Diversity is a key aspect of the theories and perspectives developed by counterculture sociologists. This is not surprising, given that this way of practicing social science aims to create a sociology for those who struggle for their liberation. The methodological and conceptual needs of emancipation struggles are multiple and varied. In this chapter we turn our attention to some contemporary theorists engaged in critical social theory, those social scientists who choose to centrally elaborate theories that aid in action to build a better world. We also illustrate how some liberation sociologists have integrated social theory, research, and activism in their own lives.

Abstractions for What?

Generally, the theorizing of liberation sociologists is different from much conventional theorizing that proposes abstractions to explain social relations as if these abstractions were neutrally and naturally generated ideas. Recall that the term "abstracted empiricism" was given by C. Wright Mills to designate a style of social theorizing (or lack thereof) that has been commonplace in the social sciences from at least the 1930s to the present. In the case of abstracted empiricism, theory becomes the collection of low-level generalizations—generally "variables useful in interpretations of statistical findings." As we saw in Chapter 3, those working in this social science style tend to view answers to opinion surveys and censuses as the best data, data to be manipulated statistically to seek relations among variables. This usually results in assertions of statistical proportions.
and relations—some simple, some complicated—that are considered to be empirical tests of abstract ideas and conceptions.

Another style criticized by Mills is “grand theory,” as exemplified in the work of Talcott Parsons and his associates. Such grand theory entails speculative attempts at constructing all-encompassing taxonomies of social phenomena. In the era after World War II, what Alfred McClung Lee called “Talcott-Parsonianism” was one of the clouds hanging over sociology. Parsons’s teachings, according to Lee, “were dogmatic and elitist, useful both to the obscurantist and the managerial.”

For example, in an important theoretical book, *Toward a General Theory of Action* (1965), Parsons and Edward Shils illustrated how they practiced grand theory. They wrote that “the theory of action is a conceptual scheme for the analysis of behavior of living organisms. It conceives of this behavior as oriented to the attainment of ends in situations, by means of the normatively regulated expenditure of energy.” For them, good social science theory has three functions. The first is to “aid in the codification of our existing concrete knowledge” understood as “unifying discrete observations under general concepts.” In addition, theory should be a guide for good research and should help control “the biases of observation.”

These seem reasonable goals, but in reality whose observations were Parsons and Shils seeking to codify? On reviewing the index of this influential book, one discovers that such critical theorists as Karl Marx, Jane Addams, Thorstein Veblen, W.E.B. Du Bois, Oliver C. Cox, and C. Wright Mills are not even cited.

By the time this book was published, Parsons and his associates had been shaping the then dominant structural-functionalist framework in the direction of the ideas of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, both of whom were constructed conservatively as forerunners of the sociological theory of social consensus and social system they were proposing. The more progressive or radical ideas and proclivities of Durkheim and Weber (see Chapter 2) were generally left out of the influential structural-functionalist analysis. From the 1930s to the 1960s, Parsons and his associates made little use of the ideas of such probing theorists as Karl Marx. Indeed, Alfred Marshall, Vilfredo Pareto, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber were the key figures examined in detail in what is perhaps Parsons’s most famous work, the 1937 book *The Structure of Social Action* (see Chapter 3). Parsons saw in the ideas of these four scholars—each working in a different European nation—a new “voluntaristic theory of action” that accented the importance of traditional societies as opposed to the older interpretations of societies. Parsons develop social theory, but usually at the expense of obscure jargon.

By not drawing significantly on empirical analyses of Western capitalist societies, a serious consideration of hierarchy and class arrangements. By doing so, the future of U.S. sociological theory was shaped. As C. Wright Mills put it, the meaning of grand theory tends to domination. A generation of theorists thereby shielded from the critical analysis.

As a point of contrast, consider bell hooks’s work. She has described her theory of feminism: “Writing progressive feminism because we knew that the world was not fair; we knew that the world was not just; we knew that the world was not right. And we wrote the words, the ideas, the thoughts, the actions that would create a world where women and men could live together in peace.” Compare the distancing vocabulary of “knowledge” and “power” to the language of “we,” “us,” “our.” Bell hooks also compare the grand theory of living organisms in both bell hooks’s aim of theorizing in determinate terms to the more formative impact” on actual lives.

Liberation theorizing aims at a development of “knowledge” that embraces discontents and troubles subject to human intervention and to which this theorizing involves a sociologist “to grasp what is happening in themselves as min biographies and history within soci...
a different European nation—a convergence in the direction of a new “voluntaristic theory of action.” This generalized social theory accent the importance of traditional values and ritual in human societies as opposed to the older utilitarian, means-ends, economic interpretations of societies. Parsons’s grand theory attempts to develop social theory, but usually at a very abstract level and often using much obscure jargon.

By not drawing significantly on the more critical theoretical and empirical analyses of Western capitalist societies, Parsons left out a serious consideration of hierarchy, oppression, and ongoing intergroup domination, such as that found in racist, sexist, heterosexist, and classist arrangements. By doing this, Parsons helped to shape the future of U.S. sociological theory in a direction supportive of the status quo. As C. Wright Mills put the matter, “The ideological meaning of grand theory tends strongly to legitimate stable forms of domination.” A generation or two of graduate students were thereby shielded from the critical tradition in social science theory and analysis.

As a point of contrast, consider how the black feminist scholar bell hooks has described her theorizing efforts in the area of feminism. Writing progressive feminist theory was so compelling precisely because we knew that the work we were doing, if at all useful, would have a meaningful transformative impact on our lives and the lives of women and men both inside and outside the academy. Compare the distancing vocabulary of “living organisms” and “expenditure of energy” that Parsons and Shils use to refer to human beings with the active “we,” “useful,” and “impact” language of bell hooks. Also compare the grandiose aim of abstract knowledge assembly on living organisms in Parsons and Shils’s analysis with bell hooks’s aim of theorizing in order to “have a meaningful transformative impact” on actual lives.

Liberation theorizing aims at human emancipation through the development of “knowledge that helps persons locate their experiences, discontents, and troubles as aspects of processes that are subject to human intervention and transformation.” As Mills put it, this theorizing involves a sociological imagination that allows people “to grasp what is happening in the world, and to understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society.” Liberation theorizing also
means reflecting on the methodological and normative principles governing the contemporary practice of sociology.

Implicit Theory and Everyday Experience: Oppression in Bureaucratic Settings

Emancipatory theories are important to those engaged in transforming the world into a more just place for two principal reasons. First, theories are like looking glasses that allow us to read social reality. Theories can render important aspects of reality—the "facts," visible while hiding other aspects of reality. We place "facts" in quotation marks here because what these facts are—and what they are called—will vary with the theory being used. Second, the decision that one solution and not another—or one result and not another—is what is needed to bring desired change depends on the social theory chosen. In this way, social theories can become linked to action; they are "ideas to think with" about troubled times and realities. Ultimately, most of our human interactions, whether orderly or conflict-riddled, are based on social theories, whether or not we are aware of them.

Although we are often unaware of the intricacies of the thought processes that lead us to our choices of perspectives and strategies, few of us will claim that we act without thinking. Sociological theorizing is the systematic thinking behind what social scientists and others observe and discover, as well as behind the actions they take in application of discoveries. Systematic theorizing in social science is, typically, different from everyday thinking in that it involves more detailed analysis, greater rigor, more reflection, and more attention to both current and historical contexts.

Nevertheless, there are some important similarities between systematic theorizing and everyday theories. Often the latter are the beginning of the former. To illustrate the process of everyday theorizing and the impact it has on our understanding and actions, consider this hypothetical case of a college professor whose salary is considerably lower than that of a male colleague who performs work identical in nature, effort, and responsibility to hers. Initially, she was shocked and angry to find this out, since this male colleague was hired some years after her, and she had trained him for his current job. And she has continued to help him on a regular basis. "Why is this happening to my coworkers?"—is one that usually initiates the socialization explanation in everyday life.

One of her colleagues advanced the salary had to do with the sometimes department "chairman"—the title managers—made some of his decisions. The explanation may be in the evidence, her colleague added, and other privileges to his friend's merit. On hearing this, a female colleague agreed, but she argued that the humble "ole boy" network that runs things is not the problem, in her view, was not in the same way in which men and women are conferred into decisionmaking networks in reocracies. Thus, she argued, the favored female professor had to do work. The latter person was also that some racial bias was like the practice of white discrimination, but also it was built into managerial inner circles. "These are well-established ways of people, and of feeling toward who they are perceived to be able to do," she colleague added.

This third explanation captured around the table, whose members cited other examples of similarly unfair people of color. Take some examples of coincidences which we have heard passed over for an appointment in another had spent many more
basis. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked a group of coworkers over lunch. This type of question—why is this happening?—is one that usually initiates the search for a specific or generalized explanation in everyday life, as well as in the practice of social science.10

One of her colleagues advanced the idea that the disparity in her salary had to do with the sometimes biased ways in which her department "chairman"—the title often given to academic middle managers—made some of his decisions. This colleague added that the explanation may be "in the evil in this man's heart." Expanding on this idea, her colleague added that "he often gives salary raises and other privileges to his friends instead of rewarding objective merit." On hearing this, a female colleague who was present in the same group noted that not all the fault should be placed on this chair. The favored man is well known for often being obsequious, in a manner that has earned him a place in the chair's inner circle, an "ole boy" network that runs the department. A third colleague agreed, but she argued that the critical thing to observe is that this ole boy network is composed exclusively of white men. The problem then, in her view, was not in the ill will of the chair, but in the different way in which men and women are differentially allowed into decisionmaking networks in most college and corporate bureaucracies. Thus, she argued, the lower salary of the better-qualified female professor had to do with "institutional sexism." Moreover, since the latter person was a woman of color, it was proposed too that some racial bias was likely present, not just in the chair's discriminatory practice but also in the institutional discrimination built into managerial inner circles at most colleges and universities. "These are well-established ways of doing things, of thinking about people, and of feeling toward what they deserve because of what they are perceived to be able to do, and not do, well," this female colleague added.

This third explanation captured the imagination of the group around the table, whose members then came up with a number of other examples of similarly unfair situations affecting women and people of color. Take some examples drawn loosely from several incidents of which we have heard: A woman faculty member was passed over for an appointment in spite of being better qualified, and another had spent many more years in a lower rank than men
typically spent. Additionally, women faculty members in many departments have reported that they are asked to perform too many of the dead-end tasks that do not lead to salary rewards and career advancement.

Moreover, in the case we began with, yet another woman faculty member commented on the disproportionate burden that women, including women faculty, ordinarily bear in the American family. The woman being discussed may have had less time for research and publication because she had the greater burden of child care. Finally, someone called the group's attention to the possibility that the woman faculty member being discussed might not be an isolated case and that men in their college were probably paid more than the women there for the same work. Further study disclosed that, in fact, women were making on average only 70 cents for every dollar men made for the same teaching and research activities. Once again, institutional sexism was evident.

In this plausible example of a woman faculty member facing problems in a college department, it is clear that, although the various explanations contribute to understanding, some are more useful than others in probing beneath the surface to interpret what is going on—and to learn what might be done to correct the situation. The explanation that the situation is a result of the "evil in the manager's heart" is, of course, very difficult to verify. This explanation identifies the cause of the problem as one that is difficult to remedy. The next explanation—that part of the blame should be attributed to the active influence of the better paid male faculty member on the chair—can be verified through observation and comparison, yet it is not clear what corrective action could be exercised. The third explanation, or explanatory theory, does not contradict the previous ones and can be more easily verified with numerous observations of similar cases. In numerous situations like this, the recognition of an institutionalized pattern of discrimination against women faculty has led a female faculty member to consult a lawyer, sue her college or university, and perhaps see a jury declare her salary to be the result of willful discrimination. Those who are targets of discrimination can sue their employers based on a theory of recurring and institutionalized discrimination, although this action may lead, regardless of its outcome, to further discrimination against them by their employers.
Theory to Change the World

The Prophetic Tradition

A crucial element of liberation thinking in sociology is the ancient belief of prophetic traditions that the world can be changed in fundamental ways through intentional human effort. This old ideal has some religious roots. In the West some attribute its origin to early Judaism. A number of analysts of U.S. social science have distinguished between what they call the prophetic and the priestly traditions of social science. Robert Friedrichs has noted, although the biblical prophets testified to the alienation of human beings from God, the prophetic tradition in sociology speaks of the alienation “from one’s untapped creative resources and an estrangement from the bonds of community with one’s fellows.”

Prophetic sociology calls for freeing human beings from this alienation. This belief in human change not only informs liberation sociologies but also progressive thinking in other specialties and professions. Such conceptions extend, of course, beyond Western traditions. The liberation theologies and progressive worldviews of people in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, as well as of those of Jewish, Latino, Asian, Native American, and African Americans in the United States, share in this fundamental assumption about human change.

Critical Social Theories

In this chapter we cannot review the full range of social science theories that are currently in use. We will discuss instead some of the conceptual frameworks termed “critical social theories,” those frameworks that involve theorizing that is particularly useful for human emancipation and liberation. Whereas some postmodern analysts have called for an end to social theory, especially broad theories such as those of Marx, we see this view as out of touch with everyday reality. Whether we like it or not, most human action is embedded in some type of social theory. Indeed, there are still many social science analysts intent on developing useful and developed versions of critical social theories. One of the exciting developments in recent years has been the emergence of an array of critical theories in both the humanities and the social sciences. A recurring theme among these critical theorists is that of social domination,
subjugation, and oppression. Most of these analysts also seek the liberation of human beings from these oppressive circumstances.

We noted in an earlier chapter that numerous introductory sociology textbooks designate the structural-functionalist, the social-conflict, and the symbolic-interactionist perspectives as the three distinctive sociological paradigms. However, this way of presenting theoretical orientations within sociology is misleading. These three paradigms do not capture the richness of contemporary theory in sociology. For the purposes of a sociology of liberation, we prefer to distinguish between instrumental-positivistic approaches to theory and critical approaches to theory. These differences are fundamental. They distinguish among social scientists in terms of how they claim to know what they know—in terms of their fundamental assumptions, in regard to what they see as the scientific method, and in regard to their ultimate aims in doing social science.

Critical social theorists seek to bring about awareness in individuals and their groups so that they can overcome the social oppression in the world around them. To bring about this awareness, one needs to be involved in a dialogue with the human subjects of research and not just in a distancing observation or experimental manipulation of observed objects. In contrast, instrumental-positivistic science seeks a neutral way of learning about the world, a way to produce knowledge that is not tied to any particular self. When transferred to social science, this attitude makes society into scattered, neutral pieces of information—into raw data to be observed from the outside.

Today, numerous contemporary theorists can be said to be critical social theorists. This explosion of social science theory has numerous branches, including feminist theory, queer theory, postmodern theories, antiracist theories, European critical theory, critical criminology, and critical legal studies. What these perspectives have in common is that they start from the belief that all human beings are “potentially active agents in the construction of their social world and social lives.”

The Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School

One of the oldest critical social theory traditions is that of what is called the “Frankfurt School” in Germany. The sociologists and other social scientists associated with the University of Frankfurt have had a major impact on what is called the Frankfurt School.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer

Among the best-known members of the Frankfurt School, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment, they and other critical thinkers such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and others argued that a new kind of enlightenment was needed in Europe, such as that of Auguste Comte's positivistic social science. Their work has been a major source for the development of critical theory and a major influence on the development of critical theory in sociology.
have had a major impact on what is often termed "critical theory." Their work has been a major source of inspiration for liberation-oriented social theorists since 1923, when the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt was founded. A group of Marxist intellectuals established the institute as a privately financed research organization. Its radical orientation, and the fact that most of its members were Jews, soon led to serious attacks by the fascist forces in Germany, and the institute was forced to relocate to the United States in 1934. In 1949 the institute and its members were able to return to Germany. Its members sought to synthesize a large number of social science and humanities disciplines, to integrate theory and empirical research, and to overcome the isolation of traditional social theory from its practical uses and implications. They were critical of orthodox Marxism but did not reject its ambitious project, which was "the ultimate unity of critical theory and revolutionary practice."\(^{14}\)

The scholars in the Frankfurt School developed major critiques of capitalistic (bourgeois) ideology and culture for a growing audience of intellectuals and university students on both sides of the Atlantic. The participation of the working class in European fascist movements before and during World War II led them to argue that "the struggle for socialism could not be carried on successfully unless the working class developed a 'conscious will' for a liberated and rational society. It was the responsibility of intellectuals to produce the critical and liberating ideas which might eventually shape the working class' conscious will."\(^{15}\) The Frankfurt School's concentration on class-linked exploitation and domination has made their writing inspiring to many liberation-oriented social scientists across the globe.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer

Among the best-known members of the Frankfurt School are Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. In their important books, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they examined some problematical ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers.\(^{16}\) Although the ideas of thinkers such as Jean Jacques Rousseau did influence the French revolution for liberty, these same ideas also helped spur despotism in Europe, such as that of Napoleon, as well as the conservative apologetics of Auguste Comte's positivism.
The aims of the Enlightenment were reformist and libertarian, not radical. Instead of launching a radical break with the reactionary past by fully enabling ideals such as freedom, liberty, and equality, the Enlightenment thinkers actually paved the way for some new forms of social domination and control under the newly emerging capitalist bourgeoisie, with its strong scientific and technological commitments. In theory, at least, scientific thought was supposed to improve the welfare of ordinary folk, but too often it created more effective ways of dominating them. The major advantages of the political revolutions and of newly emerging capitalism usually accrued to elites and upper-middle classes. Whether evolutionary or revolutionary, societal change is not necessarily progressive.

Thus, in Germany, long considered one of the most civilized and advanced societies, a rightist totalitarian state developed in the 1930s out of the political turmoil provoked by economic depression. On the other hand, China, considered to be one of the least developed societies, had become a leftist totalitarian state by the late 1940s. As Adorno and Horkheimer remind us, the possibility of a rationally organized and free society lies not in faith in some natural force of progressive change but in the determined efforts of human intelligence guided by a critical vigilance.

The Current Generation: Jurgen Habermas

Jurgen Habermas is a key contemporary figure wearing the mantle of the Frankfurt School. A very productive sociologist, Habermas began to have an impact in the English-speaking world when his book, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, was translated in 1971. Habermas' theorizing covers the social sciences as well as ethics, law, literary issues, and communications, and shows a recurring concern with the ideas of Karl Marx, the need to overcome positivism in social science, and the need to create social theory relevant to modern societies. His main critique of traditional social science theory is its tendency to recognize and interpret the world narrowly within the confines of physical science and its accompanying technology.

Habermas notes two alternative tendencies in contemporary social theory, what he terms the “empirical-analytical” (positivist) orientation and the “historical-hermeneutic” (dialectical) orientation. The empirical-analytical orientation uses controlled observation of behavior, “which is set up producible conditions by subjects reproducing those working from a dialectical consciousness of acting individuals and explore sociological worlds and explore sociological minds therein.18

Representatives of both orientations are supposed to be based on theories that have law-like patterns.

In Habermas's view, social system systems because social systems of historical life-contexts.” At best, the research relate only to parts of system techniques can demonstrate how a plural the social totality.19 Habermas is a supporter of value-neutral research. As he is only a way to avoid openly discussing who, and for what purposes social mainstream social scientists too often the uses of their research.

Habermas is also critical of much political action we discuss below. He sees today's modernist conservatives with older neoconservatives. The newer conservative Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault, and they have discovered the idea of “de-centered agency is no longer a basic decentered subjectivity is “emancipatory work and usefulness, and with this end modern world. On the basis of modern irreconcilable antimodernism.”20 More
tion of behavior, "which is set up in an isolated field under reproducible conditions by subjects reproducible at will." In contrast, those working from a dialectical approach examine "the situational consciousness of acting individuals themselves" in their social life-worlds and explore sociologically the meanings articulated therein.  

Representatives of both orientations can make use of the idea of a larger whole within which observed phenomena are situated. Analytical empiricists may rely on the idea of a social system, an organic entity of mutually related elements. We see this idea in the work of sociology's structural functionalists, whom we have previously discussed. The purpose of this type of research is to specify the manner in which system components, as operationally defined "variables," react to each other. This social scientific research lends itself to use for bureaucratic administration. Scientifically accurate predictions are supposed to be based on theories that deal with observed objects that have law-like patterns.

In Habermas's view, social systems are not among these repetitive systems because social systems of human beings always "stand in historical life-contexts." At best, the useful findings of empirical research relate only to parts of systems, and no conventional research techniques can demonstrate how a particular phenomenon relates to the social totality. Habermas is also critical of the positivistic notion of value-neutral research. As he sees it, this value-neutral claim is only a way to avoid openly discussing the problem of how, by whom, and for what purposes social research is conducted. These mainstream social scientists too often fail to take responsibility for the uses of their research.

Habermas is also critical of much postmodernist thought, a tradition we discuss below. He sees today an implicit alliance of postmodernist conservatives with older premodernist conservatives and neoclassical economists. The newer conservatives, among whom he places Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, claim that they have discovered the idea of "decentered subjectivity"; that is, individual agency is no longer a basic assumption for analysis. This decentered subjectivity is "emanated from the imperatives of work and usefulness, and with this experience they step outside the modern world. On the basis of modernistic attitudes, they justify an irreconcilable antimodernism." Moreover, some conservatives and
neoconservatives in U.S. social science have observed the “decline of substantive reason, the differentiation of science, morality and art, the modern worldview and its merely procedural rationality with sadness and recommend a withdrawal to a position anterior to modernity.”21

The neoconservatives, among whom Habermas places sociologist Daniel Bell, “welcome the development of modern sciences, as long as this only goes beyond its sphere to carry forward technical progress, capitalist growth, and national administration.”22 As Bell sees it, late capitalism is a postindustrial society, one that is now moving beyond the old industrialization, such as that of steel and automobiles. Bell expresses the fear that what he sees as a democratic populism of the current era has a desire for “wholesale egalitarianism” that insists “on complete leveling,” and these egalitarians are seeking to get rid of the ideas of merit and rewards for personal achievement.23 The development of a critical theory and science that deeply question the status quo is not seen as valuable by these neoconservatives.

The critical theories of Germany’s Frankfurt School have their roots in the Marxist tradition. We should note that the influence of Marxist thought in European and U.S. social science was greatly reduced between 1917 and 1956, for two reasons. One was the political dominance of Soviet Marxism, “which pushed other versions into a marginal position . . . with the result that they were, generally speaking, little known and largely ignored.”24 The second, and more important, reason was the fascism and anti-Communism in many Western nations, including Nazism in Germany and proto-fascist movements such as McCarthyism in the United States. Only a few intellectuals dared to work with Marxist ideas in this period.

Since the late 1940s and 1950s, Marxist scholarship has been going through a process of renewal and reinterpretation, especially in Europe. Although theorists like Habermas and Herbert Marcuse have been critical of Marx and have abandoned some of his ideas, they nonetheless have accepted much in his dialectical and historical approach. The dialectical and historical perspective generally accepts the important idea of totality. The idea of the whole must be grasped, as they see it, by the masses of ordinary people if social emancipation is to occur.25 In Marx’s own thinking “totality” refers to the ways in which the whole, such as the capitalist system, can be
seen in each of its parts. The totality is always there, in this sense. There are no fixed boundaries, and the interconnectedness of the social world is central to Marx and to the later interpretations of European critical theory.  

Communication and Liberation

Habermas is a strong advocate of the idea of societal progress and the critical use of human reason. His view includes the idea of an interactive dialogue among people across many different groups and societies. He calls this a theory of "communicative action."²⁷ To put it briefly, Habermas views the macroeconomic structures of bureaucratic capitalism as burdensome for the world of human action. In a modern capitalist society, these macroeconomic structures crash in on the everyday world, thereby "colonizing this lifeworld."²⁸ They constantly structure the mechanisms of exploitation faced by ordinary people as they work and consume.

In U.S. sociology, "symbolic interactionism" is the common term for theories that call attention to the role that meaning and communication play in everyday life. However, symbolic interactionism is often concerned with situations in which actors negotiate to "mutually fit their interpretations in order to coordinate their actions."²⁹ Although there are aspects of symbolic negotiation in communication processes, the latter involve much more than symbolic negotiation. Habermas's theory of communicative action is founded on the distinction between negotiation as a form of instrumental action and the contrasting action of communication. We engage in instrumental actions to achieve anticipated goals under given conditions with available means. A commercial advertisement is a communicative device, but it is an instrument designed to achieve the goal of persuading people to consume.

Communicative action, in contrast, is about conveying messages to others who interpret the message and then interact with and talk back to the first actor. Success, in this case, consists of the actors mutually understanding each other and agreeing how the messages should be interpreted and on how each should act. The primacy of the communicative mode is a major theoretical insight of Habermas's general framework. "Communicative rationality," Habermas writes, "carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central
experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their life world."30

These communicative forms of discourse, language included, can be emancipatory. Habermas identifies elements of an emancipatory social theory, one that works as a "frame of reference for distinguishing between what appears to be and what is," so as to eliminate institutional domination."31 His theory relates to George Herbert Mead's ideas about the social self and to Emile Durkheim's theory of the linkage of sacred rites to the realm of the secular. Amplifying their views helped Habermas "to provide a kind of double-edged theory of communicative behavior, evolutionary and procedural."32 Moreover, for Habermas, the idea of communicative rationality serves as a basis for a theory of modernity, a theory of evolution, an ethics of discourse, and a theory of language.

A crucial aspect of communicative reason, suggests Habermas, is that it "does not simply encounter ready made subjects and systems; rather, it takes part in structuring what is to be preserved. The utopian perspective of reconciliation and freedom is ingrained in the conditions for the communicative sociation of individuals; it is built into the linguistic mechanism of the reproduction of the species."33 Thus, in our terms, Habermas is proposing that communicative reason—interpersonal discourse in its most uncorrupted form—is intrinsically emancipatory. His theory allows for a moral reading of the world that accommodates the aim of changing the world, and it is flexible enough to use with various utopian projects.

Nevertheless, one problem with his theory is that its principal level for analysis is the society taken as a whole. In trying to shed light on the relationship between social conditions and individual freedom, Habermas implicitly theorizes about an undifferentiated public, about individuals struggling to free themselves from the social and cultural constraints that compel their behavior. Some theorists of democracy have raised serious questions about this assumption of a homogeneous public in this theory of communicative action. Instead, they underscore the divisions and diverse languages of class, race, heterosexuality, and gender that interfere with goals of increased societal communication. Clearly, such limitations invite a thorough revision and extension of rationality.

Impact on the United States

The penetration of European critical theory occurred, but rather slowly. During the 1960s, the sociological turn in U.S. sociology was only a superficial one. More important in providing a critical perspective were the insights of Ernest Gellner and of public place interaction was pioneered by scholars who gave much attention to the action between strangers in public places in examining interactive rituals, such as the etiquette of racial segregation, were a type of defiance, a symbolic means by which people could express their belief in the necessity of racial segregation in the front stages and in the back stages of the social order.

Contemporary Feminist Theories

Among the important critical social theories stand out for their dynamism and their understanding of society. Feminist theories and experiences of women in a review women as central subjects in the world in which they seek to see the world from their own perspective, getting key aspects of gendered oppressions. Their framework is often "critical and activ
a thorough revision and extension of this theory of communicative rationality.

Impact on the United States

The penetration of European critical theory into U.S. sociology has occurred, but rather slowly. During the 1960s and 1970s, the critical turn in U.S. sociology was only modestly influenced by these European sources. More important in challenging the dominance of a quantitative, instrumental positivism was the work of interpretive scholars and theorists like Erving Goffman. For example, the study of public place interaction was pioneered by Goffman and his students, who gave much attention to the meaning of microlevel interaction between strangers in public places. Goffman was perceptive in examining interactive rituals, such as deference rituals between people seen as superior and inferior. Obsequious words and gestures, such as the etiquette of racial relations in the South during legal segregation, were a type of deference ritual, which "functions as a symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed to a recipient." 34 Goffman described other subtle dimensions of social behavior, such as the distinction people make between their actions in the frontstages and the backstages of their lives. 35 Goffman, and other interpretive scholars like Harold Garfinkel, helped U.S. social scientists see the importance of the symbolic interaction and interpersonal meanings, thereby encouraging more use of the critical sociology of European scholars like Habermas. Today we see an increasing use of European critical theory in U.S. social science.

Contemporary Feminist Thought

Among the important critical social theories, contemporary feminist theories stand out for their dynamism and growing contributions to understanding society. Feminist theories generally assess the situations and experiences of women in male-dominated societies. They view women as central subjects in the investigative project—that is, they seek to see the world from the vantage point of women. In feminist analyses, there are well-developed conceptual frameworks targeting key aspects of gendered oppression and liberation. A feminist framework is often "critical and activist on behalf of women, seek-
ing to produce a better world for women—and thus, it argues, for humankind.” Many feminist thinkers have brought to critical social theory a great concern not just for the cognitive underpinning of oppression but also for the negative emotions, feelings, and attitudes that underlie oppression—as well as for strategies of resistance that encompass counter-emotions by means of consciousness raising, a major resistance strategy. Consciousness-raising includes self-inquiry into one’s own attitudes as well as dialogue with others.

Feminist scholars and researchers in sociology and other disciplines work not only to broaden their academic disciplines but also to rework the fund of disciplinary knowledge in terms of the experiences of women. Within the discipline of sociology, feminist concepts and approaches are gradually beginning to have a general impact. Feminist sociologists Judith Stacey and Barrie Thorne have noted that today the fields of economics and political science are more masculinist than sociology, whereas anthropology and history have incorporated some feminist ideas into the mainstream of their disciplines. They view sociology as falling in between, with feminist ideas just beginning to have an important impact. Stacey and Thorne also accent the extent to which feminist ideas are having a transdisciplinary impact on academic life, such as in feminist critiques of androcentric social structures and of the Enlightenment concerns with separating mind and body, nature and nurture. They note that “many academic feminists are now involved with overlapping, interdisciplinary, interpretive communities, such as ethnic studies, queer theory, critical theory, and cultural studies.”

Feminist theories are often interdisciplinary and make use of perspectives as diverse as social psychology, psychoanalytic theory, Marxism, democratic socialism, postmodernism, and cultural studies in order to interpret and understand the realities and meanings of gendered structures in various societies. Significantly, scholars in many disciplines—including sociology, anthropology, biology, economy, history, law, literature, philosophy, political science, psychology, and theology—have contributed to the burgeoning and diversifying feminist theories.

Much feminist work argues for a distinctive materialistic perspective, one that locates the heart of sexism and patriarchy in the tangible and material realities of everyday life. One approach is sometimes called “radical feminist theory.” For example, legal scholar and social analyst Catharine MacKinnon points to the role of a feminist analysis should play in understanding and sexuality—the tangibles, relationships that exist between men and women, and symbols of gender must be realities. In the context of a sexist society, dehumanized sexuality is forced onto women which is most a woman’s own, but not from her in the sexist society. Women’s emancipation for women is sexism’s punishment for women’s gender roles of inferior women as masks.

One of the most influential sociologist and feminist scholars is Smith, who has helped to develop a point theory.” Smith proposes a sociology of women, a distinctive viewpoint not just in Marxist theory. She writes, “At the heart of the experience is a critical standpoint emerges.”

Everyday experiences are described as a “means of knowing a beyond the immediately known.” The objectified ways of knowing in ways of ruling” become manifest. Taken for granted, and its conventional methods “built up within the male social univ. participated in its doing.”

She describes a moment, that there was a distinction of women often know the world different the established knowledge of gendered course. From this place, women can “move large, moving into a terrain of public life along the line had been appropriated by others.”

In one biographical sketch, Smith’s theory derives from her everyday life as a woman living between the male-domin
and social analyst Catharine MacKinnon has suggested that at the heart of a feminist analysis should be the material reality of reproduction and sexuality—the tangible reproductive and sexual relationships that exist between men and women. Analysis of the identities and symbols of gender must be grounded in these everyday realities. In the core of a sexist society is the alienating reality of dehumanized sexuality forced onto women. Her sexuality is that which is most a woman's own, but that which is most taken away from her in the sexist society. Who she is sexually is defined for a woman within the patriarchal system, which shapes men's treatment of and orientation toward women across the generations. Dehumanization for women is sexism's psychological dynamic, and the gendered roles of inferior women and superior men are its social masks.38

One of the most influential sociological theorists is Dorothy E. Smith, who has helped to develop a perspective known as "standpoint theory." Smith proposes a sociology done from the standpoint of women, a distinctive viewpoint not unlike that of the proletariat in Marxist theory. She writes, "At the line of fault along which women's experience breaks away from the discourses mediated by texts that are integral to the relations of ruling in contemporary society, a critical standpoint emerges."39 For some time, Smith has explored and questioned the discipline of sociology, which she has described as a "means of knowing about the shape of my world beyond the immediately known."40 However, she calls into question the objectified ways of knowing in which the patriarchal "relations of ruling" become manifest. Taken-for-granted mainstream sociology, and its conventional methods and conceptual theories, are "built up within the male social universe, even when women have participated in its doing."41 She discovered in her own life, at a dramatic moment, that there was a distinctive standpoint from which women often know the world differently than those men who create the established knowledge of academia and much other public discourse. From this place, women can "speak to and of the society at large, moving into a terrain of public discourse that somewhere along the line had been appropriated by and ceded to men."42

In one biographical sketch, Smith explains that her critical social theory derives from her everyday life as a woman, especially as a woman living between the male-dominated academic world and the
essentially female-centered life of a single mother. From these experiences, she has drawn the concept of "bifurcation," or disjuncture, which plays an important part in her theorizing. This refers to the separation between social scientific descriptions and people's lived experiences, between women's lives and the often patriarchal ideal types used to describe such experience.

For liberation sociologists, Smith's work is important for a number of reasons, including her strong accent on the diversity of human experiences and standpoints. If they are to be sustainable in the long run, all human societies must be restructured to be much less oppressive and to be meaningfully democratic—in the sense of full participation by all those in the society, including its female majority, in decisionmaking about all the critical facets of social and personal life. The diversity of people and views must be recognized structurally and culturally. Monocultures are not healthy, and they tend to deteriorate. In her feminist theory, Smith provides numerous important insights into the character of the social domination and oppression of women. As she sees it, oppressors are not simply individual actors making rational decisions based on self-interest. In making sense of oppression, she contextualizes it. She thereby integrates Marx's concerns with the structures of domination with insights into a variety of subjective and microsocial life worlds. As with Habermas, these everyday life worlds are shaped by the larger macrostructures, which are in turn shaped by specific historical demands.

One of the most important contributions of some feminist thinking and research is its growing recognition of racial and ethnic diversity. For example, in their pioneering analyses, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins have accentuated the importance of the thought and action of African American women in making feminist thought in the United States and elsewhere more nuanced, inclusive, and liberationist. Though technically in the humanities, bell hooks is sociological in much of her analysis. For example, she has examined the deep structures of racist imaging that portray black women as ugly, deviant, and criminal. The omnipresent standard of white-female beauty, seen in the mass media and other places, is consistent with a continuing ideology of white superiority. As a result, African American women, who of necessity depart from the common white-beauty norm, suffer much painful humiliation and discrimination. In addition, hooks has pointed out the numerous ways in which a white perspective constantly gets precedence of women. In one probing article, sometimes found in the rap music of the negative views of women in rap by white commentators and polysemy and malignancy by white analysts. However, the widespread misogyny in many popular movies, gets no social circulation. Misogyny and misogyny are often generated culture. As a pioneering article, constantly raises serious sociological, cultural, and racial structures.

Moreover, as we noted in Chapter 1, Hill Collins, has a reticent framework must critique white women. "Portraying African-American women, patriarchy, welfare culture, and the essential to the political economy of women's oppression." These issues social fabric of the United States and many other societies, and they realize antiblack discrimination. One look at resistance to discrimination by women were a constant and integral part of the 1960s.

In her recent book, Fighting Women, women have even deeper in regard to the and the condition of African Americans can serve either to reproduce existential and economic justice. She seeks to minimize the workings of their own. As a result, prevailing definitions historical, static system of abstractions. Elites do not produce more thoughtability—such as through the control to make their thought central and framework. This is true generally for. Thus, given the white dominance 1890s to the 1950s, there is virtually
perspective constantly gets precedence in regard to a variety of views of women. In one probing article, hooks discusses the misogyny sometimes found in the rap music of certain black male musicians—the negative views of women in rap music that are often condemned by white commentators and politicians. Black misogyny is seen as a severe malignancy by white analysts, including white male analysts. However, the widespread misogyny of white men, such as that seen in many popular movies, gets no similar criticism. Indeed, hypermasculinity and misogyny are often glorified in the larger white-dominated culture. As a pioneering analyst in feminist thought, hooks constantly raises serious sociological questions about the fundamental patriarchal and racist structures of U.S. society.

Moreover, as we noted in Chapter 4, the influential feminist sociologist, Patricia Hill-Collins, has argued that a black-feminist theoretical framework must critique the negative stereotypes of black women: "Portraying African-American women as stereotypical mammys, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas has been essential to the political economy of domination fostering Black women’s oppression." These images are webbed deeply into the social fabric of the United States and—thanks to the U.S. mass media—many other societies, and they frequently precipitate and rationalize antiblack discrimination. Collins insists that one must also look at resistance to discrimination. Thus, she has shown how black women were a constant and integral part of the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

In her recent book, *Fighting Words*, Collins has taken her arguments even deeper in regard to the character of critical social theory and the condition of African Americans. "Social theory in particular can serve either to reproduce existing power relations or to foster social and economic justice." She adds that "elite groups routinely minimize the workings of their own power in what counts for theory. As a result, prevailing definitions of theory portray it as an ahistorical, static system of abstract logic, reason, of science." Elites do not produce more thought than others, they simply have the ability—such as through the control of the media and think tanks—to make their thought central and accepted as the only legitimate framework. This is true generally for the society, and also for sociology. Thus, given the white dominance of U.S. sociology from the 1890s to the 1950s, there is virtually no treatment of black women...
from an emancipatory viewpoint in any of the major sociology journals over this long period. After developing a critique of sociology and of critical social theory, Collins moves to a level of analysis that accents the moral foundations of all social theory: “Because the search for justice has been central in African-American women’s history, I emphasize an ethical framework grounded in notions of justice as specific cultural material for exploring this more general question of moral authority for struggle.” Once again, we see the centrality of ideas of freedom and justice for liberation theories.

The approaches of these and other feminist social theorists provide yet more theoretical support for social scientists doing research on oppression and domination in the field, as well as for those pressing change strategies. As feminist theories become more powerful in the social sciences, they will become ever more threatening to established interests.

**Questioning Heterosexual Theories**

One of the areas of critical social theory that has expanded impressively in recent years is that known as “queer theory.” Much of this theorizing is located in the humanities and is influenced by both feminist and postmodern thinkers. Within sociology, this theoretical work has developed as a critique of the way in which this discipline has ignored the heterosexual assumptions often shaping its methods and knowledge accrual. The issues dealt with in queer theory have to do with how categories such as “gay,” “lesbian,” and “straight” are social and culturally constructed and how these categories serve to define positive and negative identities and to include and exclude people within communities. Thus, the conventional heterosexual-homosexual boundary places some inside and some outside a given human community.

Some sociologists have tackled the issue of the hegemony of heterosexuality and the part that it plays in distorting research on and analysis of gender and sexuality. Chrys Ingraham, for example, writes about an ideological construct termed the “heterosexual imaginary,” that conceals the operation of heterosexuality in structuring gender and [closing off] any critical analysis of heterosexuality as an organizing institution.” She calls for a feminist sociology that develops a critique of the often hidden, fully institutionalized heterosexuality, a new sociology that does not participate. A crucial step in developing a more meaningful framing of gender as “heterogendered” or stratification of the sexes within the family. This concept, Ingraham argues, “starts with a critique of the patriarchal division of labor and the patriarchal household.”

In addition, Dorothy Smith’s idea of the hidden curriculum, which has been developed within and exclusive of the field, sees the social construction of identity as a form of social identity and status. The implication of this is that a consideration of personal identity is, and should be, embedded in heterosexuality, marriage-centric assumptions. “The heteronormative assumption that marriage is the norm and marriage is the only family unit is, in a sense, the heteronormative assumption that marriage is the norm and marriage is the only family unit is, in a sense, the heteronormative assumption that marriage is the norm and marriage is the only family unit is, in a sense, the heteronormative assumption that marriage is the norm and marriage is the only family unit is, in a sense, the heteronormative assumption that marriage is the norm and marriage is the only family unit is, in a sense, the heteronormative assumption that marriage is the norm and marriage is the only family unit is, in a sense, the heteronormative assumption that marriage is the norm and marriage is the only family unit is, in a sense, the heteronormative assumption that marriage is the norm and marriage is the only 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new sociology that does not participate in the heterosexual imaginary. A crucial step in developing such a liberated sociology is the re-framing of gender as "heterogender" to emphasize the asymmetrical stratification of the sexes within the system of patriarchal heterosexuality. This concept, Ingham argues, "de-naturalizes the 'sexual' as the starting point for understanding heterosexuality with the gender division of labor and the patriarchal relations of production."52

In addition, Dorothy Smith's idea of bifurcation is applicable here since much mainstream sociology uses, however implicitly, many ideas developed within and exclusive to a heterosexual "male universe."53 In this way, sociology is "heteronormative," inasmuch as heterosexuality is generally the conceptual starting point. One can see a related bias in opinion surveys that ask respondents to check off their marital status as one of five categories: married, divorced, separated, widowed, or single. These categories are presented as important indexes of social identity and are the only options offered. The implication of the list is that a critical aspect of the organization of personal identity is, and should be, in relation to marriage. This heterosexual, marriage-centric assumption is hidden and taken for granted. "The heteronormative assumption of this practice," Ingham writes, "is rarely, if ever, called into question."54 In this way, heterosexuality is routinely institutionalized and reinforced.

These new types of sociological and other social science theorizing about sexuality and heterogender have contributed to liberation sociology by accenting once again the importance of domination as a distorting centrality in the United States. They also suggest that human diversity, not just along racial, class, and gender lines but also in regard to a variety of orientations and lifestyles, is essential to the healthy development and evolution of human societies. Much social creativity comes from diversity and the interpersonal and intergroup communication generated by it. Historically, the human species would not have survived without its great diversity.

**Antiracist Social Theory**

Another type of critical social theory with deep roots in U.S. sociology is antiracist theory. The early sociologists W.E.B. Du Bois and Anna Julia Cooper, among others, began the development of a conceptual framework probing U.S. racism as more than a matter of
racial prejudice or fringe extremists. Both saw it instead as a centuries-long, dehumanizing institutionalized system of racial exclusion and violence. Cooper wrote in the early 1890s of the violent racist practices targeting black men and women across the nation; she noted “instances of personal violence to colored women traveling in the less civilized sections of our country, where women have been forcibly ejected from cars, thrown from their seats, their garments rudely torn, their person wantonly and cruelly injured.” She described the “jungles of barbarism” created by white Americans. Moreover, by the early 1900s, Du Bois was working from a conceptual perspective that all major institutions in U.S. society were structured in racial terms. He viewed this racist order in global terms, one of the first social theorists to do so. Recall Du Bois’s argument that by 1900, “white supremacy was all but world-wide. Africa was dead, India conquered, Japan isolated, and China prostrate. . . . The using of men for the benefit of masters is no new invention of modern Europe. . . . But Europe proposed to apply it on a scale and with an elaborateness of detail of which no former world ever dreamed.” Du Bois continued to develop his ideas about white supremacy and an institutionalized racist order until his death in 1963.

Writing extensively on racism and capitalism in a number of books published between the 1940s and his death in 1974, Oliver Cox deviated from the ideas of his University of Chicago teachers. He contributed much to the development of antiracist theory with his well-substantiated investigation of how the labor exploitation of black Americans created a structure of racial classes. He showed that the white ruling class had worked hard to subordinate African Americans, “to proletarianize a whole people—that is to say, the whole people is looked upon as a class—whereas white proletarianization involves only a section of the white people.” Moreover, since the 1960s, social science analysts like Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton have developed similar ideas and accentuated the centrality of institutionalized racism for contemporary U.S. society—those patterns of racism built into all this society’s major institutions. Working on racist hierarchies and other structures of racial oppression, critical social theorists have rejected older concepts like “race relations,” the phrase often used by social scientists concerned with portraying all racially defined groups as more or less responsi-
Liberation Theory and Liberating Action

The use of the phrase “race problems” in countries like the United States. Such terminology is conservative in impact, for it takes the focus off whites who have created and maintained the hierarchical and exploitative system of racism since at least the early seventeenth century.

The reader should recall our previous discussions of the theoretical work of Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks on the racist construction of black women within a larger structure and culture of contemporary racism. They too examine closely and empirically the larger contextual and historical aspects of racism in the United States.

Drawing on the analyses of Du Bois and Cooper, as well as on Kwame Ture, Frantz Fanon, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins, we, the authors, have contributed to this development of antiracist theory in our recent work. In our conceptual analysis, we develop the concept of systemic racism, a far-reaching framework of op-pression that encompasses an array of important dimensions—the unjustly gained economic and political power of whites (for example, under slavery and legal segregation), the continuing resource inequalities across the color line, and the white racist ideologies, attitudes, and institutions created to reproduce and preserve white advantages and power over several centuries. An important aspect of this approach is the accent on the United States as a “total-racist society,” one in which most social arenas are shaped to some degree by the systemic racist realities. The macrostructure of racial oppression is reinforced by, and creates, racist ideologies and attitudes. We also explore the ways in which a range of “sincere fictions” created by white Americans are regularly used to reinforce racial discrimination on an everyday basis. Critical to the maintenance of systemic racism are not only the persisting prejudices—the ways in which whites see racialized “others,” but also the pervasive white views of whiteness, the ways in which whites see themselves. Traditional theories of racial prejudice involve little reference to white sentiments about the white self, yet racist actions require not only a representation of the racialized other but also a conception of the white self. The latter entails the creation of an array of sincere fictions, those ideological constructions that reproduce the broader societal mythologies at the level of individual whites. Thus, white men and women generally view themselves as “not racist,” as “good people,”
even while they discriminate against African Americans and other Americans of color.61

The use of these concepts can aid scholars and activists to probe beneath the denials and the myths of “race.” A social theory critical of racism can help people understand the manipulated dimensions of their lives. Today, antiracist theory needs to be developed not only to lay bare the system of racial oppression but also to help in the struggle to overcome it. Antiracist theory generally attempts to facilitate human action against racist attitudes and practices. For example, in their work on racism, both Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks have analyzed the methods by which black men and women have historically resisted racist oppression. And numerous scholars of color have examined the ways in which oppression is internalized when people of color adopt the white-racist attitudes propagated within their environments—such as by the mass media—in regard to themselves. Americans of color have had to constantly create new strategies to resist both external racial oppression and the internalized oppression within themselves.62

Moreover, some white antiracist sociologists, such as Eileen O’Brien, have developed empirical research and conceptual ideas directed at helping whites move toward action against racism. She has researched the strategies of two major antiracist organizations, the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond (PI) and Anti-Racist Action (ARA), which are attempting to move white Americans in the direction of antiracist action. The mostly white ARA groups include many young people and are organizing in a variety of ways against racism in cities in the United States and Canada. They have protested against neo-Nazi and Klan organizations and their numerous rallies. ARA groups have also developed other antiracist programs, including a Copwatch program attempting to reduce police brutality in several cities.63

The PI group, which was founded by people of color, has often focused on getting liberal whites to see their own racism. Various groups of whites who work with poor people of color, such as social workers and other government employees, come to their Undoing Racism workshops, where they are pressed to come to terms with their own paternalistic notions about the “culture of poverty” and the poor, and to examine their own racist prejudices and stereotypes. In her work, O’Brien has emphasized the importance of this teaching about systems of racial oppression, “Nearly all of us work in institutions currently operated in racist ways. It is not actively challenging that racism in our day-to-day work that is racist even as we protest against it. In groups like PI, there is a consciousness of racism, of white racism, and of the institutional racism that reproduces the self-serving myths and practices that are important that even when white people are on a mission to change the world, we are with a group of like-minded individuals that have no sense of the way that white racism is replicated within the movement.”65

Postmodern Society

The term “postmodernism” has been applied to the new social phenomena—a contemporary way of writing about contemporary society, called the “meta-narratives,” the historical literature, the cultural movement, the media society.” Those writers who are attempting to describe fields of scientific, intellectual, and moral experiences with the same language as those which were taken for granted in the modern age are commonly called modern or Enlightenment.

In one sense, modernism, a term that refers to the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the Enlightenment, is the transformation of the Enlightenment, the theocratic force of society and history, the philosophy, science, and source of much progress—views that have been based on individualism and the United States.67 On one ha...
teaching about systems of racial oppression. As she has recently put it, "Nearly all of us work in institutions that have historically and currently operated in racist ways. We need to acknowledge that in not actively challenging that racism, we are perpetuating it. This group is explicitly led by people of color, because it is their contention that the nature of white privilege is to unconsciously veer into that racist direction even as whites are trying to be antiracist."64 In groups like PI, there is a conscious effort to deal with the sincere fictions of white Americans. These are ideological notions about inferior values and cultures among the poor and people of color that reproduce the self-serving myths at the level of individual whites. "It is important that even when whites affiliate with an 'antiracist' label agenda, that they have no sincere fictions about themselves, and that they are constantly self-reflective about their own role in the movement."65

Postmodern Social Theory

The term "postmodernism" has been used for a diverse array of social phenomena—a contemporary architectural movement, a new way of writing about contemporary life that no longer relies on "metanarratives," the historical social transformations that followed World War II, and the new conditions of a capitalism centered in information technologies. It has also been used for the supposed aftermath of the "modern" industrial age—what others have called the "consumer society," "the postindustrial society," or the "media society." Those writers and scholars who use these terms are attempting to describe fields of political, cultural, aesthetic, scientific, and moral experiences which are distinctly different from those which were taken for granted in an earlier historical, commonly called modern or Enlightenment, phase of world history.66

In one way or another, postmodernism is defined in contrast to modernism, a term for the rationalist and technological culture growing out of the Enlightenment. The modernist assumptions encompass the unity of humanity, the individual as the agent and creative force of society and history, the superiority of Western civilization, science as source of much truth, and a belief in social progress—views that have been basic to the development of Europe and the United States.67 On one hand, postmodernism often involves
a radical break with this dominant modernist culture and aesthetic, which makes it important for a sociology of liberation. On the other hand, some postmodernist writers have strongly criticized the image of liberation in the work of some social scientists for being too much a part of the modernist intellectual framework, for being tied to “essentialist concepts” of human subjects that presuppose “a notion of humanity as having a fixed, unchanging identity and dynamic regardless of historical variation and social considerations such as gender, race, ethnicity, class or sexual orientation.”

The chaotic and diversified character of postmodernist theory makes it difficult to assess without some ambiguity. Indeed, postmodernism is not one theory but a complex of theories, often of an interdisciplinary nature. Nevertheless, there are some common threads among postmodernist writers, one of which is their challenge to “foundationism,” the philosophical approach arguing that the rational, independent human subject is the foundation of ontology (being) and epistemology (how we know what we know). Foundationism views the free-thinking individual as the basic source of moral and political action. Postmodernists, instead, argue that human subjects are not autonomous creators of themselves or the worlds in which they live. Rather, they are subjects produced within a complex set of relations and are constituted within and through the moral and political arrangements around them. For postmodernists, human subjects are the effects of specific social and cultural logics.

As we see it, this is a false dichotomy. Liberation-oriented sociologists want to achieve a world where human beings can endeavor creatively and move autonomously; in that sense, liberation sociologists are modernist in their ultimate aims. Yet, they are often postmodernist in their diagnoses of the troubled social worlds in which people live. Liberation social science, like all good social science, recognizes enormous differences in the capacity for agency of different social actors. Power differentials structured across racial, gender, class, and other hierarchical orders mean differences in effective social agency. A good social science recognizes the diversity within these broader social categories. Moreover, human actors are essential to a liberation analysis. No matter how determining the sociocultural order appears to be, only human beings, acting reflectively and collectively, can be said to be the inventors of social worlds. And only human beings acting reflectively and in concert can re-invent them.

We have space here to consider how modern theorizing poses to the sociologist its implications for the social work of several social scientists important for liberation projects because of the fact that experience with real-life representations—by symbols and images—can apprehend the reality of their own oppression and varying characteristically. It is not the same thing to touch earth as it is to experience the day-to-day same thing to experience the temporal as it is to experience the wind free. We are lost on a winter day. We do not have a philosophical discussion on the nature of the natural and the social. We suggest that intersubjective understanding is as critical to the liberation project. For some, sympathy is decisive, for empathy is a way of being with others that has long been indispensable for human advancement. Working to develop empathy, we have the many lines of thought that are needed for human advancement in the future.

Among sociological theorists, Staudenmaier’s work is useful for social science in postmodernism. Much postmodern thinking, for example, is based on the idea of liberation—of a society free of domination—that all postmodernism gives up. For some, postmodern thinkers make a strong claim for an emancipatory life and pluralist society of great emancipatory transforation. This modest aspiration of immediate angles for limited forms of social improvement thought “offers the possibility of deciding the history of cruelty and oppression without surrendering to the retreat of the conservative and the conservative.”

Even some relatively conservative sociologists have developed ideas that can be adapted
We have space here to consider only a few challenges that postmodern theorizing poses to the social sciences. We can briefly discuss its implications for the sociology of liberation, as revealed in the work of several social scientists. Some postmodern theory is important for liberation projects because these theorists take seriously the fact that experience with reality is mediated by socially shared representations—by symbols and intersubjectivity. Human beings apprehend the reality of their own experiences, and one must take the nuanced and varying character of these experiences very seriously. It is not the same thing to understand the roundness of the earth as it is to experience the death of a loved one. It is not the same thing to experience the temperature of a chemical compound as it is to experience the wind freezing our unprotected faces when we are lost on a winter day. We do not want to engage in a philosophical discussion on the nature of human experience here, but suggest that intersubjective understanding of other human beings is critical to the liberation project. For this understanding human empathy is decisive, for empathy is a critical human trait. That empathy has long been indispensable for survival and evolution is undeniable. Working to develop empathy across all lines within human groups, including the many lines of oppression, is essential to human advancement in the future.

Among sociological theorists, Steven Seidman sees much that is useful for social science in postmodern thought, but also some pitfalls. Much postmodern thinking, he warns, “carries no promise of liberation—of a society free of domination. Postmodernism gives up the modernist idol of human emancipation.” This does not mean that all postmodernism gives up on ethical action. In fact, some postmodern thinkers make a strong appeal for an “ethically engaged intellectual life and pluralistic values.” For some, the hope of a great emancipatory transformation is replaced by the more modest aspiration of immediate and individual or localized struggles for limited forms of social justice. At its best, postmodern thought “offers the possibility of a social analysis that takes seriously the history of cruelty and constraint in Western Modernity without surrendering to the retreat from criticalness that characterizes much current conservative and liberal social thought.”

Even some relatively conservative postmodern theorists have developed ideas that can be adapted effectively by liberation sociolo-
gists. For example, the French philosopher, Jean-François Lyotard, has underscored the intertwining of community and individual in thinking about human actions of major ethical consequence: "Thou shalt not kill thy fellow human being; To kill a human being is not to kill an animal of the species Homo Sapiens, but to kill the human community present in him as both capacity and promise. And you also kill it in yourself. To banish the stranger is to banish the community, and you banish yourself from the community thereby." 73 What is common to human beings is the image each carries in himself or herself of the other. Moreover, the community is in the individual, and the individual is in the community. This is a critical insight for understanding all types of oppression of human beings. Oppressions such as racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism not only destroy individuals, but also destroy the communities of which they are part.

Some feminist theorists have also made effective use of postmodern insights. For example, Donna Haraway, a materialist postmodernist analyst, has written a much cited article, titled "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." 74 In the article she draws on discourse analysis to call attention to the complexities of the category of "female" as constructed and contested in social science writings. Haraway has also helped to clarify the epistemological dimensions, the ways of knowing, involved in the feminist standpoints discussed in the "standpoint theory" that we discussed earlier in the chapter.

Unquestionably, as we see it, one must go beyond the postmodern concern with individual subjects, dyadic relationships, and interpersonal discourse to the larger frameworks of oppression. Larger-scale emancipatory visions must be articulated and pursued, beyond the individual and local level, whatever the intellectual and practical difficulties of such action. Given the life-threatening problems created by a globalizing capitalist system on planet Earth—such as global warming and its threat to the atmosphere, biosphere, and sociosphere—the larger-scale emancipatory theory and research projects cannot be abandoned to a postmodern malaise.

Like some interpretive and ethnomethodological theory in social science, much postmodern analysis can be paralyzing, especially when it presses in the direction of making the world only into "texts" used for linguistic assessment and deconstruction. For some postmodernists, the basic reality of modernity is that there is no truth, and by extension, no society. Yet, there is a material world beyond the social, and we must thrive or starve, and love and die—describe with and without words. It is impossible to do so without enacting human pain and interhuman oppression; we seek both to understand and alleviate them.

We should add that contemporary theorists of symbolic interactionism in sociology, depending on which aspects are emphasized and how those aspects are used, often theorize in the more critical traditions of the social sciences. They recognize that people's activities in everyday life are not just the results of social structures. Rather, people's actions are shaped by both individual and collective choices and decisions. This recognition has important implications for understanding how social change occurs and how we can work to create a better world. The theories discussed throughout this book show how critical social theory can be useful for social activism. We want to emphasize that our sample here do not stand alone, for there are many others who have come before us.

The Humanist Sociology of Alfred McClung Lee

A central figure in the liberation struggles of the 1960s was the late Alfred McClung Lee. Chapter 3 that in 1951 the progressive Problems (SSPP) was set up with his associates, including his partner and teacher Beth Bryant Lee, were resisting the monopolistic structure of U.S. sociology and stressed the impo
postmodernists, the basic reality of human life is language and text. Yet, there is a material world beyond text, in which people hope and empathize with others, find themselves in pain, manage to thrive or starve, and love and die—which they experience and describe with and without words. It is this omnipresent world of human pain and interhuman oppression that liberation sociologists seek both to understand and alleviate or eradicate.

We should add that contemporary interpretive theories, such as theorists of symbolic interactionism, can also be critical of existing society, depending on which aspects of the societal context are emphasized and how those aspects are conceptualized. "Interpretive theorists in the more critical tradition believe that it is useful to link people's activities in everyday life to the large-scale social structures that their action creates (and that necessarily constrain action in capitalist, sexist, and racist societies)." When developed along this line, interpretive theory is a type of critical social theory.

Putting Liberation Theory into Action

We conclude this chapter with a brief survey of a few lives of liberation-oriented sociologists who have been active in U.S. sociology over the past half century. The purpose of this section is to show how critical theory becomes part of, and grows out of, the lives and careers of sociologists who commit themselves to making the world a better place. Like the lives and careers of other liberation sociologists discussed throughout this book, these lives and careers show how critical social theory can be webbed together with liberatory action. We also want to emphasize that the sociologists in our limited sample here do not stand alone, for there are many others like them.

The Humanist Sociology of Alfred McClung Lee

A central figure in the liberation sociology tradition over many decades was the late Alfred McClung Lee (1908-1992). Recall from Chapter 3 that in 1931 the progressive Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) was set up with his active assistance. Lee and his associates, including his partner and talented fellow sociologist Elizabeth Briant Lee, were resisting the move to instrumental positivism in U.S. sociology and stressed the importance of dealing with serious
problems facing the society, including the problems of McCarthyism and academic freedom. In 1974, the membership of the American Sociological Association elected Lee as its president in a write-in campaign promoted by sociologists involved in the 1960s and early 1970s Liberation Sociology Movement. The election of Lee was a watershed event signaling the resurgence of social-liberation ideas in U.S. sociology. These ideas were getting more recognition among some sociologists, bringing to the fore once again the activist and radical goals of those in the alternative sociological tradition going back to Harriet Martineau, Jane Addams, and W.E.B. Du Bois.

Lee was an early pioneer in critical social theory in the United States. Growing up in western Pennsylvania, he saw discriminatory distinctions being drawn between the Scotch Irish and Catholic Irish, which he found to be unfair and which led him to participate in the struggles of other oppressed groups. In his view, social theory should be tied to the morality of liberating those who are oppressed. Such a framework affects the problems that a social scientist chooses to study. Lee called himself an "existential humanist" and probed in his work the nature of freedom and enslavement. He also linked his humanist theory with action. Thus, he was also influential in the establishment of the Association for Humanist Sociology in 1976; he saw this organization as an important effort to keep the discipline of sociology "alive, relevant, and exciting for faculties and students and useful for socially constructive efforts in our communities."76

Writing along with Elizabeth Lee and other coauthors, Al Lee left behind an important body of conceptual and empirical work illustrative of a career that constantly sought the liberation and emancipation of humanity. He and his associates usually chose important political and economic topics, often those neglected by other social scientists. Recall that during the 1930s most U.S. social scientists did not research issues connected with the growing fascism in the United States and other countries. Indeed, some sociologists sympathized, openly or privately, with the increased authoritarianism.77 However, Alfred and Elizabeth Lee were very concerned with the global rise of these fascist movements and governments and helped to organize the Institute for Propaganda Analysis. "To understand propaganda, to know how it is used in the struggles for our mind, one must constantly study propaganda of all kinds," Lee wrote in his 1952 book, *How to Understand Propaganda.*78

The period from the 1930s to the interest in social engineering conduces to corporate authority. These authorities are changing people's minds, either through advertising or institutional change, creating a personal threat to building a democracy that those who are targets of social and central decision-making processes should be able to participate in.

Lee recognized that the knowledge developed in response to the demands of the military, could be useful beyond the goals of established institutions. The conceptualizing, and working for solutions proposed for a theoretical and research did not take social hierarchies at face value. Traditionally oppressive castes could be changed by social science work, for example, people could become better educated and gain the knowledge to understand that all people, regardless of race, are equally human. People unlike ourself have no accurate information on the...
The period from the 1930s to the 1950s was one of ever growing interest in social engineering conducted under government and corporate authority. These authorities were frequently interested in changing people's minds, either through government propaganda designed for political purposes (for example, anti-Communism) or advertising on behalf of increased consumerism. Lee and his associates viewed much of the new social engineering as an actual or potential threat to building a democratic society. Indeed, they argued that those who are targets of social oppression must be brought into central decisionmaking processes about their lives.

Lee recognized that the knowledge that the social sciences developed in response to the demands of government agencies, including the military, could be useful beyond the autocratic or imperialistic goals of established institutions. This knowledge could be used in conceptualizing, and working for, a more egalitarian society. Lee pressed for a theoretical and research perspective in sociology that did not take social hierarchies at face value. He was interested in how traditionally oppressive customs and mentalities could be changed by social science work. For example, as ordinary people become better educated and gain critical knowledge, they often come to understand that all people, whatever their backgrounds, are equally human. People unlike ourselves are easier to hate when we have no accurate information on their customs and societies.  

In his important book on customs and human mentality, Lee argued that there was a time when speaking of changing customs meant socializing "backward" peoples into "the proper ways of life... to make them over into reasonable subjects or less effective enemies. More ideally, our panacea took the form of transforming them through education into typical middle class Europeans." In the course of his work, Lee tackled these related questions: For what purposes are customs and mentality to be changed? Who is to define these purposes and implement programs for change? What about the unplanned or unintended consequences of social change? What methods are most effective and acceptable in changing customs or mentality? Lee rejected the growing propaganda machines of his day, whether governmental or corporate, for such machines often aimed at reducing humanity to some type of political or social enslavement, however subtle. In his view, there was a great need for a new research ethic in the social sciences, one attuned to improving the lives
of all human beings. As Lee put it in 1958, "the only tenable reasons for seeking changes in customs and mentality are to... cope with urgent and real social developments such as overpopulation, increasingly complex technologies, urbanization, disease, secularization, international tensions, social atomization, inadequate food supplies."\(^{61}\)

He held that sociologists should do empirical fieldwork, such as he did on racial riots and governmental propaganda, but they must move away from the common positivistic framework that pretends to exclude human values from scientific inquiry. A critical social theory is essential, if it is one whose ultimate aim is to empower people to act. Lee tried to systematize his way of looking at the world, but not in the manner of Talcott Parsons’s grand theory (see Chapter 3). In fact, he rejected the common discursive currency of sociology—the language of social roles, statuses, and functions—for one accenting hierarchy, conflict, manipulation, and exploitation. The eradication of oppression was central to his research, theory, and, indeed, life. In his many writings, Al Lee articulated the analytical and activist implications of critical theory. In one commentary just before his death in 1992, Lee wrote,

The wonder and mysteries of human creativity, love, and venturesomeness and the threatening problems of human oppression and of sheer persistence beckon and involve those with the curiosity and courage to be called sociologists. Only those who choose to serve humanity rather than to get caught up in the scramble for all the immediate rewards of finance and status can know the pleasures and lasting rewards of such a pursuit.\(^{62}\)

The Critical Sociology of Robert G. Newby

We now turn to another liberation sociologist, Robert G. Newby, who has integrated his progressive research and action with critical Marxist and black nationalist theories. Over the course of a long and productive career, Newby has been an activist sociologist and has contributed especially to our sociological understanding of the role of race and class in U.S. society.

Born in the Great Depression of the 1930s, Newby grew up in Wichita, Kansas. At home, his parents were critical of U.S. racism, and he grew up with an active political education in the meaning of being black in the United States. Newby learned from personal experience that the nation actually was.\(^{63}\) Wichita activities, constantly inflicting the residents. Newby attended segregated schools and began head percussionist in the music participation in some of the first sit-ins. He graduated from high school n the United States, which he has noted that this had a “profound influence on me.” After graduation from the University of Kansas, in March 1964, he joined with others in a march on school district protesting school segregation. Gbi speaks was a revelation for him: “If he exposed so many truths about racism kept blacks in their subordinate role in society, its strength, and its total domination by the Democratic party, and its position in the American society. When Newby and other young, militant NAACP were defeated in elections for local teachers union, in regard to the 1966 he was offered the position at Battle Creek office of the Michigan he worked on issues of discrimination. July 1967, he attended the Black New Jersey, at which leading black

Soon, Newby decided to go back to work at Wayne State University, which in 1970, where he took his
being black in the United States. Traveling a lot during his youth, Newby learned from personal experience how racially segregated the nation actually was. Wichita was segregated in many social activities, constantly inflicting the indignities of racism on its black residents. Newby attended segregated elementary schools. Since there were not enough African Americans for a separate black high school, he attended an integrated high school, where he became the head percussionist in the music program. As a young man, he participated in some of the first sit-in protests against restaurant segregation in the United States, which took place in Wichita in 1958. He has noted that this had a “profound impact on me personally. It was in these demonstrations that I was first told by a white woman that I should return to Africa.”

After graduation from the University of Wichita in 1953, he took a position as teacher in the Pontiac, Michigan, public schools. In March 1964, he joined with other NAACP members and other citizens in a march on school district offices and in a rally at city hall, protesting school segregation. Going to Detroit to hear Malcolm X speak was a revelation for him: “His message was revolutionary—he exposed so many truths about how and why a system of white racism kept blacks in their subordinated position... The major theme of the speech was its revelations of how blacks were being deceived by white organizations of political power—the Republicans, the Democratic party, and its southern wing, the Dixiecrats.”

When Newby and other young, more radical, members of the Pontiac NAACP were defeated in elections and replaced by more conservative members, they formed another group called the Progressive Action Committee for Equality. Newby became active in the local teachers union, in regard to the cause of local civil rights. In 1966 he was offered the position as the first regional director of the Battle Creek office of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, where he worked on issues of discrimination in housing and education. In July 1967, he attended the Black Power Conference in Newark, New Jersey, at which leading black activists were present.

Soon, Newby decided to go back to school, did some graduate work at Wayne State University, and then moved to Stanford University in 1970, where he took his Ph.D. There he became active in campus protests and got interested in the debates between Marxist and black nationalist theories used to analyze the situation of
African Americans. Returning to Wayne State as a professor in 1974, Newby joined a faculty Marxist study group. He faced a protracted battle for tenure there, during which one key member of the promotion and tenure committee said that Marxists should not get tenure. He also got involved in Michigan politics, and in 1984 worked for Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. Drawing on experiences in various political movements, Newby wrote a number of penetrating sociological analyses in journals and books dealing with African American issues.

In his evolving understanding of U.S. society, Newby was increasingly using and blending both racial concepts and class ideas in his theoretical perspective. He was coming to see that there are "no 'race-only' solutions to the situation of black people." He came to see that the economic, health, and other troubling conditions of African Americans, especially those in the working class, could only be improved if the capitalistic domination of U.S. society was directly confronted and the conditions for all Americans were improved. In his sociological work, Newby increasingly emphasized race and class issues. He criticized orthodox Marxist analysts for failing to understand the role of racism in breaking down solidarity between white and black workers, and he criticized some black sociologists for failing to recognize the role of class oppression in the conditions faced by African Americans. As he sees it, most Marxist sociologists have shown little serious interest in racial issues, except as derivative of class. Yet, he also argues that so long as we have a capitalist system, we are likely to have a racist system as well: "That is the 'class' side of my commitment as an activist scholar. But I am also a 'race man,' struggling to change concretely the condition in which black people find themselves."

In recent years, Newby has continued to work inside and outside the university. He has been active professionally in national associations. Thus, he has been president of the Association of Black Sociologists and the North Central Sociological Association. In both organizations, he has told us, he was "able to set forth progressive themes for the meetings." He has also been active on key committees of the American Sociological Association. In his many years on the faculty of Central Michigan University, he has worked to improve the climate for students and faculty of color and has stressed the importance of racial and ethnic diversity for higher education. Thus, when

a college athletic coach told his team

Newby became one of those who also one of the founders of the university's Faculty and Staff of Color. Active on the board of directors of the faculty senate. Thoroughly professional work has been asked by other liberation for whom?" and "Sociology for

The Critical Sociology of T.R. Young

Another contemporary sociologist, his research as a sociologist with a sociologist, the story of how social experiences. Over a long career as an activist who contributed to changing the way social sciences are taught. In discussion with the author, his personal biography relate to several issues. He long had national norms of educational institutions that affirmative and effective in such a way that effectively depoliticize society.

Young's life story is not that of the age of scholars-activists often propagated. The life story is the story of a social life according to principles of social science. He dismissed from his first five academic years as a teacher at a high school in Michigan. In a meeting he proposed the graduation of male and female teachers' salaried declared that the committee had extended the end of the academic year. Young's next position was at another university. Again his contract was not renewed. Nevertheless, the Michigan Educational Association members should have the right to strike and a rival union.
a college athletic coach told his team they “should play like niggers,” Newby became one of those working for his dismissal. Newby was also one of the founders of the university’s important Association of Faculty and Staff of Color. Active as a faculty member, Newby has also chaired the university’s Affirmative Action Action, served on the board of directors of the faculty union, and served as chair of the university’s academic senate. Throughout his career, Newby’s academic and professional work has been shaped by the questions that have been asked by other liberation sociologists before him: “Sociology for whom?” and “Sociology for what?”

The Critical Sociology of T. R. Young

Another contemporary sociologist, T. R. Young, has also integrated his research as a sociologist with some sophisticated critical theories. Over a long career as an activist sociologist, Young has contributed to changing the way sociology is done and the way it is taught. In discussion with the authors, Young noted how events in his personal biography relate to several decades of development of liberation sociology. He long had difficulties fitting into conventional norms of educational institutions, norms that are “fashioned such that affirmative and effective social action is very difficult, in such a way that effectively depoliticizes and dismisses even small attempts at ‘liberating’ sociology.”

Young’s life story is not that of the titanic troublemaker—the image of scholar-activists often propagated in the media. Instead, as in the case of Lee, it is the story of a sociologist who has tried to live a life according to principles of social justice. Significantly, Young was dismissed from his first five academic jobs. In the 1950s, his first job as a teacher at a high school in Michigan ended when at a committee meeting he proposed the gradual reduction in differences between male and female teachers’ salaries. The school superintendent declared that the committee had exceeded its mandate, and at the end of the academic year, Young’s contract was not renewed. Young’s next position was at another high school in Michigan. Again his contract there was not renewed when he refused to join the Michigan Educational Association on the grounds that faculty members should have the right to choose between that association and a rival union.
Then, after serving time as an army draftee, Young was admitted to the master’s program at the University of Michigan. After getting the degree, he secured a teaching position at a college in Iowa. He writes,

Again, my wife and my family fit into the social life of the academic community excellently. Again, our home became a center of social life. Unfortunately, I fit in a bit too well with students—with Black students in particular. One day in April, a trio of Black students came to my office, told me that they were on their way to see the Dean about racism on campus and wanted me to go along for moral support. I did. The meeting went well. The students were respectful and persuasive, the Dean attentive and sympathetic.

But a few days later, he adds, “I was surprised to hear that the Dean was furious that I had led students to the office to make trouble.” Again his contract was terminated. This time his impulse was to bridge the color line, but even this moderate action got him into trouble. His next job was at Rocky Mountain College in Montana. During the first year, he met with the college president to protest the no-raise policy for faculty. After this meeting, a raise was given to the faculty. However, after Young refused to attend required morning chapel, his contract was not renewed.

Young’s next teaching position was at Southwest Missouri State College, where his views on the burdensome character of the nuclear family for women got him into some difficulties with his chair. So, in 1960 he and his family moved to the University of Colorado, where Young got his Ph.D. He next took a job at Colorado State University, just as the radical politics of the 1960s was heating up across the nation. Soon, he became involved in the civil rights movement, women’s liberation movement, and antiwar movement. Young reflects that these were “heady times and I found both intellectual and academic support for the liberation sociology that emerged by the late 60’s.” By 1968 students of color were organizing their own support and protest groups, and some black, Latino, and Anglo students occupied the president’s office. Young acted as liaison between the students and the administration. Working with the vice president, Young developed a plan by which the student demands might be heard. The university’s governing board and the protesting students accepted a plan under which new racial-ethnic courses would be added, more aggressive recruiting of students of color would be funded, and more black and Latino students recruited—a plan that persisted for the next decade.

On the day after the assassination of Martin Luther King, 1968, Young organized a King Faculty to contribute. Today, this fund was color. However, two months later, Young was not be rehired for the next year. He had been fired.

But this time, Young had not been fired only by the college president, but by all the full professors in his department. The professors had challenged the best teachers, and had done independent research. Rather than accept this decision, Young had thirty days in which to reverse the decision. The vice president was dealing with protests from the students. Some years later, the vice president realized somewhat. He wrote to us, “I considered this to be a turning point. We changed the rules for recruiting and financial aid. We also changed the rules for tenure and promotion. We had to do this in order to attract and retain the best students and faculty.”

As the 1960s passed, Young became involved in critical theories to accelerate his activism. He had no difficulty fitting into the world of conventional liberal activism. “Attracted to Marxist and Critical Theory, I set out to understand how critical theories were applied in the world.” Movement and similar groups “put an end to the old codes and practices that had kept us apart.”
funded, and more black and Latino faculty and staff would be recruited—a plan that persisted for the next two decades.

On the day after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, Young organized a King Fellowship fund and got many faculty to contribute. Today, this fund continues to support students of color. However, two months later, Young was notified that he would not be rehired for the next year. He writes: “There were several reasons; first, I had set up an underground college to give minority students academic credit for their work in confronting the University; second, I had lectured on the Student-as-Nigger in the faculty lounge. Third, I had told members of the Governing Board that I intended to monitor progress on the implementation of their agreement with the Black Student Association and MECHA.”

It soon became clear, however, that he would be difficult to fire this time. At the time, Young had more referenced scholarly articles than all the full professors in his department combined, was among the best teachers, and had done important service to the local community. Rather than accept this decision, Young told his chair that he had thirty days in which to reverse the decision or “all hell would break loose.” The vice president with whom Young had worked in dealing with protesting students helped to reverse the decision. Some years later, the vice president told Young that that was the last time political criteria for firing faculty were used by the governing board. Over the next two decades, Young’s life in academia stabilized somewhat. He wrote to us, “I did not fit in so much as the university changed to tolerate sociologists who added emancipatory knowledge and ‘praxical’ dimensions to their work.”

As the 1960s passed, Young became more involved in developing critical theories to accelerate his and others’ activities for social justice. He had no difficulty fitting into professional sociology as long as he held conventional liberal views. However, he soon became “attracted to Marxist and Critical Marxist scholarship. Conventional sociology simply did not explain either racism, sexism or class struggle in terms sensible to me.” The Sociology Liberation Movement and similar groups “put together at the edges of Sociology Conferences provided an elegant theoretical perspective with which to understand racist violence in the deep South; nationalist violence in Vietnam as well as exclusionary politics in both academic and scholarly realms.”
During the 1960s, many social scientists were joining critical social theory to action in progressive social movements and were learning new theory from such action in communities. Until the 1960s, Karl Marx's name was rarely heard in theory classes in sociology graduate or undergraduate departments across the United States. This was true for the graduate work done by Young at Michigan and Colorado. However, by the late 1960s, the names of Karl Marx, Herbert Marcuse, T. W. Adorno, Antonio Gramsci, and Rosa Luxemburg were becoming part of the theoretical vocabularies of graduate students and some faculty members.

By the early 1970s, Young was a tenured faculty member at Colorado State University. As his work became more radical, it was rejected more by mainstream journals. The American Sociological Review and American Journal of Sociology rejected everything he sent. Instead, his work found a better reception in journals such as Sociological Inquiry, Qualitative Sociology, and The American Sociologist. Young decided to make an end run around the established journals and founded the Red Feather Institute. Seeking to reach a broad range of sociologists, especially those just coming out of graduate school, Young began the Transforming Sociology Series of the Red Feather Institute. He went to sociology meetings to persuade authors to publish in his series and set up tables at conferences to provide copies of the published articles. Young writes that "by 1980, there were over 100 papers in the Series. Those ten years were filled with hard work and great satisfaction. My wife and I built the Red Feather Lodge and, in the mid-70's held conferences three or four times a year bringing Marxists, feminists, and activists together—all patterned after the West Coast Conference." He now was facilitating conferences on critical social theories.

After his wife died in 1981, Young was devastated, and the activities of the institute were reduced. In 1986, he resigned from Colorado State University. In the following years, Young began a series of visiting professorships, which, he notes, "brought me to new faculties with new ideas and new challenges. Gradually, my work picked up. By 1990, I was writing almost full time and teaching every other year around the country." Young was becoming a "Johnny Appleseed," sowing liberation sociology ideas to sociologists across the country.

The spreading influence of the Internet attracted Young's attention, and he began publishing articles, journals, and books there. He has developed an innovative web-based on-line lecture series for graduate students in sociology and for the Red Feather Institute. Young has been an important collection of original material on the social world. Young has been a key figure in spreading new sociological ideas significantly to the development of critical theory, one of the first U.S. sociologists to explicitly postmodern thought in regard to sociology. Among his Internet projects is an attempt to sort out the incompatible Marxist and postmodern theorists.

Pushing from the Margin: The Career of Maxine Baca Zinn

A leading analyst of Latino and Latina issues, Maxine Baca Zinn has contributed significantly to the development of U.S. sociology in the last few decades. In the late 1960s, Zinn attended the University of New Mexico, where she secured her Ph.D. in sociology, and then proceeded to the University of Michigan—Flint in 1974 as a visiting scholar and professor at a time when the department was including the innovative Center for Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Memphis in Tennessee.

In her college courses, Baca Zinn has tried to maintain a balance between her academic work and her feminist activism. She has written extensively on family and gender issues in U.S. society, and has shown that stereotypes of Latino women are not entirely accurate. She has criticized the victimization of victims and pressed for an understanding of the benefits to whites from...
has developed an innovative web site for postmodern criminology, an on-line lecture series for graduate students, web sites for progressive women in sociology and for Cuban sociology, and a web site for the Red Feather Institute. Today, the institute's site has an important collection of original materials with creative approaches to the social world. Young has been a pioneer in the use of the Internet in spreading new sociological ideas, and he has contributed significantly to the development of critical social theories. He was one of the first U.S. sociologists to explore the missions and methods of postmodern thought in regard to their implications for reinventing sociology. Among his Internet publications, for example, are attempts to sort out the incompatibilities and similarities between Marxist and postmodern theorists.

Pushing from the Margin: The Career of Maxine Baca Zinn

A leading analyst of Latino and Latina issues in U.S. society, sociologist Maxine Baca Zinn has contributed significantly to the recent development of U.S. sociology in regard to issues concerning women of color. In the late 1960s, Baca Zinn began graduate work at the University of New Mexico, where she received a master's degree in sociology, and then proceeded to the University of Oregon, where she secured her Ph.D. She began her teaching career at the University of Michigan–Flint in 1975 and later held posts as a visiting scholar and professor at a number of other major universities, including the innovative Center for Research on Women at the University of Memphis in Tennessee.

In her college courses, Baca Zinn notes, "they didn't describe social life as I experienced it." So she decided to do her own work on Mexican American women and families to show just how their lives were lived. Inspired by her life experiences, Baca Zinn has published extensively on family and gender issues, especially in regard to Mexican Americans and other Latino/a groups. For example, Baca Zinn has shown that stereotypes of Latinas as passive and dependent are wrong; for these women are usually at the center of decision-making in their families. She has also criticized the commonplace blaming-the-victim perspective and pressed for a new model that is structural and takes in "the whole global picture," a model that includes explanations of the benefits to whites from subordinating people of color.
In her recent work, Baca Zinn has been developing, with some colleagues, a challenge to traditional feminist thought, which has too often accepted the interests of white women. In her book, *Women of Color in U.S. Society*, edited with African American sociologist Bonnie Thornton Dill, Baca Zinn has contributed to building a new tradition of Latina feminism, a perspective that begins from the life situations of Latinas and builds on their interests. She has also contributed to the development of a broader perspective on women of color. One conceptual problem of much research, including feminist research, is the positioning of white women as the standard for other groups of women, especially women of color. In Baca Zinn's view, a liberatory sociology must also assess, criticize, and resist the role of conventional academic analysis, including much social science, in social domination. Thus, by pressing for a full consideration in sociology and the other social sciences of the interests and concerns of people of color, and for a full analysis of racial and gender systems of oppression, the social scientist is in fact engaged in acts of resistance. As Baca Zinn has noted to us, “integrating women of color into the mainstream of sociological work in a way that includes power relations between dominant and subordinate racial and class groups, as well as power relations between women and men, requires many forms of political and intellectual work.”

Like the other liberation sociologists we have considered throughout this book, Baca Zinn combines her intellectual work with her activism and service to society. She prefers the term “activist scholarship” for the “transformational efforts in social analysis as well as in the institutional structures where academics carry out their work.” In her view, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions are important arenas in which to struggle for social justice. It is in these arenas that liberation social scientists can often challenge the restrictive perspectives of older racialized and gendered scholarship, add much new knowledge from their own research, and engage in political activity to make educational institutions more representative of the great diversity of U.S. society.

Baca Zinn has been active in integrating the interests, knowledge, and perspectives of Latina/o Americans into higher education in the United States. She has played an important part in building the field of Chicano Studies and was the first Latina/o president of a regional social science association, the West.

As president, she worked to increase organization and in its journal. She new knowledge and perspective into family diversity, social problems, and she and her coauthor D. Stanley Eit how need not be limited to the synthesis, texts have possibilities for coa manary knowledge.”

Moving to Michigan State University continued her activist scholarship. In the of a Michigan State University sociological Association's MOST (Multicultural School Transformation), a project of students of color the recruitment of students of color active scholar in the Julian Samo study Latinos/as in the Midwest, she college structures of exclusion by racial-ethnic and working-class con her to us, “mentoring gifted, skilled, and progressive wh student where non-dominant students have part of the networks that produce a

**Recovering the Feminist Past of U.S. Society**

*Mary Jo Deegan*

The careers of liberation sociologists have paths. Mary Jo Deegan, a pione worked for decades to challenge dig in U.S. society and in sociology. ideas and research work of numerous mainstream discussions and research In the late 1960s, Deegan began University with a focus on disat to the University of Chicago. At the Administration, she worked with
social science association, the Western Social Science Association. As president, she worked to increase the Latino/a presence in that organization and in its journal. She has also worked to integrate this new knowledge and perspective into several sociology textbooks on family diversity, social problems, and introductory sociology. Thus, she and her coauthor D. Stanley Eitzen have argued that “textbooks need not be limited to the synthesis of dominant perspectives. Instead, texts have possibilities for constructing and transmitting liberatory knowledge.”

Moving to Michigan State University in 1990, Baca Zinn has continued her activist scholarship. In the mid-1990s, she was codirector of a Michigan State University summer institute of the American Sociological Association's MOST (Minority Opportunity through School Transformation), a project designed to recruit promising students of color at the undergraduate level in sociology and to improve the recruitment of students of color in Ph.D.-granting programs. An active scholar in the Julian Samora Research Institute, created to study Latinos/as in the Midwest, she has also worked to break down college structures of exclusion by recruiting graduate students from racial-ethnic and working-class communities and by including these students, as well as progressive white students, in her research projects. As she told us, “mentoring graduate students, making them skilled, independent, and networked is activist work in settings where non-dominant students have had few opportunities to become part of the networks that produce and monitor knowledge.”

Recovering the Feminist Past of U.S. Sociology: The Career of Mary Jo Deegan

The careers of liberation sociologists have taken many different paths. Mary Jo Deegan, a pioneering feminist sociologist, has worked for decades to challenge discrimination against women both in U.S. society and in sociology. She has done much to bring the ideas and research work of numerous women sociologists back into mainstream discussions and research in sociology.

In the late 1960s, Deegan began graduate work at Western Michigan University with a focus on disability issues, but soon transferred to the University of Chicago. At the university’s Center for Hospital Administration, she worked with Odin Anderson and Ronald M.
Anderson. The only graduate student interested in qualitative research at a center doing mostly quantitative research, Deegan became interested in theory and studied with sociological theorist Talcott Parsons, cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, and religious theorist Mircea Eliade. Early on, she decided that she “wanted to be a feminist, activist, and change agent... while the men [she studied with] wanted to be great thinkers and power brokers in academia and some of them have done so.” In her career, Deegan has devoted herself to the areas of disability studies, popular culture, feminist theory, and the history of sociology.

In the late 1960s, Deegan started searching for materials on the forgotten women sociologists whom she was convinced had been very important in the early development of the field. Finding very little published material, she undertook what became a long-term research project, which included searching many libraries and archives, compiling lists of women’s names and bibliographies, and writing about these women sociologists and their research. As she told us, “I discovered to my amazement the enormous early sociological literature by women scholars on women and labor markets, women and unions, women and wages, and so on. I immediately asked myself two questions: (1) who were these early female sociologists, and (2) why didn’t anyone ever mention them or their writings in my so-called ‘best and advanced training?’”

Clearly, one of the key tasks undertaken by some liberation sociologists has been to recover the history of the discipline, for that history has been forgotten when it has been in the interests of those dominating the discipline. Deegan not only uncovered and described the history of women sociologists but also tracked and resurrected some of their important theoretical ideas.

For a quarter century, Deegan has answered these questions in more than three dozen important articles and six books. Much of her work has not yet been widely recognized in U.S. sociology, although some has been recognized and used in fields outside sociology. Perhaps most influential is Deegan’s major book, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892–1918* (1988). This book reveals that the pen is a powerful tool for liberation sociologists, for it is pathbreaking and is beginning to have an major impact on U.S. sociologists in making them aware of early women sociologists. Deegan shows that central among these early sociologists was Jane Addams, a founder of U.S. sociology who was not only head resident of the Hull House settlement complex but charter member of the American Sociological Association. In the process of researching this egalitarianism, Deegan developed a personal approach to this history: “Sociologist Addams, a woman who, as the economic structure of society and the lives of women were particularly subject to neglect, saw the early passion, political forays, and decades of ‘scientific’ sociology. The early male sociologists, however, were the exception to the rule. As we have noted in earlier chapters, the sociology of society, increasingly centered in the middle class, was moving rapidly away from the history of the discipline. As Deegan has shown, Deegan has condemned political action for sociologists, in fact, permeated their work. She reminds us of the importance of the work of many women sociologists in the turn of the twentieth century.”

In addition, Deegan has done important work on the framework sometimes called “feminist pragmatism.” Chapter 3 our discussion of the work of Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School. The feminist pragmatism of Addams, a cooperative ethic, coupled with the democratic spirit of the works of the many women sociologists at the turn of the twentieth century.

Deegan has also shown the importance of the thought of these early sociologists in the development of symbolically American perspective that has viewed human beings as shaping and actively by means of social construct can be rejected or reconstructed by and with an eye to building better soc.
Addams, a founder of U.S. sociology. Recall from earlier chapters that Addams was not only head resident at Chicago's influential Hull House settlement complex but also an active sociologist and charter member of the American Sociological Society.\textsuperscript{107}

In the process of researching this early history of sociological radicalism, Deegan developed a penetrating sociology-of-knowledge approach to this history: "Sociologists who specialized in criticizing the economic structure of society and women's limitations within it were particularly subject to neglect or damning interpretations... The early passion, political forays, and verve were abstracted from accounts of 'scientific' sociology."\textsuperscript{108} This was also true for some of the early male sociologists, but especially true for the early women. As we have noted in earlier chapters, by the 1930s the male leadership of sociology, increasingly centered in academic departments, was moving rapidly away from the more radical and activist roots of the discipline. As Deegan has shown, "these later men therefore condemned political action for sociologists, while the ideas of the elite, in fact, permeated their work. Society as based on competition and conflict over scarce goods was a patriarchal and capitalist model of social action."\textsuperscript{109}

In addition, Deegan has done important work on the conceptual framework sometimes called "feminist pragmatism." Recall from Chapter 3 our discussion of the women sociologists, and a few associated male sociologists, in Chicago who developed feminist pragmatism. Pragmatism was an intellectual movement whose central idea was that the test of a concept lay in its practical significance. The feminist pragmatism of Addams and her associates emphasized a cooperative ethic, coupled with the values of liberal education and democracy. The feminist pragmatist ideas grew out of the social networks of the many women sociologists and activists in Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{110}

Deegan has also shown the importance of symbolic interactionism in the thought of these early sociologists. Some, like Addams, contributed to the development of symbolic interactionism, the distinctively American perspective that has rejected social determinism and viewed human beings as shaping and controlling their behavior interactively by means of socially constructed meanings.\textsuperscript{111} Older meanings can be rejected or reconstructed by humans as social producers, and with an eye to building better societies. Addams was an early
symbolic interactionist who understood that “female” and “woman” were social constructions. She researched and analyzed the division of public and private places for women, their struggles between family claims and public-sphere claims. Building on the work of these early women sociologists, Deegan has shown that symbolic interactionism is one of the few social theories that asserts that people can create and recreate their own lives. Thus, in its more radical form, it offers a liberatory framework for considering the present and future of women in society. Efforts at liberating women will meet resistance, but “it is people who create human behavior, and it is people who can change it. . . . Women can do this, but only if a large enough number want to do it, agree on definitions of what is desirable, and have access to the means to obtain these goals.”

Deegan thus suggests how a liberatory theoretical framework drawing on symbolic interactionism can be incorporated into social activism on behalf of improving the lives of people in contemporary societies.

Given the pathbreaking character of Deegan’s work, it is perhaps not surprising that there have been negative reactions to some of her research. For example, she tells of going to an American Sociological Association meeting in 1987 and hearing several groups of sociologists comment negatively on her book on Jane Addams, even though it had not yet been published. She is not alone in this experience. Other liberation sociology books and research efforts have suffered similar gossipy and pre-emptive negative attacks, which, as Deegan notes, reduce the likelihood that such scholarship will “cross the barriers protecting mainstream ideology, gatekeeping, and practices.”

Deegan has noted that liberation sociologists sometimes suffer greatly but that they also have interesting lives “defined and expressed very differently than those bounded by traditional and narrowly defined careers in the discipline.” One of the great satisfactions of doing liberation sociology is getting other people to see ideas and histories that they have never seen before and to read books and materials they have not read before.

Conclusion

In presenting the lives and work of a few critical sociologists like Alfred McClung Lee, Robert G. Newby, T. R. Young, Maxine Baca Zinn, and Mary Jo Deegan, we do not intend to suggest that these are the only sociologists who have activist sociology over the past few decades. Sociologists we have mentioned are part of that important list, as is the space to discuss. However, the decades since instrumental postmodernism have seen the development of liberation sociology and other important social science careers, these sociologists illustrate that these—lives, research projects, and co-reproduce each other.

However presented, critical sociologists with ideas that are indispensable to contemporary human problems and possibilities show, the mainstream of sociology is drenched with unexamined assumptions of self-aggrandizing claims designed to allow sociologists to generally focus on the idea of determining, permeating the laws of society, which societis are hindered in the process of change. Critical sociologists object to the idea of science as a “thoroughly historical activity.” Thus, critical social theory is different in key domain as the discipline of sociology.

The ideas of the critical theorists presented in these chapters may sometimes appear abstract, but they are a task of transforming the world into the presumption of the irrelevance of misguided. We must not conceive of action in a simplistic or mechanical correspondence between theory and practice in which the sociologist presents this book, this has turned out to have been confronted by abstract ideas, forced to rethink and modify our corresponding social theories, reservoirs of knowledge that accounts for their attempts to specific empirical phenomena or to c
are the only sociologists who have worked on liberation theory and activist sociology over the past few decades. The other counterculture sociologists we have mentioned in this and previous chapters are part of that important list, as are many sociologists we have not had the space to discuss. However, these cases do suggest how, over the decades since instrumental positivism became established in U.S. sociology, the lives of particular sociologists interact not only with the development of liberation sociology but also with the academic and other important social settings surrounding them. In their careers, these sociologists illustrate a central point of liberation sociology—that lives, research projects, and theories unavoidably intersect and co-reproduce each other.

However presented, critical social theories supply liberation sociologists with ideas that are indispensable for thinking through contemporary human problems and possibilities. As all the critical theorists show, the mainstream of sociology and the other social sciences is drenched with unexamined assumptions, distorting beliefs, and even self-aggrandizing claims designed to reproduce the status quo. Critical social theorists generally focus on histories and contexts. They reject the idea of determining permanent, cross-cultural, and natural laws of society—for societies are historically determined and ever in the process of change. Critical social theories are grounded in the idea of science as a “thoroughly historical, philosophical, and political activity.” Thus, critical social theory and traditional positivistic theory are different in key domain assumptions and general outlooks.

The ideas of the critical theorists reviewed in this and previous chapters may sometimes appear abstract and thus irrelevant for the task of transforming the world into a more just and free place. Yet the presumption of the irrelevance of anything theoretical is usually misguided. We must not conceive of the relation between theory and action in a simplistic or mechanical way, as if there were a one-to-one correspondence between theory and practical activity—a correspondence in which the sociologist plays no part. For the authors of this book, this has not turned out to be the case. Often when we have been confronted by abstract critical theory, we have been forced to rethink and modify our concrete and practical ideas. Critical social theories are reservoirs of ideas, and the creativity of the actor is what accounts for their application to interpretations of specific empirical phenomena or to collective action.
We have noted in this chapter the importance of interdisciplinary research and perspectives in critical social theories. This interdisciplinary work, together with the growing diversity of research perspectives in sociology, bodes well for the future of the field. Patricia Hill Collins has optimistically noted that “sociology’s unique social location as a contested space of knowledge construction allows us to think through new ways of doing science.” This is a good position to be in, as a science. Clearly, the increasing intellectual diversity in sociology and the diversity of its practitioners are virtues to be embraced. Such diversity puts sociology in a good position to deal effectively with the present and future complexities of both U.S. society and global society.

As we move into the twenty-first century, the imagination of countless people continues to be drawn to sociology and its focused study of human behavior and social worlds because of their help in making sense of and responding to the complexities of our times. Sociologists have always been interested in the social worlds within which they live. In this book we aim to show the relevance of sociological study for people in all walks of life, the critical sociological questions that we explore are for what? and Sociology for whom?

In this book we emphasize, and attempt to articulate, the critical sociological tradition of sociology. We highlight two questions, Sociology to make sense of, and Sociology to make sense. As we move forward we believe it is time for mainstream sociology to take a more critical sociological perspective on social science, placing its knowledge and theories at the service of those who struggle for their emancipation, not just for their emancipation.