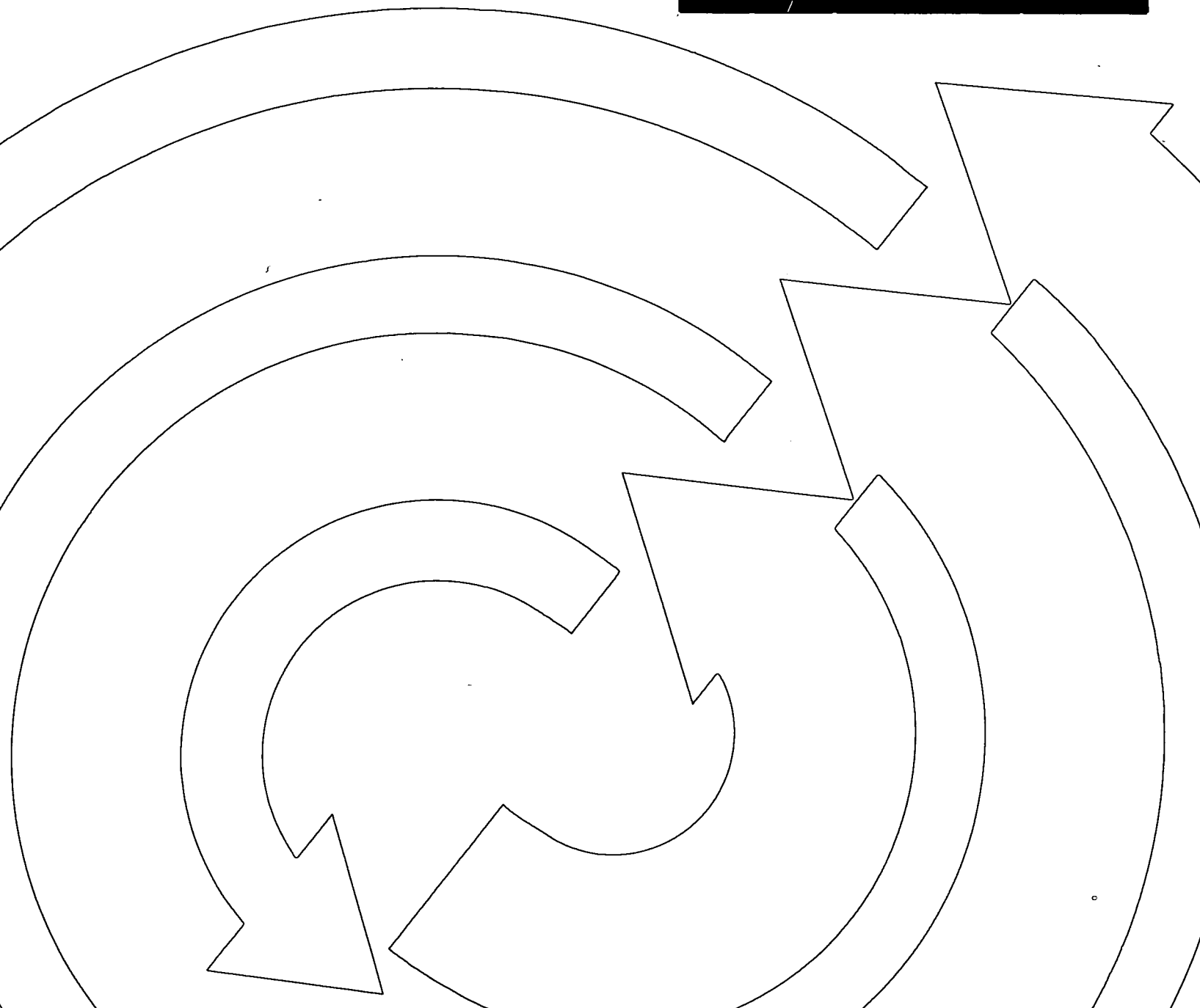# CRSO

Center for Research on
Social Organization

The Working Paper Series

The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor

POWERS OF THE WEAK:
A STRUCTURAL APPROACH

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#439   April 1991

Powers of the Weak: A Structural Approach.

Introduction. The Problem.

The problem I want to address concerns the structures in which weak actors exert power and effect social change. This is an unusual perspective because power is often seen to emanate from the powerful, not the weak. Theories of power often focus on the dominant actors in a system and identify the mechanisms by which the exert power and influence on other powerful actors, or on weaker actors who generally are assumed to have no power. Foucault and other theorists have challenged this dominant view and have attempted to articulate alternative perspectives. The theoretical problem of how weak actors sometimes exert themselves and manage to transform social structures and institutions is a neglected field of study. (Foucault, 1979, 1980).

There are many social phenomena that represent social change driven by peripheral actors. Some of these include social movements, revolutions, and labor movements. There are numerous political events in history that also present provocative questions to theorists of power. In American history, its defeat by the Vietnamese, its withdrawal from Lebanon after the attach on the Marine barracks, and other events represent instances in which an evidently dominant actor has lost out to an obviously weaker opponent. Theorists who focus on phenomena associated with weak actors that advocate and promote change work with distinct theories of powers of the weak. One of the underlying issues of this paper concerns the implications that different approaches to power by weak actors have on the mechanisms identified for their confrontation with dominant actors. The implications have political consequences to the extent that some outlooks provide positive mechanisms for action and strategy, while others have a fatalist view that limits the options available to weak actors in the system. The different outlooks theorize the power of the weak in distinct ways, with important consequences for the possibilities and future outlook of the weak actors.

The Argument.

The argument that I want to make is straight forward. I want to suggest two main points. First, weak actors have identifiable mechanisms that are available to them to challenge and oppose dominant actors. The instances mentioned earlier of social movements, rebellions, and revolutions, are testimony to this. Second, the mechanisms available to weak actors depend on the social structure and social organization in which the contestation is embedded. Different structural patterns will provide different kinds of opportunities and constraints for the weak actors and will have different mechanisms and degrees of effectiveness in the results obtained.

An examination of the theoretical assumptions that often reinforce the focus of power by dominant actors is the view that power is an attribute of actors. The attributional view of power focuses on characteristics and individual resources that pertain to that actor. Such a view tends to disregard and under-theorize the capacities and capabilities of weak actors, who have few objective resources. To provide any view of power in which actors would have any capacity to challenge the system, one has to conceptualize power in relational terms. In this way, the power of actor **A** is not intrinsic to that actor but is always in relation to one or more actors. It is only meaningful to speak about the power that actor **A** has over actor **B**, not just the power of actor **A**. (See Emerson, 1962).

The potential complexity of social life is such that the examination of relational patterns of power would tend to provide an infinite variety of possibilities that would suggest how relationally embedded actors would take advantage of their networks to gain some objective. Post-structuralists like Foucault have tried to address similar issues in their work. Their insight has often been iconoclastic with respect to dominant patterns of thinking, that they refer to as discourses, showing the relativity and historicity of these forms. One of the problems with this approach is the inability to provide positive forms of theorizing. The contribution of much of post-structuralist thought is a destructive contribution, very much needed against reified forms of thinking and theorizing, and indeed against institutional forms of power and dominance structured into discourses.

Post-structuralists with their creative negativity and historicity provide few avenues to develop social theory in ways that would have positivity. One important alternative to this situation may be a return to the work of Georg Simmel. Simmel, and others influenced by him have a different view of structure than the one commonly referred to in anthropological and linguistic theory. Simmel's theorizing is formalistic in its structure. (Simmel, 1950).

To overcome the general complexity of social life, it is useful to consider the simple structures of the dyad and the triad and examine in them how it is that weak actors would exercise their power and the different mechanisms that would be available to them within these two structures.

The examination of different power structures in the dyad and the triad provide the framework for articulating in simple terms the main argument of this paper. The following sections will try to identify fundamental differences in the possibilities for weak actors to act in dyadic and triadic structures. The essential point will be that there are qualitative differences in the strategic possibilities available in each structure.

To examine these differences, I would like to go over some results that emerged in work I did earlier in the analysis the international delegitimation of the colonial system after the Second World War.

The analysis entailed a structural decomposition of the international system into various statuses. Furthermore it entailed making some analytical distinctions that would help identify various mechanism of influence transmission among nations. The theories of influence developed there use a combination of network analysis, spatial autocorrelations and time series analysis to identify some models. Since the objectives here are more limited, these ideas and theories will not be developed here. (See Guilarte, 1989 for details).

Structural Decomposition into Positions.

Using the distinction between cohesion and structural equivalence from network analysis, two different kinds of topologies emerge of the world system.[1] Following the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, it is possible to cluster the various nation states into three statuses, with somewhat arbitrary boundaries. These three statuses are called the core, the semi-periphery and the periphery. (Wallerstein, 1974, Snyder and Kick, 1979).

Figures 1 and 2 provide a diagramed representation of the different patterns that emerge from decomposition on the basis of each of the two notions of closeness.

Cohesion

Figure 1 represents the pattern of influence that emerges from direct or COHESIVE ties between actors. The core is internally cohesive but it also sends strong relations to both the semi-periphery and the periphery, making them very dependent on the core. The semi-periphery receives strong influence from the core, but can also feedback influence to the core in a weaker manner. The periphery depends heavily on the core, but under this criteria, it is too weak to have much influence on either the core or the semi-periphery. The system that emerges is one in which the core nations have great power and hegemony over the system. Only the middle powers of the semi-periphery can provide any significant resistance to the dominant core.

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[1] For details on the distinction between cohesion and structural equivalence see Burt, 1983.

The loop of potential influence that joins the core and the semi-periphery has important theoretical significance. This loop may be called the LEGITIMATION LOOP to the extent that the maintenance of the system requires the reinforcement that this mechanism provides to hegemonic dominance. In this framework, the only mechanism to change the system come from direct challenges from the semi-peripheral actors to the core. If such a challenge is not evident, the system will tend to be maintained under the hegemony of the core.

Structural Equivalence.

Under STRUCTURAL EQUIVALENCE the decomposition is quite different. The core now has influence over the semi-periphery, but not over the periphery. The semi-periphery has more leverage over the core, and also added leverage over the periphery. Perhaps more importantly the periphery now has a mechanism for articulating its interests with respect to the system. Under structural equivalence, each position has leverage over those other positions that are immediately adjacent to it in the hierarchy, but the core and the periphery have no direct influence on each other. The semi-periphery mediates between the core and the periphery.

Under COHESION peripheral actors have no power and no mechanism for channeling influence to the rest of the hierarchy. They are very dependent and determined by the hegemonic power of the core. By contrast, under STRUCTURAL EQUIVALENCE they have the capacity to project themselves by way of the middle level actors in the system.

Under structural equivalence the combined capacities of the different statuses to transmit influence from the top down, with influence from the bottom up, forms a pair of inter-status loops. This mapping of influence suggests that the stability of core dominance depends on the strength of the loop joining the core and the semi-periphery. A challenge to the system emerges if the semi-periphery and periphery align themselves and form a mutually supportive loop. The strengthening of this loop over time creates leverage over the dominant actors who in time may be forced to yield to the emerging demands.

This distinction provides a framework by which peripheral actors who are structurally weak can have influence and change the system. The determination of actors on the basis of strong ties, as is the case under cohesion, provides no mechanism for peripheral actors to leverage their interests sufficiently to change the system.

Although these two mechanism provide different views of structures of influence in a triad, these different models are simply different mappings of the same pattern of relations. They represent alternative topological transformations or perspectives for the same relational pattern of actors at

a given time. The theoretical and empirical question then becomes what pattern would determine the behavior of actors in the system. Each actor is embedded in a social fabric with different and often conflicting pressures on what to believe and how to act. Each actor makes strategic choices by weighing the different topologies of pressure and identifying the mechanism that, taking into account one's constraints, provides the best opportunities to make some gains.

Triadic Structures.

This decomposition of the world system into three statuses following Wallerstein already suggests some mechanisms by which weak or peripheral actors may gain leverage and transmit influence that may transform the system. It is important to note that Wallerstein did not understand the world system to have such mechanisms. His theory, like others associated with dependency, tend to work with a view of power that derives from dominant actors. It is evident that Wallerstein's view of power is closer to that associated with Cohesion in Figure 1. In such a view the peripheral actors have little or no agency. Their structural position in the system completely determines their situation, and the notion of centralized power operating disallows any transformational capabilities for the weaker statuses.

The mechanisms involved for the transmission of influence from peripheral actors requires the crucial mediation of the semi-periphery which provides leverage for peripheries and structures a kind of countervailing power that has access to and leverage over the dominant actors of the system.

The structural role of mediation may have different forms. Although in the world system model represented in the figures above this middle entity consists of another status, mediation may be shaped by other coordinating structures like an organization or a coalition of organizations. This perspective would suggest that the structural pattern common to resource mobilization theories of social movement have elements of the triadic structure in an abstract sense. McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) in their work argue that social movements mobilize resources from what they call **conscience constituencies** that have important resources needed for the

movement. The professionalization of social movements provides organizational mechanisms that mediate or "speak for" the constituents directly to power. Clearly the mechanisms available to these social movements acquire a triadic structure that enables them to reshape the mechanisms of power for the peripheral actors.

Focusing on different social phenomena like peasant movements and social revolution, Jeff Paige (Agrarian Revolutions) and Theda Skocpol (States and Social Revolutions) also theorize in terms of structures of power for peripheral actors that are triadic in analogous ways to those presented here in formal term. (Paige, 1975, Skocpol, 1979). For both, organizational structures provide crucial mediation and articulation for peripheral actors.

Dyadic Structures and Power of the Weak.

Dyadic structures are simpler in a formal sense, but the theoretical complications are significant. The importance of the dyad for sociological theorizing cannot be overstated. The analysis of domination, subordination, super-ordination, exploitation, coercion, repression, and many other relations are dyadically structured. It is important to add that so are relations of exchange, and reciprocity, although these are essentially between equals. Our focus is on powers of the weak, so only those dyadic structures in which actors are unequal are of interest.

To examine some of the dynamics involved in the dyadic relations, the following sections examine the insights of two philosophers that concerned themselves with dyadic structures of power. One is Hegel, who examined the dialectical relation between master and slave, and the other is Nietzsche, whose social psychology examines the mechanism of **ressentiment** in his analysis of the slave mentality he associates with Christian ethics.

The Master and the Slave.

The dyad constitutes the simplest possible structure of domination. It represents the most primitive unit in which an actor dominates another. In the **Phenomenology of Spirit**, Hegel provides a provocative analysis of this relationship and its dynamics (Hegel, 1977). It is in the dyad that actors recognize themselves by acknowledging one another. The mechanism identified dialectically by Hegel is not unlike the "looking glass self" of Charles Cooley a hundred years later in the University of Michigan. Cooley conceptualizes the self in terms of how others perceive the self and how one perceives others perceiving the self. This reflection and double reflection is found in Hegel as well. For Hegel there are two components to be a self fully. The first is that one is cognizant of others as selves, and the second is that one must be recognized by the others as a self or person. This idealization of self identity is structured on the dyadic relation of full reciprocity. However, the achievement of this is problematic.

Hegel's analysis suggests the dynamic impossibility or at least instability of complete reciprocity, without swings in patterns of dominance and submission. The analysis of self-consciousness in Hegel is a process of becoming conscious of oneself as a person. The dialectic of the master and slave begins with an initial encounter between two persons who struggle to gain recognition from the other to the extent that their own selfhood resides in the other. But to the extent that ones identity resides and depends on the other and is outside ones control, there will also be a wish to destroy the other and regain control. The problem is that the death of one member of the dyad will prevent recognition from taking place as there will no longer be another to do the recognizing. Recognition becomes a possibility only if one submits to another, establishing the master-slave relation.

The master obtains recognition but only in a limited way because the slave is not independent but subordinated to the master's will. The recognition by the slave does not provide objective recognition for the master's self identity because of the non-independent will of the other as slave. The slave does not receive recognition from the master as a person, but instead finds realization through work for the master. The transformation of objects in the process of labor provides concreteness and permanence to the identity of the slave. The product of labor provides objectification for the slave's identity. The master who relates to nature only in terms of desire and consumption does not have this objectivity but only has limited recognition by the slave.

The slave represents the weak actor in the system. For Hegel this actor has both agency and the framework for gaining selfhood. Hegel outlines a process by which a weak actor can overcome its determination and find affirmation, but many would acknowledge that work and service fall short of the ideal to human meaning and self identity. A theoretical question is whether this limitation is intrinsic only to the master slave relation as Hegel formulates it or an intrinsic element of dyadic structures of dominance in general.

Hegel's view of work as the means to the realization of the slave may be an idealization that fails to account for the exploitative structure of the relationship and the oppressive nature of work. Nevertheless, Hegel interprets the worker-slave and not the master as ultimately achieving realization and selfhood.

Nietzsche and Ressentiment.

Nietzsche provides a different analysis of weak actors confronted by power in his analysis of Christian morality (Nietzsche, 1966, Kaufmann, 1968). The mechanism that drives this relationship is **ressentiment**. Ressentiment derives from a desire for revenge and is associated with envy, jealousy, and competition that is at the same time impotent and unable to act out

antagonism openly. Ressentiment does not derive from the internal drives of actors but from the position in the social structure. Contemporary theories associated with this concept include research on social roles, relative deprivation and reference-group behavior. The reference to Nietzsche attempts to capture in a paradigmatic way many of these forms of theorizing and the critiques that they have received.

For Nietzsche, actors occupying weak positions in the social structure are prone to ressentiment. Roles requiring enforced passivity predispose actors to ressentiment. The inability of a weak actor to express ones self forthrightly is the mark of this sentiment.

In a dyadic structure in which the weak actor is very dependent on the dominant actor, the pattern of behavior will prevent the weak actor from challenging the dominant structure. The weak actor may see its survival in terms of maintaining this relationship and resolve to openly accept it, although inwardly to resent it.

These dyadic structure of power is common in social theory. In theories of revolution, the work of Ted Gurr emphasizing relative deprivation is a classic (Gurr, 1970). This work provides an important contrast to other theories of revolution and social movements that take into account the mediating structures of organizations.

The dyadic structures in which there is no mediation, disarticulate the weak actors in their contestation with dominant others. Without the leverage available to them by mediating structures, the behavior will be structured in a qualitatively different manner. An application of Nietzsche's analysis leads to the argument that weak actors embedded in dyadic structures will have resentment.

To examine the implications of this for contemporary theory, three different theoretical domains provide important insights, namely the study of peasant rebellion, dependency theory, and radical feminist theory.

The important and insightful recent work by James Scott on the **Weapons of the Weak** provides a representative work for the dyadic formulation of powers of the weak (Scott, 1985). Scott provides an important challenge to the approaches to power from the perspective of dominance and authority. He provides an extensive and detailed account of various ways in which peasants in Malaysia resisted those who dominated them and did not accept passively their subordination. He argues that these exploited groups do not accept their situation as normal. He challenges and tries to revise theories of hegemony that focus on the open or public behavior of actors in which passivity and acquiescence is common. His meticulous ethnography leads him to what he calls "weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth." (Scott, 1985, p. 29).

Scott theorizes that these forms of behavior challenge the hegemonic theories and the perspectives of dominance that tend to remove agency from the peripheral and weak actor. He is partly right in this respect, the problem is that he fails to understand the structural basis of the behavior that he observes. There is a qualitative difference between the behaviors he mentions, and the strategic organization of actors that provides mediating mechanisms between them and the dominant actors. He is correct to affirm the capabilities for agency that weak actors have. This is often lost by many who see them either OVERDETERMINED by structural pressures, or OVERSOCIOLOGIZED by hegemonic discourses. The absence from his analysis of the mediating structures makes the relations of these actors with respect to the system that oppresses and exploits them structurally dyadic and the behavior one of ressentiment.

Dependency theory also has a dyadic structure of power. The weak actor are dependent on dominant others who exploit them. There is no much they can do about this. The theory leads to a fatalism for the weak actors who have no mechanism for overcoming their dependence and leveraging their power against the metropolitan power. The consequence of this theory is also ressentiment from these weak actors, focusing their anger on the dominant metropole. International behavior by weak nation states that have no organized mechanisms for articulation of their grievances effectively have patterns of weak power based on ressentiment. Various forms of anti-Americanism and anti-Imperialism are manifestations of the powerlessness associated with unmediated dominance structures. The case of terrorism is another kind of power of the weak that has similar structure. The analogies between the kind of mechanisms identified by Scott that include sabotage have strong structural analogies to those of terrorism, and other anti-systemic forms of power.

Radical feminism also presents a dyadic structure of power based on the power relations between genders. Feminist theory provides an important framework for the study of dyadic structures because of the perceived impossibility of mediation, given the "nature" of two genders. The extent to which this dyadic relation is inherently driven by ressentiment as most other dyadic relations is a provocative thesis for research.

Powers of the Weak: Two Approaches.

Dyadic and Triadic Theoretical Structures.

The brief examination of dyadic and triadic structures above represents a very preliminary consideration of the many mechanisms of power in complex social structures. Nevertheless, this simple analysis presents some challenges to dominant approaches to theorizing that under-theorize the capacity for weak actors to exert themselves in social structures.

The question of power from weak actors challenges two common problems of theorizing. The first is the oversocialization of the actor. This is a concept related to the one that Dennis Wrong called attention some years ago, to address an overemphasis in the internalization of norms and values with an associated disregard for individual agency (Wrong, 1961). This problem is common in theoretical approaches in which the hegemonic dominance explains the absence of conflict that structural differences would anticipate.

The second problem is that of overdetermination. This is common in structural approaches in which the context and embeddedness of the actor becomes determinative of the interests and actions of the actor. In such a view, actors also loose any capacity for agency. The forces driving the system are structural and impersonal; the vehicles for strategic action, and instruments of change are absent or non-existent.

The analysis presented earlier provides a framework for questioning the extent to which peripheral or weak actors have the possibility of transmitting influence and leveraging their power. After establishing that such non-dominant actors can manage to project influence and make changes in their interests, the next question concerns how this power gets channelled.

Whether the dyad or the triad provide a more fundamental unit of analysis for sociology may be useful debate for theory. It is in the dyad that actors must come to terms with another, and acknowledge the subjectivity of another who stands completely separate and directly opposed to one's self.

The introduction of a third actor introduces a totally different set of possibilities that are not structurally possible with a dyad. As Simmel clearly indicates, it is only in the triad where actors may form coalitions against other actors (Simmel, 1950). Two actors may join together against the third with a variety of objectives in which collective action is needed. In doing so the structure can fracture into components that are not reducible to individuals. In a triad an actor may also play two actors against each other

with the objective of having them mutually weaken each other, and maintain one's relative strength. This "divide and conquer" strategy, again, is only structurally possible with structures of three or more actors.

Conclusion

The main thesis is that conflict or contestation between two entities[2] in which one is dominant due to different resources, knowledge, or other kind of control, the direct and unmediated confrontation will generally be driven by frustration and resentment on the part of the weak actor, and persistent hegemony on the part of the dominant actor. By contrast, when there is some mediating structure between the two which can be abstractly represented as a third actor, qualitatively different mechanisms become available to the weak actors to channel their action, and while always trying to beat the odds, overcoming the fatalism and determinism that is still subjectively the case in the structured dyad.

The triadic structure provides a framework for weak actors to attempt to organize this intermediate actor and coopt it to pursue its objectives. This mediation provides an important mechanism that opens communications to the dominant actor. In a dyad the communications between the dominant and weak or dependent actor are such that the weak actor experiences a great amount of constraint. The severity of the problem is structural. In a dyad the only connection is a direct one between the two entities. If this relation gets broken, very often it is the weak actor who stands to loose the most, at least in the short term, due to its fewer resources.

In a triadic relationship in which the peripheral actors have some leverage over the middling entity, the peripheral actor is not in the same fragile structure. The capacity to influence a middle level actors provides leverage against the possibility of the breakdown of this relationship. The middle entity also may see itself in a position to pursue its interests by playing the weak actor against the dominant actor, thereby gaining some leverage for itself.

Foucault formulates a series of hypothesis regarding power which are worth examining for our purposes. One of these is "there are relations of power without resistance" (Foucault, . There is a possible problem with this. There are some kinds of power that build on control of information. It is not power in a self evident way because it is not seen. When an executive secretary withholds information from his or her superior with some objective, this is surely power, but it is not met with resistance because it is not known. Resistance to power would require an awareness of power. In the

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[2] In Simmelian terms these could be two persons, social classes, organizations, nation states, or any meaningful dyad.

information age, this may well be a most important form of power that is most difficult to resist or challenge. The object of power must know that the subject has this power (information) and perhaps its content to resist it. Coming to this knowledge could dissolve this power by knowing it.

Foucault provides an analysis of the power exercised by discourses, by confining and delimiting the field of possibilities and of truth. But there is another kind of power that involves the hiding of the truth from a discourse that would condemn it. Can it be said that government officials when they prevent information from becoming public that they are controlling the public discourse? Yes, but this control does not refer to the acceptable boundaries of public discourse, but to the condemnation that such knowledge or truth would have in the operating discourse. Such truth is repressed by the state because the dominant discourse would condemn it and publicity would lead to the rebuke of the state.

In an organizational hierarchy there is usually a core of control associated with technical and bureaucratic mechanism that coordinate the various aspects of the organization. The organization also has peripheral units that are fundamental and intrinsic to the organization but with reduced capacity for control. The structures of organizational control determine the dominant patterns of flow and control in the organization. The pattern of access and control by peripheral units in the organization will vary with each organization. What are the various patterns and their contexts that allow easy transmission from the periphery to the center? Are there new forms of organization that may allow for better flow of communication and influence from peripheral actors in overall policy? Are there specific institutional frameworks needed to facilitate such transmission?

In terms of modern organization theory, are there new forms of organization yet to be explored? Do they work on different principles?

Organizations and networks become very important variables for making sense of what has happened and for restructuring what may happen in the future organization of control.

The objective in studying control is not to make control better in an instrumental way, but to find mechanisms that will also take into account the transformation of organizational culture in such a way that greater humanity in the organizational environments in which we work.

The capacity for peripheral units to have agency and independence is an important organizational question. To the extent that the organizational work requires coordination, the directionality for the transmission of information and influence. The Japanese firms have particular forms of organization that provide different degrees of agency to all members and at the same time different sets of constraints.

In a much too ignored piece written in the early 1960's, David Mechanic identified an important set of questions for organizational theory. He indicated that often we do not associate participants in the lower levels of an organizational hierarchy with having power. But very often some roles within the organization acquire considerable power even though they have no authority. "Such personal power is often attained, for example, by executive secretaries and accountants in business firms, by attendants in mental hospitals, and even inmates in prisons." (Mechanic, 1962) Prestige and institutionalized power are closely related, but other forms of informal power tend not to be formally institutionalized with authority. These other sources of organizational power may derive from various sources. One such source may be control of information flow by intermediate actors, who gain leverage over the formally powerful due to both their access to information that is sensitive to the powerful actors, or by access to information at lower levels of the organization that the top manager do not have directly.

Power is closely related to dependence.

Dependency and World Systems Theory.

The dependency theory formulated by Andre Gunder Frank, Galtung and others was structured as a dyad, distinguishing only a core and a periphery or a metropole and satellite. Immanuel Wallerstein provided the theoretical innovation of a middle position he labeled the semi-periphery. While the distinction is important, the overdetermined formulation of the capitalist system common to both tends to put them in the same camp. The systemic development and eventual dominance of capitalism determined by mechanisms of exploitation and unequal exchange, tends to develop an elite core and underdevelop the rest of the system. Under the system of exploitation outlined in different ways by these and similar theorists, there is very little that the peripheral countries can do overcome this process. The only option available is to find a way to break with the system and forge its own independent path. The strong interconnected of the system advocated by both of these theorists make this a pessimistic option.

Dependency theory and world systems theory have been strongly criticized in recent years for the fatalistic implications of their theoretical formulation. (Warren, Petras,). The structural analysis formulated by them seems to remove any capacity for agency from the system. The developed nations seem to be driven by mechanisms internal to capitalism that remove agency even from the dominant powers. The peripheries simply find themselves in a

situation given determined by history in which they had little choice, and from which they have no practical way out.

The pattern of power in both dependency and world systems theory is always from the center to the peripheries. Peripheral actors are overdetermined in the structure and have no leverage or power to improve or make relative gains with respect to the dominant actors. This determination places them in the category of theorists working exclusively from the paradigm of power from dominant centers.

Economistic Marxism.

One may pose the question of Marx's approach to power by asking whether he was fundamentally a theorist of capital or a theorist of labor. Clearly he was both to the extent that the two are intrinsic aspects of capitalism as a mode of production. It may be said that some of the more enduring contributions of Marx include the analysis of business cycles, the processes of accumulation, concentration, and centralization, all focusing on the dynamics of capital. The labor theory of value, and optimistic view of worker organization following the Paris Commune have had less continuity and survivability, all analyzing the workings of labor.

The main objectives of this paper may be summarized as follows. First we identify that weak actors have forms of power available to them and will exercise it. Second, implicit in this view is the affirmation that weak actors, no less than dominant actors have agency, meaning the capacity to act in their interests in strategic ways, taking into account their structural constraint. Third, the capability of weak actor assertion with the objective of changing the system challenges various theoretical perspectives that tend to diminish the agency of all actors but specially weak ones. Theories that operate with either an overdetermination or oversocialization of actors dismiss some of the most interesting questions about social life, and under-theorize major social phenomena.

Fourthly, dyadic and triadic structures provide qualitatively distinct mechanisms for weak actors to the challenge their oppression. Dyadic actors tend to be locked into patterns for resentment that disallow the public expression of their agency. Actors who manage to develop or coopt

mediation structures gain mechanisms for articulating their interests strategically and leveraging their power to counter the dominant structures. Their actions are pro-active, by contrast to the fatalism common in dyadic structures.

Lastly, the emphasis on structures as well as weak actors and their capacity to act in the system provides a framework for connecting structure and action. Such a linkage also overcomes the static overdetermination often associated with structural analysis.

The analysis of the powers of the weak here takes into account only very simple formal structures. The complexity of patterns of social relations are not often reducible to these. Network analysis with its capacity to deal with relational complexity may provide an important tool for the analysis of concrete systems of power to refine and develop some of the points considered here. It may also provide a framework for further theorizing about complex interdependences that have emergent properties and mechanisms that can be formally identified.

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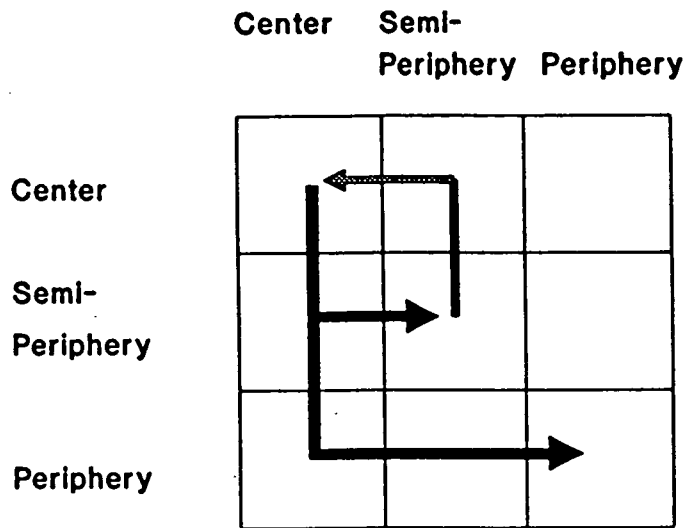
COHESION MODEL
Figure 1
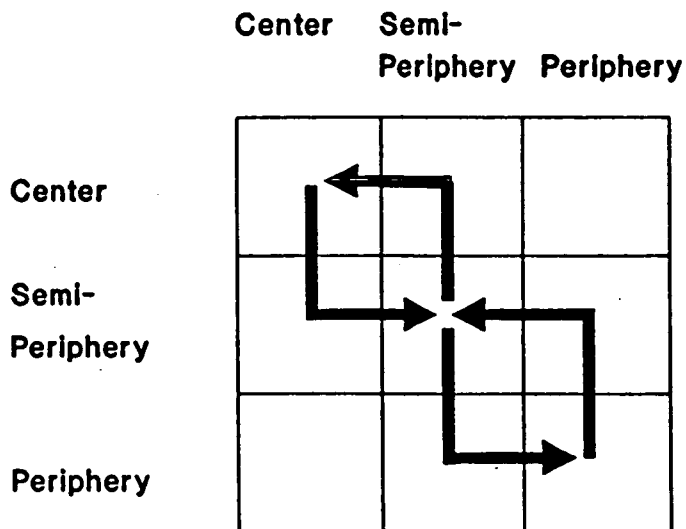
STRUCTURAL EQUIVALENCE MODEL
Figure 2

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