



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Local Orders: The Dynamics of Organized Action by Erhard Friedberg; Emoretta Yang
Frank Dobbin

Contemporary Sociology, Vol. 27, No. 6. (Nov., 1998), pp. 600-601.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094-3061%28199811%2927%3A6%3C600%3ALOTDOO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-3>

Contemporary Sociology is currently published by American Sociological Association.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/asa.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The pattern of mutual accommodation is also evident in the late 1960s with the central bank reformers—the second shift of policy-making elites under Franco that would prevail throughout the transition into the Socialist period—who had a clear agenda of financial liberalization, against the legacy of inflationary finance. However, the reformers' attempts to inject liquidity into the economy failed due to private banks' resistance. Not until the transition period (1977), when financial reform became prominent in democratization, did central bank reformers understand that they needed to seek a partnership with the banks to ensure the success of their political agenda. The Socialist victory in 1982 strengthened banks' power by shifting a large part of their resources into public debt to finance the growing deficit. Spain's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) (1986) highlighted the threat of sudden financial liberalization, which exacerbated financial nationalism. Nonetheless, the financial market was progressively liberalized, allowing the entry of foreign banks, the development of the financial market, and the reduction of the oligopolistic power of domestic banks.

Pérez has demonstrated successfully that Spain is an outlier in terms of financial reform as historical legacies and accommodation of private interests—to assure political stability—were ahead of economic performance. However, two problems with her argument should be noted. First, she fails to account for why Spanish banks possessed such strong power. More attention could have been paid to Gerschenkron's backwardness thesis on the role of banks and entrepreneurial capacities in latecomer nations. Although Pérez uses occasional comparisons with other countries to elucidate her argument, the persuasiveness of her explanation of the Spanish case would be greater had the comparisons with other cases been more systematic, historically informed, and theoretically grounded. Second, curiously, she makes little use of the critical interviews with government and private bank officials conducted as part of her research. A more systematic content analysis of these interviews would have fortified her argument. Apart from these minor drawbacks, this book offers students of comparative political and economic change an opportunity to revise current theoretical thinking about the role of private

banks and central bankers in economic development.

Local Orders: The Dynamics of Organized Action, by **Erhard Friedberg**. Translated by Emoretta Yang. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1997. 311 pp. \$78.50 cloth. ISBN: 1-55938-921-4.

FRANK DOBBIN
Princeton University
dobbin@princeton.edu

In this essay, Erhard Friedberg builds on his collaborative work with Michel Crozier, published in English in 1980 as *Actors and Systems: The Politics of Collective Action* (University of Chicago Press), to call for a broader conceptualization of organization theory and for a broader application of that theory to organized social activity generally.

Friedberg makes a compelling case that organization theory can be used to think about all varieties of organized action. He reviews developments in organization theory from the 1960s and 1970s that challenged the three elements of the classical conception of the organization—and that should have broken down the barriers among the study of organizations, political systems, and social movements. Organizational scholars challenged classical assumptions about the instrumentality of organizations, the unitary and cohesive character of organizations, and the boundedness of organizations. By showing that organizations are not especially rational, cohesive, or bounded, scholars set the foundation for bridges to other subfields in sociology. If these elements of the classical model of the organization are not defining characteristics, but factors on which formal organizations themselves vary, then all manner of organized action is opened to scrutiny by organizational scholars.

How might organizational scholars analyze social movements, political systems, and social structure generally? Friedberg contends that organized action occurs within "local orders," by which he means that roles and interaction patterns are stable and that there is intersubjective agreement among actors about how one can conceivably pursue goals and what particular actions mean. This stability, however short-lived, amounts to a form of social structure that is readily studied with the tools of organizational sociology.

But Friedberg has ambitions greater than merely calling for organizational sociologists to expand their purview. He argues, again building on his work with Crozier, for a particular, politicized theory of organized action; he argues for a distinct method (or more accurately, a meta-method); and he argues for a special kind of relationship between theory and practice, or between the theorist and his object of study.

In terms of theory, Friedberg contends that all social action is essentially political, in that it involves the strategic pursuit of goals within groups. The central elements of the theory are actors, "local orders," and power. It is based on a kind of methodological individualism, in which individuals are situated in local cultures but in which they pursue a variety of different interests at once through a range of different strategies. The strategies they use derive from the "local order," or the stable roles and socially constructed routines available to them. In each local order one finds a set of accepted "problems" and accepted "solutions" that shape the strategies individuals develop. While individual, goal-seeking, behavior is at the heart of this model, outcomes in terms of social structure, organizational choices, and even individual strategies are underdetermined.

The method Friedberg calls for is actor-centered. He criticizes recent American theories, particularly population ecology and neoinstitutionalism, for neglecting individual actors and thereby elevating formal organizations to the status of actors themselves. Friedberg insists on an inductive method that pays close attention to the characteristics of the "local order," and critiques organizational scholars whose empirical work is based on deductive reasoning. The method Friedberg proposes is inseparable from his ideas about the goal of scholarship, which should be not to develop universal claims, but to develop knowledge that can help participants to better understand the order around them. General theory can emerge only from the cumulation of inductive studies of local orders.

Thus, in proposing a model for how researchers should interact with the actors they study, Friedberg calls for an organizational sociology that is oriented to praxis. Friedberg's model of praxis is closer to Freud's ideal than to Marx's, for he is calling for us to develop local theories that will give actors insight into the worlds they inhabit.

Fans of Crozier and Friedberg's *Actors and Systems* will find here an elaboration of many of the ideas found in that book, as well as a number of illustrations of how the theory might be used. Organizational scholars will find a provocative survey and critique of classic works, as well as a timely critique of the new American schools for neglecting the actor. Social theorists will find a wide-ranging essay that is as much about epistemology as it is about theory per se, written in the unrestrained, circuitous style that has become emblematic of some quarters of French sociology.

The Structure of Women's Nonprofit Organizations, by **Rebecca L. Bordt**. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. 128 pp. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-253-33347-4.

DEBRA C. MINKOFF
Yale University
debra.minkoff@yale.edu

The question motivating *The Structure of Women's Nonprofit Organizations* is whether the contemporary feminist movement's preoccupation with organizational form has left some lasting trace in the organizational structures of women's nonprofits. This broader interest is pursued as two specific research questions: What do women's nonprofit organizations look like? And why do they take the form that they do? To this end, Bordt systematically located close to 200 women's "public goods oriented" nonprofit organizations established between 1967 and 1988 in the New York City area. Using surveys and interviews, she makes some important conceptual and empirical advances that should inform future scholarship on conventional and alternative organizations.

Bordt's book challenges the presumption that women's organizations are either lumbering, ideologically bereft bureaucracies distanced from their constituencies (albeit efficient at service delivery) or politically motivated collectives mired in consensus decision making (although true to feminist ideals). Rather, most women's nonprofits are hybrids that combine elements of both bureaucracies and collectives. Using cluster analysis, Bordt inductively distinguishes two types of hybrids: "professional organizations" and "pragmatic collectives." The more interesting and prevalent of these combinations is the lat-