

Structuration Theory: The Duality of Structure

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Abstract

This proposal focuses on the duality of structure, as well as the unintended consequences of actions, as presented by Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory.

Keywords

Actions; Structure; Unintended Consequences

Proposal

According to Littlejohn and Foss (2011), Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory can be defined as "human action is a process of producing and reproducing various social systems through ordinary practice." In other words, actions build structures/rules that affect future actions. As a sociocultural theory, Structuration attempts to explain human behavior and actions within the context of the group. As such, Structuration has been most often utilized in the organizational and team settings.

I recently conducted research on Structuration Theory in which I analyzed the different aspects of the theory and the situations in which it is usually applied. This theory has two main ideas: the unintended consequences of actions and the duality of structure. Actions, both verbal and nonverbal, have consequences that form structures, or "rules," that affect future actions and decisions. The duality of structure can be summed up with the statement, People's actions affect structures, which affect future actions. In other words, structure both influences and is influenced by the unintentional consequences of people's actions and decisions.

The focus of my research was on the duality of structure. While this theory has been utilized in a variety of contexts, it is most often used in the organizational context. One study

presented by Christina Ling-hsing Chang analyzed the way in which political behavior affected how a specific organization (“Tahoe”) was structured (2014). Chang’s study on the use of political behavior in the organizational setting incorporates and analyzes Structuration Theory very well, in that the study analyzes how people’s strategic use of political behavior affects not only future decisions and actions that the organization will make, but it also affects the organizational structure and culture within the organization itself.

In conclusion, Structuration Theory’s duality of structure proves especially valuable within the organizational context due to its ability to explain how people’s actions and decisions are affected by past actions and affect future actions.

References

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