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WORK, ORGANIZATIONS, AND MARKETS

The Sociology of the Economy, edited by **Frank Dobbin**. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004. 343 pp. \$49.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-87154-284-6.

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What is economic sociology? Research in the new economic sociology has flourished in the last couple of decades, and if membership in ASA sections is a valid indicator, many sociologists now self identify as economic sociologists. Still, there are also plenty of those who wonder what economic sociology entails, and what kind of research questions and theoretical issues it tackles. For anyone curious, Frank Dobbin's new edited volume, *The Sociology of the Economy*, provides a great sense of the sociological study of the economy and its most current research.

The volume is the product of two conferences at Princeton University organized to take stock of the new economic sociology. Contributions attest to the tremendous diversity of the research in this subfield. After the editor's Introduction, we find 11 empirical chapters on topics as varied as the legitimacy of hostile takeovers, institutional foundations of national economic organization, and cultural accounts of human organ donation. Among others, the authors find their inspirations in the Renaissance Florence, contemporary urban China, and the past and present of the United States. They are equally diverse in their methods, showing that economic sociology can be done with regression equations, conversation analysis, network methods, historical process tracing, focus groups, or content analysis of newspaper articles.

While the individual chapters are substantively and methodologically diverse, they share a common goal of uncovering the social foundations of economic processes. In one way or another, they show that the eco-

nomie domain is just as social as religion or family. Treating markets as social construction, the researchers problematize the assumption that economic behavior boils down to one single principle of self-interest or one universal principle of efficiency.

Those who equate economic sociology with the studies of embeddedness in social relations may be surprised that only a minority of the contributions are concerned with how social networks influence economic behavior (and only in two of the chapters is the notion of embeddedness explicitly mentioned). Contributing scholars examine concrete empirical processes through a variety of analytical lenses. In fact, the editor organized the volume into four parts, clustering individual chapters by the type of the social mechanism that the authors privilege in their analysis: (a) political institutions, (b) economic models, (c) social networks, and (d) economic ideas.

Classifying social processes that structure economic life is a valuable attempt to integrate diverse individual studies into a whole. At the same time, providing a definite list of relevant social forces is necessarily a vulnerable effort. Is this list exhaustive? Are categories analytically separate? For example, is there enough of a distinction between "economic models" and "economic ideas" to merit their treatment as two separate social mechanisms? Would a category of "culture" as a force that structures economic processes be a better conceptualization for some of the contributions? For instance, studying global currency trading, Karin Knorr Cetina and Urs Bruegger show that even seemingly disembodied virtual transactions between agents who strive to maximize self interest have inherently social foundations. The authors trace how a shared economic model of a market is socially sustained but, more generally, they document a series of interaction practices and norms that reflect and reinforce traders' behavior, providing a glimpse of their culture. And while Deborah Davis in her study of the different meanings of property rights in contemporary China discusses the contingent nature of economic ideas, by analyzing the focus group participants' evaluations of competing claims to ownership, she primarily gets at how people draw on their cultural toolkits to judge what is appro-

priate and just for different situational contexts.

A possibility of a different analytical classification of the rich empirical material serves more as food for thought than a reflection on the value of the editor's Introduction, which succinctly presents the distinctiveness of a sociological understanding of the economy, helpfully links current research to the discipline's classics, and provides an excellent summary and synthesis of the volume's empirical contributions. I also commend a decision to place side by side research about social bases of traditional economic phenomena like financial markets and firm behavior, studies that trace social construction of national or industrial economic organization, as well as efforts to examine areas commonly defined as outside the market such as the chapter on human organ donations.

The 11 empirical chapters are carefully researched and well written. They provide plenty of new ideas for research in economic sociology. For example, those interested in social networks may respond to a call by Paul McLean and John Padgett asking analysts to examine how different types of social relations matter for different kinds of economic outcomes. Others may take up the invitation by Richard Swedberg to advance a sociological understanding of the role of law in economic processes.

On the whole, *The Sociology of the Economy* provides extremely stimulating material for several audiences. The volume would serve well as a text in advanced undergraduate and graduate economic sociology seminars. The broad scope of topics and methods will also attract any sociologists who are at least remotely interested in economic phenomena of various kinds but do not think of themselves as economic sociologists. Last but not least, veteran economic sociologists should read *The Sociology of the Economy* to be inspired by the very concrete evidence of the field's vitality.

Organizational Innovation: Studies of Program Change in Community Agencies, by **Howard B. Kaplan**. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2003. 242 pp. \$95.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-306-47726-2. \$46.00 paper. ISBN: 0-306-47852-8.

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Organizational change in corporations or governmental apparatuses is a consistent area of research for the students of organizational studies. However, little is known about what triggers the process of organizational innovation in nonprofit organizations. Howard Kaplan revisits his 1960 research project in order to shed light on this long ignored area.

In this study, the project sample was 42 community welfare agencies that aimed to service the aged population, and child care or youth programs in Houston or Harris County in Texas. Organizational innovation was measured as the number of new programs introduced over a 10-year period from mid-1950 to mid-1960. The evaluations of outsiders (community council staff) and insiders (executive directors) were used to construct the outcome variable, Implementation of Program Change Index (IPCI). Explaining that "the upper echelons of the organizational hierarchy are most directly and strategically involved in decisions regarding program innovation" (p. 17), Kaplan took attributes, attitudes, or perceptions of the two status-role units, that is, executive directors and influential board members of welfare agencies, as explanatory variables. Interviews with both the executive director and one influential board member from each agency were reconstructed into explanatory covariates through factor analysis.

Therefore, the main framework of the research design is whether, or how many, new programs implemented by the welfare agencies were causally affected by attributes, attitudes, or perception of or between influential status-role holders in the organizations. According to a series of exploratory factor analyses from Chapter 4 through 10, the sociopsychological explanation of the organi-