Ideologies of Breast Cancer: Feminist Perspectives, edited by Laura K. Potts

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American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 106, No. 6 (May 2001), pp. 1792-1794

Published by: The University of Chicago Press

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/338163


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Book Reviews


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When the most distinguished empirical social researcher in Britain takes on the problem of the relation between theory and research, places the issues in their larger historical setting (based on wide and accurate reading in the historical literature), and also states the issues in current technical terms, and does so with both panache and bite, we get a book that is well worth reading. The question that Goldthorpe examines is this: Does the historical reality of conflict between theorists and researchers “reflect some inherent incompatibility between their concerns . . . or was their failure to come together a matter of various unfavorable circumstances, albeit of a long lasting kind?” (p. 26). Implicitly this is also an answer to an unstated prior question, namely, How is it possible to get around the negative expectations that rationally follow from the fact that all previous attempts to create a statistical scientific sociology have failed?

What Goldthorpe thinks should have happened in the history of sociology is this: something along the lines of rational choice should have been married to something along the lines of Yule’s statistics so that hypotheses about mechanisms, meaning essentially mechanisms by which aggregate level results are produced by individual choices made in varying contexts, could be tested. This, Goldthorpe argues, is where the future of sociology lies, and the mystery is why it did not come sooner. Goldthorpe’s answer is unfavorable circumstances of a long-lasting kind, but the blame he places is intellectual and, as he notes, also ironic, for it falls in part on the 19th-century positivist conception of science and its lingering negative effects on the development of probabilistic analysis. Durkheim, bedazzled by Comtean ideas about science, failed to take advantage of Yule. Statistical sociologists frequently confused the establishment of statistical phenomenon with their explanation, thus producing “laws” and regularities that they imagined were scientific but which begged the question “why?” Theorists failed too, and Goldthorpe’s bête noire is the kind of theory that concerns itself with analyzing assumptions to the exclusion of considering empirical evidence, in the fashion of Jeff Alexander.

Goldthorpe discusses these issues in the light of a major example: he examines research on the stubbornly continuing fact of class education differentials despite the changes in the cost structure, policy, and many

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American Journal of Sociology

other things, and he works through a detailed discussion of the theoretical issues, showing how the data interact with and shape a rational choice analysis that pinpoints the choices and the contexts of choice that make for the continuing differentials. The force of Goldthorpe’s case comes down to whether one takes this example as he does, namely as a model for sociology and a case of successful application of theory to data and vice versa. He makes the argument in part in a chapter on ethnography, in which he challenges the claims of ethnographers to provide a methodological alternative that achieves something that large data set analysis cannot. He argues that given the general logic of testing of hypotheses, cases do not establish much at all, but he suggests that there might be a role for ethnography in testing hypotheses about “local causes,” that is, about mechanisms, operating in particular contexts and not others, that cannot be tested in large data sets.

Does all of this convince? Certainly it is an advance on previous discussions, in that Goldthorpe acknowledges some of the massive difficulties in generating causal conclusions from structural equation models and recognizes the sheer intellectual inadequacy of much of what passes as explanation in statistical sociology, though he could certainly have gone much further in this direction. It is also an advance in that it recognizes that claims that sociology is a “science” have gotten in the way of dealing with these and other methodological problems. But what Goldthorpe seems blind to is a recognition of the role of concepts and the study of concepts and their changes in social life and history. That humans form concepts, conventions, and practices, and that the changes in these change the form of human existence, and that understanding social life involves necessarily and perhaps largely an understanding of these things as they actually figure in human action, seems simply not to be a part of Goldthorpe’s model of sociology. Calculation, or rational choice, occurs within understanding, but it cannot produce understandings, concepts, or practices. This fact seems to be the source of an inherent incompatibility between the concerns of theorists and the concerns of quantifiers of precisely the kind that he claims does not exist. And by the way, could the concept of rational choice itself have developed other than by analyzing assumptions to the exclusion of empirical evidence?


Steven Shapin
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Consider two criticisms of the idea that scientific knowledge is socially constructed: the first is that the notion is misconceived or malevolently motivated; the second is that it is banal. We are these days more familiar
with the first criticism. Defenders of science say, for example, that scientific theories are real in the same sense as the rocks on the ground. If you think such theories are mere social constructions, then you should walk off tall buildings with insouciant disregard for what physicists have to say about your likely fate.

The second criticism is both less silly and less frequently heard. When one says that “the pressure and the volume of a gas stand in inverse proportion,” this proposition, idea, and associated belief stands in a causal, but contingent, relationship to the state of affairs in nature to which it refers. It is a proposition in English, whose sense depends upon the stock of knowledge that you happen to have about the meanings attached to gases, pressure, and volume, and whose credibility is shaped by processes of socialization in cultural institutions. What else could it be but a social construct? The only really interesting task for the sociologist or historian is to give an account of the ways in which different sorts of ideas are socially constructed.

That’s a version of what the philosopher Ian Hacking seems to think, and it is a pretty sensible thing to think. Whenever you hear someone say that $X$ is socially constructed, first consider what kind of thing $X$ is. Hacking judges that sociologists have been careless in specifying what is supposed to be socially constructed, and he means to sort out sensible from imprudent usage. The effect is rather like being a member of a class collectively summoned into the headmaster’s study. He is very wise, generally benevolent, and good-humored; but just now he is rather disappointed in the class’s behavior.

Should a sociologist say that Boyle’s law was wholly a social construct, and should she mean that the state of affairs in nature was socially constructed, and that the law was not, therefore, a reliable generalization, she would be both mistaken and unjustified. The unverbalized natural reality to which Boyle’s law refers is a causal element in the idea expressed by $PV = k$, though Hacking agrees that it is circular to use the truth of an idea as an explanation of why people believe it. Should a sociologist, however, say that the federal funds rate is wholly a social construct, she might be accused of vacuity, since there is nothing else that such a thing could be. Reality and consequentiality are not to be set against socially constructed status: businesses succeed or fail according to what the Alan Greenspan and his colleagues say the interest rate is.

Moreover, humankind terms—child abuse, for example—can actualize their objects, because people may be aware (as gases are not) of how they are classified, and behave accordingly. You must not say that the abused child is a social construct if by that you mean that children have not been hurt, but you may coherently say that the institutions mobilized around the idea of child abuse are, of course, social constructs, and you may even say that, by virtue of these institutionalized ideas and practices, the abused child becomes a hurt human of a specific sort: a real, socially constructed sort.
I have only two objections to this generally well-intentioned and intelligent performance. First, social studies of science are here represented almost solely by Bruno Latour and Andrew Pickering. Hacking finds them worthy representatives because, like himself, they pitch their work on the terrain of metaphysics and epistemology, aiming to say what sorts of things the world contains and how we may know about them. But many other sociologists decline the role of metaphysician or epistemologist, and, by saying that science is a social construct, they refer mainly to the credibility of its ideas, beliefs, and propositions, both within and without the scientific community. Hacking happens not to be very interested in such projects, and that’s his right, but he happily concedes that the sociology and history of science done using the idea of social construction as a methodological maxim are far more rich, detailed, and philosophically resonant than what went before.

Second, not all the sociologists that Hacking aims to sort out are quite as confused or as imprecise as he maintains. Disinterested readers might be surprised by comparing Hacking’s account of the differences between humankind and natural-kind terms with Barry Barnes’s important essay “Social Life as Bootstrapped Induction” (Sociology 17:524–45). But this, and much writing in a similar vein by Barnes and David Bloor, is not mentioned, and Hacking makes glib generalizations about their views that bear little relationship to their actual work. Headmaster might know his pupils a bit better.


Julie Hepworth
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Laura K. Potts’s edited collection of research on the meanings of breast cancer includes authors from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada whose perspectives draw on literary criticism, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies among others. The research employs various methodological approaches—for example, media analysis (Saywell et al.), autobiographical narratives (Potts), and analysis of social activism (Fishman)—to elucidate the multiple dimensions and diversity of breast cancer experiences. The first of two parts, “Meanings of Breast Cancer,” presents the problematical relationship between biomedicine and women’s constructions of breast cancer knowledge, the sexualized and maternalized breast in the print media about breast cancer, environmental risks to women’s health in the Bay Area of San Francisco, and women’s narratives of breast cancer and situating the self. In part 2, “Discourses of Risk and Breast Cancer,” examination of the discourses of prevention and risks to health are taken up in relation to breast cancer screening, the problem
of prophylactic mastectomy for hereditary breast cancer, and environmental activism.

“Ideology” and “feminism” are the two key conceptual frameworks that are revisited throughout the book to research women’s experiences. Potts defines these frameworks early in the book’s introduction, drawing on Althusser, that “‘lived’ experience is not a given, given by a pure ‘reality,’ but the spontaneous ‘lived experience’ of ideology in its particular relationship to the real” (p. 2), and on Dorothy Smith’s work on a sociology for women which “preserves in its analytic procedures the presence of the subject as actor and experiencer” (p. 2). The articulation of the social and political structuring of experience is clearly accomplished throughout the book in the ideological and feminist analyses of the intersections of biomedicine, social activism, popular culture, environmental awareness, and women making sense of disease and illness.

The sexualized and maternalized breast in the print media analyzed by Saywell et al. in chapter 2 represents women’s narratives of breast cancer outside the popular media and also demonstrates the ways in which public narratives about breast cancer in the media situate women. For example, as in a quote from a newspaper, “Mother Turns Down Cancer Treatment to Save Unborn Baby,” women become depicted as saints and martyrs through “mother-centred stories” (p. 50). At times difficult to read due to the poignancy of women’s stories, chapters 2 and 4 tell us about the simultaneous dimensions of women’s realities of having a life-threatening disease yet bearing a new life, decision-making about chemoprevention, and the loss of femininity through chemotherapy and prophylactic surgery.

Key concerns of social inquiry such as age, race, and class are particularly highlighted in chapters 2, 5, and 1, respectively. In chapter 2, Saywell et al. show how breast cancer reporting prefers youthful representations of women. In contrast to the reality of epidemiological data in which the majority of women who get breast cancer are 50 years old and older, they argue that young women’s bodies dominate coverage of media reports on breast cancer. Simpson in chapter 5 argues that the results of research on the preventative effects of tamoxifen, a major pharmaceutical drug for breast cancer, only apply to white women because of the sample characteristics of trial participants. Of all participants, approximately only 3% of women were African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic, or other, providing extremely limited findings for women from different ethnicities. The shifting nature of class related to breast cancer is taken up in chapter 1 by Fosket, who emphasizes the financial expense of breast cancer. For example, leaving work and high costs of cancer treatments mean economic hardships for women and class movements within a short period of time.

The book makes an important contribution to social and health research about women’s experiences of breast cancer through its exploration of the sheer breadth of discourses, controversial issues related to prevention
and risks to health, and how these coalesce in the construction of the meanings for individual women as victims/survivors of breast cancer. For example, Klawiter argues that she approaches the terrain of breast cancer activism using theorization at the “juncture of culture and social movements” (p. 64). Using participant observation and a concept of “cultures of action,” Klawiter examines the interplays between embodiment, subjugated knowledges, and culture within sociological inquiry in a reaffirmation of the value of contested meanings to amplify voices that were hitherto silenced.

This book takes on analyses of the dynamic interplay of discourses in the social construction of meanings about breast cancer, above all achieving clear arguments about the complexity of the ways in which “knowledges” and “reality” are socially constructed and mediated through social relations. Moreover, the book is firmly situated within the broader context of feminist perspectives on health in which women’s experiences are the basis for research. Laura K. Potts has brought together feminist researchers who expose a litany of issues and problems with which the health field has to grapple in order to develop its understanding of women’s experiences of the prevention and treatment of breast cancer. The breadth of the book also makes it a key reading for a wide audience—from those in sociology, nursing, women’s studies, psychology, and medical science, to various health professionals, particularly medical specialists, radiologists, and diagnosticians.


Diane E. Taub
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The number of scholarly books and articles about women with physical disabilities has increased in the past several years. Most of these works, however, have been either commentaries or theoretical discussions about women with physical disabilities. Few efforts have focused on research that examines how the women themselves interpret their daily lives and define their social interactions. Venus on Wheels represents the type of approach that incorporates the voices of women with physical disabilities. Gelya Frank’s work is exceptional in several respects, notably in its rigorous and feminist methodology, historical view of disability and the disability rights movement, and empowering and liberating portrayal of Diane DeVries, a woman born without arms and legs. This book encompasses nearly a quarter century of the professional collaboration and personal relationship between Frank and DeVries. The two women met in
Book Reviews

1976 at the University of California at Los Angeles. DeVries was 26 and an undergraduate sociology major enrolled in a cultural anthropology course, for which Frank, at age 28, was a graduate teaching assistant. Frank is unabashed in revealing her first memories about DeVries, believing that DeVries was probably dependent on her parents and living at home. Frank also assumed that DeVries would remain single and never have sex.

Reflecting her anthropological training, Frank defines her research as cultural biography, a synthesis of ethnographic and life history methods. This work utilizes a variety of methodological approaches, including participant observation, DeVries’s unpublished autobiography, clinical records, and letters written by DeVries, as well as formal and informal interviews with DeVries and with individuals who were salient in her life. Emphasizing empathy, or the “mirror phenomenon” (p. 4), Frank continually undergoes self-reflection of her viewpoints and recognizes how the interconnectedness between Frank and DeVries affects the representation and interpretation of DeVries’s life. However, the frequent self-disclosures of Frank and discussions about her life are not always relevant and detract from the portrayal of DeVries.

Throughout this work, Frank expresses her strong desire that DeVries, and not Frank, narrate and construct DeVries’s life. In discussions about their collaboration, Frank and DeVries agree to split any royalties fifty-fifty and to resolve any concerns DeVries might have about the material Frank includes. Frank is keenly aware of the power differential between the “ethnographer and ‘native,’” but underplays her own role when she claims that DeVries has “the ultimate power, appropriately, over me” since she could reject Frank’s work at any time (p. 108).

DeVries was born in Texas in 1950 to white, working-class parents. During her childhood, she swims, becomes a poster child for the March of Dimes, and is resistant toward artificial arms and cosmetic legs. In adolescence, tensions escalate with her mother over her care, and DeVries moves to a rehabilitation facility. While in this environment, her embrace of disability culture, independent living, and disability rights is strengthened. As an adult, DeVries participates freely in sexual relationships, gets married, becomes involved in religion, divorces an abusive and alcoholic husband, receives her bachelor’s degree in sociology, obtains employment, encounters job discrimination, gets fired, sues, and obtains a master’s degree in clinical social work. At last report in the book, DeVries lives in her own apartment and is employed as a social worker.

Rather than focus on the individual nature or the physicality of DeVries’s disability, Frank highlights DeVries’s experiences in relation to the prevailing cultural climate affecting women and individuals with disabilities. Similar to other women during the 1960s and 1970s, DeVries is influenced by the women’s movement and strives for independence, education, and a career. At the same time, she encounters social stigma because of her disability and confronts legal and institutional barriers.
A drawback of this book is the extensive academic excursions in which Frank indulges. The resulting distraction would be reduced with fewer and less detailed allusions to various academic debates. This work is supplemented with 57 pages of notes, providing in-depth discussion about such topics as cultural ethnography, cultural studies, and state and federal programs and laws concerning disability. In addition, the book contains 38 pages of a comprehensive bibliography, along with a quite helpful index that includes both names and topics. Further, nearly two dozen photographs and newspaper clippings depicting DeVries’s life are presented in the center of the book. Individuals interested in either gender or disability studies will find this work instructive and thought-provoking.

The reader is not led to feel sympathy for DeVries nor to consider her an anomaly. On the contrary, Frank and DeVries identify DeVries with the Venus de Milo. DeVries perceives herself as “a modern-day Venus”, not on a pedestal but in a wheelchair: Venus on wheels” (p. 162). Her story is one of empowerment and of recognition that disability reflects diversity rather than a condition of pathology or deviance.

Gendering the City: Women, Boundaries, and Visions of Urban Life. Edited by Kristine B. Miranne and Alma H. Young. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000. Pp. x+229. $75.00 (cloth); $24.95 (paper).

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University of Melbourne

In this book, Miranne and Young have assembled a collection of articles building on the past two decades of work investigating women and the urban form. The book consists of 10 essays, emanating from the 1997 Urban Affairs Association Conference, that examine the visible and invisible boundaries women negotiate. In particular, the works focus on notions of boundaries, the ways that women are implicated in spatial boundaries, and examples of how women create new spaces within the built environment that reflect the diversity of women’s lives. The editors, in the introductory chapter, briefly outline the bodies of knowledge focusing on women and the urban environment across a range of disciplinary fields, and they set out a framework that acknowledges the multiplicity of women’s identity and experiences. The first two chapters begin the task of problematizing the notion of boundaries and suggest how, in quite different ways, these boundaries are constantly shifting, both constraining and enabling women in certain ways. Garber, for example, takes the notion of anonymity to be an example of a boundary that has been predominantly interpreted as a method for women and other marginal groups to participate in cities. Anonymity, she suggests, can enhance women’s interaction in cities, but it can also be limiting, as it assumes anonymity can be chosen or discarded at will. Garber concludes that, as
a political strategy, anonymity fails to allow for difference to be acknowledged. In the same way, Peters considers the silencing of First Nation women of Canada and how they negotiate everyday urban spaces. She argues that spatial knowledges become boundaries that produce uneven understandings of women where not all women are meaningfully represented.

In section 2 of *Gendering the City*, four chapters examine women’s multiple subjectivities and range of experiences. Gilbert employs an antiessentialist framework to rethink geographical understandings of the intersection of gender, race, and poverty. Subban and Young use literacy as an example of how cultural knowledges are imbedded in language. Especially among African-American women, literacy is shown to be a powerful mediator of social relations, where political capacities can be diminished as a result of literacy levels. Spain outlines how black women’s influence on planning has been hidden, lost, or forgotten over time. She chronicles the contributions of black women and organizations to city planning and how their efforts mitigated some of the excesses of racial discrimination. In the final chapter, Miranne looks at the impact welfare reform has on further isolating and disempowering women. She argues that welfare reform creates uncertainty that places women in a powerless position. This essay outlines how women resist the ways that the state socially and geographically isolates women.

Moving beyond descriptions including women in discourses of the urban form, the final four chapters challenge modernist orthodoxy, arguing for the production of knowledges that reflect the multiplicity of women’s experiences. Hendler and Harrison critique Canadian planning history and illustrate the gendered bias that now constitutes planning theory. Adding to this theme on planning, Andrew takes one instrument of planning, safety audits, to illustrate how they can result in either reinforcing, constraining, or dismantling boundaries for women in urban spaces. She concludes that planning tools like safety audits can have a multiplicity of impacts and can also aid in removing some boundaries for women. In contrast to using a planning tool, Ritzdorf critiques the ways that black families are constructed as “other” by the discourses of public policy. She shows how zoning becomes a method of physically creating boundaries and also how these discourses reinscribe normative uses of urban space. The final chapter outlines the meanings of home for women and children and the problems single mothers face in the metropolitan housing system. Cook, Bruin, and Crull suggest that planners and policy makers do not consider the meaning of home for women and instead focus on the practicalities of housing, thus ultimately diminishing single mothers’ choices in the housing market.

The concluding chapter, by Milroy, returns to the political gesturing of this collection to reflect on the intersection of women and cities. Milroy reasserts how an antiessentialist framework is a feminist politics that is possible and worth pursuing. *Gendering the City* represents a contem-
porary collection of essays that examine a diversity of women’s experiences while successfully adhering to the main theme of visible and invisible boundaries. The political positioning of the book both deconstructs the silencing of women and provides refreshingly innovative ways of rethinking spatial knowledges of the urban environment. The collection contributes to the emerging body of work employing an antiessentialist framework while still situating women at the center of discourse.


Fiona M. Kay
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In recent years, the pay equity issue has gained prominence in academic research, media commentary, and policy debates. Center stage is the challenge to identify the source of wage differences between jobs held primarily by women and those held primarily by men within the same organization. The dominant discourse holds that differences in wages are a product of the market, rather than the decisions of employers, and differentials are founded on considerations of efficiency. In this skillfully argued and well-documented book, Nelson and Bridges pose a formidable challenge to the core empirical claims of contemporary theories dominated largely by orthodox labor economists. Nelson and Bridges contend that a substantial portion of the pay differences between “male” and “female” jobs, especially in large organizations, cannot be attributed to the market nor to principles of efficiency. Rather, their research convincingly demonstrates that these differences derive from organizational processes for which employers should be held legally responsible. Their claims reignite the policy debate on pay reform.

*Legalizing Gender Equality* begins by tracing the evolution of statutory and case law leading up to the *Gunther* opinion, a doctrinal turning point for wage discrimination claims under Title VII, and analyzes reported cases of sex discrimination in pay following this pivotal case. The authors’ reading of contemporary cases suggests the courts were heavily influenced by the dominant conception of between-job gendered pay differences. The focus of the book is a detailed analysis of four empirical case studies of significant pay discrimination lawsuits litigated during the 1970s and 1980s. Nelson and Bridges offer a distinctive emphasis on dimensions of the employing organizations as defendants in the lawsuits, highlighting organizational data filtered into legal records, employment conditions giving rise to legal disputes, and the consequences of legal decisions for organizations. In each case, the authors find that gender inequality cannot
be adequately explained by market forces or efficiency arguments. The patterns observed and their complexities demand a new theoretical focus on organizational dimensions of gender inequality, specifically the process through which organizations mediate market wages.

Nelson and Bridges offer a significant contribution to the sociology of law and social inequality by explicitly challenging conventional theories of the relationship between market and organizational processes, and by painstakingly unraveling the mechanisms through which organizations reproduce gendered pay inequities. Their innovative sociological framework for the analysis of gender inequality is termed “the organizational inequality model.” Grounded in the classical Weberian conception of organizations as systems of legitimate domination, the authors propose a framework that examines the process by which certain values become organizational practice and the consequences for employees and the organization.

The most significant limitation of this study is the difficulty of drawing generalizations from only four cases to the larger and more complex terrain of organizational structures. Yet the authors discuss this limitation at length, as well as issues of selection bias in cases pursued to court. Another shortcoming is that the book does not explore racial inequality in organizational pay systems, although the novel approach to inequality clearly holds potential for the study of race-based pay discrimination. Overall, Nelson and Bridges have succeeded with a systematic investigation of efficiency, market, and organizational inequality models across public and private sectors. The rich data derived from the cases peel back layers of organizational complexity to reveal the mechanisms that reinforce gender-based pay inequality within organizations.

The authors extend their work beyond theoretical frontiers to recommend policy initiatives. The first is to address institutional barriers through the development of a “best practice model” of gender-neutral wage administration. The second strategy demands renewed efforts at achieving meaningful results through selective litigation and other forms of antidiscrimination regulation. The authors suggest that courts redirect their focus from the standard of culpability toward a standard of responsibility, in which the touchstone of liability is systematic wage gaps that remain unjustified by market and efficiency considerations. In an interesting twist, the third tactic suggested is that of the market’s potential for transformation. While Nelson and Bridges challenge the link between markets and organizational pay systems, they argue that significant gains may be achieved through harnessing market forces. They argue that organizations can more consistently and fairly incorporate market principles in their wage determination systems to foster progressive gender outcomes.

*Legalizing Gender Equality* is essential reading for scholars of social inequality, gender, and sociology of law. The book breaks new ground in a highly polarized debate over pay equity. The “organizational inequality model” emphasizes gender in structuring employment relations and rein-
introduces the firm to studies of gender inequality. The results of this compelling study testify to the importance of mapping variations in gender inequality across different market and organizational contexts.

_The Gender Division of Welfare: The Impact of the British and German Welfare States_. By Mary Daly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. x+273. $64.95 (cloth); $23.95 (paper).

Betty Farrell  
_Pitzer College_

Welfare states are both gendered and have an impact on gender relations in complex and unpredictable ways. Although no state welfare system has specifically defined gender equality as its primary goal, welfare policies, practices, and the norms that underlie them can have both intended and unintended consequences for male/female income distribution and redistribution, poverty, and the kinds of life choices open to men and women in a society. Mary Daly’s densely packed, informative study of welfare in Britain and Germany in the mid-1980s sets out to add gender to the predominantly class-based analysis that has characterized the welfare state literature to date. She asks: What difference does it make to shift the analysis of institutionalized welfare policies from an exclusive focus on labor markets, wage-earning, and job-related economic risks to a model that considers the interrelationship between family, state, and market? One consequence is to bring to center stage the kind of care-taking responsibilities (for children, the ill, the elderly, the disabled, and for household maintenance) that have traditionally been located in families as the (unpaid) work of women.

This book addresses the extent to which welfare policies in Britain and Germany have shifted the traditional work of families from the private sphere to the public, and what impact such a shift has had on women’s and men’s life experiences. Considering welfare and tax policies through the lens of gender highlights different male and female risk universes—in particular, the privileging of male income security and the relative inattention to women’s patterns of family/work involvements and the life-long vulnerabilities these produce.

The German and British welfare systems offer an important contrast. Germany has adopted a social insurance–based model of welfare in which cash transfers and tax benefits are provided to working men, with the assumption that these resources will be distributed through the family to dependent wives and children. The privileging of the male breadwinner household results in women having limited access to benefits on their own, except as widows who are well provided for under this system. The implicit bargain that German women make in this welfare system is to be cared for through marriage, rather than through their own labor force.
participation. One consequence is that there are large income gaps between German men and women, and a high rate of poverty for female-headed households.

In Britain, by contrast, the welfare state has operated as a flat-rate, minimal income replacement system that focuses more on support for individuals than for families. Some benefits, such as those for children, are directed to mothers, and alternative family forms, such as single-mother households, are far less marginalized in Britain than in Germany. British benefits are meager for everyone, but because transfers are not differentiated according to gender, the result is less gender-based income inequality than in Germany. The paradox is that, although the British welfare state has been more successful in reducing gendered income inequalities, it nevertheless has produced higher rates of poverty in the society overall.

Ultimately, Daly argues, both systems are flawed in terms of supporting or improving the lives of German and British women. The care-taking activities of women are either uncompensated or low-paid. Poverty remains high among female-headed households in both countries. Recent trends in Germany have been to reinforce the traditional family assumptions and gender arrangements behind their welfare policies, even though there is evidence to suggest that these social relations are in flux. In Britain, there is new emphasis on reducing state support in favor of family-based care, even though high divorce and nonmarital childbearing rates have undermined the family’s capacity to provide traditional support services.

This book is geared to a sophisticated academic audience in the fields of gender, stratification, comparative welfare politics, and family studies. At times, the author’s abstract analytic style obscures the thread of the argument, and one occasionally longs for a narrative of how these policies actually play out in people’s real lives. But Daly’s comprehensive, comparative perspective offers many important insights. The book ultimately raises many intriguing questions that cannot be answered in the context of this study or through the methodology of multivariate analysis. How, for example, does the greater familism of German households play out in terms of gender power relations, compared to the higher degree of individualism that structure British gender dynamics? What are the prospects for women in both countries in the face of economic downturns and the tightening of state-supported welfare benefits? Sweden is briefly suggested as an alternative welfare model (pp. 218–19), but this tantalizing example must await another study. One wonders, as well, about the lessons these two welfare systems can provide the United States, where the debates continue uncritically about marriage and the family as the best private alternative to state-supported welfare. The comparative perspective offers insights we can learn much from, and this book provides an excellent starting point for bringing gender and family to the center of economic and political analysis.
There are three general themes that, as well as being the analytical focus for separate chapters in this book, all the authors of this vital book return to again and again. The first is an analysis of the characteristics of the particular welfare regimes that separate European counties used to institute their policy prescriptions to counter unemployment. The second is how these regimes interact with and are affected by variations in patterns of family life and solidarity that, the authors acknowledge, are affected not only by different patterns of welfare but also depend upon “much longer-standing cultural traditions.” The third theme is to locate the previous two within an analysis of the specific economic conditions of each of the European countries they studied (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom) and to consider how this has been affected by different levels of economic development as well as by the nature of economic restructuring that these countries have put into place.

With the intellectual “protection” of exhaustive qualitative and comparative analysis, the authors deftly thread their way through some of the more intractable ideological thickets of contemporary discourses about unemployment. One example is the well-worn debate, originating in the Elizabethan poor laws, that generosity of welfare benefits affects attitudes to work. This is a magisterial study that effectively raises and returns policy analysis to the importance of national differences in their respective consideration of unemployment practices. It calls into question the potential glibness of those social policy analyses that have too easily subsumed these differences in order to promulgate more general theories such as globalization and comparative welfare state descriptions.

The authors are to be commended for demonstrating the complexity of unemployment policy and for revealing the detailed and distinctive national characteristics inherent in unemployment policies. They propose a fourfold analysis of these differences in policy prescription, namely: subprotective, liberal/minimal, employment centered, and universalistic. While not assuming that any one nation can ever adequately be located within any one specific model, their analysis of European welfare regimes in the selected countries will provide policy analysts and academics in other countries with a schema for the analysis of their own sets of unemployment policies. It will be an important resource in this endeavor.

The great benefit of this book is that it does return the issue of unemployment studies to an analysis of the particular. In this way, it is a specific and welcome challenge to the sloganeering responses to unem-
ployment that have marked the public rhetoric in such countries as my own (New Zealand), which have so profoundly embraced the restructuring demands of an economic rationalist model and are only now beginning to consider what has been wrought.

There is a strong strand of social policy analysis that reduces all of the complexity, so carefully portrayed and analyzed in this book, to various subsets of political discourse. While not entirely standing apart from an assessment of the role of ideological conflict in an approach to unemployment analysis, this volume does much to lay the groundwork for a return to a detailed policy analysis of difference and, I would suggest, inculcates a respect for these national differences. In this way, the authors expand on the concept of social exclusion, as though it had an independent and therefore effective explanatory frame, and they challenge those who would use this concept loosely to instead consider a more detailed analysis in which “dimensions of deprivation” are analyzed locally. They demonstrate that we have much more to gain from an analysis of these national differences than from blurring them in generalized and inadequate mantras of the globalized new. This is an important work of scholarship that will provide a great wealth of material for academics, students, and policy analysts.


Hiroshi Ishida
*University of Tokyo*

The persistence of economic inequality in contemporary America has attracted public attention for a long time. Many Americans believe that social policies to reduce the level of inequality in the form of employment training or redistributive programs are either ineffective or unfair and that economic inequality is the result of differences in people’s cultural disposition and generic ability, which are immune to societal intervention. This book, which contains original essays by leading scholars in the fields of economics, sociology, and the biological sciences, argues that economic inequality cannot simply be explained by individual intellectual ability and that social reforms can reduce the extent of inequality and improve the nation’s economic well-being.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part, “Merit, Reward, and Opportunity,” contains chapters by Amartya Sen and by John E. Roemer, and takes up the issue of defining meritocracy. Sen claims that the notion of merit is underdefined and that, if it is properly defined, it depends on one’s view of what the just society should be. Roemer advocates the importance of the conception of the “level playing field” in
which opportunities must be equalized before the competition begins while individuals must be responsible for the outcomes after they enter competition. The second part, entitled “The Causes and Consequences of ‘Intelligence,’” includes two chapters. Flynn’s chapter demonstrates a clear trend in IQ tests, in which each generation outscores the previous generation, and suggests that the increases in IQ scores are too large to be regarded as intelligence gains. A chapter by Feldman and others shows that the heritability of IQ has been overestimated in previous studies and that high heritability does not imply immunity to environmental change. Both chapters criticize the thesis presented by Herrnstein and Murray in The Bell Curve which emphasized the increased importance of genes in explaining economic inequality and the ineffectiveness of public policies.

The third part, “Schooling and Economic Opportunity,” contains five chapters that deal with the relationship among cognitive skill, education, and socioeconomic attainment. Ashenfelter and Rouse’s chapter reports that workers who have similar genetic and family backgrounds but different schooling do have different wages and that students from less advantaged homes benefit from schooling as much as those from more advantaged backgrounds. School thus has great potential in raising skills and income of the individuals from less well-off families, thereby reducing income inequality. The chapter by Bowles and Gintis argues that schooling increases earnings primarily by transforming individuals’ preferences, rather than by enhancing cognitive skills. They show that noncognitive individual traits, such as trustworthiness, willingness to work hard, and competitive attitudes toward fellow workers, are rewarded in the workplace because they contribute to attenuating incentive problems at work. Korenman and Winship reanalyze the data used in The Bell Curve. Their reanalysis shows that the apparent effect of intelligence is reduced substantially by controlling for education and that a refined measure of family background exerts equally strong impact on economic attainment as intelligence.

The chapter by Hauser and others reports that the effect of schooling is substantial and persistent even after controlling for mental ability, social background, and social psychological variables (such as parents’ encouragement and friends’ college plans). They conclude that, although ability plays a crucial role, education and social psychological variables play even more important roles in occupational attainment. The chapter by Cawley and others examines a dynamic relationship between ability, schooling, postschooling investment in training, and earnings over the life cycle. Their simulations show that wage gaps between high school and college graduates differ by ability groups and that ability affects present wage levels as well as individuals’ decisions to invest in their skills which, in turn, influences future wage levels.

The final part, entitled “Policy Options,” contains three chapters. Lundberg and Startz propose new economic models of racial inequality, which emphasize the role of social externalities, including factors like imperfect
information, use of race as a signal, racial segregation, and community effects (such as group reputation and social capital). They claim that it is possible to design effective policy interventions which encourage positive feedbacks where individual behaviors affect community attributes and where community attributes affect incentives and opportunities of individuals. Loury’s chapter shows simple economic models of worker-employer interaction where quota-like antidiscrimination policies lead to reduced incentives for skill acquisition among the disadvantaged group. Finally, Benabou claims that policies promoting equality of opportunity are likely to increase social mobility and economic growth, while policies to enhance equality of outcome tend to reduce economic output and work incentives.

In summary, this book shows that scientific studies can contribute to tackling one of the most pressing issues confronted by American people: the persistence of economic inequality. It should be read not only by the educated public, who will gain a better understanding of the causes of inequality, but also by public policy makers who will learn a great deal about how to craft effective policies to reduce economic inequality.


George Farkas
Pennsylvania State University

This is the second in a series of volumes analyzing a new data set on American adolescents in the 1990s, collected with the support of the Sloan Foundation (the first was _The Ambitious Generation_ by Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson [Yale University Press, 1999]). Across 12 sites and 33 middle and high schools in 1992–93, the researchers identified a “focal” sample of 1,215 students in grades 6, 8, 10, or 12, and a “cohort” sample of 3,604 students also in these grades. The focal students received all the data collection instruments; the cohort students only completed a questionnaire. Data were collected again from the sample members in 1993–94, 1994–95, and 1996–97.

This volume uses cross-sectional data from the first data collection wave to explore how teenagers are preparing for work and adulthood. Three sets of questions are addressed. First, what images and expectations do teenagers have about their future employment careers? Second, how do family, school, and friends affect the expectations, values, habits, and skills—the cultural capital—of adolescents? Finally, what sort of experiences are teenagers having as they transition out of high school?

For the first set of questions, the authors find that teenagers are very optimistic about their future work careers. Approximately 70% expect to
have jobs that pay well and that they will like. Further, the less advantaged groups—African-Americans, ethnic minorities, and students whose communities rank lower in social class—tend to have the highest optimism scores. (This seems surprising, but at least for African-American adolescents, it has been reported before.) The downside is that this optimism may be unrealistic, leading to disappointment later. Certainly the percentage of the sample expecting to achieve careers in the professions greatly exceeds the actual percentage of the labor force currently holding these jobs. The authors suggest a need for support systems to assist teenagers with socialization into adult work roles.

The second set of questions is addressed, in part, by using data collected via the experience sampling method (ESM). Students were given programmed wristwatches that signaled them at eight unpredictable times per day during a typical week. Students filled out a one-page form each time they were signaled. The respondent reported the activity engaged in, his or her location, and his or her thoughts and feelings at the time. In addition, data were collected via questionnaires and personal interviews with the respondents, parents, and school staff.

Results show that academic activities are seen as work, leisure activities as play, and while the former are seen as important to one’s future, they are not seen as enjoyable. Surprisingly, white children from educated families report disliking work more than do less advantaged minorities. However, a more negative social class finding is that economically disadvantaged teenagers spend greater amounts of time than do more advantaged teens in a state of disengagement—one that is neither like work nor like play. This is an unpleasant, unfocused state, often accompanied by low self-esteem. This demonstration of greater disengagement among teenagers toward the bottom of the social class hierarchy is one of this study’s major contributions, since such disengagement may play a central role in the lower educational and occupational achievement of this group. (For a suggestive ethnographic treatment, see *Ain’t No Makin’ It* by Jay MacLeod [Westview Press, 1995].)

The opposite of disengagement is engagement in activities that combine high levels of challenge and skill. Teenagers reporting higher levels of such engagement also report a better overall quality of experience, are more involved in productive activities, are more motivated and optimistic, and have higher self-esteem. The authors find that families play a key role in providing an environment that is both supportive and challenging. The most successful families do this in a way that is spirited, cohesive, and purposeful. Such a family ethos can overcome economic disadvantage in preparing adolescents for adulthood.

The authors also use their ESM data to explore students’ experiences in the classroom. They find that some of the most common classroom activities—teacher lectures and watching videos—are reported by students to lack both challenge and importance to their future goals. Students report a lack of engagement at these times. By contrast, the most engaging
activities are individual work (including a test or quiz) and group activities (although, with the exception of science labs, the latter are relatively rare). Nonacademic subjects are reported to be more engaging than academic subjects. With its focus on individual work and tests, mathematics is reported to be the most engaging academic subject. The authors find that student engagement in schoolwork is largely driven by the activity format (lecture, group, individual, audiovisual, test) employed by the teacher. However, it may be important that in a further analysis of these data, Gad Yair (Sociology of Education, October 2000) finds that, net of activity, African-American and Hispanic students are significantly more preoccupied with external matters (less engaged with schoolwork), than are Asian and white students.

Finally, the authors examine the experiences of the oldest sample members as they transition out of high school. They are not very positive about the assistance provided by guidance counselors or the foundation laid by academic schoolwork for these students’ futures in additional schooling or employment. The volume concludes with a set of recommendations for improvement that are consistent with these themes. Overall, this is a provocative study that will be of interest to anyone concerned with American adolescents and their transition from school to work.

Stepping over the Color Line: African-American Students in White Suburban Schools. By Amy Stuart Wells and Robert L. Crain. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997. Pp. xii+380. $40.00 (cloth); $18.00 (paper).

Meredith Phillips
University of California, Los Angeles

Nearly a half-century after the Supreme Court’s landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision, most children in America still attend racially segregated schools. An intriguing exception are those students who voluntarily participate in an interdistrict transfer program in St. Louis that buses over 13,000, mostly poor, urban, African-American students to 122 predominantly wealthy, white, suburban schools each day. Stepping over the Color Line is a thorough, well-written case study of this program. The book’s importance reaches far beyond this particular case, however. Its insights into the complexities of the school-choice process and the difficulties of true racial integration make its core chapters required reading for all sociologists interested in race, education, and inequality.

The book has three sections. The first traces the history of racial subordination in St. Louis over the past 150 years, setting the stage for the court settlement that led to the creation of the interdistrict transfer program. The second, and most provocative, section presents interview data from city students and their parents about why they stayed in the city
schools, transferred to the suburban schools, or returned to the city schools after trying out the suburban schools. The third section describes the transfer program from the point of view of the white suburban educators, parents, and students.

Wells and Crain’s interview data challenge common assumptions about how parents and students make educational decisions. Their results reinforce the concern that school-choice programs may “cream” off the better students and the most vocal parents. In their data, students who transferred to the suburbs tended to have supportive parents, resilient temperaments, or both. The parents of transfer students also tended to have more education and higher-status jobs than did city parents, even though Wells and Crain deliberately sampled transfer and city students from the same neighborhoods.

Wells and Crain’s results also indicate that basic “push/pull” factors cannot explain educational choices. Neither dissatisfaction with the quality of their neighborhood schools nor positive information about the transfer program—even from friends and relatives who participated in it—were sufficient to encourage some city parents and students to try the transfer program. Even though most city parents believed that the suburban schools were better, some chose to remain in the city simply because the environment was more familiar. Others settled for the path of least resistance, in essence choosing not to choose. Still others used a complicated decision calculus involving a careful assessment of their children’s academic preparation and personality in relation to the predicted demands of the suburban schools. As one parent, who decided to let her son, but not her daughter, transfer to the suburbs, put it: “I wanted to put her out there, too, but it would be too stressful for her. She is not as quick as Maurice. He is very quick; he just memorizes—has an excellent memory. She is very active—won’t sit still to grasp it. If I put her out in Parkway [a suburban school], it would be very stressful. She can’t deal with it” (p. 209).

An important strength of the book lies in the authors’ willingness to portray transfer students’ experiences in all their complexity, despite the fact that both authors are strong proponents of the long-term benefits of racial integration. Wells and Crain’s interviews reveal that many of the advantages of suburban schools, such as having access to a more challenging curriculum, being exposed to all the forms of capital inherent in a wealthy, white environment, and escaping from one’s neighborhood, are also disadvantages. Transfer students faced obstacles to academic integration because they had weaker academic skills than their suburban counterparts and because they felt excluded from the tacit cultural knowledge that suburban teachers and students shared. They also found it difficult to become socially integrated with their suburban peers because they lived too far away to spend time with them after school and on the weekends.

Despite the book’s contributions to our understanding of the school-
choice process and the promises and pitfalls of integrated schooling, it has several limitations. It is too long, mostly because the authors did not synthesize the histories of residential and school segregation. More important, its conclusions rely too heavily on its small N, cross-sectional interview methodology. Although the authors used some secondary survey data to support their findings, their basic descriptive claims about differences between the city, transfer, and return students would have been much more convincing had they administered their own survey. Moreover, the retrospective nature of the interviews makes it difficult to tell whether the informants are describing factors that actually influenced their choices or factors that simply help justify their choices after the fact. A prospective research design would have helped sort out these issues of cause and effect. Taken as a whole, however, Wells and Crain have written a first-rate book on the history, politics, and lived experience of a policy designed to erase the color line, one transfer student at a time.


Omar M. McRoberts
University of Chicago

In this highly readable and well-researched book, Gerald Gamm rewrites the story of neighborhood invasion and succession and makes a significant contribution to urban sociology and the sociology of religion alike. The events unfold in Boston's Upper Roxbury and Dorchester—two formerly white and Jewish districts transformed in the 1960s and 1970s by black in-migration. Gamm begins with the contention that racist fears, manipulative real estate and lending practices, and antagonistic street-level interactions cannot fully explain why Jews left relatively quickly and peacefully, while Catholics held on longer, fought with more vitriol, and pulled up stakes less often.

Rather, rules governing membership, institutional rootedness, and religious authority for synagogue and parish differed in ways that permitted Jews to leave readily and encouraged Catholics to hold fast. Membership in synagogues is entirely voluntary and has no territorial basis. Catholic parishes, by contrast, are membership boundaries delineated in the space around the church. Jewish ritual, meanwhile, is far less rooted in particular places than Catholic ritual, which is built around immovable altars in permanent, diocesean edifices. The Torah is highly portable and does not derive any degree of sacredness from any particular building or territory. Finally, Catholic rules of authority locate a great deal of power in officials located outside and above the congregation and parish priest. Synagogues and rabbis, however, are highly subject to congregational preferences and
cannot appeal to powerful judicatories for monetary or moral support. The synagogue, then, would have little choice but to follow suit if congregation members staged a mass exodus toward the suburbs.

In developing this argument, Gamm mobilizes an impressive array of statistical, archival, and anecdotal data. The book’s painstakingly constructed thematic maps are particularly helpful. The maps, reminiscent of those in St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton’s classic Black Metropolis (University of Chicago Press, 1945), show how racial and ethnic settlement patterns covaried with religious institutional locations over nearly a 90-year period.

Urban Exodus is pioneering in that it takes local institutions as the key players in the invasion/succession process. In many previous studies, institutions were considered reactors to, not engineers of, shifting residential patterns. Largely absent were accounts of institution-led relocation or institution-based resistance to displacement or the arrival of reviled others. Also absent were accounts sufficiently sensitive to the formative roles local religious organizations have played in the urban process. Urban Exodus begins to present those accounts and develop that sensitivity, thereby significantly enriching theoretical and empirical discussions of religion in urban settings.

A minor problem with the book is its title, which suggests that white Catholics stayed in their neighborhoods while Jews left wholesale. The fact is, as Gamm reveals in the text, many white Catholics eventually left too. Catholic churches, nonetheless, remained and became religious homes for recently arrived Vietnamese, Latino/a, and Haitian immigrants. This points, nevertheless, to a deeper conceptual problem regarding Gamm’s uneven operationalization of the term “mobility.” He always describes Jewish mobility in terms of institutional and personal flight but sometimes describes Catholic rootedness in terms of an absence of institutional movement, without regard to the glaring fact of white Catholic flight. The insinuation is that Jews and Catholics really behaved oppositely.

More generally, Gamm’s explanatory discussion is thicker for synagogues than churches, which makes Catholic cases appear as a backdrop against which to develop the complexity of Jewish cases. This is partly understandable since the book aims to refute Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon’s Death of an American Jewish Community (Free Press, 1992), which foregrounds all of the impetuses for Jewish flight that Gamm downplays. Still, Gamm demonstrates more convincingly that institutional Judaism did not impede Jewish flight than that Catholic canon law led whites toward belligerent parochialism.

At times, Catholic rules of authority allowed the hierarchy to sidestep territorial rules of rootedness and membership. As Gamm acknowledges, Boston’s Catholic archdiocese sometimes shut down churches or experimented with nongeographic “ethnic parishes.” Importantly, though, neither response indicates a rigid devotion to altars, buildings, or physical propinquity as the primary basis for membership. These actions point to

Finally, Gamm may overstate the Jewish immunity to territorial concerns. If institutional Judaism were so unlike parish-based Catholicism, synagogues might not have needed to relocate in order to maintain membership. Why did synagogues not remain in place, confident that members would commute back to the city for worship? Perhaps the Jewish faithful, like so many of their Catholic counterparts, preferred to live near their religious institutions, such that synagogues had to follow their members’ movements. Perhaps Boston’s Jews had parishes after all—portable ones.


Francesca Polletta
*Columbia University*

The boycott of two Korean produce stores by black activists in Brooklyn in 1990 lasted almost a year, created a firestorm of publicity, and destroyed the reelection prospects of New York City’s first black mayor. Claire Jean Kim traces the history of the boycott in order to advance an ambitious set of arguments about race, power, and protest in post-1965 America. The press reported the story as one of racial scapegoating, with blacks lashing out against hard-working Koreans whose success showed up their own failure. Academic accounts of black-Korean conflict have not gone much beyond that interpretation, Kim argues. But they thereby “miss the forest for the trees” (pp. 12, 154), namely, the “racial order” structuring the contenders, stakes, and outcome of such conflicts. Kim draws on Omi and Winant’s notion of a “racial formation” to draw attention to the naturalized categories and understandings of race that shape people’s life chances. But she extends their concept in two ways. First, she locates Asian Americans in the post-1965 American racial order. Ranked below whites but above blacks on an axis of superiority/inferiority, they are positioned as apart from both groups on an axis of insider/foreigner, as “permanently foreign and unassimilable” (p. 16). They are a “model minority” with admirable values of entrepreneurialism and self-sufficiency, but are also “ostracized from the body politic” (p. 17) and denied access to the social safety net available to other Americans. Second, Kim argues that the racial order shapes how subordinated groups experience and challenge their position, and with what consequence. Segregated in underfunded and politically underserved neighborhoods as the result of a long history of discrimination, black Americans have repeatedly drawn on a
nationalist “community control” frame to fight the intrusion of exploitive landlords and merchants in their neighborhoods and to envision a geographical base for more fundamental black power.

When a Haitian woman was allegedly beaten by the Korean manager of a Brooklyn green grocery in 1990, black nationalist activists saw in the boycott an opportunity to mobilize black residents around the aim of community control. Their complaint was with particular merchants and with black powerlessness, not with Koreans. But in response to the boycott, Korean merchants and their supporters in the media invoked an integrationist rhetoric and, indeed, the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., to paint the boycotters as racist. Mayor David Dinkins, caught “between a rock and a hard place” (p. 189), alienated whites by hesitating to criticize the boycotters and then alienated blacks nine months later by crossing the picket line. Others began to cross the picket line after he did, but the boycott’s end did not reverse his political fortunes—he was later defeated by Rudolf Giuliani in an election which played up racial themes—nor secure protesters anything in the way of victory. Such a dénouement was inevitable, Kim argues, since the integrationist, “colorblind” rhetoric invoked by the boycott’s opponents effectively reinterpreted black challenge as black criminality and “reverse” racism. In the end, “racial power inevitably generates protest by subordinated groups, but it also names, interprets and ultimately silences that protest” (p. 219).

Kim traces the unfolding of the boycott through in-depth interviews with black nationalist activists, city officials, Korean merchants and their advocates, and boycott participants. Her account is illuminating in showing the extraordinary pressures on black elected officials, and especially the mayor, to assuage the exaggerated racial anxieties of white business elites and media editorialists. It also depicts the complex relations of competition and mutual dependence that mark black activists’ interactions with black elected officials, and the reliance of both on the very media coverage that ended up undercutting their positions.

The problem is that Kim’s analysis repeatedly strains against the limits of the racial power model she presents. Her thorough account of why Korean immigrants cornered the green grocery niche in poor black neighborhoods emphasizes more the fact that immigrants were often middle class and came with cash than the effects of a discursive racial formation. The racial power model provides no purchase on the relations between protest leadership and elected officials, which deserve generalization beyond this case. Nor does the model account for what seems some change in Koreans’ status (if not that of blacks) as a result of the protest. Kim argues that protest in the end merely strengthens rather than changes the racial order. But media coverage of the boycott referred to Koreans flexing new political muscle, suggesting that they may have begun to successfully position themselves as legitimate political claimants—precisely the status that Kim argues is denied them in the current racial order.

Still, the book deserves a wide audience. It bridges theorizing on race/
ethnicity and social movements, offers a too-rare picture of post-1965 black protest, and joins a rich empirical analysis of interethnic conflict with an ambitious and provocative argument.


Parmatma Saran
_City University of New York_

As a result of changes in the American immigration laws in 1965, there has been a constant flow of immigrants from India for the last 30 years, and it is still continuing. Initially, those who came in the 1960s and 1970s represented a high level of education and skills and were mostly professionals, for example, doctors, engineers, scientists, and so on. This was the function of the immigration laws which only allowed professionals to come as immigrants. These are referred to as “primary” immigrants.

Subsequently, Indians were coming to America as immigrants through sponsorship by relatives who were already here. However, this group, which came from 1980 to 1990, was not necessarily as well educated and lacked the professional backgrounds of previous waves of immigrants. They are referred to as “secondary” immigrants. Therefore, now we have a highly diversified Indian community in the United States in terms of social, cultural, educational, and occupational backgrounds. A strong Indian community has emerged in the United States, with major concentrations in metropolitan areas like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco among others.

The emergence of Indian communities in the United States has attracted academic attention and has also been the object of a spate of articles in newspapers and magazines. A number of books have been published by historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and others exploring different aspects of the Indian immigrant experience in the United States. This book is the newest addition to the growing literature on this subject, and perhaps the most detailed, comprehensive, and articulate one. Padma Rangaswamy has captured the Chicago scene to the fullest extent possible and attempted to relate it to the larger scene both theoretically and methodologically. She has played her role extremely well as both “insider” and “outsider,” particularly since she had gone back to India for 10 years and again returned to Chicago in the early 1990s. This clearly gave her an advantage in conducting this research.

At the microlevel, Rangaswamy has done an excellent job in portraying the Indian American community in the Chicago area. She has successfully used both quantitative and qualitative analysis in presenting her data. Her personal interviews and observations give a real sense of what is
happening to the lives of her respondents. Unlike many other studies of Indian immigrants, which focus on social and cultural aspects of assimilation, she also introduces the role of cultural, religious, political, and economic enterprises and its impact on the Indian community. While the status of women has been an issue and has been dealt with by other scholars, Rangaswamy adds a new dimension to the study of Indian immigrants by particularly dealing with youth and the elderly population and concerns affecting them. These two issues are of immense value for their practical implications and must be addressed independently by future researchers. Her study also confirms that the experiences of Indian immigrants in Chicago are not any different from those living in New York and other parts of the country, nor, for that matter, much different from those living in different parts of the world. One common thread is their strong commitment to Indian identity.

The history of Indians migrating to different parts of the world is not a new phenomenon, even though the circumstances and context of their migration may vary. Indian communities around the world are generally seen as “diaspora,” meaning thereby that while they have common roots, they are in a state of exile, as Rangaswamy rightly points out. Additionally, since they cannot return to the homeland, they are also disconnected from their roots in India. Rangaswamy therefore introduces an alternative term, oikumene, which connotes the formation of an extended household around a central oikos (a Greek word meaning “home”), and she suggests that this may be more appropriate to the study of Indians around the world since the central source or homeland, India, remains an important part of their identity.

This model makes sense for the study of Indians who left India from 1950 to 1960 for England, Canada, the United States, and Australia. Because of their better economic status, and advancements in transportation, communication, and media, it has been possible for them to maintain closer ties with India. However, those who left India earlier in the 1800s for South Africa, East Africa, Fiji, and Trinidad really lost contact with India for practical purposes, even though Indian identity remained important for them. Hence this alternative model, oikumene, has some limitations and may not be useful in the study of the earlier wave of Indian immigration. However, in any case, it can be argued that we need to explore new paradigms for the study of Indian immigrants in these changing times.

In conclusion, this book can be clearly seen as a serious scholarly contribution, providing a very comprehensive picture of Indian immigrant experiences at the microlevel and at the same time sensitizing its readers to the larger theoretical as well as methodological issues needed for the study of Indian immigrants at the macrolevel. This study is certainly a welcome addition to the growing literature on Indian immigrants and particularly valuable to scholars engaged in the study of ethnicity and migration. It is highly recommended for those studying Indian immi-
Book Reviews

grants. Finally, Indian immigrants will find this reading engaging as well as rewarding.


Peter Skerry
Claremont McKenna College and the Brookings Institution

Appearing in the midst of the continuing controversy surrounding the 2000 decennial census, this study is a timely addition to the growing literature on the political and policy implications of government statistics on race and ethnicity. Concerned specifically with the historical and contemporary interactions between Latinos and the U.S. census, the author offers a competent, nontechnical overview of the issues concerning how our largest minority fits into this nation’s bipolar, black-white racial paradigm. More to the point, Rodrı́guez examines how Latinos may be changing that long-dominant paradigm.

Working squarely within the well-established framework that race and ethnicity are social constructions, the author plows no new theoretical ground here. Similarly unsurprising are her findings that Latinos’ racial identities in the contemporary United States are, quite unlike those of black and white Americans, highly fluid and context related. For that matter, Rodrı́guez’s research methodologies—which include intensive personal interviews, simple correlational analyses of census responses, and thorough review of academic and government studies on responses to racial and ethnic survey questions—are hardly innovative. Nevertheless, she offers an adequate overview of the evidence on the correlates of shifting responses by Latinos to questions about their racial and ethnic identities.

Particularly useful is Rodrı́guez’s inquiry into the tendency for Latinos to check off the “other race” category on the 1980 and 1990 censuses. Indeed, Rodrı́guez reminds us that in 1990 more than 40% of Latinos identified themselves racially as “other race” and that more than 97% of all those so identifying that year were Latinos. To the extent that Rodrı́guez has an overarching argument, it is that such responses to census and survey questions do not reflect, as is often averred, “confusion” among Latinos as to how they fit into the contemporary American racial paradigm. Rather Rodrı́guez maintains that such responses reflect the very different conceptualizations of race that Latinos bring with them from their countries of origin and that to some extent are maintained here in the United States.

In a similar vein, Rodrı́guez presents some intriguing data on the effects of the race of interviewers and of the context of interviews on Latinos’
responses to questions about their race and ethnicity. Rodríguez also presents an informative historical summary of the changing format of race and ethnicity questions on the decennial census forms.

What this study does not do is deal with the policy issues now swirling about the census. For example, the author spends a good deal of time tracing how we arrived at the present regime of racial and ethnic self-identification on the census form. But she neglects to address the interesting and important exception to self-identification: observer identification of race and ethnicity, the method that civil rights enforcement agencies have come to rely upon.

Toward the very end of the study, Rodríguez alludes to the persistent “conflict between providing recognizable categories that are relevant to respondents and needing to gather uniform, comparative data” (p. 176). But this is all she has to say on this important issue. Nor does Rodríguez consider the much more basic question of whether Latinos are fundamentally challenging the United States’ bipolar racial paradigm, as she seems to suggest, or whether they are gradually becoming absorbed into a new version of the old paradigm that in law and public policy treats African-Americans, Latinos, and others as similarly situated racial minorities.

As a result, this book will be most useful in undergraduate courses dealing with race and ethnicity. More advanced students and researchers will find it less helpful.


Mary Pattillo-McCoy
Northwestern University

There is plentiful demographic evidence that U.S. cities are highly segregated by race. Yet this does not mean that all neighborhoods are segregated. Sharing America's Neighborhoods takes as its focus the nearly 20% of metropolitan neighborhoods that are racially integrated. Here, “neighborhood” means census tract, and “integrated” means 10%–50% black. The book concentrates on black/white integration and stresses the residential decisions of white households as determinative. It offers an instructive analysis of the mechanisms of racial integration and racial change and should be read by urban sociologists, demographers and planners, and race and ethnicity scholars.

Ellen lays out the landscape of racially integrated census tracts. Whereas the “social problems” approach predisposes many sociologists to tell a story of neighborhood racial instability, Ellen spins the data in the opposite direction. Turnover is not inevitable. The majority (57%) of in-
tegrated neighborhoods in 1970 were still integrated in 1990. This is a service to the discipline as it counteracts the collective pessimism about racial integration. Having established the possibility for stable integration, the remainder of the book examines the reasons that neighborhoods change.

Ellen uses censuses (1970–90) and geocoded survey data from the American Housing Survey to build a theory of “race-based neighborhood stereotyping.” The theory challenges the notion that whites’ residential decisions are based on their aversion to living near blacks. Instead, Ellen argues that whites are more concerned about nonracial economic and quality of life criteria, such as housing values, school quality, and crime. However, whites’ assessments of neighborhood health are influenced by stereotypes about blacks. “It is not necessarily that white households dislike living next to blacks per se; it is that many white households, rightly or wrongly (and even perhaps, with some regret), associate predominately black neighborhoods with diminished neighborhood quality and resilience” (p. 47). The fear that racially integrated neighborhoods are on their way to becoming all black is the primary threat to maintaining their stability.

The author finds empirical support for the theory. When predicting white population decline (chap. 4), neighborhood satisfaction (chap. 5), and actual mobility (chap. 6), the coefficient for proportion black in the neighborhood is almost never significant, but the measure of black population growth is frequently significant. Growth in the black population is positively correlated with white population decline and actual mobility decisions, and negatively correlated with white neighborhood satisfaction. This finding challenges pure prejudice theories that are based on white households’ simple antipathy for black neighbors. Such dislike, Ellen argues, should be captured by the measure of current racial composition. What matters instead is whites’ future expectations for neighborhood quality, informed by the trend in racial composition.

Ellen also finds that unlike homeowners, white renters’ satisfaction and mobility are not affected by either current proportion black or growth in the black population share over time. If white residential decisions were based primarily on aversion to black neighbors, then one would not expect differences in attitudes and behavior among whites by housing tenure. The race-based neighborhood stereotyping theory rests on the investment decisions of white households. Thus, the financial, temporal, and social investments in neighborhoods made by homeowners and not renters make the racial stereotypes operative for homeowners in their housing decisions and evaluations.

While the author contends that these findings strongly challenge pure prejudice models of neighborhood change, it seems instead that the results in this book are important qualifications of such models. It is consistent, for example, with a “tipping” hypothesis that growth in the black population better predicts white behavior since “tipping” is based on breaches
of the racial tolerance thresholds of successive waves of white residents. Yet the author resists pure prejudice as an explanation using a phrase that is becoming ever more prevalent in sociology: “It isn’t race per se.”

What authors usually mean when they use this rhetorical expression is that it is not the “blackness” of blacks that occasions some outcome, but rather other characteristics that are so tightly connected with blackness that they are often indistinguishable by lay observers. Through statistical isolation, however, we can make the race coefficient insignificant and conclude, as Ellen does, that “households care less about the racial composition of their neighborhood per se than about its quality of life” (p. 131). I am unconvincd, however, that this is a helpful distinction. Surely, it can be informative to policymakers who wonder what things about blacks need to be “changed” in order to change an outcome, since changing skin color is not an option. But the important task of specifying the mechanisms does not necessitate using a language that obfuscates the primary connections between blackness and negative outcomes. Because, as Ellen points out relative to neighborhood quality, “any disparities that exist between black and white neighborhoods are to a significant degree rooted in negative racial attitudes and discrimination” (p. 156).


Arnold R. Hirsch
University of New Orleans

In 448 well-researched, written, and illustrated pages, Lawrence J. Vale provides a history of public housing in Boston, focusing upon its national context and cultural origins. For Vale, public housing is not simply a bricks-and-mortar New Deal program. It is, instead, part of a historical debate regarding the nature of society’s obligation to provide decent housing those who cannot meet the market’s demands or the community’s accepted standard of behavior. Embracing such individuals collectively as “public neighbors” (p. 8), this book connects the prehistory of public housing to traditional attitudes and policies aimed at distancing as well as reforming the poor.

Ambivalence and continuity constitute dominant themes. The former manifested itself in repeated attempts to separate the “deserving” from the “unworthy” in the distribution of public assistance. From the “warning out” of “strangers” to the institutionalization of “indoor relief,” the desire to withhold support from those of questionable character, or to ration it to those susceptible of being “cured” in a confined environment became clear. Progressive era settlements, model tenements, zoning ordinances, and building regulations ambiguously elaborated upon society’s respon-
sibilities by suggesting the need to reform both the environment and the poor. And these actions contrasted sharply with the largesse bestowed upon upwardly mobile “worthy” citizens by the federal government’s distribution of public lands. Not only did such giveaways promote the ideal of the single-family home occupied by a hardworking citizen-owner, but they made its realization possible for many. Ironically, the ubiquity of the housing subsidies (later augmented by federally insured mortgages and breaks enshrined in the tax code) contributed to their invisibility and the ideology-mythology of the morally superior, independent property owner.

The second half of the book furnishes a richly detailed case study of public housing in Boston that will be especially appreciated by specialists. It is here that the continuity with the program’s prehistory shines through: the exaltation of the single family home, distrust of the poor, the popular linkage of (im)morality and poverty, and the persistence of the “politics of ambivalence.” The “more privileged,” Vale concludes, “gained urban houses, frontier homesteads, or suburban plots,” even as “those public neighbors judged least deserving were warned out, walled-in, and left behind” (p. 158).

Undergoing a multistaged transition keyed to legislative enactments through the 1930s and 1940s, public housing in Boston began as a series of highly “selective collectives” intended to reward the “deserving” poor (as late as 1950–51, 90% of the applicants were veterans and 95% were employed) only to emerge later as the leading option for impoverished nonwhites possessing the fewest choices. First seen as an engine of reform that promoted good citizenship by lifting its denizens out of surrounding slums, public housing lost its image as “step up” when it became a means of facilitating private economic development. The Boston Housing Authority (BHA) subsequently managed 25 family projects built between 1938 and 1954 on scattered sites. With a carefully screened tenantry, the system worked well until faced with the problems of concentrated poverty and race in the postrenewal and civil rights eras. In charting the BHA’s subsequent decline, Vale cites the usual explanatory suspects while adding an “underlying cultural unease” rooted in “ideological ambivalence” (p. 333). That intellectual discomfort soon led authorities away from the construction of new developments and toward programs that utilize private housing and market forces. Vale concludes that vouchers represent the best hope for sheltering the nation’s public neighbors: more public housing, but without projects.

From the Puritans to the Projects is an impressive rendering of an influential, if ambiguous, reform tradition and the BHA. However deserving of intense scrutiny in its own right, though, Boston’s unique character raises questions with regard to the weight placed on cultural or ideological explanations. Even holding Puritan legacies in abeyance, a city that remained 91% white in 1960, and whose public housing population nearly equaled that figure (85%) two years later, presents quite a
different profile from that found in many major cities. Where 13 of 17 Boston family projects built between 1949 and 1954 were on vacant, often outlying land, such suggested placement provoked bitter opposition elsewhere. Those cities that concentrated overwhelmingly black developments in the urban core faced racial problems of a different order and such magnitude that the stigma placed upon their projects flowed from sources other than the ideological “ambivalence” described here.

Finally, Vale’s call for more public housing without projects must be measured against Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh’s recent plea to halt the current wave of demolition in his *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Harvard University Press, 2000). An ethnography of Chicago’s Robert Taylor Homes, Venkatesh’s alternative perspective led him to fear that the public commitment to shelter the poor will itself disappear without the projects’ tangible presence; Vale believes that visible presence is now an inescapable part of the problem.

*The Crime Drop in America*. Edited by Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. xiii+318. $54.95 (cloth); $19.95 (paper).

John H. Laub

*University of Maryland*

Criminologists were caught off guard by both the upsurge of violence during the mid-1980s and the precipitous decline during the mid-1990s. The magnitude of the decline in violence, for example, is truly startling, with national homicide rates at a 30-year low. *The Crime Drop in America*, edited by Alfred Blumstein and Joel Wallman, is an important collection of papers that systematically addresses various explanations for changing rates in violent crime in urban areas. The topics investigated can be categorized as follows: the effects of criminal justice institutions (John Eck and Edward Maguire examine changes in policing and William Spelman assesses the impact of prison expansion); the effects of situational components of violent events (Garen Wintemute examines the role of guns in violent crime and efforts to control guns, and Bruce Johnson, Andrew Golub, and Eloise Dunlap analyze changes in drug use, drug markets, and drug subcultures); and the effects of larger social forces (Richard Rosenfeld examines the age structure of homicide, especially the steady decline in adult homicide, declining rates of marriage and intimate partner homicide, and changing cultural norms; Jeff Groger analyzes economic trends, in particular economic opportunity; and James Fox assesses the effects of demographics).

Alfred Blumstein sets the stage for these chapters by reviewing trends of violence from 1980 to 1998. Blumstein carefully documents the steep rise in violence starting in 1985 and the equally steep fall in violence
starting in 1992–93. Blumstein highlights the different trends in homicide for different age groups and underscores the need to examine disaggregated rates of violence. From these data, it is clear that the increase in violence during the 1980s was due to juveniles, not adults. However, the decline is attributable to both age groups. Blumstein presents his thesis that the increase in juvenile violence was due to the diffusion of guns into the hands of juveniles coupled with the emergence of the crack cocaine market. What is less clear is whether this explanation can account for the large decline as well.

Although there are few surprises in this volume overall, some findings should be highlighted, especially for those interested in policy. For instance, the increase in incarceration played a relatively modest role in bringing down crime rates. More precisely, Spelman estimates that “the crime drop would have been 27 percent smaller than it actually was, had the prison buildup never taken place” (p. 123). Along similar lines, there appears to be no hard evidence that changes in policing alone (e.g., zero-tolerance policing drawn from “broken windows” theory) accounted for the decline in violent crime. Finally, it is apparent that demographic trends were not helpful in predicting either the upsurge in violence or its hefty decline. As Fox says, “Demography can be predicted with a high level of certainty, suggesting future changes in crime that might occur with the rather bold assumption that all else remains equal.” However, “the assumption of ‘all else equal’ is a rather problematic one” (p. 309).

I wish the volume was more expansive than it is. Three things come to mind. First, the focus on short-term trends in violence needs to be justified. We know that rates of burglary have declined dramatically over the last two decades. Do the same “suspects” for the decline in violence extend to property crimes and forms of problem behavior, like teenage birth rates, that have also declined? Moreover, what do these short-term fluctuations look like when examined in a longer time series of say 50 years? Second, there are several sociolegal trends that are not discussed in enough depth. These issues are of interest to sociologists, and they include crime prevention initiatives, welfare reform, attempts to strengthen families and schools, the controversial role of abortion legalization, and efforts of African-American religious groups like the Ten Point Coalition in Boston. Third, what can we learn from the experiences of other countries? In fact, an exclusive focus on the United States may limit our understanding of trends in violence. At a recent meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Rosemary Gartner, a sociologist at the University of Toronto, pointed out that while homicides in Canada have fallen markedly during the 1990s, there has been little change in drug demand or drug markets, incarceration rates have fallen, police practices have not changed in any systematic way, and overall the Canadian economy has not been particularly robust during this time period. This suggests that there is much that can be learned from a comparative study of crime trends in the United States, Canada, and Europe.
American Journal of Sociology

These criticisms aside, this book is a “must read” for criminologists. The questions examined are important, the research is carefully done, and the findings will not only help us sort out competing explanations for the current crime drop, but will also expand our general knowledge about crime causation and its control.


Mathieu Deflem
Purdue University

This book provides an account of the history of flag desecration and the efforts to criminalize it. Welch’s analysis is primarily directed at unraveling the course and outcome of attempts to outlaw flag desecration and the unintended consequences these had. The opening chapters provide a narrative of the main stages in the history of flag desecration. During the antebellum years of the 19th century, movements to protect the flag as a powerful symbol in American society had strong associations with nativism and patriotism. The Civil War was a first important catalyst to launch a veritable movement against flag desecration based on the intimate connection between flag desecration and anti-Unionism. Not surprisingly, similar intensifications of the flag issue took place during World Wars I and II.

Mounting resistance against the outlawing of flag desecration did not take place until the protest era of the 1960s and 1970s, when various forms of flag desecration, especially flag burning, became central elements in a more general protest movement. During the 1980s, this generality made way for more isolated but highly publicized flag desecrations by specific social movements, such as the Revolutionary Communist Party. The intense nature of the controversy at that time led to convictions on the basis of flag protection statutes. These statutes, however, were quickly overturned when the U.S. Supreme Court in 1989 ruled that a Texas antidesecration statute violated the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The debate shifted to the political arena, but a constitutional amendment to ban flag desecration failed. In 1989, Congress passed the Flag Protection Act, which in the following year, however, was ruled to be unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

The final section of Welch’s book analyzes the reactions against flag desecration in terms of a model of moral crusading. Welch identifies the criteria of the panic, the social control agents and institutions that played a prominent role in the crusade, and the themes that were used to substantiate concerns for and against flag protection. Specifically analyzed are relevant congressional debates and the representations of flag dese-
cration and flag protection in the media. The author concludes that po-
political elites and the media have contributed to the idea that flag desec-
cration is a revolutionary force targeted at the very fabric of American
society. The media’s role is more ambiguous in that journalists are also
highly protective of First Amendment concerns. This ambiguity is also
shown in the ironic consequences that reactions against flag desecrations
have had in contributing to the opposition to the control of flag
desecration.

Michael Welch’s book delivers a contribution to the sociological study
of a fascinating and important social issue. Any sociologist interested in
flag desecration issues has to start with Welch’s work, this book, and the
author’s many related articles. The empirical sections of the study, es-
pecially the identification of the various themes and players in the con-
frontational battle between First Amendment rights and the protection
of fundamentally held beliefs and values, make for an interesting read.
However, I found the work to be generally much less convincing in the-
toretical aspects. The book is largely indebted to a rather orthodox social
constructionism, additionally relying on other sociological insights, par-
ticularly Robert Bellah’s notion of civil religion, which is used to argue
that the American flag has become a venerated object that demands
special protective status. While occasionally useful, Welch’s theoretical
model is not particularly illuminating. For one, the theory is spiced up
with a fanciful terminology (e.g., “authoritarian aesthetic”) that is neither
explained nor applied to any reasonable degree of intellectual sophisti-
cation. The reliance on theories in the social control literature is at times
careless, most clearly when Welch uses Gary Marx’s notion of the ironies
of social control to argue that social control contributes to rule breaking
(p. 179), whereas the original insight is that social control may contribute
to deviance under specified circumstances, the conditions of which have to
be carefully investigated.

Betraying certain normative tendencies in the social construction par-
adigm, Welch’s analysis focuses too exclusively on the strategies of state
agents to monopolize the opposition against flag desecration. This “elite-
engineered model” (p. 124) neglects the popular, grassroots dimension
of the flag protection movement. Failing to disentangle these two dimensions
of power and resistance—for instance, in terms of a Weberian distinction
between state and nation—the one-sidedness of Welch’s perspective be-
trays a highly partisan stance. Desecrations of the flag are seen as “crit-
icism of the state” (p. 4) that target the “authoritarian aesthetic by at-
tacking its symbols” (p. 50), while movements protective of the “symbolic
value of Old Glory” (p. 49; note the different terminology to refer to the
flag) are claimed to use images that are “fraught with contradictions” (p.
9), relying on arguments that “not only fail basic ontological scrutiny,[but]
also defy the underlying principles of the U.S. Constitution” (p. 12). I fail
to see the scholarly grounds that could rationally support such a priori
normativism to slip into our discipline.
American Journal of Sociology


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This is an important, carefully argued book, although I disagree with much of what it says. Kuper, a South African anthropologist, details in eight closely argued chapters the uses to which the concept of culture has been put in postwar American cultural anthropology. His introduction surveys the 20th-century culture wars, showing how the uses and meanings of culture moved back and forth from the humanities to the social sciences. At mid-century culture was defined by Parsons, Kroeber, and Kluckhohn as a collective symbolic discourse about knowledge, beliefs, and values. This would be the term’s meanings for the newly emerging behavioral sciences.

The next generation of anthropologists (Lévi-Strauss, Geertz, Schneider, Sahlins) moved the discourse in two different directions at the same time, the structural or linguistic, and the humanistic or interpretive. Lévi-Strauss and his followers read culture as if it were a language. The post-structural Geertzians, in contrast, interpreted culture as a text.

In part 1, elaborating the themes in his introduction, Kuber presents two genealogies of the term. Chapter 1 surveys the continental discourses on culture, noting tensions among those who treat culture with art and civilization (Febvre, Arnold), as a way of life (Eliot), and as structures of feeling (Williams). Chapter 2 examines the call by Parsons, Kroeber, and Kluckhohn for an objective science of culture. Part 2 explores postwar experiments with the concept. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 respectively examine the works of Geertz, Schneider, and Sahlins. Geertz’s interpretive turn, which moved anthropology into the humanities, is contrasted to Schneider’s rigorous scientific structural approach to kinship, and Sahlins’s historical materialism.

Chapter 6, “Brave New World,” offers an all-too-brief reading of the post–Clifford and Marcus writing culture project. For Kuper, the tenured radicals of the post-Vietnam generation politicized culture, while criticizing anthropology’s complicit relationship with American imperialism. This generation rejected functionalism (Parsons), structuralism (Lévi-Strauss), and the strict hermeneutic approaches to culture (Geertz). Literary approaches to writing culture were developed. Rosaldo and others questioned the value of such terms as objectivity and impartiality. This generation was united on three themes: there has been a world-historical shift in the terms of cultural trade; objective accounts of other ways of life are not possible; and there is a moral obligation to celebrate cultural difference (p. 218).

Kuper criticizes each of these assumptions, calling them romantic, post-
modern and relativist, and asking (without Spivak), who can speak for the “other”? He believes that the postmodern turn has had a paralyzing effect on the discipline. And at this moment, Kuper’s values become most clear. “The postmodern, writing culture project has stifled young ethnographers. It has become a source of ideological support for identity politics. Most importantly, this project denies the possibility of a cross-cultural, comparative anthropology” (p. 223). He wants to return to the good old days, before everything got so messy.

Chapter 7 presents Kuper’s conclusions. He now has three generations of anthropologists interacting in his text. The Parsonian generation wanted an objective science of culture. Geertz’s generation pushed for a “detached, cerebral hermeneutics of culture” (p. 228). In the 1990s, culture theory would become political, and essays on cockfights in Bali seemed quaint (p. 229).

Enter the enemy, the left and its cultural studies project. The humanities and popular culture triumph over high art. Culture is politicized, cultural difference and multiculturalism are valorized, the melting pot is dead, and cultural criticism becomes normative. We are suddenly confronted, he asserts, with a fragmented culture built on identity politics. This conflicts with the liberal individualism of the earlier melting pot model. This assimilation model recognized difference but urged persons to find a place in the larger culture. Kuper liked this situation. In order to dismiss cultural studies, he charges that it presumes an essentialism that turns culture into a “politically correct euphemism for race” (p. 240). Surely Stuart Hall should have been allowed to confront this conservative allegation. For these are harsh words, and Hall is nowhere to be heard.

Kuper conclusions are quick and brief. He wants to dismantle culture and make it refer to several separate things, such as knowledge, art, or belief. He is quite firm, contending that “appeals to culture can only offer partial explanations of why people think and behave as they do . . . political and economic forces, social institutions, and biological processes cannot be wished away” (pp. x–xi). Thus does he morally object to cultural studies. It draws attention away from “what we have in common . . . across national, ethnic and religious boundaries” (p. 247). We are back to square one, back to Parsons and the good old boys, back to the unproblematic days of cross-cultural, comparative anthropology.

As a partisan of cultural studies, I have several objections to Kuper’s project. Where are the women? The women who have written culture are not here. Culture is a site of the political struggle to define how life is lived and experienced. This site is deeply enmeshed in matters of power, ideology, and the media. Humans live in a second-hand world, one already defined by language and the culture industries. The anthropologist is part of this world, not above or outside it. There is no objective vantage point from which one can write. We are always already writing culture. This project will not disappear because of Kuper’s disapproval. Further, raising the red flags of cultural essentialism will not make the politics of identity
disappear. Kuper cannot legislate what a nation and its peoples have in common. The melting pot worked only as long as it was controlled by whites males.

So this is an important book, and it must be contested. Historical readings are always important because they police disciplinary boundaries. Kuper’s readings clearly exclude certain versions and forms of culture and cultural studies. Because it is so well written, this book has the potential of becoming a canonical guide for a new generation of anthropologists. This could be unfortunate. Culture is an unruly term. Its meanings cannot be dictated. More deeply, the term must always exist within shifting political, historical, disciplinary and gendered terrains. Each generation must have the freedom to take up the term and make it their own. If they take Kuper too seriously, the current generation will not do this. And that would be a great loss.


Wendy Griswold
Northwestern University

One of the most eminent sociologists currently active—a former president of the ASA—has written a book lambasting common sociological practice. Two practices, actually: he attacks both the common move of imputing causality from plausibility and the “iceberg fallacy” of assuming that every glittering new shard on the “cultural surface” indicates a structure of social change underneath. Stanley Lieberson will tolerate neither, and he has put together an impregnable demonstration of how to do it right.

The topic is taste, and the specific subject is taste shifts in the naming of children. Lieberson points out that naming offers an ideal window into how taste works because they are one of the few fashion-driven practices that are virtually untouched by marketing and the manipulation of consumption, for no one stands to profit from any particular naming decision. Moreover, the historical record is extremely rich; over the centuries we might not know if little Pamela or Pierre learned to read or lived beyond childhood or were socially mobile, but we do know what their names were. So mustering fabulous quantities of these data and subjecting them to rigorous analytic scrutiny allows Lieberson to see what motivates shifts in naming practices whereby Harry and Hilda go out of style and Lakeisha and Michael come in.

Lieberson charges that the typical cultural sociologist (your reviewer blushed as she writes this) finds a cultural change, finds some social change that happened around the same time, theorizes a plausible connection between the social change and the cultural change, and asserts that the
former caused the latter (or, more typically and less honestly, that the latter “reflects” the former). With the cool eye of a scientist, Lieberson views this as simply hypothesis formation, and he demands that any such assertion be subject to rigorous testing to see if what is plausible is actually correct. It often is not. For example, while it might be plausible that biblical names reflect a religious spirit, in fact biblical names came into fashion in the 1960s, just as church attendance was dropping. Moreover, parents with intense religious feeling who go to services regularly are less likely to give their children biblical names than those who never darken the doorway of church or synagogue.

Indeed the sociological impulse to assign an external cause to changes in a fashion system may be misleading. Lieberson suggests that internal causes produce most of the advances and declines in the popularity of names. Most important of these internal causes is the ratchet effect whereby (1) taste shifts are modest variations on existing tastes, and (2) these shifts do not oscillate back and forth but move steadily in one direction for a considerable period of time so that there can be no confusion in the short run between what’s fashionable and what’s out of date. Other internal mechanisms include expansion from a taste stem (Jane gives rise to Janet, Janice, Janis) and combinations of prefixes with previously more popular roots (among African-Americans, popular girls names of the 1970s like Tonya and Tasha had given way to Latonya and Latasha by the 1980s). For the past century or so there has been far more room for such innovation, because fashion has replaced custom in name selection, a change that Lieberson demonstrates was brought about by urbanization and individualism, not by the mass media.

But if internal pressures produce some sort of shift, what moves the shift in certain directions and not others? External cues can sometimes be identified (the name Donald dropped out of fashion when Donald Duck appeared) but not always (the lasting popularity of Humphrey Bogart did nothing for Humphrey). Symbolic connections difficult to untangle, and while the fate of a few particular names (Adolf) can be attributed to symbolic contamination, external triggers from media or political leaders do not seem to have any consistent impact. Lieberson regards innovations as like mutations: they happen, and then the internal processes help carry on a particular innovation or not. For example if someone with an unusual Old Testament name emerges as a sports hero, that name would be more likely to catch on in the 1960s (when biblical names were hot) than in the 1940s (when they were not).

Going beyond names, Lieberson argues that a culture should be regarded as a “surface,” the result of various unconnected processes that have put elements there. I envision this cultural surface as something like a table set with different pieces of crockery, some old, some new, some wedding gifts, some from the second-grader’s art class. The analysis of the cultural surface involves three different activities: “the initial occurrence and growth of each element; its continuation in the likely event that
the initial causes no longer operate; and the forces that cause other earlier elements to decline or disappear" (p. 258). The set table does not reflect some underlying iceberg, but instead is the result of different mechanisms (attitudes toward wedding gifts, involvement of one’s children’s ceramics, tendency to break old things). To understand the surface and how it might change over time requires painstaking analysis, not an assertion of plausibility, but it can be done, and Lieberson challenges cultural sociologists to try to map and account for culture in this manner.

There are certain books in cultural sociology that accumulate so much evidence and subject it to such painstaking scrutiny that one cannot help but be convinced by them; the thesis is not so much argued as established. Such books are usually written by full professors with lots of resources, immense patience, and high standards. Claude Fisher’s America Calling was one such book; so was Orlando Patterson’s Slavery and Social Death. Now Lieberson has produced another of these rarities. These books are sold. More, they are scientific, not in the sense of an uncritical positivism but in the sense of a careful but relentless gathering and weighing of the evidence. Books like A Matter of Taste set the benchmark for sociological practice and remind us of how often we fall short.


Gary Alan Fine  
Northwestern University

We understand social order both through naked torsos and clothed ones. Social class, gender, and identity are inscribed in bodies and on what bodies are draped in. Sociologists, being professionally prudish, have been more likely to examine the latter than the former, and, as a consequence, there is now a growing quantity of scholarship that examines the symbolic meaning of fashion. Fashion in clothing seems particularly symbolic and “cultural” because it is evident that what people choose to wear often seems so voluntary. The rapidity and abruptness with which dress styles change serves to remind us that attire is an aesthetic choice, mediated, of course, by those technologies and those gatekeepers that set the options.

Diana Crane has long been fascinated with aesthetic styles and cultural movements. In *Fashion and Its Social Agendas* she has woven together seven previously published articles to provide a lens on the selection of clothing in the 19th and 20th centuries. The origin of this volumes leads inevitably to a certain fragmentation, and the reader who expects to be presented with a consistent and linear analysis will leave disappointed. In short, this is not a work that aspires to present a fully formed argument about the nature and the dynamics of fashion. Crane’s detailed historical
treatment sometimes downplays narrative facility with telling a grand story, establishing proof based upon a preponderance of detail. Recognizing this limitation, there is still much to be learned from the depth of Crane’s scholarship. Crane’s intention is not to smooth over details, but to explain the complications of clothing use.

To assert that fashion reflects class, gender, and identity is to make a claim that is far too simple. The interesting question is the limits of these connections and the semiotic subtleties of the connections. As Crane aptly notes, the fashion divisions among social classes are not as self-evident as they might otherwise appear. Drawing on the case studies of Frederic Le Play in 19th-century France, Crane demonstrates that individuals in distinct segments of the working class brought different orientations toward middle-class fashion, notably—and surprisingly—in regard to such “accessories” as ties and hats. Clothing represented a complex semiotic system in which individuals select items to incorporate in their wardrobe, especially on leisure occasions, often centered on Sundays and holidays.

The difference in fashion attitudes between the provinces and Paris, where the class divisions were less evident and imitation greater, are also sociologically significant. In the United States, too, the class divisions were less apparent than in the more traditional and stratified cultures of Europe. In her excellent and novel treatment of the “cultural politics” of hats in 19th-century France (who would have thought there is so much to a beret!), Crane notes not only class and gender division, but differences among Paris, provincial cities, and rural areas, and points to variant meanings of different styles, even pointing to the donning of bowlers to blur class lines (p. 84). In light of the gendered meaning of clothing, Crane demonstrates the multiple ways that women in the 1890s used “fashion” as a form of nonverbal resistance to (or at least commentary upon) male hegemony. Within the clothing system, a set of alternative styles emerged—a multiplicity of styles that has become increasingly institutionalized within contemporary consumption systems. It is now possible for individuals—men and women—to create “texts” of identity by selecting body coverings, and, as Crane points out, at various times during the past two centuries social movements emerged that pushed various forms of clothing reform—bloomers, pant suits, unisex clothing, and the like. Most of these movements had as their goals to provide women more options to dress “like” men, but more significantly to permit them the opportunities to have the bodily freedom to do what men do, recognizing that clothing can be not only socially constraining, but physically constraining as well.

Perhaps most interesting is Crane’s discussion of 20th-century (French) couture as a global industry. Any student of occupations and of cultural organization will recognize within her discussion the process of globalization, now so widely evident. Fashion, it turns out, was an early industry in which national boundaries on acquiring resources, producing garments, and selling the product were undercut. While fashion (along with cuisine)
served as a marker for the dominance of French society, this position of centrality is only possible given the global reach of the French fashion industry.

Crane powerfully demonstrates why fashion is a powerful image for the sociologist. Precisely because dress seems to be so separate from the demands of function, it appears to be pure expression, an undiluted construction of segmental groups. The danger—a danger that Crane does not entirely escape—is to ignore the fact that fashion decisions are selected by individuals with their own motivations. To suggest, as does the title, that fashion has its own agendas is perhaps to make concrete fashion as a social actor in its own right, rather than being part of a tool kit—a closet—from which agents select to clothe their public selves.


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In this book, Caves applies theories of contracts and industrial organization in order to explain the economic and social organization of creative industries. His task, to explain “why art worlds are organized the way they are,” is an ambitious one. He begins by developing the argument that contracting and organizational arrangements are shaped by seven distinctive features that differentiate creative industries from other sectors. The first feature is nobody knows. Demand is uncertain, and whether a product will be a success cannot be known until after it reaches the market. The second is art-for-art’s-sake. Individuals working in the creative arts differ from other workers in that they often care greatly about the attributes of their output and the circumstances under which it is produced. As a result, they are willing to work in creative jobs for compensation substantially below what they could earn in “humdrum” jobs, and the number of people seeking work in creative industries greatly exceeds the work available. The third is the motley crew phenomenon. Creative industries often require inputs from individuals with diverse skills and orientations toward their work, which creates problems of coordination. The fourth is infinite variety. The products of creative industries are unique and highly differentiated. No two films, plays, books, paintings, musical compositions, and so on are exactly the same, and the number of possible products is infinite. The fifth is the A list/B list phenomenon. Skills are vertically differentiated, and talent is strictly ranked. These rankings create differential rents: the amount consumers are willing to pay to enjoy the product of a top-ranked artist greatly exceeds the minimum compensation required to elicit that artist’s services, and the amount of this “rent”...
decreases dramatically with artists’ rank. The sixth principle is *time flies*. Temporal coordination is very important, as is the prompt realization of revenues, and production delays are extremely costly. The final principle is *ars longa*—individuals are still willing to pay to enjoy a product long after it is produced.

From here, Caves goes on to explain similarities and differences in organization across a wide range of art worlds: popular music, musical composition and performance, theater, television, motion pictures, book publishing, fine art, and even toys. We learn, for example, why the option contract is used so widely in creative industries, why nonprofit organization is an efficient solution to high fixed costs in the performance arts, why talent guilds have tremendous bargaining power, why media conglomerates continue to pursue merger strategies despite the illusory payoff of “synergy,” and how the durable and expanding stock of musical masterpieces constrains opportunities for contemporary composers. We learn why “payola” (paying a bribe to get a creative work into channels of distribution) is a natural and efficient response in industries in which “conventionalized” prices exceed marginal costs and, in an interesting aside, how Dick Clark elevated this stigmatized practice to an art form. Caves also explains how the recent acquisitions of television networks by film studios (e.g., Disney’s merger with ABC) can be understood as a kind of “capitalized payola.”

Extending the work of Gans and others, Caves offers an interesting analysis of the distinction between highbrow culture and lowbrow culture that eschews differentiating the two based on aesthetic principles or the demographics of audiences. Instead, he argues that what we usually call “high culture” is an art world where there is both a high ratio of “buffs” (who invest in acquiring capital that enhances their appreciation of the product) to casual consumers and a high level of fixed costs per consumer. Thus, in his view, “each art realm has its natural turf and scale of operation, a balance of demand and supply forces” (p. 187).

None of what appears in this book is based on Caves’s original research. Instead, he draws upon his extraordinary command of just about every serious scholarly work on creative industries written by cultural sociologists, and on a rapidly growing body of theoretical and empirical work in the field of cultural economics. Some of what is covered in the book will be familiar ground to cultural sociologists, such as the discussion of organizational arrangements that attempt to manage the conflict between art and commerce in creative industries. And, as an economist, Caves is quick to embrace a functionalist logic (“In the world of commerce, market distortions tend to generate their own repairs” [p. 144]) and puzzles over the persistence of organizational arrangements that seem to defy economic logic (e.g., stable customary royalty rates in music publishing). Yet Caves approaches his task with a humility that is uncommon among the more zealous practitioners of the dismal science, and I came away from this book more convinced of the applicability and utility of economic models.
Readers of this book will be surprised to find that it contains only passing reference to the impact of electronic commerce. There is no explicit discussion of online auctions, music exchanges, or Internet book retailers. Caves argues convincingly that the rapid expansion of electronic commerce is not evidence of a fundamental transformation of creative industries. Instead, the Internet’s impact can be understood by applying the same principles from theories of contracts and industrial organization. Indeed, a productive approach for using this book in the classroom would be to require students to extend Caves’s analysis of auction houses to eBay, his analysis of the distribution of popular music to Napster, and his analysis of changing organizational concentration in the publishing industry to Amazon.com.

Caves’s book effectively communicates sophisticated economic concepts with a minimum of formalism and technical jargon. It is clearly the work of an individual who cares deeply about art, culture, and the creative process. It should be read by anyone who teaches or does research on the production of culture or the economics of organization. And anyone who aspires to be a rock star, best-selling author, or filmmaker (not uncommon career goals among sociology majors these days) would be well advised to read this book to better understand how money is made and creativity is managed when art and commerce intersect.


Dominic Boyer
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This informative and enjoyable new social history of Soviet celebrations in the Stalinist era offers novel insight into the role of state-sponsored ceremonials in national identity formation. Petrone explains that, faced in the 1930s with the problem of perduring localized social imaginaries, the bureaucrats of the Soviet Union sought to instrumentally utilize mass celebrations to cultivate standard currencies of national belonging and national imagination. The narrative of the book skillfully juxtaposes the Soviet state’s quest for legitimacy in a harmonious national imaginary with the pragmatic complexities, tribulations, and not occasional fruitions of engineering symbolic meaning on a mass scale.

The book’s introduction is succinct and deftly positions the author’s project as an investigation of Soviet celebrations as political instruments of mass identity formation significantly mediated by the contexts of their production and reception. The next several chapters each focus on a
particular celebration complex (ranging from physical culture parades to the glorification of Soviet aviation and polar exploration to the 1937 Pushkin centennial) and analyze in detail both the state’s intended logic for the celebration and the problems the state encountered in maintaining the transcontextual purity and integrity of its desired meanings of national culture as it created and disseminated them. To her credit, even though she explicitly aims to complexify contemporary interpretations of Soviet propaganda, Petrone never downplays the power of state ideology for cultivating and accreditating particular strategies of national identification as emblematic of “New Soviet” men and women. Yet, neither does she take “state ideology” as an undifferentiated given, instead consistently exposing the heteroglossic effects of the factional interests of different groups of propagandists and of the indigenization of state discourse in the Soviet peripheries. Finally, the great methodological strength of the book is Petrone’s juxtaposition of private documents like diaries with official discourse to reveal the uneven incorporation of state symbologies into the formation of local and personal social identities. Here, we encounter both triumphs of state intention—for example, in tears shed by an old collective farmer for the heroism of Soviet explorers—and blanket failures of official narratives of citizenship and identity to suffuse local conceptions of selfhood.

The case studies, taken together, admirably support Petrone’s central argument that “the identities created by Soviet celebrations were highly variable, contingent, and constantly in the process of being reshaped. Soviet celebrations both succeeded and failed in their goal of creating New Soviet Men” (p. 204). In this, the book makes an important contribution to mass culture studies by showing how celebrations were equally rituals of establishing categories of national sacredness (in a Durkheimian sense) and objects of estrangement. Petrone’s insistence on the plurality of vectors in Soviet identity formation—including accredited state discourse, critical intellectual subversions, competing ethnic-national affiliations, and a host of other local adherences—is a welcome reminder that state-sponsored mass culture cultivates but does not guarantee mass identity formation. Indeed, the book reveals that this is not only a problem of differential local reception but indebted to a fundamental heterogeneity at the production end of state narratives. The book’s historical analysis vividly illuminates the pluricentric institutional forces as well as the individual agents who constitute the artisans of any national imaginary.

Fresh insights into center-periphery relations in the Soviet Union, into the social life of propaganda, and into the hybridity of Soviet public culture are among the text’s more significant contributions both to Soviet studies and to mass culture research more generally. The text does have certain weaknesses, however. Even taken as a whole, the several case studies do represent a somewhat limited sample, and one might wish for more sustained theoretical consideration of how Soviet celebrations should be placed within research on state manipulation of public culture more
generally. Here, comparisons with other socialist contexts might have helpfully illuminated what was distinctive to the Soviet case and what strategies were more generally shared by other party-states’ mass cultural regimes. The subtitle of the work is also misleading since the case studies focus almost exclusively on the period between 1932 and 1937, with some connections to the period of the first Five Year Plan but with only sketchy connections to the celebration complexes of the World War II and postwar periods. Finally, this reviewer found the narrative choppy in places and the exegesis of particular celebrations repetitive in others.

Despite these relatively minor flaws, this book should be warmly received for its timely reconsideration of the role of mass celebrations in national identity formation and, particularly, for its striking illumination of the complex and often unsuccessful negotiations of local and translocal knowledge that are implicit in any state effort to “engineer” (using Stalin’s own phrase) a national soul. Petrone describes with understated irony how genuine collective rapture emerged in these celebrations almost despite the backroom calculations oriented to achieve it.


Charlotta Stern
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David T. Beito tells a constellation of fascinating stories about the fraternal societies of ordinary Americans, 1890–1967. With strong empirical support, he argues that, far from being odd social clubs with strange rituals, fraternal societies were at the center of working-class and ethnically based living and were creatures of material and moral necessity. Using an ideology of self-reliance and mutuality, fraternal societies provided members with social services framed as rights. The mutuality meant that today’s recipient could be tomorrow’s donor, and vice versa. The stigma of hierarchical dependence was thus replaced by the dignity of self-reliance. Over the period studied millions of Americans by such means provided themselves with sickness insurance (worker’s compensation), life insurance, and health insurance.

A member’s social right depended on proper conduct according to accepted rules and rituals. These were enforced by visiting committees and interpersonal communication. Beito points out that a fraternal society worked much like a formalized extended family. It taught members the virtues of thrift, mutualism, and individual responsibility. Unlike a family, however, the fraternal lodge was an organization of consenting adults. It was usually democratic, with elected leaders and functionaries. Its rules and rituals made the obligations explicit, and perhaps most important, if
the value of membership was doubted, members could exit. It organized solidarity around membership, it pooled resources and extended them to members in need, and it practiced social control. Members also learned valuable organizational skills.

Thus, fraternal societies offered social inclusion and economic security to uprooted individuals with scarce material resources. Its success was enormous. By 1920 members of fraternal societies carried over $9 billion worth of life insurance. At least one-third of adult males were members, including large segments of workers, blacks, and recent immigrants.

The first and last part of the book is about the rise and fall of mutual aid fraternities, while the chapters in between contain many fascinating stories beyond insurance and mutual aid. Beito shows that fraternal societies were multifaceted, spirited organizations of great variety and that organizations sometimes pulled together some rather grand, even heroic, endeavors. For instance, he outlines the story of the Ladies of the Maccabees, a woman-only, feminist fraternity that organized around 20,000 members in the 1920s. And the United Order of True Reformers, a black fraternity that ran a 150-room hotel, a bank, a newspaper, and several retail stores as well as provided their members life insurance. Or the Loyal Order of the Moose, which established Mooseheart to feed, clothe, and educate the children of deceased members. By 1929 Mooseheart housed 110 mothers and 1,274 children. In his chapter on Mooseheart, Beito describes the quality, financing, and everyday workings of the orphanage, and gives accounts of the children’s social background, their adult lives, and attitudes about their childhood. His careful and detailed review of the evidence suggests that the disrepute of orphanages was quite unfair and overstated.

Beito goes on to examine the lodge practice, another fraternal institution in disrepute. Through lodge practice, fraternal societies provided members with low-cost medical services, costing on average $2 per year or laborer’s day pay. After interviews and voting, a doctor was signed up to provide basic health care in exchange for a fixed salary based on the size of the membership. Lodge practice spread rapidly—until leaders of American Medical Societies decided that it was an evil. The evil consisted in it “posing as] a danger to prevailing fees and subject[ing] doctors to the exploitative whims of the laity” (p. 109). The lodge practice evil elicited almost universal condemnation from medical societies. This, coupled with declining numbers of doctors, led to the demise of the lodge practice by the end of the 1920s.

Using these and other examples, Beito explains the rise and fall of some specific fraternal institutions and the long-run fall of fraternal mutual aid. The challenges presented at the time seem to have shifted the emphasis of fraternities to service rather than mutual aid. Beito suggests that the shift might have been a strategic mistake because fraternities thereby lost their special character. But the demise of mutual aid societies may have been inevitable. With growing wealth among the new generation of Amer-
icans, the demand for mutuality declined. With increasing regulations and legislation, fraternities could no longer offer hospitals, orphanages, and old age homes. With taxpayer-financed mother’s pensions, workers’ compensations, and social security, the demand for voluntary insurance declined. As the title of the book suggests, mutual aid was indeed crowded out by the welfare state.

Beito’s excellent study sheds light on an important yet neglected part of the social past. It is exciting in the way that it exposes the selfishness and arrogance of the elite of the time. It has insights especially for sociologists interested in social movements, voluntary organizations, social work, empowerment, and American social history.

The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State.
By John Torpey. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. xii+211. $59.95 (cloth); $22.95 (paper).

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At first glance, the passport deserves little scholarly attention from sociologists, as it appears to be no more than an official document needed only for foreign travel and rarely bearing any significance in our daily life. However, John Torpey has turned a seemingly insipid topic into a fascinating one by making an original contribution to the sociology of the (nation-)state. In this groundbreaking exploration of the passport’s vicissitudes from the French Revolution to the present time, Torpey argues convincingly that the passport is important to our understanding of the nature of the state and the state system.

Echoing Marx’s analysis of the means of production in capitalism, as well as Weber’s conception of the monopoly of legitimate violence by the state, Torpey adds a third type of expropriation in the modern world, namely the “monopolization of the legitimate means of movements” by nation-states. Intended to be bounded, mutually exclusive communities, nation-states need to bring closure not only to their territories but also to their subjects. Accordingly, Torpey suggests that the traditional characterization of the state “penetrating” society be replaced by that of “embracing” it. To enhance its capacity of governing, the state must locate and lay claims to people by “surrounding” or “taking hold” of its members (p. 11). Therefore, documentary controls on movement and identification become essential to determine “who are in” and “who are out.” Drawing on extensively collected materials covering France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, Torpey impressively provides us with a well-documented account of how ideas and practices concerning the passport developed in various historical contexts and became institutionalized, albeit at an uneven pace, in the contemporary state system.
Such a theoretically driven and empirically grounded study contains rich themes that can sustain a range of discussion. Although Torpey hardly makes “institutions” his buzzword, this study can be best seen as exemplifying the analytical strengths of the “institutionalist approach” to the study of world polity (following John Meyer) and nationhood/nationalism (following Rogers Brubaker). Indeed, Torpey is “institutionalist” to the bone when he asserts that “national communities must be codified in documents rather than merely imagined” (p. 6), or that “nationality is an ascribed status that cannot be established without reference to documents” (p. 155; emphasis in original). Torpey also nicely deals with the contradictions of the passport with cosmopolitan views in revolutionary France, and with economic liberalism in the nineteenth century, eventually leading us to the ongoing debates concerning the “postnational” argument. As hypermobility of transnational flows of people is deemed one of the defining features of globalization, we tend to assume that people are crossing national boundaries more and more freely. Torpey reminds us, however, that such is not the case. He shows us that transnational flows of people, no matter how mobile they may seem, have to move within the institutional channels set up by the state. Even where passport controls are loosened, the state remains the final authority for such discretions, and institutions of nationhood and citizenship remain predominant. Thus, the study provides a powerful refutation against the prevalent view of the “decline of sovereignty/citizenship” or “postnational membership.”

However, there are some limitations with the book due to its ambitious scope. Because it focuses on a few selected countries, there is a relative lack of coverage on how an overarching passport regime has been created worldwide. In addition to detailed biographies of individual trees, readers motivated by the book’s title might want to know more about how the entire forest has grown into what it looks like today. Besides, while the image of “embracing” is a refreshing way of conceptualizing the relationship between the state and society, the definition of “means of movement” is not clearly framed in this study, making the analogy hard to grasp. Unlike machinery (means of production) or the army (means of violence), the passport is neither inherent in nor necessitated by the movement itself. To say that the state “monopolizes” the means of movement through passport control implies that movement intrinsically invokes admissions or regulations of some sort. This, apparently, is not true. In discussing cosmopolitanism and the *laissez-faire*, Torpey has already pointed out that regulations on migratory flows can be eliminated under different credos. Thus, it is the state that sets barriers on the otherwise free movement of people. The passport regime simply embodies Foucault’s “governmentality,” Giddens’s “surveillance and administrative power,” or Weber’s “legitimate violence” in a microscopic, capillary form. All these authors’ concepts Torpey has aptly drawn upon, but his novel notion of “means of movement” seemingly adds little to our theoretical stock.

These limitations notwithstanding, this book on the whole is a laudable
effort that will interest students in a full array of topical fields: the modern state, nations and nationalism, globalization, sovereignty and citizenship, international migration, world polity and international regimes, and others. All will find parts of this work either insightful or stimulating for further investigation.


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Barrington Moore is a geographer. To this statement, no one may agree. However, allow me to summarize Moore’s classic theory as follows: Moore argues that modernities are not universal but place-specific, that different types of modern political regimes, from dictatorship to democracy, are the result of place-specific modes of production and, consequently, the social-spatial relations among major classes in different places ranging from England to China. Presented with the preceding summary, geographers may think that Moore is indeed one of them. In fact, however, Moore is still not a geographer, and neither is geographer Byron A. Miller.

The book studies antinuclear movements in Cambridge, Lexington, and Waltham, Massachusetts. It argues that antinuclear movements in the three Boston-area municipalities faced different structural constraints in terms of levels of education, class composition, political opportunities, economic history, and history of activism. Consequently, the activists in the three municipalities adopted different strategies in participant mobilization, issue framing, and in their interactions with the authorities. It also shows that while the antinuclear movements mainly operated at the municipal level, what they were against was a military policy determined by the central state. Since the central state for most of the time wanted to keep the arms production going and defense firms had plenty of resources to stage nationwide countermobilizations, the municipality-based antinuclear movements were not very effective in achieving their goals.

In the above summary, I have disposed of all the geographic jargon used by the author. Once this jargon is avoided, the book becomes a rather typical comparative sociological work. The geographic jargon can be added to Moore’s work and removed from Miller’s without altering their main arguments, because the jargon carries no mechanism of its own. For example, the author argues that characteristics of places give rise to place-specific movement strategies. However, by the characteristics of a place, the author actually refers to people’s social backgrounds—such as levels of education, class composition, and political opportunities—in a municipality. What provides mechanisms here are the social back-
grounds, not the place. As for the place-specific strategies, the author only supplies evidence that shows, for example, that the spatial distribution of memberships in a municipality reflected the social structural composition of the population in that municipality. Without a demonstration that the spatial distribution indeed resulted from the strategies of the peace movement organizations, the distribution only shows us that people of certain social structural backgrounds were more likely to join the peace movement than others. Should the author provide evidence on how the peace organizations had targeted people with certain social structural backgrounds, it is again the social structural backgrounds of the population, not the places, that furnish mechanisms. In other words, the strategies are structure specific, not place specific.

The author also argues that the antinuclear movements faced different political opportunity structures at the municipal and central-state levels, and that this difference had a great impact on the movements’ strategies as well as chances of success. The author uses “geographic scale” to label the problem. Obviously, what really matters here are the different political opportunity structures at the local and central-state levels. The concept of geographic scale again carries no mechanisms in itself and is therefore dispensable.

Let me use Roger Gould’s study of mobilizations during the Paris Commune to illustrate a mechanism-based geographic analysis. Gould argues that the Haussmann’s projects had altered Paris geography and destroyed the class-based residential networks in Paris. Consequently, the mobilization during the Paris Commune was no longer based on working-class consciousness, as was the case during the June rising of 1848, but on neighborhood-based networks. The difference between Gould’s and the author’s approaches is clear. In the author’s analysis, none of the sociological factors that the author found important to participant mobilization, such as the level of education, class composition, political opportunities, have anything to do with the geographic characteristics of the three municipalities. Geography has no contribution to the analysis. In Gould’s work, however, it was the change of Paris geography that contributed to the change of neighborhood structures and consequently the patterns of mobilization. One cannot understand the patterns of mobilization without understanding the new Paris geography. Geography provides a mechanism in Gould’s study and is thus indispensable.

The book has an unnecessarily long theoretical discussion, with many analyses unrelated to the major arguments of the book (but they may be useful for students who want to know the literature). The book’s empirical analyses also remain thin. However, the most crucial problem of the book lies in the way the concept of geography is used. Given such a usage, as the Barrington Moore example shows, any comparative studies involving cases from more than one place can be treated as a geographic study. Such an all-inclusive, mechanismless use of geographical concepts will only undermine the legitimacy of geography as a discipline. A valid ge-
American Journal of Sociology

ographic analysis must assign space, place, and scale independent mechanisms—mechanisms that cannot be reduced to traditional sociological factors such as class, gender, and state but make a significant contribution to a social process under investigation.


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It may surprise those not familiar with the sociology of religion to know that the “new paradigm” perspective currently in vogue is not synonymous with a “rational choice” theoretical approach. The term “new paradigm” came from R. Stephen Warner’s “Work in Progress toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States” (American Journal of Sociology 98 [1993]: 1044–93). Warner’s argument was that particular social and institutional conditions in the United States made its religious scene distinctly different from Europe’s. Thus, secularization theories based on the European canon are not particularly useful for understanding religion here. The argument could have been considered historicist or institutionalist—in any case, it certainly was not premised on a rational choice theory of human motivation, nor did it propose development of “formal” or hypothetico-deductive sociological theory.

Those reading this book may not recognize that distinction either. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke have added much to the sociological study of religion and helped open new vistas and new ideas to the subdiscipline. But intellectual caution and scholarly diplomacy are not their style. They claim much, in a vociferous voice, and pretty much assume they wear the mantle of the new paradigm.

I hasten to add that Stark and Finke claim not to like the “rational choice” moniker. They use a “softened” and “expanded” conception of rational action, which emphasizes reasonableness to the actor. But this has its own problems, as the conception is so qualified and broad that it is not only unobjectionable but it is close to tautological.

Nonetheless, the logic of the argument and the organization of the book are consistent with the classical liberalism that produced neoclassical economics (Gary Becker and Adam Smith are cited repeatedly) and sociological exchange theory. Stark and Finke begin with an analysis of the “religious individual” and her or his motivations for religious behavior and then proceed to sections on the “religious group” and then the “religious economy.” Their case is codified in 99 propositions and 36 formal definitions presented over the course of the book—numbered sequentially throughout so as to emphasize their cumulative and logically deductive
quality. Individual, group, and economy are not just analytic levels for Stark and Finke; rather they represent a necessary micro-to-macro theoretical progression in which social groupings are aggregations of individual actions.

For example, religious groups are analyzed by the extent to which they can demand commitment and behavior from members. Since individuals are trying to maximize religious benefits, the more membership “costs,” the more it must be worth and the greater the commitment. Thus, groups that are more demanding will do better because membership is more exclusive and thus more valuable, the certainty of salvation is higher (at least to believers), and religious capital is reinforced through social networks. In some of the literature, the key to this loyalty is “strictness” in both doctrine and behavioral demands. Stark and Finke, however, generally use the term “distinctiveness” rather than strictness, which shifts the focus to group-environment interactions.

Concomitantly, when the authors discuss the venerable “church-sect” tradition of understanding different religious collectivities, they focus less on internal organizational characteristics and instead define the difference as between “low tension” (churches) and “high tension” (sects) with the surrounding society. This helps explain religious change; high-tension sects arise when low-tension groups cannot satisfy people’s religious needs. But when sectarian groups grow enough to become dominant, they necessarily lose some of their tension with society, thus leading to new sectarian movements. The logic is basically free market: monopolies produce laziness while market competition meets more people’s demands more efficiently.

Obviously, there are anomalous cases, as some very strict and distinctive groups are not at all oriented to growth, or they place such high demands that they are too costly. However, growth need not be a synonym for health, unless we accept too completely the assumptions of capitalist economics. More troublesome cases to this formulation are the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the Mormons. While the Mormons remain in some tension with U.S. society generally (even if they dominate some areas), the SBC is harder to figure. It has become a national denomination and is in near perfect concert with the recent conservative changes in American politics and public religion. How exactly is it “high tension”? If individualist, experiential, racially segregated, anti-intellectual, and locally organized religion is a subculture, then what exactly is the dominant culture? One needs more of a theory of power to deal with such questions than this economistic theory provides. And perhaps the assumption that “you get what you pay for” is based in culture and not as universal or fundamental as assumed here.

Those familiar with the sociology of religion literature will know that there is currently a lively debate over some of the empirical evidence Stark and Finke use to support their conclusions. Whether religious pluralism actually increases church attendance is very much in doubt. That
debate is not engaged seriously here. Also, the authors’ bête noir, “secul-
arization theory,” is caricatured, and the introductory chapter on atheism
and the study of religion has little to teach serious students of social
thought.

While this book will probably not persuade those who do not already
agree with Stark and Finke, it does provide a thorough account of their
perspective and covers a great deal of ground. There is much to engage.
No doubt this book is not the last word, but it will spur much future
research.

Conservation Tillage and Cropping Innovation: Constructing the New Cul-
ture of Agriculture. By C. Milton Coughenour and Shankariah Chamala.

Donald E. Voth
University of Arkansas

This is a sociological analysis of a major sociotechnical change in agri-
culture, the transition from farming systems based upon plowing and the
plow to various minimum-till or no-till production systems. According to
the authors, Christian County, Kentucky, was the site of the first no-tillage
crop production experiments in the United States, experiments which
occurred on the farm of Harry and Laurence Young in 1962. In 1998 the
authors report that from 12% (for cotton) to 18% (for “other crops”) to
as high as 49% of double cropped grain sorghum and 74% of double
cropped soybeans in the United States are grown under some form of
“conservation tillage.” The book describes, sometimes in almost tedious
detail, how this sociotechnical transition occurred. Parallel with the U.S.
experience, a similar transition in Australia is described.

The book’s eleven chapters start with a conceptual treatment of the
“social construction” of tillage and cropping systems. This is followed by
a description of the “plow culture” in the United States and Australia,
including its historical roots in Europe; by a description of the major
forces which affected both U.S. and Australian crop production agricult-
ure in the 1950s; and then a rather abstract treatment of “the social
construction of innovative networks.” Then follow two chapters dealing
with the social construction of new tillage and cropping systems, one
focusing on the United States, the other on Australia. Here, the “action
learning” processes involved in the innovation are described through use
of numerous brief case descriptions. The spread of conservation tillage in
Kentucky and Queensland, Australia, and ultimately throughout the
United States are then presented with a dual focus upon statistical in-
formation and the phases or cycles through which this transition passed.
Here the authors emphasize that the process was not linear, but quite
episodic, depending upon the economic environment for agriculture, tech-
technical developments, and practical results found in the field. The final two chapters focus upon the role of research and development institutions and of public policies upon experimentation with and the adoption of conservation tillage.

The innovation with new tillage systems and transition away from the deeply ingrained plow culture is described as fundamentally a sociocultural process. The technology of agricultural production is a social product, created by human beings to facilitate achievement of their desired ends. Though the authors do not emphasize it, the book could be used as a detailed description of cultural inertia and resistance to change, even when the physical and economic environment seem to be forcing change. Rather, the authors focus upon change and the change processes. Though they do not set out a specific series of hypotheses to test, they do, from time to time, challenge conventional wisdom about the innovation and adoption processes. In the introduction they state that “the process of diffusion, as this study indicates, differs substantially from the classical theory of the diffusion of innovations (Rogers 1983). The principal difference in our view is that because a practicing farmer and his farm are the core of a conservation tillage system, rather than simply of a particular machine or the chemical herbicide, diffusion takes place by the communication of a model of a tillage cropping system that individual farmers acquire and use as a basis for reconstructing a satisfactory management system of their own” (p. 13). They go on to identify what turns out to be a key feature of their entire story—the role of networks: networks of farmers, networks of institutions, even networks of ideas and concepts of agricultural production systems.

The book is an excellent example of that rural sociology that focuses upon the dynamics of agriculture and agricultural production, in context of the broader issue of the social construction of reality, in this case some very concrete reality that is in flux. As such it both makes a strong case for the importance of the sociocultural aspect of technological change and development, and provides a path, if not concrete methodological tools, for understanding this sociocultural context. Unfortunately, its length and the amount of detail it provides make it unlikely that those who need to be persuaded will read much of it. Hopefully those seeking to perform similar analyses will do so. In addition to the central topic of the book, they will find excellent summaries of relevant literature. Those who are simply interested in the history of agricultural production practices will also find the book informative and enjoyable. Theoretical and analytic material is interspersed and illustrated with a vast amount of concrete detail involving the real experiences of farmers, extension agents, and others involved in agricultural production.