# Boudon Reexamined

## Nuts and Bolts for Contemporary Sociological Science

Gianluca Manzo (Ed.)

SORBONNE UNIVERSITÉ PRESSES

L'intelligence du social

*Boudon Reexamined* presents a selection of short essays by leading scholars from several generations who critically engage and enter into dialogue with the work of Raymond Boudon. Each chapter focuses on a specific topic from his extensive writings. Readers will follow this intellectual trajectory through analyses of early correspondence with Lazarsfeld and Merton, his typology of sociological styles, and his contributions to contemporary analytical sociology, including the notion of middle-range theory. In addition to already well-discussed aspects of Boudon's work, namely his understanding of methodological individualism and the theory of ordinary rationality, the book also explores less frequently discussed topics, including his early interest in formal modeling in sociology and his understanding of the link between interdependence structures and social change. Included in the following pages are new assessments of Boudon's well-known analyses of the inequality of educational opportunity and intergenerational social mobility, as well as his lesser-known substantive contributions to the study of relative deprivation and his early dialogue with game theory. The book also outlines Boudon's study of classical authors, especially Tocqueville, before two final chapters conclude by examining how Boudon's works can be used to teach sociology at the undergraduate and master's levels. Our hope is that *Boudon Reexamined* provides readers with a fresh assessment of his legacy – how his work can be applied to conduct theoretical and empirical research in contemporary sociology, as well as to promote high-quality scientific standards for new generations.

**Gianluca Manzo** is Professor of Sociology at Sorbonne University and a Fellow of the European Academy of Sociology. His research applies computational models and social network analysis to the study of social stratification and diffusion dynamics. He is the author of *La Spirale des inégalités* (PUPS, 2009) and of *Agent-based Models and Causal Inference* (Wiley, 2022). He also edited *Analytical Sociology: Actions and Networks* (Wiley, 2014) and the *Research Handbook on Analytical Sociology* (Edward Elgar, 2021). More information is available on his webpage: www.gemass.fr/member/manzo-gianluca/.

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# Chapter 16

## Complexity from Chaos:

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## Theorizing Social Change

Emily Erikson

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L'intelligence du social

**Book series directed by Pierre Demeulenaere**

The great books of the sociological tradition are either works of theory and epistemology or empirical studies structured by a profound theoretical or epistemological reflection. Émile Durkheim's first three books, *The Division of Labour in Society*, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, and *Suicide*, each fall into one of these three categories. This heritage represents an impressive growing legacy of authors and works that foster an understanding of social life through the formation of new concepts, models, and interpretations, thereby providing a pathway to deciphering the thickness and chaotic nature of human societies.

Gianluca Manzo (Ed.)

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# COMPLEXITY FROM CHAOS: THEORIZING SOCIAL CHANGE

*Emily Erikson*
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In addition to and in part because of his work on education and social mobility, Raymond Boudon was an important theorist of social dynamics. He made his contributions and approach to the important subject explicit in his work *La Place du désordre* (1984), translated into English as *Theories of Social Change: A Critical Appraisal* (1986). Boudon asks a question fundamental to the philosophy of social science in this work. Is a theory of social change possible? As I will argue, he ultimately concludes – somewhat surprisingly – that theories of social change are not possible, thus casting into doubt the entire project of comparative historical sociology. However, his pessimism is eased slightly by a sentiment that, despite the impossibility of theories of social change, a scientific study of social change is possible.

This precarious and perhaps slightly contradictory stance begs the question of what a scientific study of social change would look like. Boudon gives us a sense that it would have something to do with the study of unintended consequences, but does not delve into the details of the best methods to anticipate those consequences. And this is unfortunate because if he were more willing to commit to a style of analysis for analyzing unintended consequences, he might also have been more optimistic about the potential for theories of social change.

Boudon presented unintended consequences as a vast and eternally unmanageable sea of contingency and chaos, responsible for social outcomes: the place of disorder he refers to in the title of the original volume. Individuals are like sailors setting out for a specific port but cast on unknown shores by unpredictable tides and currents. He assumes that the sea of social contingency is so chaotic that no theory can reliably predict which port will be reached, for instance, which social outcome will be achieved. This perception drives his sense that systematic theories of social change are impossible.

However, he was writing before many tools and approaches we now rely on had reached full maturity. Today, several methods have been developed to systematically analyze complex situations – which can resemble chaos if the underlying patterns are not detected, including computational modeling, network analysis, complexity sciences, and natural language processing (for examples, see Manzo 2014; Hedström and Bearman 2009).

These methods – and the theories upon which they are built – allow us to reconceptualize a sea of chaos as an area of vast complexity that nevertheless can be explored and even analyzed, although perhaps with great difficulty. If it is possible to detect complex patterns within the chaos, then there is also a potential for theorization. And despite Boudon's deep skepticism about a full accounting of social complexity and unintended consequences, I argue that his work suggests a specific and promising path forward.



## REASONS FOR PESSIMISM

Boudon presents a clear argument in *La Place du désordre* (1984) by laying out in detail the reasons that he has such significant doubts about the possibility of theories of history. He begins his critique in chapter 1 by arguing that many, if not in fact all, existing theories of social change are wrong. They are, however, wrong for different reasons – and he proceeded to give each of these reasons its own chapter.

In my opinion, chapter 2 begins to set out a positive agenda and therefore should have gone at the end of the critique. I, therefore, delay my summary of that chapter.

Chapter 3 takes as its topic nomological theories of social change, which is to say laws of social change that we could expect to hold constant across circumstances in much the same way that we expect the law of gravity to govern the movements of celestial bodies as well as any object with mass. Boudon argues that the social laws, such as the law of supply and demand, depend on an understanding of why individuals act a certain way, and that circumstances throughout history vary so greatly that one cannot reliably understand or predict why someone would act a particular way in a particular point in time. Thus, any law-like theory of social change that has an *if A, then B* logic will only ever be right in a particular context – and therefore will be wrong the majority of the time. To make matters worse, it is difficult to know in advance whether any given context is one in which the law will be right or wrong. Casualties of this criticism include Parsons, Rostow, and Popper (which is remarkable given Popper's similarly deep suspicion of the possibility for historical explanation), as well as theories of collective action, development, and modernization.

In chapter 4, Boudon takes on structural theories of social change. One of his central examples is Margaret Mead's *Cultural Patterns and Technological Change* (1953), which posits that traditional communities will be resistant to change because of the complex interdependencies that link various cultural practices into a resilient web of interlocking systems. Boudon argues that this structural theory has been proven insufficient by Trude Epstein. Epstein's work shows that technological change, in the form of modern irrigation, is able to transform traditional villages in India. Further, the change is incomplete and affects different traditions in different villages. From this and other examples, Boudon argues that structural theories of social change, in fact, always depend on something that is not structural. As a result, structural theories of social change are at most only partially right. And that anyone who believes the structure alone causes the outcome is, in fact, wrong.

Chapter 5 addresses theories that identify one fundamental cause of social change. Here, Boudon singles out Marx and theories of conflict as inadequate, even with Marx's own writings. In *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1900), Marx identifies class struggle as the motor driving the transition into capitalism, a position that notably gained many adherents in sociology. In the same work, however, Marx explicitly argues that the discovery of gold in the Americas was essential to the disruption of the feudal system – a factor self-evidently unrelated to class struggle. Further, the ongoing argument between views that material conditions always drive culture or culture always drives material conditions is unhelpful. Indeed, according to Boudon, theories attempting to identify one fundamental cause are not merely wrong – they are so entirely wrong that they are not even proper scientific theories. They are instead suspect and grandiose metaphysical claims.

Chapter 6 closes out the roster of theories with a focus on the impossibility of deterministic theories of social change. With a range of different examples, Boudon argues that theories that seem to be right only work because they are explaining closed systems. And those closed systems will always eventually become open – through exogenous shocks and chance events – at which point the existing deterministic theories of social change will also be wrong.

By the close of chapter 6, the prospects for theory are bleak. Boudon has made a strong case that the existing arsenal of theories, which in this case would be mid-twentieth-century theories of social change, are too grand, too ambitious, and have no sense of an appropriate scope for their application. Further, they do not recognize that contingency and chance will always be a large factor in determining the path of social change. He appears to see these deficiencies as insurmountable, however, I believe that he does in fact lay out

a positive path forward for constructing better theories in chapter 2 – though I cannot say for certain whether he did so intentionally.

## AGGREGATION AND CONTINGENCY

If we return to chapter 2, which could have served as the penultimate chapter of the book, he begins the process of mapping out a new direction for sociological research. This chapter focuses on aggregation effects and temporal contingency. Aggregate effects are emergent effects that change depending on the number of people involved. Classic examples include Karl Popper's seekers of solitude (Popper 2006 [1957], p. 158) and Jean-Paul Sartre's farmers of Sichuan (2004). In Popper's example, if one person goes to the mountains to be alone, they will enjoy perfect solitude, but if everyone goes to the mountains, no one will find solitude. Sartre's example, which he used to illustrate a dialectical relation between persons and nature as well as a metaphysical relation between creation and destruction, is more complicated. The peasants in Sichuan desire more arable land for cultivation. To create more land, they cut down the trees that stand on the land. The individual strategy is adopted by all Sichuan people. Sartre called this a unity of purpose and action. The collective nature of this undertaking transforms the action into a destructive force: The systematic demolition of the forests by all the people calls up a counterimpulse in nature. The trees had in fact protected the farmers from natural flooding, which is unleashed to devastating effect by the deforestation. The farmer's attempt to reform nature destroys their newly cultivated land.



These two examples present instances of perverse outcomes, where the actions of actors produce the opposite of what was intended when everyone does them to negative effect. Good outcomes can also follow from perverse effects, examples of which fill Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1993 [1714]), where vanity promotes industry and pride provokes generosity. The most famous example however is Adam Smith's argument in *The Wealth of Nations* (1994 [1776]) that selfish actions can produce national prosperity, thereby improving the material circumstance of the impoverished (an argument that was strongly influenced by Mandeville's work).

The next chapter, "Giving Disorder its Due," which is the last substantive chapter, explores temporal contingency. Boudon focuses here on the idea that a particular conjuncture of circumstances will always play a role in social change. In this chapter, he concludes that theories of social change must be specific to particular places and times: "It is only possible to construct theories (in Popper's rigorous sense of the word) of social change about partial and local social processes firmly situated in time and particular circumstances"

(Boudon 1986, p. 207).[1] This criticism poses a serious challenge to the idea of a 'real theory' of social change, given that social change is necessarily about the transition between a set of particular circumstances unique to one time into a different set of particular circumstances that define a new time. So, either social change is a continuous process that resides in all moments and social processes – and therefore a special category of social theory devoted to "change" does not make sense – or the causal effect is residing outside of local circumstance somehow, a proposition that Boudon explicitly rejects.

There is, of course, also the added issue that theory is usually considered to consist of generalizable abstractions portable across time and place, though not necessarily all times and places. And when theory is not generalizable or portable, one may ask whether it is really a theory or, in fact, an untested hypothesis. Boudon does not, however, push his criticism this far.

Additionally, a historical setting is inevitably going to include at least two independent causal sequences, and following Augustin Cournot's definition, the intersection of two causal sequences will be random. So, pushing someone out of a window cannot account for the likelihood that someone will walk under the window with a mattress and save the individual from injury. Following this model, a conjunction of circumstances will always be random.

These two issues then set the stage for Boudon's understanding of social change. In his definition, social change is the product of "emergent effects from the aggregation of the behavior of individuals in conditions which were changing under the influence of a particular conjuncture of circumstances" (Boudon 1986, p. 130). This definition makes sense if we consider that social and historical change takes place at the aggregate level in a historical moment, which will also necessarily encompass several (if not billions) of causal chains. Social changes are changes to the whole of society, and history is not the story of one person but the story of civilizations, nations, and empires. The story of nations, peoples, and lands is, of course, made up of the stories of individual persons. However, if aggregate effects exist and outcomes vary based on the number of people involved, it follows that large-scale historical transformations will unfold differently than they would under the same circumstances for one individual alone. Further, the inclusion of more than one causal chain and different circumstances will make things even more difficult to predict, if not inherently random.

It follows from this that understanding the intentions and motivations of individual actors is insufficient for theorizing about social change. In Boudon's

1 There is evidence that Boudon revised his opinion on this issue in later works, such as *The Poverty of Relativism* (2005).

perspective, explanation at the level of individual action is good and necessary. Still, it is not adequate to explain the aggregate consequences of individual behavior, which may be quite unmoored from the intentions of actors. Therefore, if one believes that social theories must be based on individual motivations alone, theory cannot address social change.

The issue is not merely one of alignment between motivations and outcomes, for instance, good intentions can produce bad things, and bad intentions can produce good things. If good motives are consistently aligned with bad outcomes, that may also lend itself to theory, prediction, and explanation. But if effects are inherently unpredictable because they are the result of aggregate actions and contingent conjunctures, then the task is perhaps impossible.

Thus, Boudon portrays unintended consequences as unknowable – or more precisely, the subset of action-effect links that are unpredictable and arbitrary. Boudon states "the way in which aggregation effects of the type M = M($m$) shape things is thus not always straightforward, and a more or less lengthy training is necessary if we are to understand it. It is no more 'natural' to the human mind than handling the differential calculus and, like that discipline, has to be learned" (Boudon 1986, pp. 57-58). Now we might think that that this could be the purpose of graduate training in the social sciences, but Boudon instead suggests the training should consist of reading "authors like the Scottish moralists, the German dialecticians and certain modern economists, political scientists and sociologists who are aware of the basic notion [of aggregation effects]" (Boudon 1986, p. 58). And when he presents a list of eleven different aggregation effects as a demonstration of their ubiquity, which he characterizes as a small number of examples of what is an "indefinite number" that is both 'difficult and pointless to classify."



## REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

In summary, Boudon presents a typology of four types of theories of social change, all of which are insufficient for two main reasons. One is that social change is composed of aggregate effects, and a second is that contingency always plays an important role. The question then is whether to treat these elements as limits to inquiry or the most promising direction for exploration and research. If we treat them as the latter, then Boudon has essentially laid out a path for future research.

Boudon argues that social theories are not really theories but instead 'models' because they require input – in the form of chance and contingency – to serve as explanations or tools of prediction, for instance to function the way we would want a theory to function. But elements of social change

that Boudon would have written off as chance and contingency can now be explained through theory.

Take, for example, the division of labor. The division of labor is a fundamental social process that has been at the heart of social science inquiry since its origin, appearing as a central concept in the work of Adam Smith (1994) and Emile Durkheim (1996), among others. Understanding the rise and spread of the division of labor can be understood as a central component of understanding the rise of commercial society and, by extension, capitalism. Thus, it is central to theories of social change.

When people engage in a division of labor, they separate out tasks that collectively achieve a common goal. Each person must accomplish their portion of the larger task for the goal to be achieved. For Adam Smith, the larger goal seems to have been to increase the prosperity and wealth of the larger population. For Durkheim, the larger goal seems to have been to provide for the needs of the population. But the division of labor is also applied daily to smaller, more discrete tasks by corporations, universities, government bureaucracies, and even sports teams that assign different roles to different players.





In this sense, it is possible to treat the division of labor as a social coordination problem that can be reduced to a more abstract model or game. In the graph coloring game, which has its roots in cartography, a network is composed of nodes and edges. The object of the game is to color each node a different color from the nodes to which it is immediately connected. This represents the problem faced by mapmakers that wanted to color countries differently from their contiguous neighbors without requiring an infinite number of colors.

The graph coloring name has been shown to support generalization to a large set of coloring games (Dong et al. 2005). A division of labor game needs to capture a slightly different goal, where nodes are not necessarily colored differently from neighbors, but are immediately connected to nodes of the subset of colors that represent the different tasks necessary to achieve a common goal (Erikson and Shirado 2021). So, for example, if a task is split into green, yellow, and blue segments, a green node must be connected to both a yellow and blue node for the task to be accomplished.

This game can then serve as the basis for an agent-based model (Macy and Willer 2002), such as a computer simulation, that captures how the division of labor might emerge and spread within a population. The nodes in the network represent agents, edges represent possible exchange relations, and colors represent task specializations. The agents are incentivized to cooperate when possible, and simulations explore the role of various structural parameters (such as size, density, etc.) in inhibiting successful specializations in the larger population.

The reason why I introduce this example is because it turns out that the number of solutions to the coloring node game can be difficult to predict and is affected by small properties, such as whether there are an even or odd number of nodes in the network or the number of closed cycles and the length of the shortest cycle (Fengming et al. 2011). Changes in these properties, which are likely to seem like minimal adjustments to most people, can therefore have a large impact on the spread of specialization and, additionally, the rise of the division of labor – which again, let me emphasize, is a central social process that has driven industrialization and modernization throughout history.

If we don't know how much network structure matters, then we might interpret the difference in outcomes across the two settings as depending on chance factors. However, it is in fact dependent on a structural condition in a way that is entirely predictable but just happens to be difficult to observe. So that people unaware of the importance of network structure in solving this particular puzzle would very likely chalk up variation in results to unexplained factors of fate and contingency.



If we return to the traditional village example raised by Boudon in chapter 4, it is possible that the pattern of relations in the various villages studied by Epstein (1967) affected the ease with which certain actors in those villages could successfully find exchange partners supplying their full set of needs, allowing then to transition to a more efficient, specialized role within a larger division of labor. If this were the case – and I am at this point only saying that it is valuable to entertain the possibility that it might be the case – then the contingent circumstances that appear to be the result of a very specific and chance configuration of institutions and traditions are actually the result of an invariant structural condition that does have predictable results across times and places. Those conditions, however, were not theorized, measured, or observed at the time that Mead or Epstein published their research.

This example is particular to network structure, but the category of aggregate effects is now much better understood than it was earlier in the last century – although certainly there is still much to learn.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

If we accept this more positive interpretation of Boudon's argument, implications follow for how we should pursue research into social change. Following Boudon, social change results from the unintended emergent consequences of aggregate processes. And secondly, society is a large, complex system with many different interacting and interdependent components that unfold sequentially over and within historical time. The interaction of

these components, as well as the order and timing of those interactions, can independently affect macro-social outcomes (Ermakoff 2015). Effects such as these, which occur outside the level of individual actions, can be challenging to observe, measure, and analyze for individuals. And if they are unintended, those consequences are by definition difficult to predict, as they are the outcomes that individuals do not expect or consider to be ancillary.

Since these emergent and temporal effects are harder to anticipate and observe than other types of cause-and-effect sequences, it makes sense that we need an academic field devoted to understanding and analyzing them. The area of sociological inquiry best suited to studies these effects is, arguably, comparative historical research. Comparative historical research already has a strong legacy of analyzing unintended aggregate effects that unfold within historical sequences. The canonical work being Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2002), which makes the point that it is often the unintended, second-order consequences unfolding at the scale of the population level that had one of the greatest impacts yet experienced on the course of world history.





Comparative historical research is one of the few ways in which we can understand the chain of actions and consequences that produce large-scale changes in the messy, complex reality of social life as it occurs on the ground. But, along with most of sociology, large theoretical frames are largely eschewed for middle range topics, such as state formation, collective action, and empire. It might be helpful if these meso-level areas of theoretical inquiry were conceived of within a project of emergent aggregate and temporal effects, like unintended consequences.

Certain tools also offer an advantage in analyzing emergent processes, both temporal and aggregate. These tools include but are not limited to computational models, network analysis, large language models (LLMs) for processing historical and archival data, computational models for complex social processes, and a truly global comparative approach to questions of macro-history.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, computational models have been central to understanding and demonstrating the existence of aggregate effects. Tom Schelling's neighborhood model (1971), Mark Granovetter's threshold model of collective action (1978), Watt's small worlds (1999) are all examples of essential formalizations that have led to a deeper understanding of how individual actions are related to larger outcomes such as segregation, revolution, and the diffusion of information. Computational models are the most essential tool there is for understanding how complex interactive social processes unfold over time.

The advantage of network analysis is that networks are crucial to understanding the emergent properties of aggregate outcomes. Social networks are always implicated in large-scale social processes because their structure directly and independently affects the diffusion of ideas, knowledge, information, and resources. The informality and fluidity of networks make them powerful potential agents of change, though they are almost always a secondary consequence of some intended action that has an independent causal effect (Erikson and Occhiuto 2017).

The problem, however, with historical network analysis has always been obtaining systematic network data. That data does exist in the archives, but in incredibly varied formats, like early modern typeface, ancient scripts, handwritten bank notes, or ships' logs. In the past, these records had to be painstakingly translated into a text-readable format. But now, LLMs are showing an amazing capacity to translate and organize these sources into datasets. They can extract and code archival data that records the activities of people in the past in a systematic way (Rolan et al. 2019). This is a great gift for understanding how social change has proceeded throughout human history.



Where these three methods are underrepresented in comparative historical inquiry, global comparative research has been expanding at a faster rate. This expansion is also extremely important to the progress of the field. As Boudon notes, many theories have been wrong because they have treated concepts like modernization and development as more real than material reality. Another way of seeing this, however, is not as a realist trap but as a perspective problem. An example would be the common and erroneous belief in twentieth-century social science that patterns of social change in Europe would automatically set the course of history for the rest of the world. I think it is fair to say that a single-mindedly Eurocentric perspective is going to fail at understanding general principles of social change. But this does not mean that social change cannot be theorized, as per Boudon. Rather, this strongly suggests that that global comparative work is extremely important to identifying what parts of extant social theory relate to specific contexts and which are more general.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Boudon was skeptical of the possibility of developing true theories of social change. Boudon's pessimism was based in his understanding of unintended consequences, which he thought of as a residual category of the unexplainable. If we reframe our understanding of unintended consequences to refer to – or at least include – emergent aggregate and temporal effects like contingency, there is less need for pessimism and more space for progress.

His line of reasoning brings us to a point at which the logical path forward is clearly indicated: systematic analysis of the causes and consequences of unintended outcomes.

Understood in this way, Boudon's book lays a strong case that the tools that help us understand the unanticipated consequences of action will be central to inquiry into social change. Computational models, network analysis, LLMs, and global comparative historical methods are likely to help accomplish this goal. Thus turning some portion of what we have experienced as chaotic into a slightly more tractable area of complexity – and probably some chaos.

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Charles-Henry Cuin & Patrice Duran (eds.)

*La Sociologie analytique de Talcott Parsons*
François Chazel

*La Spirale des inégalités.*
*Choix scolaires en France et en Italie au XX^e^ siècle*
Gianluca Manzo

# ACCLAIMS

This remarkably well-structured volume accomplishes two feats at once. It offers a critical engagement with the multiple facets and contributions of Raymond Boudon's sociological oeuvre, for example: the modeling of relative deprivation, the generative approach to social stratification, the plea for methodological individualism, the analysis of unintended consequences and social change, the epistemology of sociological investigations, and the reflection on rationality and belief formation. Through this critical engagement – here is the second feat – this volume tackles substantive and methodological issues central to contemporary developments in the discipline of sociology, whether the focus is on formal models, simulation work, counterfactual reasoning, social mobility and its measurements, the significance of Rational Choice, or our understanding of processual dynamics.

Ivan Ermakoff, Professor of Sociology,
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Without indulging in praise, this collective volume – bringing together 18 substantial chapters – aims to shed light on the enduring legacy of Raymond Boudon's sociology. It addresses a notable gap: the lack of a detailed, multifaceted examination of the work of one of the foremost figures in both French and international sociology. The reader will find not only an assessment of Boudon's intellectual contributions but also a critical appraisal of their limitations and the avenues they open for further research into contemporary issues. The book will appeal both to specialists familiar with the evolution of Boudon's thought over time and to those wishing to discover it, explore it in greater depth, or draw upon it for teaching purposes.

Gérald Gaglio, Professor of Sociology,
Université Côte d'Azur

This book is a splendid tribute to Raymond Boudon, one of the most important sociologists of the second half of the 20th century. The contributions, in their appreciative and critical aspects alike, clearly bring out the intellectual depth and challenging nature of Boudon's work and its continuing relevance in the study of modern societies.

John H. Goldthorpe, Emeritus Fellow,
Nuffield College, University of Oxford

This collection of papers, expertly curated by Gianluca Manzo, is as wide-ranging and thought-provoking as Raymond Boudon himself. It is sure to stimulate interest in a now-sometimes-forgotten giant of French sociology.

Neil Gross, Charles A. Dana Professor of Sociology,
Colby College (Maine)

This Memorial Festschrift honors Raymond Boudon (1934–2013) by considering his contributions to conceptualization, theory, and empirics, as well as their associated methods, across foundational topical domains in sociology and guided by expert commentators. It is not only a superb assessment, and its value will grow in three main ways. First, like most Festschrifts, it provides a portrait of the growth and trajectory of Boudon's ideas, embedded in his relations with other scholars, both teachers, peers, and students. This portrait will grow over time. Second, as the historian David Knowles wrote about the *quaestiones quodlibetales* of the medieval university (especially the University of Paris) and the debates held during Advent and Lent when anyone could ask any question of any master, Festschrift discussions are a valuable index to what is "in the air" – in this case both when Boudon was working and now. Third, Boudon believed in the promise of mathematics, and it will be possible to trace over time the progress of the $X -> Y$ relations in the book, as they travel from general functions to specific functions.

Guillermina Jasso, Professor of Sociology,
Silver Professor of Arts and Science, New York University

This book is not a hagiography. Unusually, its title truly reflects its content. Twenty-two sociologists from different countries and different generations take a fresh look at the work of Raymond Boudon. In keeping with his approach but without complacency, they highlight the theoretical and methodological contributions of his sociology, its limitations, its errors, its relevance for teaching sociology to the new generations, and the perspectives that remain open in several thematic areas.

Dominique Vidal, Professor of Sociology,
Université Paris Cité