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978-0-521-43794-3 - Intercorporate Relations: The Structural Analysis of Business

Edited by Mark S. Mizruchi and Michael Schwartz

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Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences 1

Intercorporate Relations

Within the last decade, researchers studying business organizations have come to realize that corporate behavior cannot be explained in terms of the actions of individual firms alone, and that in order to understand how businesses operate it is necessary to explore the relationships among them. This volume constitutes the first compilation of work by leading international scholars who have adopted a structural approach to the study of business, taking relations among companies as the fundamental unit of analysis, and examining the behavior of individual firms within this framework.

In their introduction to the volume, the editors analyze the historical and intellectual context of this rapidly growing area of research. The essays that follow include position statements by leading spokespersons for the two major structural perspectives on intercorporate relations – the resource dependence and social class views; national studies of the comparative historical development of intercorporate structures in Britain, France and Germany; essays on markets, money, and relations between corporations and cities; analyses of business structures in Europe, Latin America, Japan and the US; and a chapter on transnational business relations.

The volume as a whole will demonstrate to a broader public the significance and value of a structural approach to business studies, and will appeal to sociologists, organization theorists, business scholars, economists, political scientists, and business historians.

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Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences

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Intercorporate Relations: The Structural Analysis of Business is the first volume of a Cambridge University Press series, *Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences*, which will present approaches that explain social behavior and institutions by reference to relations among such concrete social entities as persons and organizations. This contrasts with at least four other popular strategies: (1) reductionist attempts to explain by a focus on individuals alone; (2) explanations stressing the causal primacy of abstract concepts such as ideas, values, mental harmonies and cognitive maps (what is now called 'structuralism' on the Continent should be sharply distinguished from structural analysis in the present sense, though Claude Lévi-Strauss's early work on kinship is much closer to it); (3) technological and material determinism; (4) explanations that take 'variables' to be the main concepts of analysis, as for the 'structural equation' models that dominated much 1970s sociology, where the 'structure' is that connecting variables rather than concrete social entities.

The methodological core of structural analysis is the 'social network' approach but the series will also draw on a large body of work in areas such as political economy, conflict, human ecology, social psychology, organizational analysis, social mobility, sociology of science and biosociology, among others, that is not framed explicitly in network terms, but stresses the importance of relations rather than the atomization of reductionism or the determinism of ideas, technology or material conditions. The series will consist of edited and single-authored volumes; each will broadly synthesize one area of study and demonstrate the value of a structural perspective. Though this perspective has become extremely popular and influential in all the social sciences, it does not have a coherent identity, and no series yet brings together such work under a single rubric. It is my hope that the *Structural Analysis* series will, by doing so, bring the achievements of structurally oriented scholars to a wider public, and thereby encourage others to approach their theory and research in this very fruitful way.

Mark Granovetter

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The Structural Analysis of Business

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