

Evidence for the USAID Local Capacity Strengthening Policy: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Resources

This annotated bibliography reflects a fraction of the growing evidence base relevant for local capacity strengthening in humanitarian assistance and development contexts and includes a selection of the key resources that were consulted for the development of the [USAID Local Capacity Strengthening Policy](#). The resources included in this list do not reflect any particular sector or country, nor do they account for the many resources produced or compiled by other local and international organizations. USAID Bureaus and Independent Operating Units include relevant evidence to their technical areas in their Local Capacity Strengthening Policy implementation guidance documents.

Analoui, F., and J. K. Danquah. 2017. *Critical Capacity Development*, 1 ed.: Palgrave Macmillan Cham.

This book contributes to our understanding of a neglected and poorly understood concept within the development field: ‘capacity development’ in the context of human and organizational sustainable development. Relating ‘capacity development’ to other perspectives in development thinking and practice and giving an account of the concept’s genesis, the book introduces readers to recent empirical research initiatives that help to elucidate the concepts of capacity, capacity development, and capacity management. While capacity development initiatives and programmes have been used by most international and national agencies over the course of the last five decades, the term means different things to different people, especially to different major players in the international community. This weakens its effectiveness. This book, therefore, strives first of all to set ground rules that can be utilized by international aid providers.

Andrews, M., L. Pritchett, and M. Woolcock. 2013. "Escaping Capability Traps Through Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)." *World Development* 51: 234–244.

Many development initiatives fail to improve performance because they promote isomorphic mimicry—governments change what they look like, not what they do. This article proposes a new approach to doing development, Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA), which contrasts with standard approaches. PDIA focuses on solving locally nominated and prioritized performance problems (instead of transplanting “best practice” solutions). PDIA encourages positive deviance and experimentation (instead of requiring that agents implement policies as designed). PDIA creates feedback loops that facilitate rapid learning (instead of lagged learning from ex post evaluation). PDIA engages many agents to create viable, relevant interventions (instead of depending on external experts).

Baber, C., and R. McMaster. 2016. "Collaborative Sensemaking." In *Grasping the Moment*, edited by C. Baber and R. McMaster, 285. London: CRC Press.

In contrast to the individual cognition, other approaches assert that sensemaking is a social process whereby a common understanding of the task and mental representations are distributed across the members of a group (Thompson and Fine 1999). When viewed in terms of collaborative networks (i.e., communities of practice and exploration networks), sensemaking can be conducted as a systems-level activity. Socially distributed cognition is primarily concerned with the properties of wider systems that emerge through the coordination and communication of human agents. In other words, socially distributed cognition “...includes phenomena that emerge in social interactions as well as interactions between people and structure in their environments (Hollan et al. 2000, p. 177).”

Balbo Di Vinadio, T., P. Sinha, and P. Sachdeva. 2012. Strengthening Inclusive Ownership through Capacity Development: Operational Lessons from Case Studies. World Bank, Washington D.C.

Ownership of development goals and priorities by local stakeholders is widely viewed as a critical factor impacting development effectiveness and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 2008 Accra Agenda for Action identifies the concept as one of inclusive ownership, involving parliaments, local authorities, and civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as governments. The importance and challenges of building such broad-based ownership across society were a key discussion topic at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in November 2011 at Busan. This study aims to generate deeper operational knowledge on what can be done to foster inclusive ownership and involves a retrospective review of a small sample of cases. From these cases, it is possible to demonstrate that inclusive ownership, when considered in terms of the operational dimensions examined in the study, can improve as a result of strategic capacity development efforts. It also shows how using an analytic lens such as the CDRF, in particular for the assessment of intermediate results of capacity development, helps to deconstruct the change process in a given case and suggest some operational lessons.

Barasa, E. W., K. Cloete, and L. Gilson. 2017. “From bouncing back, to nurturing emergence: reframing the concept of resilience in health systems strengthening.” *Health Policy and Planning* 32, suppl_3: iii91-iii94.

Recent health system shocks such as the Ebola disease outbreak have focused global health attention on the notion of resilient health systems. In this commentary, the authors reflect on the current framing of the concept of resilience in health systems discourse and propose a reframing. Specifically, they propose that: (1) in addition to sudden shocks, health systems face the ongoing strain of multiple factors. Health systems need the capacity to continue to deliver services of good quality and respond effectively to wider health challenges. The authors call this capacity everyday resilience; (2) health system resilience entails more than bouncing back from shock. In complex adaptive systems (CAS), resilience emerges from a combination of absorptive, adaptive, and transformative strategies; (3) nurturing the resilience of health systems requires understanding health systems as comprising not only hardware elements (such as finances and infrastructure), but also software elements (such as leadership capacity, power relations, values, and appropriate organizational culture). The paper also reflects on current criticisms of the concept of resilient health systems, such as that it assumes that systems are apolitical, ignoring actor agency, promoting inaction, and requiring that we accept and embrace vulnerability, rather than strive for stronger and more responsive systems. The authors observe that these criticisms are warranted to the extent that they refer to notions of resilience that are mismatched with the reality of health systems as CAS and argue that the observed weaknesses of resilience thinking can be addressed by reframing and applying a resilience lens that is better suited to the attributes of health systems as CAS.

Baser, H., and P. Morgan. 2008. “Capacity, Change and Performance Study Report.” European Centre for Development Policy Management Maastricht.

Capacity and capacity development have been pervasive concepts in international development cooperation since the late 1980s. But for most of the 1990s, both capacity as an outcome and capacity development as a process—what we call in this report capacity issues—attracted little in the way of serious research. This pattern began to change in 2001 with a major UNDP initiative entitled Reforming Technical Cooperation, which was critical of the weak contribution of technical assistance to capacity development. In late 2002, the Department for International Development (DFID) approached the European Center for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) to carry out a research programme that would build on the UNDP work, but would also focus on what could be done to improve the effectiveness of the capacity interventions of international development agencies (IDAs), the multilateral and bilateral

organizations as well as the multinational NGOs providing support to developing countries. This new study was to have a particular niche: to understand better the processes of capacity development and to provide some good practices to guide IDA programming, particularly at the operational level. The purposes of the study were: to enhance understanding of the interrelationships among capacity, change and performance across a wide range of development experiences; and to provide general recommendations and frameworks to support the effectiveness of external interventions aimed at improving capacity and performance.

Boud, D., R. Keogh, and D. Walker. 2013. *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*. Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

First published in 1985, this is a volume of collected articles on reflection in learning, looking at the model, experience-based learning, development of learning skills, writing, and the importance of the listener. Contains a variety of examples and methods with applications to training and experiential education.

Burkett, I. 2011. "Appreciating assets: A new report from the International Association for Community Development." *Community Development Journal* 46, no. 4: 573–578.

This report brings together the various strands of ‘asset’ approaches to community development that have become increasingly influential. These include approaches that focus on: the importance of the strengths and assets that people in communities bring to change processes, such as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), strengths-based work, and citizen-led development; the idea of assets as providing the basis of community capital, including human, social, built, political, cultural, natural and financial capitals; and the importance of asset ownership for building pathways out of poverty and exclusion, including asset transfer, asset-building, and community-led management of assets.

Chambers, R. 2012. *Ideas for Development*. Earthscan from Routledge.

Our world seems entangled in systems increasingly dominated by power, greed, ignorance, self-deception, and denial, with spiraling inequity and injustice. Against a backdrop of climate change, failing ecosystems, poverty, crushing debt and corporate exploitation, the future of our world looks dire, and the solutions almost too monumental to consider. Yet all is not lost. Robert Chambers, one of the “glass is half full” optimists of international development, suggests that the problems can be solved, and everyone has the power at a personal level to take action, develop solutions and remake our world as it can and should be. Chambers peels apart and analyzes aspects of development that have been neglected or misunderstood. In each chapter, he presents an earlier writing which he then reviews and reflects upon in a contemporary light before harvesting a wealth of powerful conclusions and practical implications for the future. The book draws on experiences from Africa, Asia, and elsewhere, covering topics and concepts as wide and varied as irreversibility, continuity, and commitment; administrative capacity as a scarce resource; procedures and principles; participation in the past, present, and future; scaling up; behavior and attitudes; responsible wellbeing; and concepts for development in the 21st century.

DAC, OECD. 2012. "Supporting Partners to Develop their Capacity: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews." *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews*.

This book is about partnerships between Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members and civil society organizations (CSOs) which can serve many purposes. These include, as reflected in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2011), supporting the vital role that CSOs play in enabling people to claim their rights, in promoting rights-based approaches, in shaping development policies and partnerships and in overseeing their implementation, in providing services in areas that are complementary to those provided by states and in contributing to and raising public awareness about

global development challenges and results. Despite the significant share of official development assistance (ODA) flowing to and through CSOs (16.2 percent of ODA of DAC member countries in 2010), there are few shared guidelines, benchmarks or documented good practices that DAC members can follow when partnering with civil society. At the same time, DAC peer reviews provide recommendations, evidence and examples of how different members work with CSOs, the challenges they face and good practice.

DAC, OECD. 2012. “Supporting Partners to Develop their Capacity: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews.” *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews.*

Over the period 2006 to 2010, capacity development was treated as a special topic in a total of 19 OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) peer reviews in recognition of its increasing importance in development co-operation. In addition, how DAC members work to support capacity development in their partner countries has been discussed in many other peer reviews under the heading of aid effectiveness. This booklet draws out some common themes or lessons regarding capacity development from these peer reviews, including technical co-operation which is one of the main forms of DAC members’ assistance to partner countries. The lessons are focused on how DAC members can reform their technical co-operation and other practices to better support partners to develop their own capacity. The booklet includes examples of DAC members’ practices and experiences and sketches out the challenges donors still face as they move toward better support for capacity development. While the lessons are very much targeted at DAC members, they are relevant for others too. The lessons are grouped under the following headings: the strategic framework; delivering effective support for capacity development; and learning and accountability.

DAC, OECD. 2006. “The Challenge of Capacity Development – Working Towards Good Practice.”

Adequate country capacity is one of the critical missing factors in current efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Development efforts in many of the poorest countries will fail, even if they are supported with substantially increased funding, if the development of sustainable capacity is not given greater and more careful attention. This is now widely recognized by donor organizations and partner countries alike, as articulated in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Yet, capacity development is a major challenge. Technical cooperation and various forms of capacity building have absorbed substantial funds over many decades. While a few countries have done well, donor efforts in many countries have produced little to show in terms of sustainable country capacity. This contrast between the importance of the challenge and the difficulty of meeting it is what stimulated the preparation of this paper. The paper draws on a large volume of documented experience provided by bilateral and multilateral donors and academic specialists. It is mainly concerned with capacity and performance in the public sector, but private sector experience is drawn on where relevant.

Development Alternative. 2019. “Shifting the Power: What will it take to do development differently?”

This is a research series into Youth Civil Society led by young people in Iraq, Lebanon, Madagascar, and Uganda. The research covers four major areas of concern: Funding and Resourcing, Leadership, Organizational Capacity, and Connections and Collaboration. The major findings of the research are that organizations want more interaction with donors, and building trust and transparency are important for creating long and lasting relationships. These relationships need to be formalized at the beginning of a new partnership. Youth CSOs want collaborations that outlive the program’s funding cycle, as short funding cycles constrain building strong relationships. These same organizations want funding structures to better value and compensate the expertise of national organizations. Additionally, organizations want

more flexible funding streams that enable organizational growth in strategic areas. Finally, the research finds that they would also like to have more diverse and productive spaces for connecting.

Ellerman, D. 2005. Helping People Help Themselves: From the World Bank to an Alternative Philosophy of Development Assistance. University of Michigan Press.

David Ellerman relates a deep theoretical groundwork for a philosophy of development, while offering a descriptive, practical suggestion of how goals of development can be better set and met. Beginning with the assertion that development assistance agencies are inherently structured to provide help that is ultimately unhelpful by overriding or undercutting the capacity of people to help themselves, David Ellerman argues that the best strategy for development is a drastic reduction in development assistance. The locus of initiative can then shift from the would-be helpers to the doers (recipients) of development. Ellerman presents various methods for shifting initiative that are indirect, enabling and autonomy-respecting. Eight representative figures in the fields of education, community organization, economic development, psychotherapy, and management theory including Albert Hirschman, Paulo Freire, John Dewey, and Søren Kierkegaard demonstrate how the major themes of assisting autonomy among people are essentially the same.

Fowler, A. F. 1998. “Authentic NGDO Partnerships in the New Policy Agenda for International Aid: Dead End or Light Ahead?” *Development and Change*, no. 1 (January): 137–59.

Since the seventies, ‘partnership’ has been an aspiration and measure for relationships between nongovernmental organizations involved in international development (NGDOs). Unfortunately, NGDOs have shown little ability to form equitable relations (i.e., true partnership between themselves). The first part of this article analyzes why. The new policy agenda for international aid emphasizes contract-based relationships, which will make real partnerships even more difficult to achieve. The second part of the analysis argues why trust-based authentic partnerships remain vital for development and outlines ways NGOs can form them. But in the long term, NGDOs must radically rethink their roles, which calls for a transformation from intermediaries in a funding chain to facilitators of international cooperation between the diverse groups which comprise civil society. NGDOs unwilling to take this step could be classified as hypocrites if they continue to employ the term partnership for old wine in re-labeled bottles.

Freeman, L.C. 2004. The Development of Social Network Analysis: A Study in the Sociology of Science. Empirical Press.

Ideas about social structure and social networks are very old. People have always believed that biological and social links among individuals are important. But it wasn’t until the early 1930s that systematic research that explored the patterning of social ties linking individuals emerged. And it emerged, not once, but several times in several different social science fields and in several places. This book reviews these developments and explores the social processes that wove all these “schools” of network analysis together into a single coherent approach.

Gaventa, J. 2006. “Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis.” *IDS Bulletin* 37, no. 6, (November): 23–33.

Development actors are increasingly aware of the need to understand and engage with power relations as a means of promoting pro-poor change. So, where should they target their efforts, and which strategies should they use? This article explores one approach to power analysis, known as the ‘power cube.’ If the development community wants to change power relationships to make them more inclusive, it must reflect on power relationships in all of its dimensions. The power cube may represent the first step in making power’s most hidden and invisible forms more visible. The power cube is a framework for

analyzing spaces, places, and forms of power and their interrelationship. It incorporates three dimensions of power—levels (global, national, and local); spaces (closed, invited, and claimed/created); and form (hidden, invisible, and visible).

Illeris, K. 2018. *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists...in Their Own Words*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

In this book, Professor Knud Illeris has collated chapters that explain both the complex frameworks in which learning takes place and the specific facets of learning. Each international expert provides either a seminal text or an entirely new précis of the conceptual framework they have developed over a lifetime of study, such as adult learning theory, learning strategies, and the cultural and social nature of learning processes. Elucidating the key concepts of learning, *Contemporary Theories of Learning* provides both the perfect desk reference and an ideal introduction for students. It is an invaluable resource for all researchers and academics involved in the study of learning and provides a detailed synthesis of current learning theories... all in the words of the theorists themselves.

Interpeace. 2020. “Local Leadership to Local Ownership – An Essential Element for Effective Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention.”

This is a short policy note explaining some of the core issues surrounding the concepts of local ownership and local leadership in peacebuilding and peacemaking processes. The note covers three key questions: Why is local ownership important for peace? What is ‘Local Ownership’ and ‘Local Leadership’ in the context of peacebuilding? Why is local ownership hard to foster and enable? It also provides brief examples of tools and approaches that enable local leadership and local ownership on-the-ground and a summary of key recommendations from the UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace report that relate to enabling greater local leadership.

Jurie, J. D. 2000. “Building Capacity: Organizational Competence and Critical Theory.” *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 13, no. 3: 264–74.

Public administration and organization management features numerous references to the development and maturation of individuals within organizations not only as a means of self-fulfillment but also as a primary component of meeting the larger goals of the organization. Successful articulation of individual needs, theory, practice, and programmatic objectives requires the maturation of the organization as a “competent” entity capable of providing enhanced opportunities for the development of individual potential as well as stakeholder and client satisfaction. Organizations building competence seek to synthesize effective management theory and quality of service delivery within a procedural framework, which interrelates unsublimated needs satisfaction, management practice, and agency mission. An organizational competency model constructed through the use of critical theory offers greater employee and client satisfaction, more effective and efficient service delivery through improved agency self-actualization and performance, and expanded community involvement through a redefined public interest.

Kania, J., and M. Kramer. 2011. “Collective Impact.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 9, no. 1: 36–41.

Large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations. Shifting from isolated impact to collective impact is not merely a matter of encouraging more collaboration or public-private partnerships. It requires a systemic approach to social impact that focuses on the relationships between organizations and the progress toward shared objectives. The authors describe five conditions of collective success.

Khalil, E. L. 1995. "Organizations Versus Institutions." *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 151, no. 3 (September): 445–66.

The paper draws a sharp distinction between organizations and institutions. Organizations are agents like households, firms, and states that have preferences and objectives. Institutions are formal and informal social constraints (rules, habits, constitutions, laws, conventions) which apparently reduce the total scarce resources available. Economists debate whether organizations are individuals with their own objectives or whether they are artificial things created ultimately to serve the objectives of their members. In contrast, economists debate whether institutions are real schemes, which define the cognitive ability of the agent, or whether they are the subject of optimization rationality. And, hence, are nominal social constraints.

Mathie, A., J. Cameron, and K. Gibson. 2017. "Asset-based and Citizen-Led Development: Using a Diffracted Power Lens to Analyze the Possibilities and Challenges." *Progress in Development Studies* 17, no. 1: 54–66.

Asset-based community development or Asset-based and citizen-led development (ABCD) is being used in a range of development contexts. Some researchers have been quick to dismiss ABCD as part of the neoliberal project and an approach that perpetuates unequal power relations. This article uses a diffracted power analysis to explore the possibilities associated with ABCD as well as the challenges. It focuses on the application of ABCD in the Philippines, Ethiopia, and South Africa and finds that ABCD can reverse internalized powerlessness, strengthen opportunities for collective endeavors, and help to build local capacity for action.

Ostrom, E. 2005. *Understanding Institutional Diversity*. Princeton University Press.

Understanding Institutional Diversity explains the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, which enables a scholar to choose the most relevant level of interaction for a particular question. This framework examines the arena within which interactions occur, the rules employed by participants to order relationships, the attributes of a biophysical world that structures and is structured by interactions, and the attributes of a community in which a particular arena is placed.

Petty, S., and M. Leach. 2020. "Systems Change & Deep Equity: Pathways Toward Sustainable Impact, Beyond "Eureka!," Unawareness & Unwitting Harm." *Change Elemental*.

Transformative change towards love, dignity, and justice requires deeply embedding equity into all systems change efforts. And yet, there are many ways a deep equity perspective has not been integrated into the systems change field and as a result, many systems change efforts have caused harm. We have learned in our work that systems change without equity is not systems change. This monograph by Sheryl Petty, Movement Tapestries, and Mark Leach, Change Elemental, illuminates essential dimensions of approaches to Systems Change, which are intimately connected with Deep Equity. It also offers ideas about how to bring racial [equity]—and other intersecting aspects of equity—more deeply and centrally into your systems change work. The combination of the *systems change* and *deep equity* fields is critical work for the next phase of our human evolution, to become the societies we hope for in our deepest hearts.

Root Change. 2013. "New Directions in Local Capacity Development: Embracing a Systems Perspective."

In this synthesis report from the Learning Agenda (LA) on Local Organization Capacity Development, the authors corroborate the main finding from the LA fieldwork—foreign assistance has largely ignored the emergence of complexity-informed approaches to the aid challenge, and in particular, capacity development. Instead of acknowledging the systemic problems of our current system, much of our

present-day capacity development practice is built on the assumption that we can fix things by doing “the wrong thing righter (Ackoff 1999).” According to Ramlangan (2013), “the pronounced tendency to do the wrong things right reinforces the ‘second best’ nature of aid solutions.” As the authors demonstrate through this study, the “wrong thing” is a preoccupation with management-centered capacity development. While internal systems and management practices contribute to an organization’s “capacity,” they do not, in and of themselves, represent capacity. High-capacity organizations make a significant difference in the lives of the individuals and communities they serve—they achieve impact. In this report, Root Change sets out to better understand the systems view and the importance it places on intangibles, such as trusting relationships and tapping into the power of social bridging and bonding social capital.

Rose, M., and N. Wadham-Smith. 2004. “Mutuality, trust and cultural relations.” British Council London.

This paper is an exploration of the idea of mutuality in cultural relations. In it, the authors examine what mutuality means and ways in which it can be implemented. Their argument puts trust-building at the center and argues that the building of trust requires independence of government, a long-term perspective, and an approach based on mutuality.

Scott, W. R. 2014. *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests and Identities*. Los Angeles, etc.: SAGE Publications.

Creating a clear, analytical framework, this comprehensive exploration of the relationship between institutional theory and the study of organizations continues to reflect the richness and diversity of institutional thought—viewed both historically and as a contemporary, ongoing field of study. Drawing on the insights of cultural and organizational sociologists, institutional economists, social and cognitive psychologists, political scientists, and management theorists, the book reviews and integrates the most important recent developments in this rapidly evolving field and strengthens and elaborates the author’s widely accepted “pillars” framework, which supports research and theory construction. By exploring the differences as well as the underlying commonalities of institutional theories, the book presents a cohesive view of the many flavors and colors of institutionalism. Finally, the book evaluates and clarifies developments in both theory and research while identifying future research directions.

Ubels, J., N. Acquaye-Baddoo, and A. Fowler. 2010. *Capacity Development in Practice*. London: Earthscan from Routledge.

The international development community invests billions of dollars to improve organizational capacity. But real-life practice is poorly understood and undervalued as a distinct professional domain. Written by practitioners, this innovative publication is designed to make capacity development more professional and increasingly effective in achieving development goals. Practical illustrations draw on experiences from the civic, government, and private sectors. A central theme is to understand capacity as more than something internal to organizations. This book shows how capacity also stems from connections between different types of actors and the levels in society at which they operate. The content is crafted for a broad audience of practitioners in capacity development: consultants, managers, front-line workers, trainers, facilitators, leaders, advisors, programme staff, activists, and funding agencies.

Vella, J. 2002. “Learning to listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults.” In *The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series*, 3–27. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

For most of us, the idea of learning is based on our years in high school and college. You sit in a classroom, the teacher speaks—you listen, the teacher asks a question—you answer, the teacher

delivers the final answer, and that is just the way it is. Jane Vella, in her book *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults*, debunks this ideology for the adult learner outlining twelve principles of dialogue education.

Wang, V. C. X. 2008a. Curriculum Development for Adult Learners in the Global Community: Strategic Approaches. 2008b. Curriculum Development for Adult Learners in the Global Community: Teaching and Learning. Florida: Krieger Publishing Company.

Adult and continuing education continues to evolve as both a strong discipline and a professional field of practice throughout the global community. Both adult educators and adult learners require a common and informed conceptual and theoretical framework to assist them in developing meaningful curricula for adult learners. This book, in a collective and unified manner, describes innovative strategies to develop curricula for adult learners in diverse social, cultural, and economic contexts.

Wellman, B. 1983. "Network Analysis: Some Basic Principles." *Sociological Theory* 1: 155–200.

Network analysis is a fundamental approach to the study of social structure. This chapter traces its development, distinguishing characteristics, and analytic principles. It emphasizes the intellectual unity of three research traditions: the anthropological concept of the social network, the sociological conception of social structure as social network, and structural explanations of political processes. Network analysts criticize the normative, categorical, dyadic, and bounded-group emphases prevalent in many sociological analyses. They claim that the most direct way to study a social system is to analyze the pattern of ties linking its members. By analyzing complex hierarchical structures of asymmetric ties, they study power, stratification, and structural change.