

Contents and Summaries

STRUCTURE, EXCHANGE, AND POWER.

Studies in Theoretical Sociology.

edited by

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and Marian KEMPNY

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Summary: This book contains eight studies of varied character (methodological, theoretical and experimental). All of them bear on “social exchange theory”, most of them being focused on the “elementary theory” – a recent offshoot of the network-structural approach in exchange theory. These papers have been written by the members or associates of the team working in the Microsociological Laboratory at the Institute of Sociology, Jagiellonian University. American authors of the elementary theory are also among the contributors to this volume (their paper, first published in the American Sociological Review in 1988, has been reprinted here by permission of the American Sociological Association). The editors are indebted to David Willer, the director of the Laboratory for Social Research at the University of South Carolina, for his cooperation at different stages in the preparation of this book. Finally, this project has been completed thanks to the financial support from the Committee for Scientific Research (grant PB 1927/1/91).

Jacek SZMATKA, Tadeusz SOZAŃSKI

On Four Myths of Sociology and
Three Generations of Sociological Theories9

1. The Problem (9). 2. Four Myths about Social Theory and Their Critical Examination (10). 3. Three Generations of Sociological Theories (18).

Summary: In the beginning of their paper the authors criticize several widespread views in sociology, namely, that a peculiar, interpretive nature of social phenomena makes sociology unable to keep to the methodological standards of the sciences; that the material studied by the discipline is too complicated to allow for model building; that empirical social research can only mean exploration of social entities embedded in a concrete historical context; and, finally, that classical “grand theories”, for all their deficiencies, give us a proper understanding of what a general theory is like. The second part of the paper shows that there have already appeared sociological theories which successfully break with these four myths endemic to traditional theorizing. The theories of

the third generation (epitomized by the “elementary theory”) accept methodological standards of the “hard sciences”. They are both abstract and empirically testable unlike the theories of the first generation (old and new “grand theories”) which suffer, first of all, from the lack of explicitly stated “scope conditions” (hence they remain untestable). The theories of the second generation are testable, but they are endowed with scope conditions which make reference to concrete people and societies rather than to abstractly defined social actors and systems.

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Towards a Theoretical Research
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Summary: The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the development of the broad theoretical orientation known as social exchange theory can be analyzed in terms of competing “scientific research programs” (a metatheoretical concept introduced by Lakatos). The first social exchange scientific research program had its origin in Homans' claim that the principles of “operant” psychology are a proper basis for social theory. Such a theoretical choice laid aside the problem of how people's actions are conditioned and molded by social structures. Meanwhile, the effect of structural determination was evidenced in experiments: the structure of inter-position connections was discovered to generate differential power among actors occupying positions in the “network”. The revised version of Emerson and Cook's “power–dependence theory”, which found support in those experiments, marked a transition to a new scientific research program. A further, more radical breakthrough came with the emergence of the “elementary theory” (ET). The authors show that ET is not only a theory in the narrow meaning of the word, but it has started a new research program of the dynamics of social structure, which differs in many respects from Homans' program. In particular, the ET program is richer, since it deals not only with exchange structures, but allows for modeling of coercion and conflict. The “core”, or the unchangeable set of assumptions, of each of the two programs is discussed at length and the two cores are compared to each other. The final part of the paper gives an overview of the models which lie within the scope of the ET research program and have already been tested or are being currently investigated. Lastly, possible directions of further research are considered.

Izabella UHL

What is the “Elementary Theory”?73

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Summary: The aim of this paper is to provide an “elementary” introduction to the “elementary theory” (ET) for those who are new to it. The theory has been named not for its subject matter, but for its mode of construction (its models are built from simple irreducible elements). As a general theory of social interaction ET covers a wide range of phenomena which are interpreted and explained by means of certain laws and principles. Furthermore, its conceptual constructions, theoretical propositions and modeling procedures presume a special understanding of what a theory is and how it is to be tested through “scientific experiments.” The methodological dimension of ET, which is a multi-faceted intellectual tool, is discussed by the author in the beginning of her paper. Its substantive focus is on the study of coercion – one of the three basic forms of social relationships distinguished by ET. The reader will learn how ET analyzes the simplest coercive interaction process in a dyad, next, how more complex coercion structures are modeled and tested in the laboratory experiment, and, finally, how the theory can be used to interpret the historical phenomenon of slavery.

Wiesław STRUKOWSKI-KOZIENÍ

The Dynamics of Social Structure101

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Summary: To apply the systems and structural approach to sociology a general conceptual apparatus is needed. Thus, one has to define a set of interrelated terms denoting “theoretical objects” which could be used to develop a model of a general social system and its two subsystems (informal groups and institutions). The place of an individual or collective actor in such a system is characterized by the actor's roles and statuses. The “resultant” of both characteristics is called by the author the “effective social position”. It is the set of relations among effective social positions that is identified with the structure of a social system. In the final part of the paper the “elementary theory” is considered as a tool that can be used to build a more specific model of social dynamics and to analyze conditions of a change or reproduction of the social structure.

A Tentative Formalization of Network Exchange Theory149

1. Exchange Theory Today (149). 2. The Formal Model of a Network Exchange System (155). 3. Axiomatic Characterization of an Exchange System. Special Classes of Systems (166). 4. From the Model to Theories Explaining the Functioning of Exchange Systems (180). 5. Concluding Remarks (188).

Summary: The “network approach” to social exchange is, first of all, a certain conceptualization of exchange phenomena which generates a range of research problems. Within such a framework there also exist theories which provide definite solutions to these problems. This paper does not offer a new specific exchange theory (such as, say, the “resistance theory”), but develops a formal language which can help formulate more precisely such theories and design experiments to test them. A “network exchange system” is defined as a “mathematical object” (a “set endowed with a structure”) that satisfies a list of axioms (they can play the role of “scope conditions” of possible exchange theories having their own specific axioms). The global structure of an exchange system consists of five interrelated partial structures which all depict particular facets of the functioning of the system. The “network structure” is defined as a connected directed graph. Its “nodes” stand for the system’s constituent elements: “positions” or “actors” (two interpretations of the nodes are used interchangeably on the assumption that there is a one-to-one correspondence between actors and positions throughout the system’s lifetime). The network’s arcs determine admissible (socially or physically possible) inter-position resource flows. The network structure is assumed to be constant over time and the same is postulated for the “valuation structure” given as the utilities assigned by the actors to resource units. Three remaining structures: “property structure”, “action structure” and “social control” directly bear on the dynamics of the system. The state of the system at a moment t is characterized by the current allocation of resources to positions and by the sequence of “actions” (“offers” or “partner choices”) which took place before t . This “action string” is assumed to be compatible with the rules of a “grammar of interaction” (these rules are part of the axiomatics). Further negotiations and eventual exchanges also depend on the current operation of the structure called “social control” which imposes extra-network constraints on the circulation of resources. The formal model of an exchange system encompasses various classes of systems such as “bilateral homogeneous free markets” discussed in the paper. Special cases are obtained by adding further axioms to those defining a general “two-resource network exchange system”. The model also allows for an analysis of the rationality of actions *in the context* of the negotiation process. The suggested formalization does not attempt to absorb all conceptions that have appeared so far in network exchange theory. Its specific rationale lies in combining the microeconomic understanding of exchange (as a bilateral flow of valued resources) with the idea of “social” restraints on “free” interaction, and with a formal-linguistic approach to the analysis of negotiations.

Barry MARKOVSKY, David WILLER, Travis PATTON

Power Relations in Exchange Networks195

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Summary (the abstract attached with the ASR publication of this paper): Many theories address the problem of how a social structure affects the experiences and behaviors of its members. This paper offers a network exchange theory to solve this problem. Previous research has shown that the nature and outcomes of negotiations among individual or corporate actors can be inferred from their network positions. The impact of this research has been limited because its theory does not enable the researcher to locate power positions in the network. We offer a theory that is both consistent with all previously reported experimental research and is generalized to conditions not considered by other formulations. In addition to supporting derived hypotheses pertaining to network-based power, our experiments demonstrate, among other things, that certain unstable networks break down to form stable substructures and that some networks contain overlapping but autonomous domains of power and exchange.

Tadeusz SOZAŃSKI

Hierarchical Exchange Systems.
A Replication of an Experiment of David Willer233

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3. Hypotheses, Results, and Conclusions (257).

Summary: A “centralized hierarchical network exchange system” is characterized by the condition that consecutive exchanges of the “central” position with particular “peripheral” positions (connected on the network with the central position) are made on different terms favoring those actors who exchange earlier. In conditions of “fixed hierarchy” better terms of exchange are reserved for fixed peripheral positions, while under a “mobile hierarchy” the peripheral actors have to compete for the right to exchange first, which results in the domination of the central actor over his partners. This effect was first analyzed and experimentally tested by David Willer (*Theory and the Experimental Investigation of Social Structures*, 1987) in the context of his “elementary theory”. Willer's experiment on mobile hierarchy was replicated by the author of this paper. He reinterpreted the original definition of such a system using his own formal model (see his first paper in this book) and designed a computer-aided scenario for the experiment in which the structural conditions of hierarchy were slightly modified to get more knowledge of the workings of the system. The power advantage of the “center” over the “peripherals” has been observed, however, to a lesser degree than in the original experiment. It is suggested in the conclusion

that the difference can be explained in terms of different modes of negotiating. The rules (imposed by the experimenter or adopted spontaneously by the subjects) which organize the negotiation process can enhance or weaken the competition among peripheral actors. Another result reported in the paper is the support for the Willer-Heckathorn "resistance theory". It was able to correctly predict the exchange rate in the final phase of the system's functioning (in this phase, extending from 3rd through 6th exchange, no longer hold the conditions of structurally generated competition).

Marian KEMPNY

Sociological Theory of Social Exchange:
Towards a Cultural Perspective or Beyond It?273

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Summary: The search for a metatheoretical framework to comparatively analyze social exchange theories leads to the claim that two crossing polar axes are needed to map a variety of approaches which fall under the broad social exchange paradigm. The first axis involves the opposition between intentional and consequential analysis: exchange processes are explained either in terms of intentions of human agents involved in exchange relations or the rationale of exchange phenomena is sought in their consequences for the social system. The second axis reveals the split into individualistic and collectivistic exchange theories. An explication of both dilemmas is substantiated by a discussion of Lévi-Strauss and Homans' contending explanations of the prevalence of some forms of cross-cousin marriage. Following the identification of the four regions of metatheoretical space, various sociological and anthropological exchange theories are located in there. The anthropological interpretation of the exchange phenomena is examined at some length and its peculiar features are emphasized in contrast with the sociological approach in its old and new varieties, including the "elementary theory". It is concluded that anthropological revisions of classic sociological approaches and recent sociological network exchange theories move in opposite directions, however, both trends respond to the present state of social theory and are part and parcel of the current process of overall transformation of social thought.

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