



Exchange and Power in Social Life

By Peter M. Blau

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Exchange and Power in Social Life By Peter M. Blau

In his landmark study of exchange and power in social life, Peter M. Blau contributes to an understanding of social structure by analyzing the social processes that govern the relations between individuals and groups. The basic question that Blau considers is: How does social life become organized into increasingly complex structures of associations among humans.

This analysis, first published in 1964, represents a pioneering contribution to the sociological literature. Blau uses concepts of exchange, reciprocity, imbalance, and power to examine social life and to derive the more complex processes in social structure from the simpler ones. The principles of reciprocity and imbalance are used to derive such processes as power, changes in group structure; and the two major forces that govern the dynamics of complex social structures: the legitimization of organizing authority of increasing scope and the emergence of oppositions along different lines producing conflict and change.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Blau's analysis represents a very important advance in the application of exchange analysis to social structure and behavior."

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"A vast quarry of a book from which other writers will be able to extract ore—and fossils too—for some time.... The style is outstandingly clear and incisive; both abstract general terms and vivid anecdotes are made to serve (he argument."

— Alasdair MacIntyre, *Sociology*

"The book is brilliant,"

—Robert Bierstedt, *American Sociological Review*

"This book is exciting.... Blau makes a significant and successful attempt to identify some components, to state their general properties, and then to indicate how more complex social structures can be built from them."

— Alfred Kuhn, *Science*

"Blau has made an extremely important contribution to the theory of small group behavior."

—John Power, *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*

About the Author

Peter M. Blau is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Before that, he was Quetelet Professor of Sociology at Columbia University. Among his many publications are *The Organization of Academic Work* and *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, both published by Transaction in paperback.

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