# Deviant Behaviour in a Network-Analysis Perspective:

# A Structural-Constructionist Approach

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*Abstract*

This paper focusses on the integration of the study of *deviant behavior* on the one hand side and *network analysis* on the other. Considering (1) the methodological and theoretical assumptions of network analysis, (2) its contribution to the understanding of *protest behavior and social movements* (as a field of interest near by) and making (3) some tentative remarks on studying the process of societal confrontation with organized crime by applying the network perspective, this paper will try to show the fruitfulness and potentials of network analysis in the *particular* field of interest, i.e. deviant behavior. Following recent theoretical developments by Emirbayer and Goodwin, the pure *structural-determinist* approach of network analysis will be enriched by some elements of a *structural-constructionist* analysis. The paper will also try to show that a *shift in perspective* by using deviant behavior not predominantly as a dependent but as a independent variable will enrich the possibilities of understanding societal dynamics.

*Contents*

# 1      From Network Analysis to Structural Analysis

Structure is one of the most fundamental terms in sociology. Although everbody is using it, there is hardly a common, shared understanding of the content. In part of the sociological discourse structure represents the counterpart of culture - structure either being the prerequisite *or* the "output" of  culture, both being the objective side of the cultural subjective (Parsons and Shils 1951). Nevertheless, there are claims that there also is a *cultural* structure opposed to a *social* structure (Berger 1995). Structure is described either as static or as dynamic, structure can be metaphor or mathematical formula, it can have a volatile meaning or it can be based on a logical composition producing loads of inertia. *In short*: a central element of sociology in use by nearly everyone without an underlying basic consensus (for a further discussion, Sewell 1992). Of cause there is a certain need of under-determination in the sociological discourse due to the "soft" material of analysis. Nevertheless, one should get some clarification in order to structure the unstructured.

First of all, the sociological use of structure is a kind of distancing move, a shift away from the French *Structuralism* a la Lévi-Strauss. Structure in this older understanding goes beyond the sum of individual behavior, it´s the deep grounding of human reasoning. To get rid of this "idealistic structuralism" (Berkowitz 1982: 160) is one of the incentives at the start of sociological *structural analysis*. Structural analysis, in its "American version" (Schenk), refers to Simmel and Durkheim as some of the classics of the discipline, especially when clearing structure of anything sub-conscious. Structures, according to this understanding, are any "regular, peristent pattern(s) in the behavior of the elementary parts of a social system"

(Berkowitz 1982: 1). Especially Peter Blau in his later works (Blau 1977, 1982, Blau, Beeker and Fitzpatrick 1984, Blau/Schwartz 1984, Blau 1994) and Ronald S. Burt (1982, 1987, 1992, also Burt/Doreian 1982) have promoted the structural analysis and made it to one of promising currents of empirical sociology in the United States.

Structural analysis seeks to describe societal structures in the aforementioned sense - and to put the behavior of societal actors in a causal connection with them. In contrast to methodological individualism structural analysis tries to explain action not by individual calculations but as the product of structural influences (Giddens 1988: 270). Ronald Burt (1982) laid the foundations of a "Structural Theory of Action" in a book of the same title. He starts from the assumption of a *divided sociology*: one faction he calls atomistic, the other a normative school. Under the *atomistic* school he subsumes the theoretical and empirical work of Coleman (1973), Olson (1965) and the early studies of Blau (1964). In a line with Adam Smith´s work he sees e.g. the utility theory and the exchange theory. As for the *normative* school he refers to Parsons as a prominent theorist, mainly deriving action from internalized norms. This idea of a fundamental schism of sociology has been taken up by Mark Granovetter when he speaks of "undersocialised vs. oversocialised conceptions" of sociological theory (1985). In the group of *undersocialised theories* he locates the neo-classic approaches like rational choice, being based on ideas of Hobbes and Smith. Like Ronald Burt Mark Granovetter tries to show that

(a)     individual action can not be analyzed independent of the societal context and that

(b)     - in contrast to the assumptions of rational-choice-theories - macro-phenomena cannot be explained as solely emerging from individual action.

Being fundamental to undersocialised versions he identifies the mono-causal approach of taking internalized norms as the exclusive foundation of individual action. Consequently, Burt and Granovetter try to build a theory "half way" by synthezising both polarizing approaches.

In his first sketch of a structural perspective Burt built on the formal models of *sociological network analysis* in order to find a schism-transcending theoretical foundation: During the seventies network analysis had emancipated itsself from its ethnological and sociometric starting grounds. Network analysis had developed a differentiated repertoire of methods to formally describe social structures (profiting e.g. from the path-breaking works of Laumann/Pappi 1976, White/Boorman/Breiger 1976, Boorman/White 1976, Fischer et al. 1977, Fischer 1982; for a summarizing of the *state of the art*: Burt/Minor 1982). In terms of terminology the consensus was to understand social networks as "the relations between and among social actors and institutions" - whatever this relation is based on (Berkowitz 1982: 3ff.). One of the most important theoretical foundations of network analysis was the so-called "anti categorical impetus", i.e. refusing to accept the correlation of socio-structural variables without looking at the integration of individuals (and the specific variable categories connected with them) in a specific social context (Wellmann 1988). Consequently, the perception of categories and their "meaning" in a related social context had to be taken into account. One has not necessarily to share the view of Berkowitz, who saw "signals (of) the beginning of a scientific revolution" (1982: 150) stemming from sociological network analysis, but there certainly is a - now flourishing - kind of loosely-coupled family of methods of data analysis, which is integrated by a special theoretical perspective common to all of them (Burt 1980, Emirbayer/Goodwin 1994).
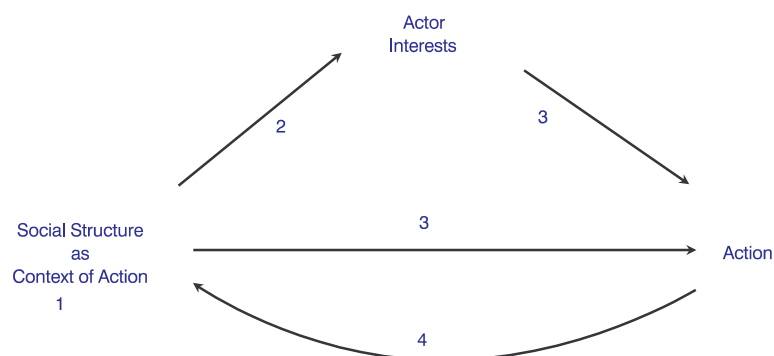
Actor
Interests

2          3

Social Structure
as                    3
Context of Action ──────────────────────▶ Action
1

4

*Abbildung 1:* Die strukturale Theorie des Handelns nach Burt 1982
(Erklärung der Ziffern im Text)

The most important contribution in conceptional terms was provided by Boorman, White and colleagues when introducing *structural equivalence* in terms of applicable mathematical models (Boorman/White 1976, White/Boorman/Breiger 1976). Based on the assumption that individuals are not solely acting on cohesion (i.e. the actual contact to others) but on competing with (potentially unkown) others incorporating the same structural role in a societal context. Burt´s theory, as a foundation, is not deriving action exclusively in a direct way from structure: His conception proposes a modelling ("patterning") of the interests of the actor by social structure as the "context of action" (number 2 in graphic 1). Interests themselves are "determining" the action, whereas structures are putting limits to the options of action (i.e. "constraining", number 3). Action itsself has an impact on social structure (being "responsible", number 4). In his "Theory of Structuration" Giddens (1988) has made the point that structural analysis of this kind does not take into accont (a) the subjective perceptions of the supposedly "objective structural parameters" by individuals, (b) the potential of social structure to enable action and (c) the potential of action to fundamentally transform structural contexts. The potential of structure to enable actions (and of actions to transform contexts) can be seen as an already integral (but not

prominent) part of Burt´s theoretical proposals. However, the diagnosis of a *cultural deficit* as a *desideratum* of structural analysis seems to be a fair and adequate critique.

## 2        Constructionist Enrichments of Structural Foundations

The critical remarks by Giddens are implicitly taken up by Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994). In their theoretical paper they cluster the previously mentioned studies within the paradigm of structural analysis. They distinguish three main currents: (1) They identify a pure, *structural-determinist* school, i.e. an approach that just builds on the objectivly measurable relationships regardless what the actors involved perceive (of those relationships). Wellmann (1988) sees the same trend and calls it *radical structuralism*. The broad structuralism he separates from this is further differentiated by Emirbayer and Goodwin into (b) a *structuralist-determinist* approach, i.e. the inclusion of instrumentalist calculations within the structural settings (e.g. similar to Burt´s approach, see graphic 1). The *structural-constructionist* approach (c) however transcends the previous two by including the cultural dimension by incorporating cultural *frames of interpretation* (see also Ellingson 1995). Additionally and in contrast to the structural-instrumentalist approach the constructionist version develops a dynamic perspective of analysis. This necessarily includes a higher rating of the actors´ perceptions: Perceptions are the *filters* through which structural factors diffuse - and hereby influence the actors´ norms and interests.

As examples of structural-constructionist studies the authors refer to Gould´s work on the Paris Commune (1991, 1993a, 1993b), Padgett and Ansell´s analysis on the rise of the Medici family

in Florence (1993) and - mainly - on the work of Doug McAdam (and collaborators) on the mobilization of political protest. McAdam studies, laid down in various books, articles and papers (for a basic publication, see McAdam 1988), are empirically based on the mobilization of the Freedom-Summer Civil-Rights-Campaign of 1964. The analyses employ various empirical methods to explain the decison of activists to take part in these high-risk-activities. Beside structural-instrumentalist variables (e.g. biographical availability) also cultural-cognitive variables (e.g. attitudinal affinity) are enclosed. Nevertheless, the most decisive asset as far as the decision to take part is concerned are pre-existing-network-ties between the activists. Extending his early publications, which focus on the *quantitative*-structural elements (1986a), McAdam uses his recent publications to develop a more qualitative view, that concentrates on the grounding, differentiation and description of the network *contents* and *contexts* (e.g. McAdam and Paulsen 1993). In this article e.g. ties and contexts are qualified by a cultural description. In addition, McAdam et al. try to apply a dynamic perspective on the identity development of participants - an approach that clearly improves the determinist and instrumentalist versions mentioned earlier. In contrast to rational-choice-approaches this perspective also emphazises the possibility of social change; an argument, which in turn makes it possible to label rational choice studies as basically structural-instrumentalist.

3      Micro-Macro-Potentials: Structures, Frames and Perceptions

Taking these considerations into account, one can present a more elaborated version of Burt´s fundamental scheme. Graphic 2 shows the integration of some of the elements discussed above into are more sophisticated theoretical system. The additives are as follows: (1) The former

central explanatory elements (social structure and interests of the actors) are embedded into an interplay with cultural frames of interpretation; (2) the perception is included as a *second* filter to influence the actor´s interests (social relations being the first); (3) social structure is viewed as both, constraining (Burt) and enabling (Giddens) for actions; and (4) all elements are seen as dynamic and in perpetual change.
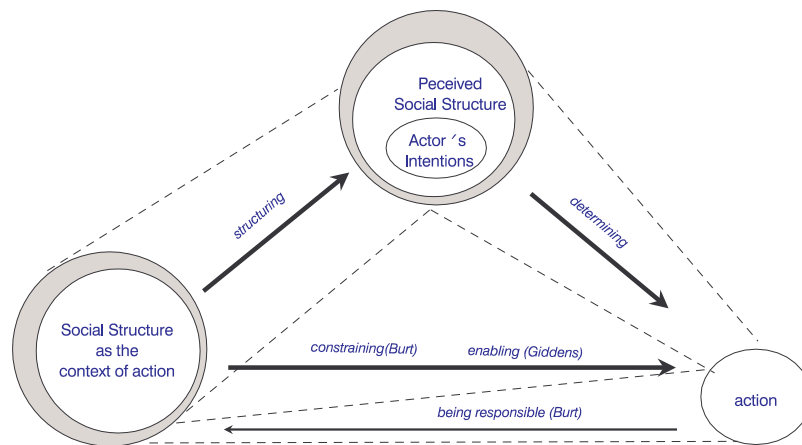


Graphic 2: The structural theory of action in its constructionist version

The most promising potential of a structural-constructionist approach, according to my view, lies in its ability to provide possibilities to partly bridge the *micro-macro-gap*. By locating *actions* at the micro level (except when looking at organisational action) micro action can constitute and change structures *and* frames at the macro level. Perceptions can also be located at the micro,

while structures are both micro and macro. Like perceptions structures are com-bined (sic!) with the actors at the micro, whereas structures are also a macro element just *perceivable* in a kind of aerial view (e.g. structural equivalence as a derived macro component). Frames themselves are macro elements, which are broken down on the micro level by individual perceptions (i.e. frame amplification, frame bridging). In a special intermediary process of perceived societal *ex*istence and *per*sistence of frames they again have an impact on the micro level of society (as a kind of *proxy* macro variable), i.e. by influencing actors´ decision to act: frames hereby influence the micro from the macro via some intermediary (*meso?*) processes.

*In conclusion:*  By combining structural and cultural assets the structural-constructionist approach seems to be capable of at least providing a kind of *infrastructure* as a starting point for bridging the micro-macro-gap. Possible perceptions (mainly as frames) and the perceptions of perceptions are the crucial relay (or the operational filter) between frames and structures on the one hand side, and interests and actions on the other. However, structures seem to have an *independent* influence on action, whereas frames rely on perceptions to develop their impact. *Therefore:* Structural analysis, even in the constructionist version, claims an independent and direct influence of structures on action. One of the most interesting questions caused by this presumption is whether there can be an total roll-back of structural influence by perceptions as a *substituting* factor: Is there a freedom of structural determination or are there residuals actors can *not* emancipate from. This again evokes the question of the relevance (of at least this current) of sociology as an explanatory approach to human action.

## 4       From Protest Action to Deviant Behavior

What does inclusion of frames into an analysis when applied in empirical research actually mean? Frames are reference systems for interpreting and constructing reality, according to Snow et al. 1986. Taking an example from the analyis of social movements - i.e. uncoventional and collective behavior of a certain stability combined with the intention to initiate social change - I want to illustrate the fruitfulness of a combined structural and constructionist interpretation. Gerhards and Rucht (1992) analyse the protest mobilizations in West-Berlin (a) during the visit of the then President of the United States Ronald Reagan in 1987 and (b) during the assembly of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1988. *On the one hand side* they scrutinize the spectrum of groups and associations supportive to the protest campaigns (looking at the context of all existing associations and groups in Berlin). For the mobilized groups (the *activated* mobilization potential) they look at the underlying frames of reference - especially they search for links between the groups´ internal frames and the so-called master frames of the overall campaigns. By using leaflets central to the campaign they isolate the master frames of "imperialism" (IMF) and "military world dominance" (Reagan visit). These master frames are the central points of reference for all groups. They are the condensed "packages of interpretation" (Gamson 1988) all groups can lock in or on to. By further differentiating diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames (following Snow and Bendford 1988) Gerhards and Rucht are able to reconstruct and explain the process of activating broad segments of the mobilization potential.

Stepping back a little bit, one can enclose some more studies into this "tradition" leading to the empirical studies of Gerhards/Rucht, McAdam and Gould. Gamson (1975), Gamson/Modigliani (1989), McCharthy/Zald (1987), Ellingson (1995) and Diani (1995) are also integral parts in this line of reasoning about and researching on social movements. Speaking in theoretical terms they mainly built on two theoretical concepts, i.e. the resource-mobilization-perspective and the political-opportunity-approach. The early protest analysis being dominated by collective behavior approaches with its mass-psychological and *irrational* appeal, these new approaches have stressed the rationality of the protest actors, either being individuals or collectives. Recent studies in social movements and protest have built roots in institutional terms and founded networks of reasoning reaching into bigger theoretical families (e.g. into the rational-choice-approach, for an broader overview see Rucht 1991, 1994). The explanandum of these approaches is unconventional behavior of a special kind: *political protest* mainly in its collective version. Protest itsself lies on the borderline of political sociology and the sociology of deviant behavior: Protest is per se *unconventional* behavior, but it is not necessarily *criminal* behavior - of cause there is a certain overlap in terms of civil disobedience. Criminal behavior itsself *can* have an element of political or social protest - but this is not necessarily the case.

Looking a bit closer, both at the political-opportunity-approach and at the resource-mobilization-perspective, one can identify a question common to both (which leads to the shared structural perpective). Both approaches ask: What makes protest successful? Success is defined on a micro bases by activating citizens, but also on the macro level by influencing political decisions. Gamson (1978), McCharthy/Zald (1986) and Tilly (1978) speak of social resources a social actor can mobilize as a prerequisite of his or her success. Political opportunities in the version suggested by Tarrow (1983, 1989) include all elements on the political level of society that can

support or hinder political protest to develop. Both approaches can be interpreted to encompass *both* structures and frames as factors explaining the rise and fall of protest and social movements. Especially the inclusion of the framing approach by Snow et al. (1986) made it possible to stress the cultural additives like frames and perceptions. Taking this, first, as a starting point and pushing the analysis, second, further away from the meso-level of society (movements, organisations, political success) down to the micro level of individual perceptions, interests and actions will make it possible to improve the study of deviant behavior - as I want to show in the following passages.

5      Deviant Behavior in a Structural-Constructionist Perspective:

       *Perceptions of Organized Crime*

What does all that have to do with the study of deviant behavior? And what is the improvement that might be inherent to these theoretical suggestions? In the following, I want to show its potential fruitfulness by applying the structural-constructionist approach to a field previously deserted in terms of empirical research: *organized crime*. In the last chapter of this paper I will outline the conceptional ideas and the main empirical bases of a project of the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony.[1] The project, in its sociological parts, is based on the central hypothesis of a presumed correlation between a cumulated confrontation with crime (either directly or indirectly via personal networks) on the one hand side and a gradually diminishing trust in democracy as a system to regulate conflicts on the other (Weatherford 1987).

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[1] The research is mainly funded by the Volkswagen-Foundation (Az.: II/ 70 213: "Victimization and System Trust"). Funding started in March 1995 and will finish in February

The conceptional assumption was that business-people (i.e. in the actual empirical project *pubholders*) are endangered in a double way. First, they are potential victims of private victimization, second, they are also possible victims of business-specific victimization. This double threat makes business people a group under specific stress - and with special demands to the political system. We also hypothesized that *organized crime* in its specific version of racketeering and extortion might endanger the pubholders´ trust in democracy in a very special way: Officials like policemen and government-politicians publicly announced that "the state" cannot do anything against racketeering and extortion in terms of actual help - as these crimes are handled as forms of organized crime. A possible result of this dominant frame of interpretation, that is echoed by nearly the whole of the public discourse, is the feeling of "being left alone" on the side of the actual and potential victims which might urge them to look for potential functional equivalents (e.g. self-justice or anti-democratic changes). Additionally, we included the pubholders´ confrontation with corrupt government officers in our conceptional sheme, because being confronted with corruption (a) is obviously a challenge to system trust and (b), according to the public discourse reflected and reinforced by the media, corruption is a field to be increasingly conquered by organized crime. All of these elements are of even more concern with pubholders stemming from *ethnic minorities*: they might we more often victims both of everyday crime, of corruption and of racketeering (this - at least - is also a dominant frame in the public discourse). We therefore focussed our project on businesspeople, focussing on pubholders of German, Greak, Italian and Turkish ethnic origin.

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1998; collaborating scientists are Ute Gabriel as a psychologist, Eberhard Mecklenburg as data-administrator, Christian Pfeiffer as criminologist and my person on the sociological side.

The data base is twofold: *First* a standardized telephone interview effectively conducted with a group of 4.393 pubholders, *second* a mailed questionnaire (anonymously) sent back by 3.489 pubholders of the targeted groups. However, the roughly 7.900 datasets do not fulfil the requirements of constituting representative samples - the response rate was to low (about 35% in the telephone survey, about 11% as far as the mailed questionnaire is concerned). We therefore do not claim to present a representative survey, although tests showed that the structure of our sample comes close to the sampled population, as far as type of business and regional distribution (both in geographical and uban vs. rural terms) is concerned.

In the theoretical context presented an analysis based on the telephone data is of special interest: We both asked the interviewees (a) to tell us how many pubholders they know *personally* who were/are confronted with racketeering and/or corruption (i.e. indirect victimization) and (b) what rate of victimization they would estimate refering to the pubs in their city/town with pubholders of the same ethnic origin (i.e. perceived victimization). We correlated both, indirect *and* perceived victimization of racketeering and corruption, with an indicator of system trust. This indicator is based on four standard items of surveys on trust in institutions and democracy, i.e. the effectiveness and legitimacy of democracy as regime/political order. These four items are isolated theoretically as empirical indicators of specific and specific-diffuse support (in contrast to efficacy-items *on the one hand side* and to the diffuse support of the philosophic idea of democracy *on the other*). This theoretical idea was empirically confirmed by a factor analysis (showing that those four items are loading on one factor).

*Table 1*:     Bi- and multivariate regression of perceived victimization and indirect victimization (racketeering/corruption) with system trust (scale); telephone sample

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| System trust (scale) | Indirect victimization racketeering | Perceived victimization racketeering | Indirect victimization corruption | Perceived victimization corruption |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *bivariate* (r-values) | -.06** (n=4.015) | -.15** (n=2.219) | -.10** (n=3.993) | -.26** (n=2.218) |
| *multivariate* | -.01 | -.05 | -.04 | -.22** |
| (beta-values) R=.27 (n=1546) | ** p < .01 | | | |

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The bivariate correlation reveals two results: (a) the correlation between corruption and system trust is higher than between racketeering and trust, both for indirect victimizations and for perceived victimizations; (b) the correlation between perceived victimizations and trust, both for corruption and racketeering, is higher than the correlations between indirect victimizations and trust. Consequently (in a way), in the multivariate regression analysis the *perceived victimization of corruption* is the only variable having a significant, independent correlation with trust (see table 1).

Two conclusions can be drawn from this (1) corruption is the factor of higher influence on trust, (2) *perception* in form of perceived, generalized rates is more important than *structural* assets in form of personal relations to victims. Elements of the conclusion can be doubted in terms of confusing dependant and independant variables, i.e. generalized corruption rates and system trust. *In other words:* Showing distrust in democracy urges the interviewee to claim corruption to be widespread - in order to produce consistent patterns of answering to avoid cognitive dissonance. The conclusion refering to racketeering seems to be of more uncontestable validity. Its consequences will be dicussed in the final section.

The *first* conclusion can be: *Perceptions* (i.e. generalizations in form of estimated victimization rates) are more important than *structures* (i.e. victims one knows personally) when it comes to

the formation of individual interests. This conclusion is supported by the bi- and multivariate analysis reported above - and by an additional bivariate correlation between perceived and indirect victimizations: victimizations in the personal network do only mildly correlate with levels of generalizations. Obviously structures are not a necessary prerequisite of perceptions. This leads to the *second* conclusion: the importance of the handling of frames of interpretations within the public sphere, i.e. especially the mass medias´ handling of reconstructions of society - being a virtual (but the only available) reality in many parts of social life. In this perspective the construction and perpetuation of frames is an important asset of social change - and a precarious element in the public discourse to be handled with care by all of the public actors. Structures seem to be a fundament, but perceptions seem to overrule or - at least - moderate their influence.

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