



NRU HSE INTERNATIONAL LABORATORY
FOR APPLIED NETWORK RESEARCH

Relational Sociology: New Era in the Social Network Analysis or an independent trend?

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Moscow, May 30, 2015

Basis of presentation

Реляционная социология: новый этап в развитии анализа социальных сетей или самостоятельное направление?

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Д.В. Мальцева
РЕЛЯЦИОННАЯ СОЦИОЛОГИЯ:
НОВЫЙ ЭТАП В РАЗВИТИИ АНАЛИЗА СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ
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МАЛЬЦЕВА Дарья Васильевна — аспирант социологического факультета Российского государственного гуманитарного университета, социолог-аналитик Исследовательской группы ЦИРКОН. E-mail: d_malceva@mail.ru	MALTSEVA Dar'ya Vasil'evna - fellow, Faculty of Sociology, Russian State University for Humanities; ZIRKON Group analyst. E-mail: d_malceva@mail.ru
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The question



1970s: **Social network analysis** as an
independent discipline

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1980-90s: Other theoretical traditions, including **Relational sociology**

The question

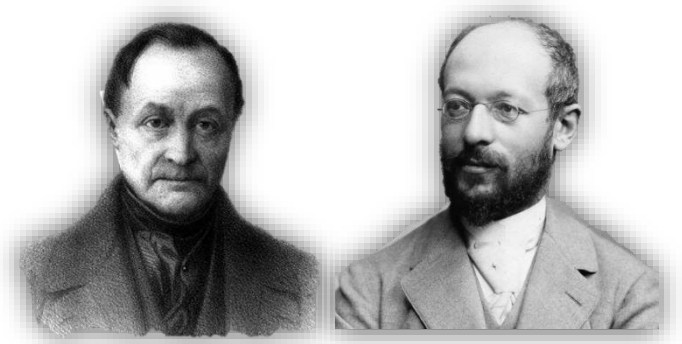
1970s: **Social network analysis** as an independent discipline

1980-90s: Other theoretical traditions, including **Relational sociology**



- Relational Sociology – a “right” version of Social network analysis?
- What is the level of sociological knowledge?

SNA as a discipline



Appearance:

- Auguste Comte – society as relations between individuals
- Georg Simmel - effects of the social relations structures on their contents
- Interdisciplinary nature: social psychology, sociometry, economics, political science, social geography, anthropology, etc.

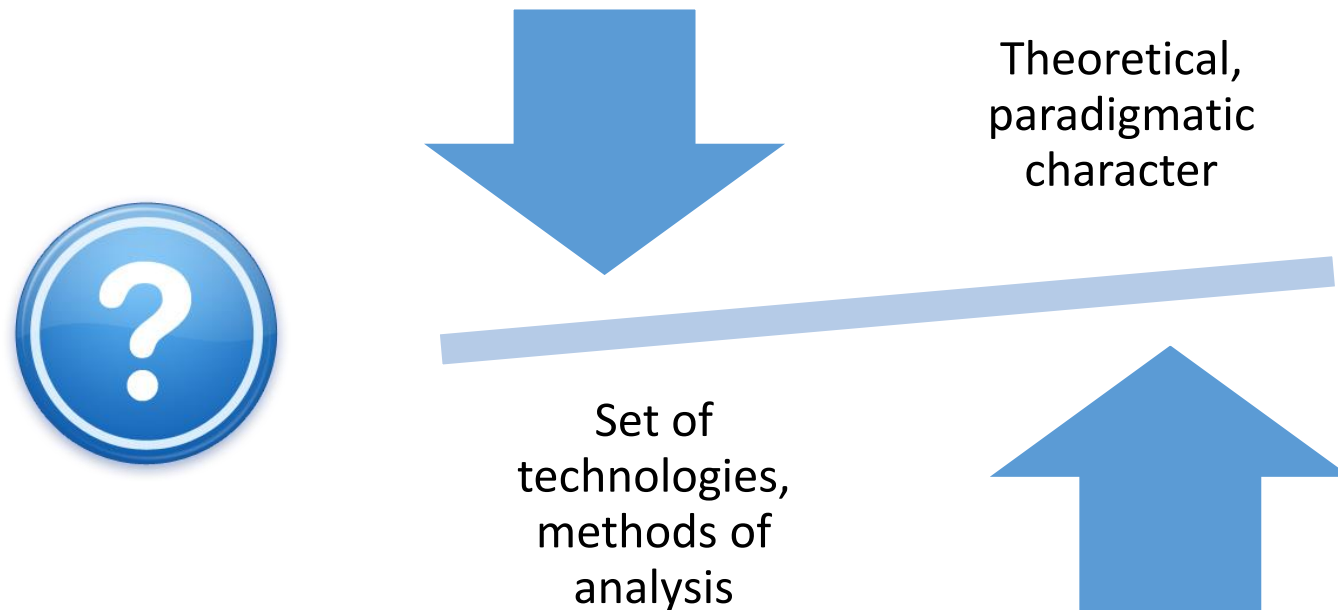
Important influence:

- American quantitative statistical analyzes (critique),
- British anthropology (ethnographic approach),
- Mathematics (graph theory and discrete mathematics),
- Computers, programs for data analysis and visualization

Institutionalization - 1970-80th: INSNA, conferences, journals, courses.

SNA as a discipline

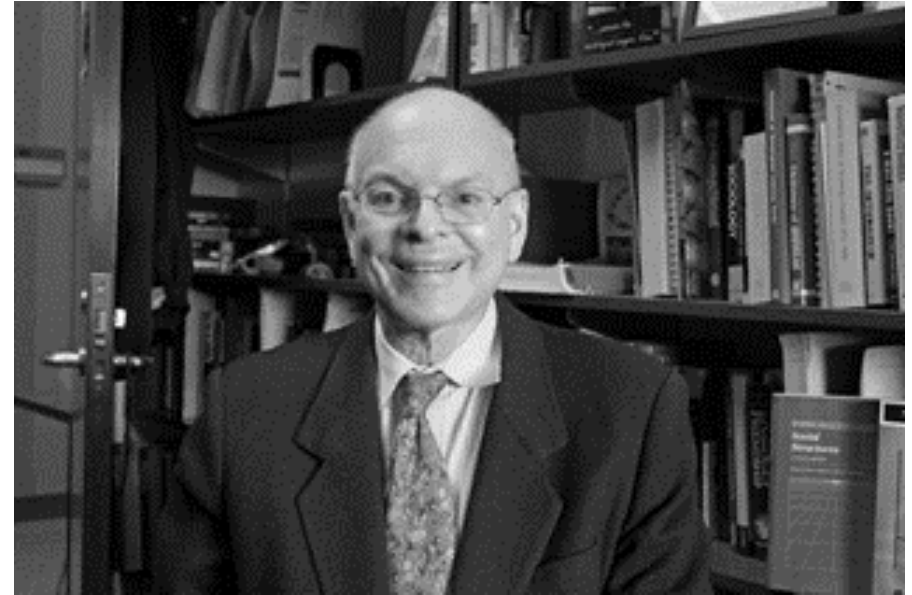
- Ann Mische*: “Is network analysis merely a **cluster of techniques** for analyzing the structure of social relationships, or does it constitute a broader conceptual framework, **theoretical orientation**, or even **philosophy of life**?”



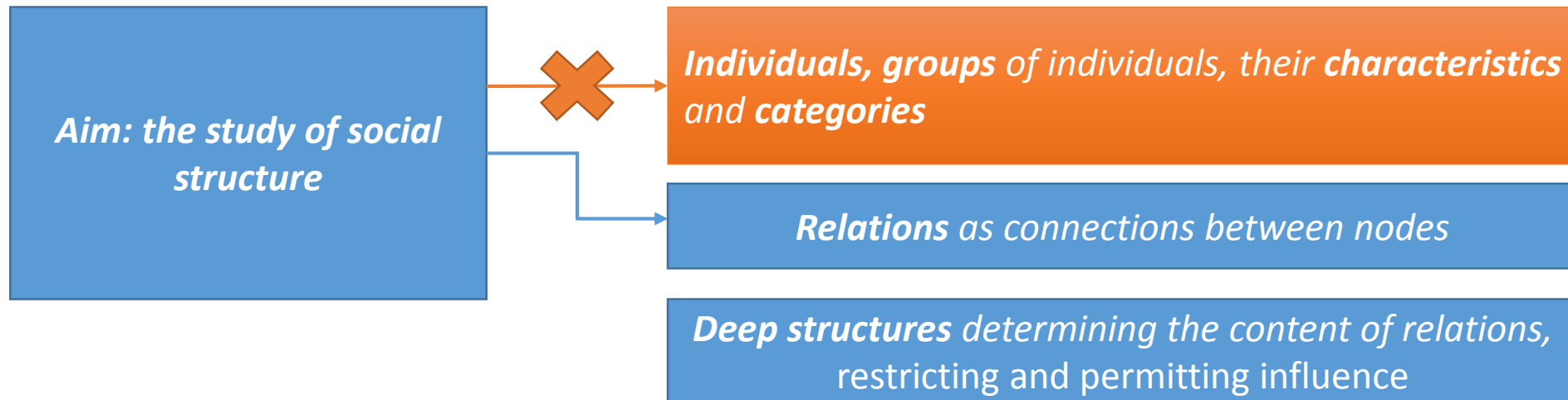
*Mische A. Relational Sociology, Culture, and Agency. / In: Scott J. G., Carrington P.J. (eds.). The SAGE Handbook of social network analysis. SAGE Publications, 2011. pp. 80-98.

SNA: searching for the theory

- Wellman B. **Network Analysis: Some Basic Principles**. Sociological Theory, Vol. 1. 1983, pp. 155-200.
- Wellman, B. Network Analysis: **From Method and Metaphor to Theory and Substance**. In: Wellman B., Berkowitz S. D. (eds.), Social Structures: A Network Approach, New York: Cambridge University Press. 1988. pp. 19-61.



Barry Wellman: structural network analysis



Barry Wellman: structural network analysis

1. **Anti-methodological individualism, anti-categorical imperative:** grouping people from equivalent *structural position*, not *categorical affiliation*.
2. **Anti-normative explanation of individuals behavior:** norms arise from positions in the systems of social relations; *effects* of structural positions, but not *reasons*.
3. **Anti-dyadic approach:** social structures *determine* dyadic relations.
4. **Anti-group approach:** *networks*, not *groups*.
5. **Duality of groups and actors:** *nature of groups* is determined by interconnections of *actors* inside them, nature of *actors* is determined by interconnections of *groups* (through their group affiliations).
6. **General analytical principles.**



Critique of Barry Wellman model

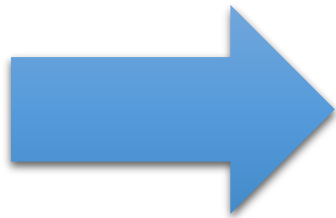
Emily Ericson*: the model is **not a consistent theory**:

- Has important *ontological prerequisites*, but **is not complex enough** to be a *theoretical system of views*.
- **Does not form a coherent set of assumptions** that can be used to generate *hypotheses*.
- “*Can not be regarded as a **theory** in any sense of this word*”.

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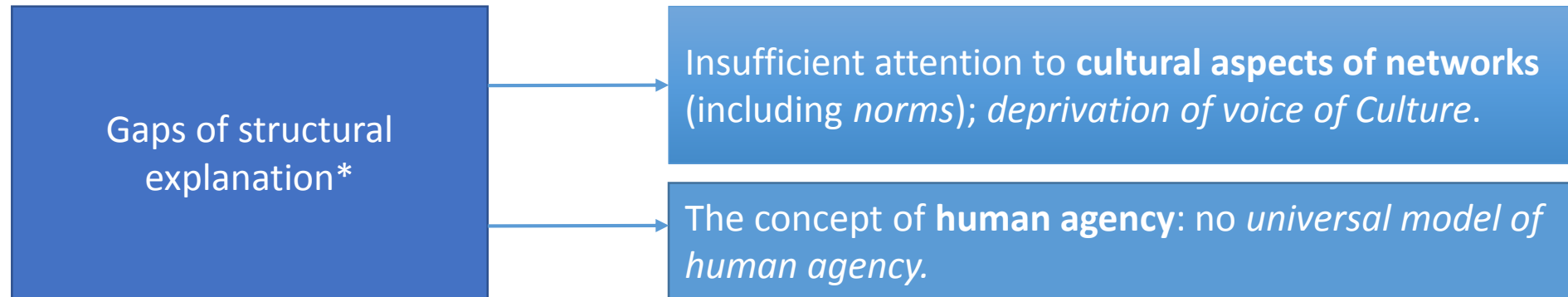
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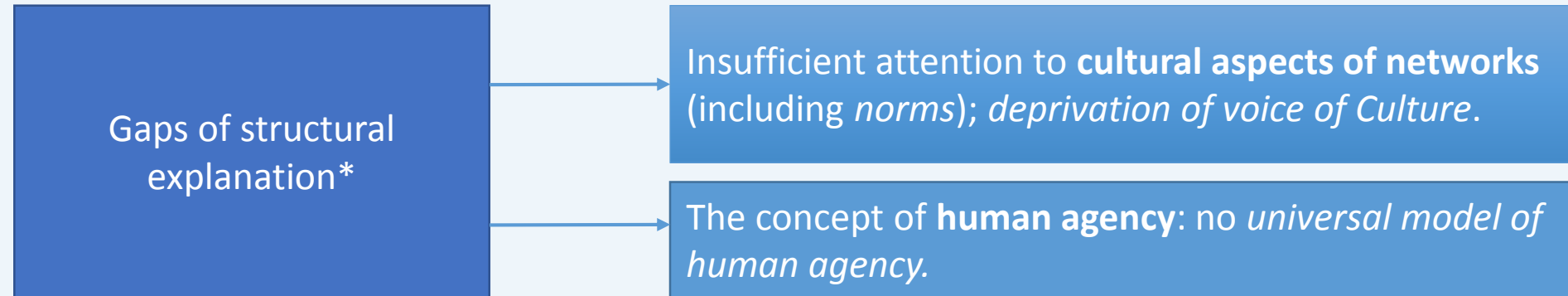


Critique of Social network analysis

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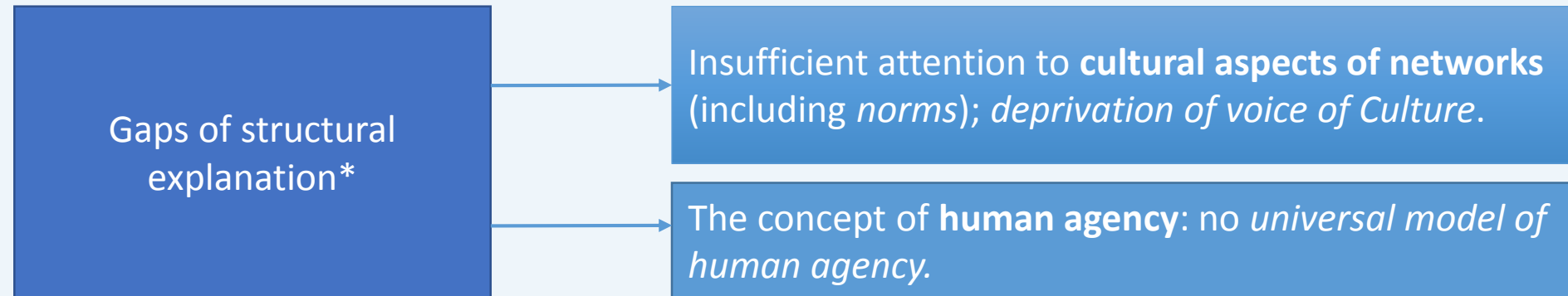
Critique of Social network analysis



Context - “cultural turn” in social sciences: studies of cultural sphere, interest to microsociology and qualitative methods, sociology of culture, Strong program in cultural sociology of J. Alexander & Ph. Smith:

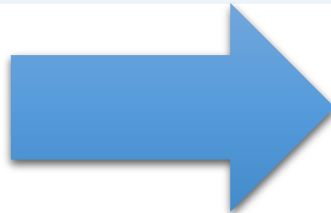
- *Studying structures needs inclusion of cultural backgrounds of behavior, as meaning of relations can change in different cultural and intersubjective contexts;*
- *Empirical networks can be understood as networks of meanings, founded in discourse and products of culture.*

Critique of Social network analysis



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Turn to Relational sociology

Relational sociology as a discipline

Appearance – 1980-90th, several intellectual centers:

P. Donati (1983, 1991 rr.), H. White (1992 r.), G. Bajoit (1992 r.), S. Laflamme (1995 r.), M. Emirbayer (1997 r.), N. Crossley (2010 r.), M. Archer (2012 r.)

“New York school” of relational sociology (Paul F. Lazarsfeld Center for the Social Sciences at Columbia University and the New School for Social Research):

- Series of *ongoing seminars* with H. White, Ch. Tilly, M. Emirbayer, A. Abbot, K. Carley, R. Collins, P. DiMaggio, V. Zelinzer.

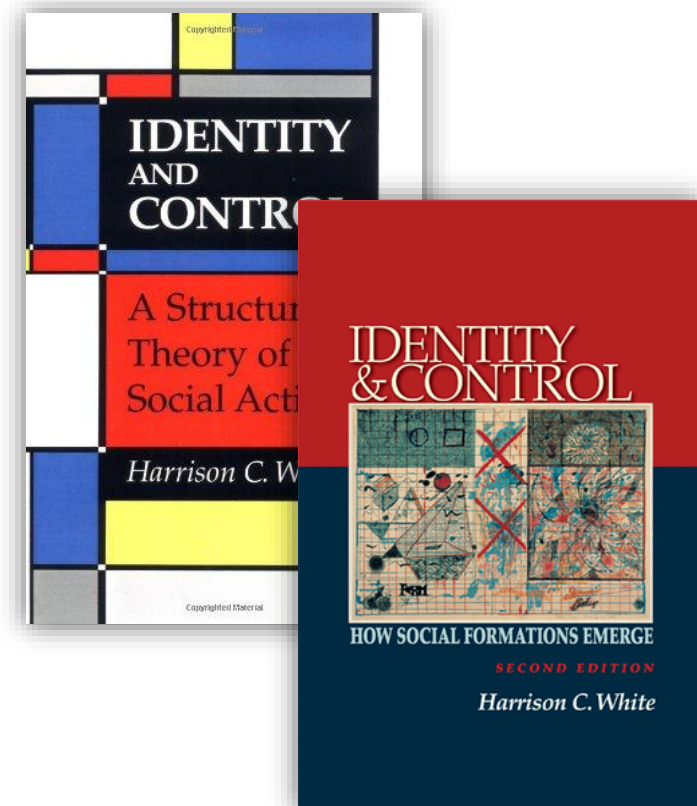
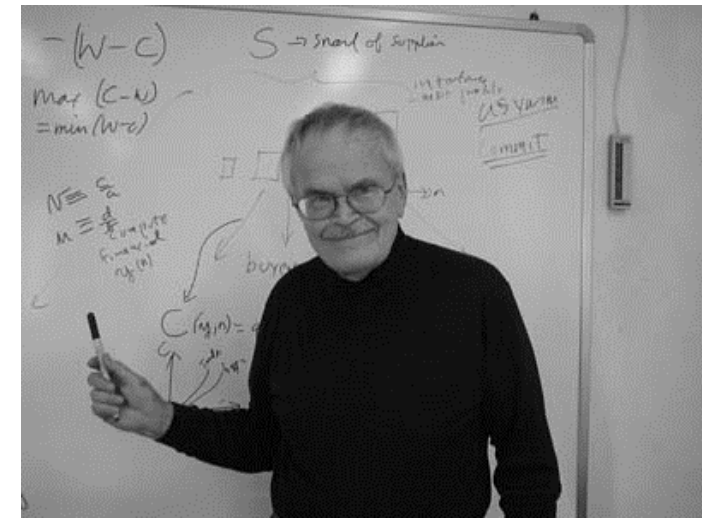
- *Important works*, including:

Emirbayer M. **Manifesto for a Relational Sociology** / American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 103, No. 2 (September 1997), pp. 281-317.

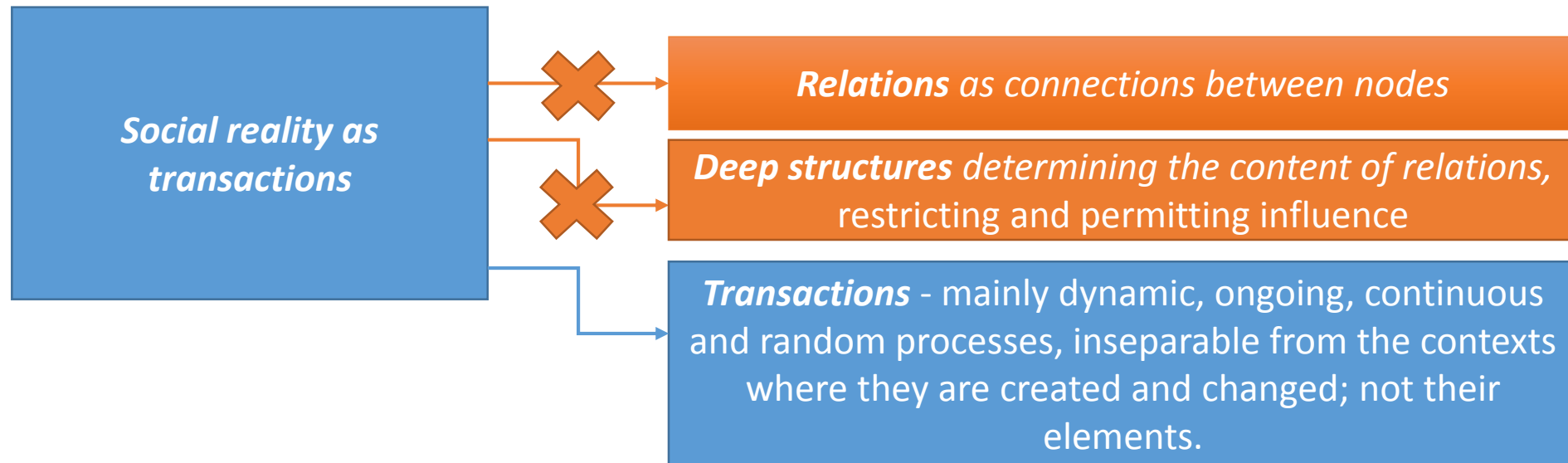
Emirbayer M., Goodwin J. **Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency** / American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 99, No. 6 (May, 1994), pp. 1411-1454.

White H. **Identity and control: a structural theory of social action**. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.

White H. **Identity and control: how social formations emerge**. 2nd ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008.

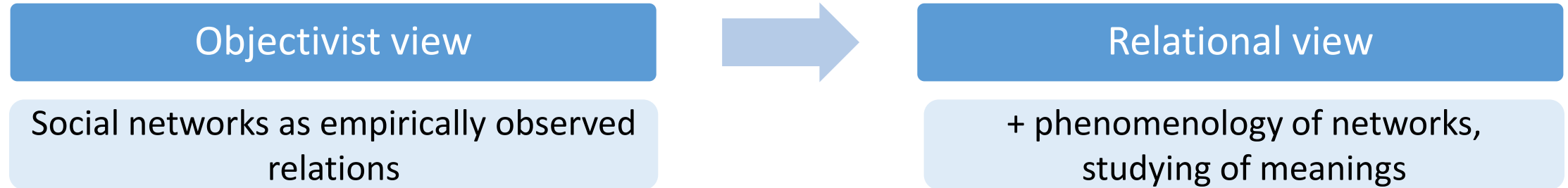


Relational sociology as a discipline



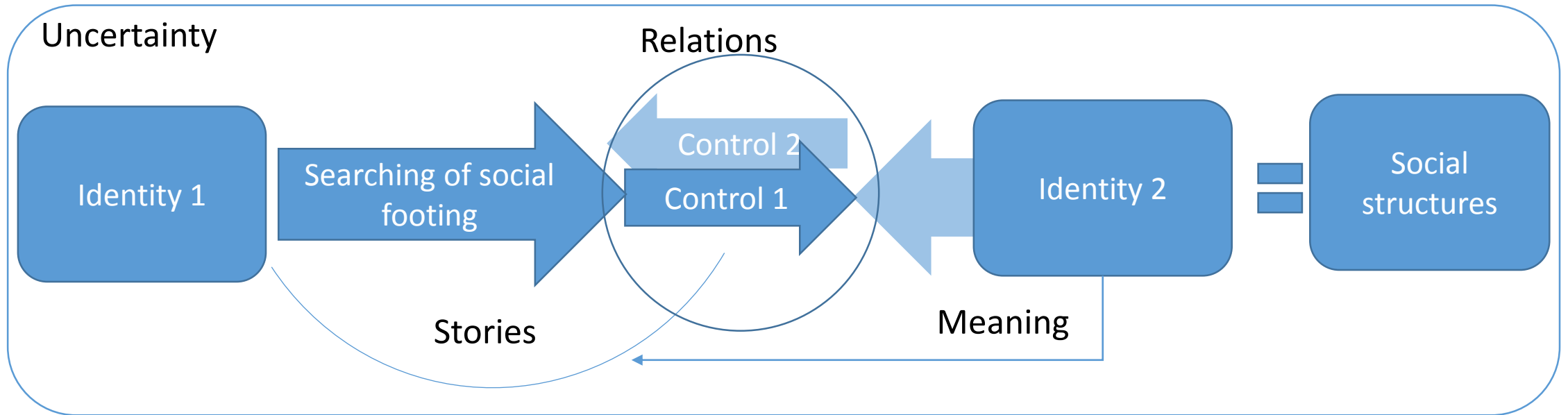
- Parts of analysis are *independent entities*, prior to relationships, which, however, **receive their identity only based on these relationships**, from changing the functional roles they play in the process.
 - The object is formed during the *transaction*.
 - Elements are not separated of the streams in which they are involved (and vice versa) -> **anti-substantialism principle**.
- Both **structural** and **cultural** (local practices and meanings, discourses, repertoires and norms) components are in the focus of analysis.

Harrison White: Synthesis of SNA and cultural approach



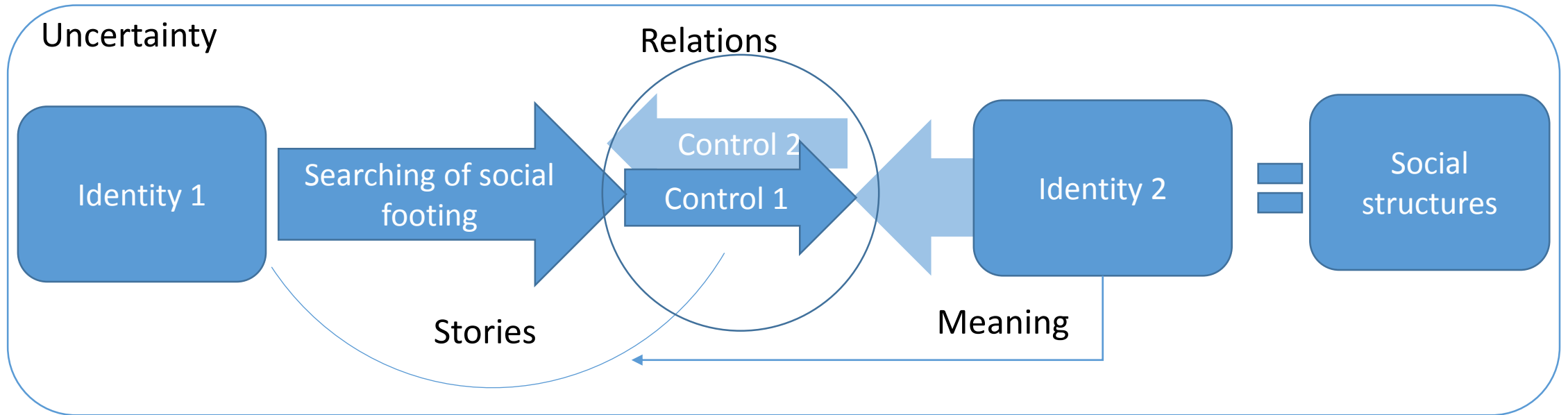
Networks are culturally created processes of communications, which means the merging of network relations (**structures**) and discourse practices (**culture**). The core of communications is *language* – act of translation from one person to another, from which **meaning** emerge.

H. White: Theory of social action

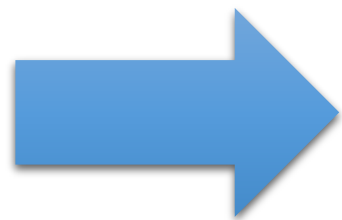


In the context of uncertainty, making control attempts to find a social footing, identities arise and form social life.

H. White: Theory of social action



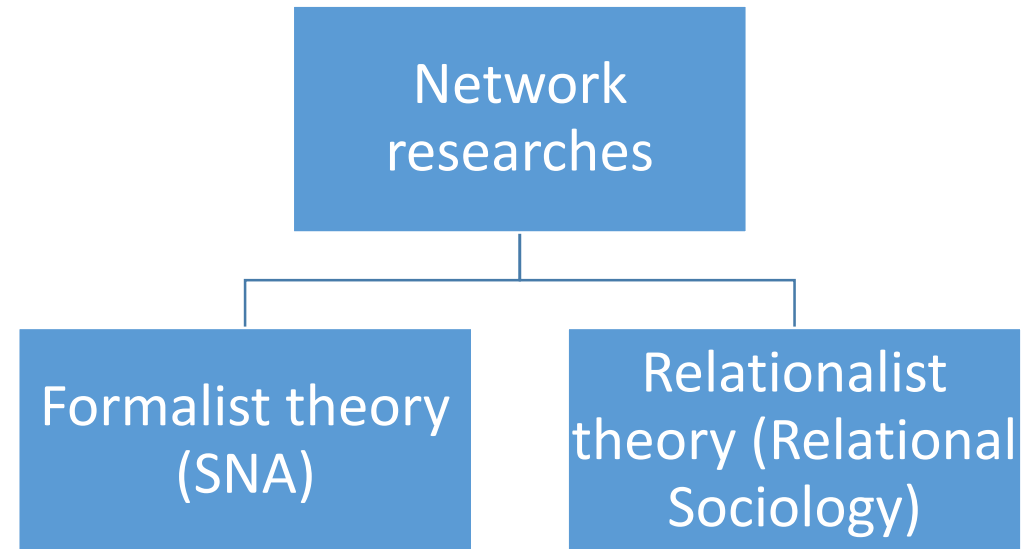
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Right version of Social network analysis?

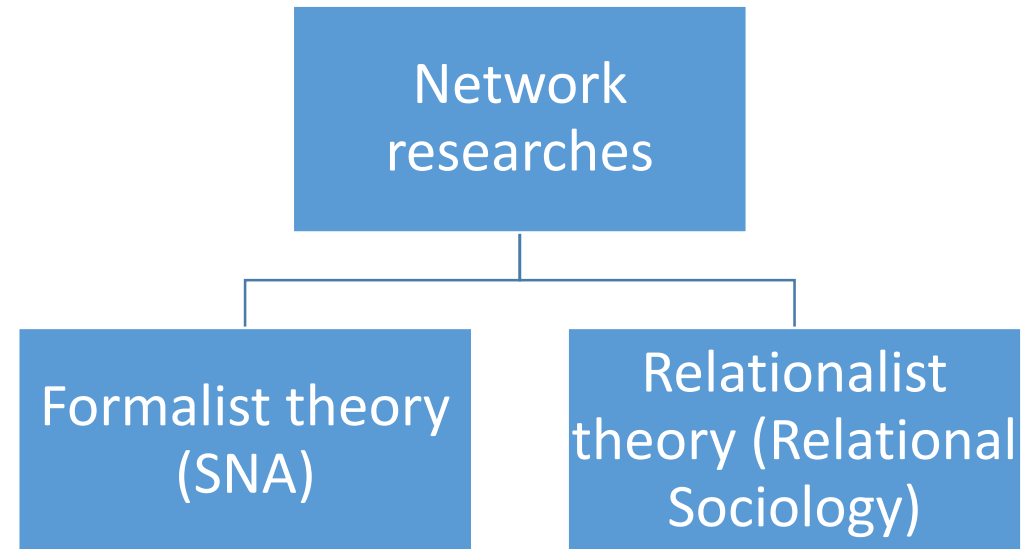
Emily Ericson: searching for the theory of social networks

Ericson E. **Formalist and Relationalist Theory in Social Network Analysis / Sociological Theory**, (2013), 31, pp. 219-242.



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Coherent formalism does not lead to the adoption of the culture and agency as components, giving greater theoretical weight to SNA

SNA & RS: comparison

	SNA	RS
Founding father	Zimmel-formalist	Zimmel-relationalist
Philosophy	Kant philosophy: there are natural structures which are aprioristic to our experience. Relations emerge from social forms (not vice versa).	Spinoza philosophy - opposite view
Content of relations	Form can not exist without content, but is not determined by it -> Secondary, purposely pushed beyond analysis . Priority of models of social structures above types of relations.	In the focus of analysis (production of meaning)
Context of relations	Secondary, forms should take place in all societies and contexts	In the focus, as social structures are relevant only being included into the larger environments
Micro- macro-levels of analysis	Priority to groups & structures, determining individual choice.	Individual and group are different demonstration of the same processes: relations influence on individuals, but actors have power to act between different relations
Notion of network	Analytical tool	Analytical tool + phenomenological reality

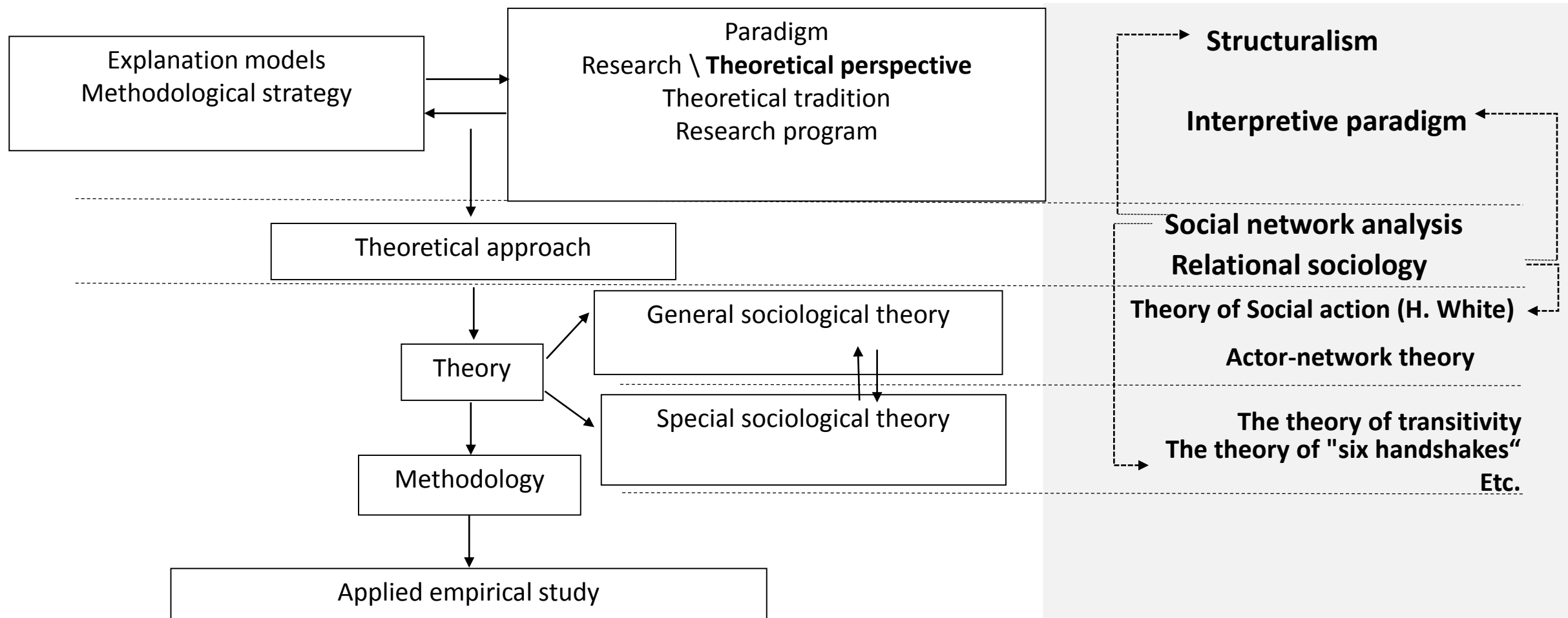
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- **Both SNA and RS has characteristics of theory**
- **Another view on SNA** – not as a “wrong” version, but the direction, which *analytical power* is in ignorance of content and context.
- Critique of SNA lead to the **emergence of separate theoretical model (RS)**.

SNA & RS in the structure of sociological knowledge



Approaches to understanding the links between culture, structure and agency

A. Mische: Networks and Culture	M. Emirbayer, J. Goodwin: Structure, Culture and Agency
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Networks as conduits for culture2. Networks as shaping culture (or vice versa):<ul style="list-style-type: none">• network clusters as incubators of culture;• network positions as generating categorical identities (or catnets);• network bridges as a source of cultural resources and creativity.3. Networks of cultural forms4. Networks as culture via interaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Structuralist determinism;2. Structuralist instrumentalism;3. Structuralist constructionism;4. Synthesized approach;+5. Cultural determinism (H. White).

- Mische A. Relational Sociology, Culture, and Agency. / In: Scott J. G., Carrington P.J. (eds.). The SAGE Handbook of social network analysis. SAGE Publications, 2011. pp. 80-98.
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