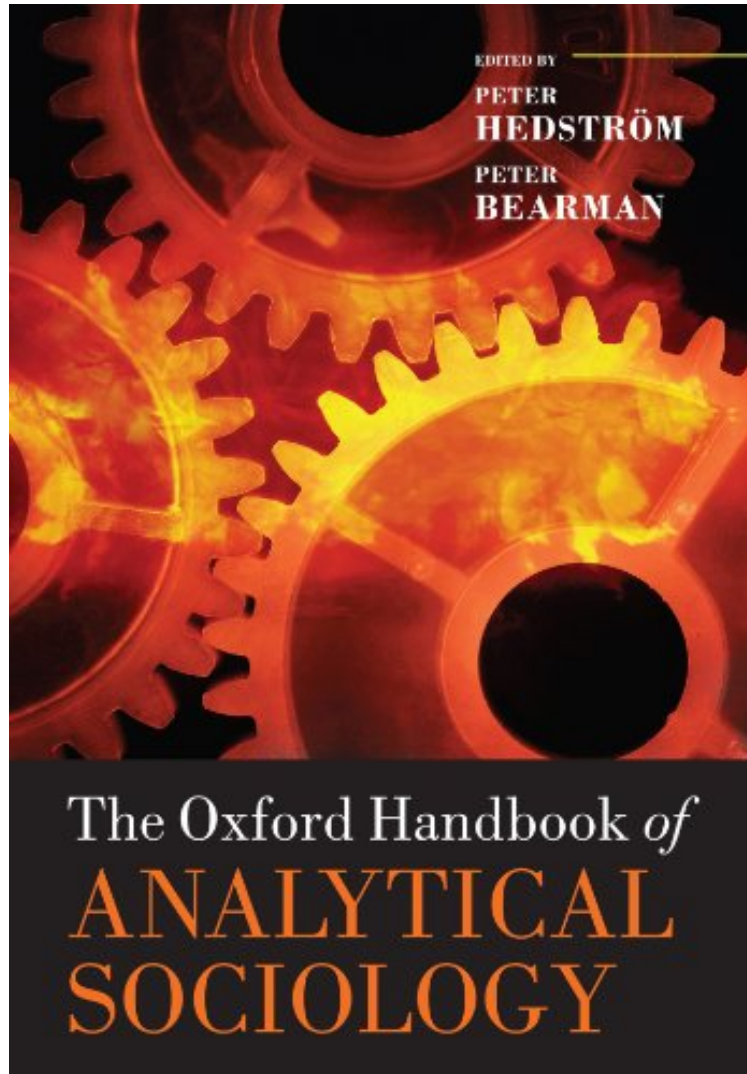


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From Oxford University Press : The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology (Oxford Handbooks) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology (Oxford Handbooks):

6 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Interesting, but not DefinitiveBy Herbert GintisThe central fact about contemporary sociology is that it has no core theory. This doesn't prevent applied sociologists from doing very good work based on what is called "middle level theory." But what one learns in graduate school is parade of sociological gurus, such as Pareto, Simmel, Weber, Durkheim, Parsons, Homans, Goffman, Garfinkle, Schutz, and so on. Moreover the culture of high level sociological theory is that one must uniquely individual, basing one's ideas as

much as possible on one's own psyche, not the work of previous researchers. Doing high level sociological theory is thus like painting or writing fiction. This of course is but the cause and the effect of the absence of core sociological theory. Obviously, then, sociology is a science only from the middle level down, and it is to the credit of a younger generation of sociological theorists that they are trying to create at least a unified middle-level theory, which the authors of this handbook call "analytical sociology." There are two major points to make about this new school of thought (I will call it a "school" in that Hedstrm and Bearman argue eloquently in the "Foundations" part of the book that it has enough unity to define it as a cogent intellectual entity). First, the analytical foundations of neighboring fields, psychology, biology, economics, and political science have analytical cores that are deeply mathematical, and students learn to deal with the core even if they themselves favor applied work. In this Handbook there are virtually no equations, and certainly no analytical theory based on formal modeling. Second, the editors' exposition of core analytical sociology has no substantive principles at all, but merely methodological principles. The first fifty pages, outlining analytical sociology, are virtually exclusively methodological. Are these facts a problem? I believe they are. Methodology is for the philosophers, not for the scientists. And scientist should be able to formulate and understand, if not personally produce, analytical theory in the form of mathematical models. The problem, of course, is that most "analytical sociologists" reject the rational actor model in any form, and this is a big mistake. I should note that in 1995, Hedstrm and Swedeberg wrote a very insightful paper urging the adoption of the rational actor model by sociologists. This book is a big step back. Despite the failure of this Handbook to credibly establish "analytical sociology," there are many fine contributions by individual authors, Parts II and IV being especially useful. There is nice chapter on emotions by Jon Elster, an excellent chapter on beliefs by Jens Rydgren, and a decent job of explaining signaling models without equations by Diego Gambetta. Typical for sociologists who are afraid of being assimilated by economics and psychology, fine chapters on game theory and behavioral game theory are relegated to the back of the book.

Analytical sociology is a strategy for understanding the social world. It is concerned with explaining important social facts such as network structures, patterns of residential segregation, typical beliefs, cultural tastes, and common ways of acting. It explains such facts not merely by relating them to other social facts, but by detailing in clear and precise ways the mechanisms through which the social facts were brought about. Making sense of the relationship between micro and macro thus is one of the central concerns of analytical sociology. The approach is a contemporary incarnation of Robert K. Merton's notion of middle-range theory and represents a vision of sociological theory as a tool-box of semi-general theories each of which is adequate for explaining certain types of phenomena. The Handbook of Analytical Sociology brings together some of the most prominent sociologists in the world in a concerted effort to move sociology in a more analytical and rigorous direction. Some of the chapters focus on action and interaction as the cogs and wheels of social processes, while others consider the dynamic social processes that these actions and interactions bring about.

"A fundamental reformulation of sociology, with profound implications across the social sciences."--Joshua M. Epstein, Professor of Emergency Medicine, Johns Hopkins University, author of *Generative Social Science*"This formidable volume puts on display an impressive array of leading scholars, each grappling with key substantive and methodological topics in contemporary sociology. The chapters provide both a masterful summary of existing research and a valuable roadmap for future investigation."--Donald Green, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies, Yale University"The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology is a reference work that belongs on every working theorist's desk and not just warehouse in university libraries." -- *Contemporary Sociology*"The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology represents an important step forward in the development of the analytical sociological research programme because its contributions move beyond earlier meta-theoretical statements to address substantive theoretical and methodological issues central to the discipline. By doing so the volume establishes analytical sociology as one of the more promising alternatives for pursuing a scientific and explanatory sociology."--*British Journal of Sociology*About the Author Peter Hedstrm is a Professor of Sociology and Dean of the School of Social Sciences at Singapore Management University, and Official Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford University. His area of specialization is analytical sociology. He has a special interest in the analysis of complex social networks, particularly analyses seeking to explain how the structure of the networks in which individuals are embedded influence the collective outcomes the individuals bring about. Peter Bearman is Director of the Lazarsfeld Center for the Social Sciences, the Cole Professor of Social Science, and Co-Director of the Health Society Scholars Program at Columbia University. A recipient of the NIH Director's Pioneer Award in 2007, Bearman is currently investigating the social determinants of the autism epidemic.