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The American Sociological Association acknowledges with appreciation the facilities and assistance provided by Pennsylvania State University. Cover art by Tina Burke; design by Robert Marczak.
With this issue of CS a new editorial group takes over from its able predecessors at UC/Irvine, who were most thoughtful in providing us with enough material to fill several upcoming issues. Not until mid-year will most of the published reviews be those initiated by the Penn State office. We intend to repeat this favor for our successors several years hence. Beginning an editorial tour of duty with little or no banked material is very difficult, as I know from experience, so the zealous regard for the journal’s immediate future exhibited by the Irvine team is deeply appreciated.

A few small changes in the journal’s content and look will be evident. The cover art was especially commissioned for CS, and each January issue will feature new, original art on the cover. The back cover will advertise a sample of works inside, but will not provide an exhaustive ToC. The subject categories under which books are reviewed have been simplified. They mimic in part typical chapter titles in introductory textbooks, and also follow broad labels that have been in use, formally and otherwise, for decades. The first issues of CS in 1972 also featured about a dozen subject categories simply expressed. I prefer this uncluttered nomenclature since it promotes clarity when arranging books for review, even if certain subtle distinctions might be lost or abrogated.

The editorial board consists of well-regarded senior scholars as well as energetic younger ones, who are perhaps more attuned to the latest subdisciplinary trends. I tried hard to diversify the board even more than it appears, inviting dozens of desirable scholars to serve. Not surprisingly perhaps, it turned out to be much easier to recruit white males than to win over women or minorities to the notion of working for CS. Not everyone wishes to receive every two months a long list of books which need reviewers, and many notable women and minorities are already overburdened with such duties, as they explained. It is indeed not a task to be taken lightly. Still, our board is filled with excellent scholars, and because one third will rotate off every year, there will be plenty of opportunities for others to serve during my tenure as editor.

Many past editors of CS have publicly observed how hard it can be to persuade suitable scholars to write reviews regularly, even when the book in question falls squarely within their zone of expertise. My Irvine predecessors explained that they sometimes approached a dozen or more potential reviewers for a single volume’s treatment, all of whom refused. This speaks poorly for the discipline, for the sense of responsibility that scholars must bear toward one another, and I hope my editorial team does not face similar odds against finding able reviewers. I fear this is becoming truer even for junior researchers, since so much scholarship and proto-scholarship has become web-based, thereby converting books into an antique form of intellectual communication. And yet for all the hype associated with web-based learning, publishing books still seems to matter to many scholars and their sponsoring institutions, and they will go to extraordinary lengths to publish a monograph or a good collection of essays. In my first several months as “transition editor,” I have already noticed that more sociologically attuned books originate in the U.K. than in the U.S., since publishers there seem more eager to publish books by sociologists.

My principal goal as editor will be to review as many books by and for sociologists as we can fit into the pages allocated to CS each year, while also including as many review-essays and symposia as feasible. My three predecessors at Irvine vigorously pursued symposia despite the logistical difficulties associated with them, and I will try to follow their example, though perhaps with less regularity. Because CS is the most important outlet in English for reviews of sociological material, and plays a key role in shaping both discourse and careers, I invite interested parties to contact me with ideas or suggestions for reviews, essays, or symposia. By ASA rules, CS cannot accept self-nominated reviewers, nor books for review sent by
Editors’ Note

authors rather than by publishers. But I will gladly consider any reasonable suggestion that will help us cover deserving scholarly works, and am especially interested in hearing from those who believe CS has overlooked a meritorious book.

Alan Sica

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Consuming Youth

All of these books focus on the destructive impact of broad global economic and cultural changes on young people in both postindustrial and developing societies. And the picture they paint of that impact is, on the whole, a troubling one. There are glimmers of hope for the future of the young, but not many. Taken together, these books force us to think about the long-term effects of a rampant global consumer society more deeply than we have before, and to face up to the possibility that for many of the less privileged young, the world may have irrevocably changed for the worse.

It was not, of course, supposed to be this way. The freeing of markets and the shift away from the constraints of the traditional industrial economy promised, in theory, to open vast new possibilities for the young—opportunities for high-skilled, well-paid work and a greatly expanded range of educational and consumer choices. But whatever may be true for the most privileged among the global young, the reality for many—and not only the most excluded—is very different: a compound of unstable, poorly-paid, and alienating work, joyless leisure, stunted social and personal relationships, and a future, at best, of more of the same.

Two of the books— Violent Night and Out of Sight—explore the state of youth in the north of England. The third—Youth, Globalization, and the Law—is a collection of articles ranging widely across a variety of countries, from France to El Salvador and Brazil. But there are striking similarities among them, both with respect to the nature of the forces affecting youth today and the possibilities—or lack thereof—of mounting a significant challenge to them. There is an extraordinary convergence in all three books on the view that the global spread of consumer capitalism with accompanying neo-liberal ideology and social policy have undercut the social and economic prospects for a large swath of young people in both the developed and developing worlds. At the same time, consumer capitalism has eroded the normative and institutional structures that, in the past, bred significant movements for social change. That is not the whole story—there are some countertrends, notably the spread of formal legal rights for youth to places where they had not penetrated before. But it is the main story.

The portrait is drawn most sharply, and most bleakly, in Simon Winlow and Steve Hall’s impressive Violent Night, set in a large city in northern England that has been rapidly transformed from a center of blue-collar industrial production to one shaped by an expanding service economy and an increasingly individualistic and consumption-driven culture. Winlow and Hall spent a year interviewing and observing youth who are at least one step up from the truly excluded—young people who, as they put it, still have “a stake in civil society,” who inhabit the “lower echelons of the mainstream economy” (p. 6). They work in the “insecure and non-tenured sector” of the labor market (p. 4)—in call centers, supermarkets, and malls, in jobs they almost uni-
The young people in Robert McCauley’s Out of Sight come from farther down the social scale, but in many ways his portrait echoes the themes set out by Winlow and Hall. McCauley’s book is based on field research, done mostly in the 1990s, among low-income white and Afro-Caribbean youth in “Ford,” another city in northern England, mostly in a deprived neighborhood he calls “Nova.” They too are casualties of the brutally rapid transformation of the regional economy from one in which “cities were places of production and work” (p. 18) to a landscape of consumption which McCauley, like Winlow and Hall, finds singularly barren and bereft of opportunities for meaningful or productive work. Most of them had disastrous encounters with school, a place where they were stereotyped as inherently delinquent products of a highly suspect neighborhood, and from which they often left or were thrown out. They then become trapped in what McCauley calls the “workfare merry-go-round”—moving back and forth from unstable, poorly paying, and alienating work, mandated by the rules of the “workfare state,” to scratching out a living on social benefits and what they can scrounge or “mooch” through a variety of individual enterprises, both legal and illegal.

McCauley argues that the workfare “merry-go-round” is a powerful trap from which it is difficult for these poorly educated young people to escape. The long hours and unpredictability of work in “Ford’s” expanding retail and service sector—many of them get temporary jobs in a large shopping complex just outside the neighborhood—make it difficult to take on the serious training that could help them move up to jobs that could provide meaning, opportunity, and stability. Despite much rhetoric about the virtues of work, there is little money for serious training in any case. So Nova’s youth are routinely stuck in poverty-level and often temporary jobs, whose alienating character is compounded by the routine disrespect and arbitrariness of employers. The stigma of school failure and the relentless stereotyping of youth from their community as inherently criminal make it that much harder to break the workfare cycle. And so they are laid off and/or fired with great regularity, bouncing

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back onto inevitably inadequate public assistance.

Faced with that depressing cycle of exclusion, Nova’s youth are drawn to try to make a living on their own—“workin’ for yourself.” In the conditions that prevail in Nova, that usually means combining small-scale efforts at legitimate entrepreneurship with a variety of illegitimate ones that range from the merely shady to the illegal—what some of McCauley’s informants call being in “the Business,” dealing in drugs or unlicensed alcohol and cigarettes. In a telling phrase, they speak of going “out on the shift”—a throwback to a vanished time when Nova’s young people really did work steady shifts in stable industrial workplaces. McAuley sees these efforts to concoct an independent livelihood as reflecting a lingering work ethic—as genuine strategies, within very limited circumstances, to earn enough to live decently and to sustain a sense of autonomy and independence. But the problem is that the strategies serve to confirm their image as criminal and unreliable, which further diminishes their chances of moving up and out of “the life” in Nova.

The themes of shrinking opportunities for good work and the resulting frustration, aimlessness, and demoralization reappear, in strikingly similar form, in Laurent Bonelli’s chapter on French youth in *Youth, Globalization, and the Law*. As in the north of England, deindustrialization has radically transformed the prospects for French youth: three quarters of jobs for unskilled labor in textile, clothing, woodworking and leatherworking industries disappeared in the course of 20 years after the 1970s. The decline in traditional blue-collar unskilled work was most heavily concentrated among immigrants, especially from North Africa, and it was accompanied, as in England, by the spread of short-term, part-time, and unstable work. Like their counterparts in Nova, young people from the fragmented former working class of the Parisian *banlieues* are forced to shift back and forth between temporary work, shady enterprise, and idleness (interestingly, Bonelli’s youth speak of being in “le business,” exactly as McCauley’s do). They are confined in schools which promise access to a better future but, given these overriding economic circumstances, cannot deliver it. And like Nova’s youth, they are essentially prisoners in their own neighborhoods: their lives are mainly bounded by their own block or even their own stairwell.

Like the British writers, Bonelli sees little movement on the horizon to challenge these conditions. In an age of triumphant neoliberalism, governments—even those on the left—have largely abandoned efforts to confront the social roots of youth marginalization. Youth crime is increasingly approached (as it is in the United States and the United Kingdom) as an individual problem, best addressed by strategies of zero tolerance and a rhetoric of individual responsibility.

Meanwhile, the authors’ outlook for movements from below to challenge the essential expendability of the young is not encouraging. The same processes that have undermined the possibility of meaningful work and economic security for youth have also eroded the traditional institutions that were the breeding ground for movements to challenge these developments through political and social action. In the past, relatively stable working-class communities and the industrial organization of blue-collar work provided the ground from which both the traditional labor movement and left-wing political parties grew. With the fragmentation of the communities and the workplaces that once sustained those movements, there is little structural support for the growth of alternatives to the cultural and economic juggernaut of global consumer capitalism.

In the absence of those alternatives, the youth whose lives have been diminished by the double blow of drastically restricted opportunities and the decline of traditional sources of cultural meaning and political participation tend, in these accounts, to respond in ways that are mainly passive, or at best represent brave but largely futile efforts to maintain some degree of dignity and autonomy in the face of forces much larger than themselves. Winlow and Hall’s bored and anxious call center workers go “down the town” on Saturday night, drink themselves into a stupor, and face the very real risk of meaningless violence, at best salvaging some sense of competence by refusing to be pushed around and giving a good account of themselves if they are attacked. McAuley’s trapped denizens of the “workfare state” can
derive some inner satisfaction from trying to scrape by on their own, thus salvaging a measure of dignity and independence, but that doesn’t take them very far—and can even help to keep them trapped on the margins of the new economy. McAuley appears to find some signs of collective movement in the indigenous cultural expressions of these marginalized youth, including hip-hop music. But there is little sense in these descriptions of anything approaching either an organized movement among youth themselves to challenge the insecurity and bleakness of their lives, or of any new institutions in the larger society that could replace the traditional labor and political organizations that sustained and mobilized earlier generations.

Some of the articles in Youth, Globalization, and the Law argue that there is another, more positive, side to the picture. John Muncie, for example, in “Youth Justice and the Governance of Young People,” makes a strong case that globalization has also meant the worldwide spread of more progressive legal frameworks supporting the rights of youth. But most agree that this parallel movement to enhance the rights of young people is swimming upstream against the negative economic and social impacts of globalization carried out under neo-liberal auspices. The paradox of growing formal rights for youth coupled with economic and cultural trends that systematically undermine their chances for a decent future, of course, already characterizes more advanced democracies, where, at least on paper, the rights of young people have long been established.

These books are, perhaps necessarily, stronger on description than on solutions. Their unflinching explorations of the state of the young, even in countries—like England—that are often celebrated as examples of the success of neoliberal social and economic policies, help to explode the myth that the global unleashing of the private market has been beneficial for the young people of the postindustrial societies. They leave us with the urgent questions of what can be done to create durable opportunities for both security and meaning for the young—and who will do it.
Adaptation or Paradigm Shift?

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Even scholars who have no interest in economics may find the debate about behavioral economics (beh.ec.) of great interest because it points to a major meta-theoretical, empirical, and normative divide in the social sciences. While social science textbooks, professional associations, and the academic job market are still largely organized by the old-fashioned division among disciplines, social sciences are often conducted in terms of one of two paradigms that cut across these disciplines. On one side are those who hold that all behavior can be studied in neoclassical terms, as mainstream economics does—on the other, those who hold that behavior should be studied as if the actors were homo sapiens, not homo economicus. One paradigm assumes that actors are rational individuals, seeking to maximize their self interests whether they buy, sell, vote, pray or love. The other paradigm, adopted by other members of the same disciplines, draws on a variety of conceptions that focus on cultural, historical, and structural forces, and assumes that people often act non-rationally and heed complex motives. Behavioral economics is an excellent place to compare these two paradigms and to explore where the social sciences are headed.

Beh.ec. took off in the late 1970s. Its first major stars are widely recognized as the psychologists, Daniel Kahneman (winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize in Economics) and the late Amos Tversky. Previous work along similar lines had been carried out by Herbert Simon and long before that, by Adam Smith (Theory of Moral Sentiments), among others, but Kahneman and Tversky were the first to provide beh.ec. with a strong empirical backing. Scores of other scholars have since contributed to beh.ec., including some whose work has captured the public imagination, topping best-seller lists (e.g., Freakonomics by Steven Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, and Irrational Exuberance by Robert Shiller).

Three recent contributions to this field further strengthen the case that people do not and cannot behave the way the neoclassical paradigm assumes. In reviewing these works, the key question is whether the neoclassical paradigm can be corrected, and whether the mixed bag of conceptions associated with the homo sapien model can be consolidated to provide a better paradigm. To put it starkly, if the first approach is wrong (or at least deeply flawed), and the second provides none but myriad answers—where do we go from here?

Dan Ariely’s Predictably Irrational employs original studies and anecdotes to show that people are congenitally unable to process information and make the calculations that utility maximization and otherwise rational conduct requires. His results are very much in line with previous findings of beh.ec., and thus add to their robustness. Many of Ariely’s findings, and those of beh.ec. in general, are centered around three axes:

a) People’s choices are influenced more by anecdotes or personal experiences than by statistical evidence. Thus many people (wrongly) believe that more murders occur than suicides, because murders are regularly on the evening news and suicides are not.¹

¹ Sarah Lichtenstein, Paul Slovic, Baruch Fischhoff, Mark Layman, and Barbara Combs,
Ariely focuses on a related but different systematic bias: what people expect is what they see or—taste. Ariely offered two groups beer “A” and beer “B.” One group was informed prior to the taste-test that beer “B” was plain while beer “A” had some balsamic vinegar added. The other group was led to believe that beer “A” was a special, new “MIT Brew.” Those who knew about the vinegar prior to the taste-test tended to prefer the plain beer, while those who didn’t, tended to prefer the vinegar-laced version.

b) Individual choices are influenced by “anchoring” (or “framing”) which makes items seem different according to what they are compared. Ariely asked students to write down the last two digits of their Social Security number next to a list of items up for bid. Those with lower anchors—in this case, lower Social Security numbers—systematically made lower bids than those with higher anchors.

c) People develop irrational attachments to objects they own—known as the endowment effect. Thus, students who had been given much-coveted tickets to a basketball game were willing to part with them for prices that were much higher than other students, who were not given any tickets, were willing to pay for them.

These are but a few of the many examples Ariely presents—highlighting the systematic and hence predictably irrational ways people deliberate and make choices—which differ sharply from those assumed by the neoclassical paradigm.

Nudge, by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, each a very highly regarded academic in their respective disciplines of economics and law, adds much to beh.ec. By drawing on scores of studies of behavior in “field” settings, they refute suggestions that beh.ec.’s findings hold only in artificial lab conditions. Better yet, the book provides a treatment for the profound cognitive defects beh.ec. has revealed. They call for a “libertarian paternalism” that entails structuring choices in ways that make it easier for people to make sound choices. For instance, Thaler and Sunstein urge that employee contributions to 401(k) plans be arranged on an opt-out instead of an opt-in basis. One study found that participation rates, which under the opt-in model were around 65 percent, skyrocketed to 98 percent under an opt-out model. Nudge shows that this and other such improved “choice architectures” would serve both people and society well in a variety of areas in both the private and public sectors: from increasing the number of organ donations, to encouraging better investments, to protecting the environment.

However, not all nudges are equal. As Thaler and Sunstein note with regret, “choice architects in all walks of life have incentives to nudge people in directions that benefit the architects (or their employers) rather than the users” (p. 239). The authors emphasize that they only support nudges designed to serve the best interests of the users, not the architects.

Robert Frank’s Falling Behind draws on the concept of relative deprivation to highlight a profound defect of the neoclassical paradigm and, more broadly, of American capitalism. Frank points out that when all people work longer to consume more, the pursuit of material goods becomes Sisyphean: all sacrifice leisure time to work more in order to purchase more goods, but the material gains each earns relative to one another remain fixed, resulting in an overall loss of satisfaction. Thus Frank writes, data show people would be better off spending more time socializing and relaxing.

Moreover, Frank highlights a trend in the United States of growing disparity between the incomes of the top earners and those of the rest, moving people towards more work and more relative deprivation. Between 1949 and 1979, most people’s incomes rose more or less equally. Since then, the top income group’s after-tax incomes have risen much more than those of the rest, leaving those in the middle class feeling more deprived, even though their incomes have grown. In addi-

tion, the increased spending at the top “has raised the cost of achieving goals that most middle-class families regard as basic,” adding stress (p. 43). Frank hence calls for a progressive consumption tax, which would make the rich spend less, increase incentives for savings, improve public services—and combat relative deprivation.

Tim Harford reports in the Financial Times that most economists continue to work within the neoclassical paradigm, and that beh.ec. “merely illuminates some fascinating but relatively minor foibles.” He adds that he has “long been persuaded that the evidence shows that we are fundamentally rational creatures when it comes to most decisions that really matter.” This position is much harder to maintain after the publication of these books.

Actually, as I see it, beh.ec. underestimates the difficulties the neoclassical paradigm faces because most of its studies deal with poor choices due to cognitive flaws, a few with those caused by emotions, and practically none with those based on values. (To their credit, Ariely does explore the effects of norms and Frank deals with non-self-interested motives.) This ignores the fact that people vote largely because they consider it their civic duty; or the fact that most married partners of Alzheimer’s patients opt to stay with them, even though they cannot expect any reasonable return for their services.

By studying atomized individuals, beh.ec. neglects emergent group attributes such as power structures, communal bonds, informal social controls, and cultures—attributes that often account for a good part of behavioral variance. These attributes shape individual preferences and guide their choices in ways the actors are unaware of and, hence, cannot take into account in their calculations. (It is particularly regrettable that many behavioral economists seem to be unfamiliar with the works of Weber, Parsons, Smelser, and other sociologists.)

Where do we go from here?

None of these books explicitly addresses the implications of all these robust findings for neoclassical social sciences. Rather than hoping to establish a new paradigm, Ariely states that his goal is to use beh.ec. to help his reader to become less like a homo sapien, and more like a homo economicus: “Once you see how systematic certain mistakes are—how we repeat them again and again—I think you will begin to learn how to avoid some of them” (p.xii). Evidence actually shows that this is hardly the case; that irrational biases are congenital and not easily curable. For instance, studies show that even physicians—in their area of specialized training—are “still largely dominated by logical inconsistency and failure to apply basic concepts of probability.” Indeed, if Ariely’s impression was a valid one, the core thesis of beh.ec. would be invalidated, namely that cognitive defects are profoundly ingrained, even wired in.

Still, most social scientists who draw on the neoclassical paradigm continue to work as if beh.ec.’s findings never existed. Nor can they readily correct or adapt their paradigm, as it seems next to impossible to integrate most of these findings into a single model. How is an economist to study what drives prices up and down, if levels depend on what consumers compare them to: lower than last year? Or—higher than five years ago? Or—to those overseas, or . . . ? Will consumers find the same costs painful if they learn that others paid less, but a source of satisfaction if it turns out that others pay even more? And how are economists to study trade if goods are more valuable to those who buy them than to those who sell them?

True, some valiant attempts have been made in this direction by diluting the definitions of key concepts. The concept of “bounded rationality,” for instance, allows for the construction of models that anticipate some amount of irrationality by individual decision-makers. However, the main challenge of beh.ec., especially once emergent group attributes are added, stands and—as I see it—points to the need for a paradigm shift.

This point is best illustrated by the concept of choice architecture outlined in Nudge. Choices are not structured primarily by well intentioned or self serving managers, but by macroscopic historical and cultural forces. This is a main reason corporations are bailed
Scott Fitzgerald is said to have defined the novel as “how it was with a group of people.” A long tradition suggests just such a definition suits ethnographic research as a rich description of individual lives as they unfold in a particular setting and historical period. In this collection of articles on the practice of institutional ethnography, edited by Dorothy Smith, a different definition prevails. To compliment the earlier companion volume, *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005), Smith assembles a number of young scholars who have emerged from her tutelage to discover “how things are actually put together” (p. 1), and “looking out beyond the everyday to discover how it came to happen as it does” (p. 3). The result is an accessible, pedagogically grounded set of explorations into what it means to undertake institutional ethnography, and why its intentions and methods differ from more conventional ethnographic practice.

One would not imagine that the marriage of Karl Marx, French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Harold Garfinkel, and 20th Century feminism would produce anything more useful than a dense fog. Yet, for that they tend to make non-rational choices. I spelled out such a paradigm in *The Moral Dimension* (1988), and founded the Society for Advancement of Socio Economics (SASE), dedicated to developing such a paradigm. This is far from a boast because twenty years later SASE, though it continues to thrive, has not made significant progress in this direction. Indeed, the neoclassical paradigm continues to dominate. You cannot beat a theory, however flawed, with nothing (or a hundred fragments that do not make one whole).

I find this particularly regrettable because the neoclassical paradigm’s predictions—to the extent they are derived from the relevant theories!—are often off the mark; the paradigm’s assumptions about human nature are profoundly erroneous; and, studies show, people who study neoclassical economics end up being more selfish than those spared.5

### Beyond the Everyday

Scott Fitzgerald is said to have defined the novel as “how it was with a group of people.” A long tradition suggests just such a definition suits ethnographic research as a rich description of individual lives as they unfold in a particular setting and historical period. In this collection of articles on the practice of institutional ethnography, edited by Dorothy Smith, a different definition prevails. To compliment the earlier companion volume, *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005), Smith assembles a number of young scholars who have emerged from her tutelage to discover “how things are actually put together” (p. 1), and “looking out beyond the everyday to discover how it came to happen as it does” (p. 3). The result is an accessible, pedagogically grounded set of explorations into what it means to undertake institutional ethnography, and why its intentions and methods differ from more conventional ethnographic practice.

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can reveal the often elusive connection between individual and social structure, where individual lives are deeply affected by the larger social relations that act upon them, even as they go about the business of creating that same social world.

For those who have in the past misconstrued Smith’s insistence that we begin from the everyday “lived” experience of women as being simply about restoring women’s voices to the mix (Smith 1987), this volume will clarify the complicated call that Smith has been making to sociologists: instead of beginning from so-called grounded theory or the abstracted institution, institutional ethnography takes as a starting point people’s experiences, but it “...is committed to discovering beyond any one individual’s experience...” (p. 1). Thus, starting points certainly matter but sociological destination matters, too. In large measure, this collection shows us the way to get to the sociological world both of—and beyond—the individual.

The chapters within the collection range widely in their empirical sites, as well as the lessons they explicate, but two central orientations come clear throughout. First, it proves conceptually useful to apply the concept of “work” to include virtually all organized behaviors accomplished in concert or connection with others in particular places and times. Contributions to the volume attest to the libatory aspect of this conceptual shift to life as practical work. Second, “texts” are defined broadly as the use of language in virtually any form, and serve as the conceptual and practical bridge beyond the individual to where the sites for social relations are controlled. Text is not everything however, for in constant counterpoint to it is embodied work and the physical aspect of the social.

The volume is arranged in three thoughtful, even innovatively arranged sections, in rough progression from data-gathering to data analysis, to practical examples of how research in progress might appear—as proposals, design development, and political analysis. The three chapters in Section I speak of specific methods in the context of institutional ethnography: Marjorie Devault and Liza McCoy discuss the use of interview techniques in the context of institutional ethnography. They offer some insights into a reconceptualization of interview “subjects” to institutional “informants,” as well as how the discourse of interviews can reveal particular “corners” of an institution’s ruling relations. To shore up such insights they cite interviews with institutional ethnographers themselves, providing a great source to understand the challenges of interviewing. Tim Diamond follows with a chapter devoted to the ways in which participant observation can enhance the purposes of institutional ethnography. This chapter too comes at its subject in a novel way: Diamond is interviewed by Dorothy Smith about how he undertakes ethnographic work, problems he encountered, and ways he manages data of this kind. In the last section, Diamond illustrates how participant observation can proceed to “locate the institutional in the local” (p. 61). The final chapter in this section is by Smith, who discusses the incorporation of texts into institutional ethnography. Smith is on familiar ground here, to be sure, as she reminds us that institutional texts constitute the connective scaffolding between local and translocal practices. Her discussion of how to examine sequences in which texts are given a central role will be very useful to those who have only such institutional remnants to analyze. She also introduces the useful concept of “intertextual hierarchy” (p. 87) to describe when texts act on and regulate other texts. If texts seem to be animated in this formulation, that is no accident; texts do act, they do regulate, and they are one part of ongoing institutional work.

Section II concerns itself with the management of data and contains some useful admonitions for the ethnographer. For example, Marie Campbell’s chapter on using experience as data in her study of a nursing home makes good use of the concept of social relations as “coordinating” action and meaning. Liza McCoy’s chapter on the analysis of interview data offers up the concept of “analytic drift.” It speaks to how easily drawn into the drama and depth of individual lives we ethnographers become, seduced away from the institutional processes we intended to capture. She concludes her incisive chapter with a clear statement of the mission of institutional ethnography: “The goal is to develop a detailed, description analysis of some portion of the institutional relations that have been identified as consequential, in

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order to show how these institutional work processes are organized and how they shape the ground of people’s everyday experiences” (p. 123). The remaining chapters return readers to how data work can actually proceed: in Allison Griffith’s research on the creation of the construct “single parent,” and in Susan Marie Turner’s chapter on how to analyze institutional texts. Both are exemplars of how the methods and point of view of institutional ethnography can reveal both the foreground of experience and the backdrop of power. This chapter raised a misgiving that emerges, not so much with the formulation and intent of institutional ethnography, but with its translation. The notion is that the ethnographer “takes the side” of, as Turner says, “those being ruled” (p. 95). Yet narrowly construed, this may deflect attention away from the useful view that ruling practices may be found at many levels, and as the institutional scene changes, so too do the objects of ruling practices. Thus, ethnographic interest may begin from the story of a single “ruled” individual, but should range widely enough to encompass a less partial view.

The final section of the volume contains three chapters, each representative of a stage of research, and does more than just end the volume with an applied turn. The first is a research proposal submitted to the Canadian government by George Smith, Eric Mykhalovskiy and Douglass Weatherbee. Students especially will be able to see from it how an underlying epistemological viewpoint can be translated into a description of methodology, design, and techniques in the context of a substantive problem. In her ongoing study of UN policy making, Lauren Eastwood’s chapter interrogates the concept of “accessibility,” a term not only about “getting in,” but also one that describes the liminal moments or “spaces” in which lived experience and the control of those experiences are made manifest to the researcher. Finally, we read of Alex Wilson and Ellen Pence’s work on an analysis of legal interventions into the lives of native women who have experienced domestic violence. Here again, students will be able to see how it is that collaborations between researchers and informants can reveal the ways institutions silence, revictimize, and reorder reality, but also how such revelations can lead to new knowledge of how change can be made.

This volume is perfectly suited for graduate seminars, as either a practical companion volume to Smith’s earlier work on institutional ethnography (Smith 2005), or as a stand alone text. Smith and her colleagues will call a new generation of students to institutional ethnography, as well as to a larger sociological vision.

References
Stanley Cohen’s and Sally Engle Merry’s influence on human rights scholarship in sociology and anthropology, respectively, is reflected in these two volumes. In the early 1990s, Cohen, along with Bryan Turner (1993), helped to forge a “sociology of human rights.” Anthropology, in contrast, had taken an early stance on universal rights, exemplified by the American Anthropological Association’s 1947 “Statement on Human Rights,” which criticized the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as ethnocentric and inimical to cultural differences. Merry’s 1992 essay in the American Review of Anthropology persuasively explained why the anti-universalist defense of cultural relativism had lost its relevance in light of the impact of transnational processes in local settings across the globe. In 1999, the AAA issued a “Declaration on Anthropology and Human Rights” that acknowledges the importance of the UDHR, and encourages anthropologists “to be involved in the debate on enlarging our understanding of human rights on the basis of anthropological knowledge and research.”

Cohen’s political-intellectual legacy is eloquently and accurately summarized in Ruth Jamieson and Kieran McEvoy’s chapter in the volume dedicated to his honor: “Throughout his career, [Cohen] has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to visualize and theorise with precision about what is actually occurring in a range of different types of conflict. Whether he is unpicking the violent societal reaction to mods and rockers, or intermecine disputes within the disciplines of criminology and sociology to the human and social destruction of political violence, Cohen’s particular knack has been to see clearly through the smoke of conflict and to speak authoritatively above the din. A key feature of conflict is confusion. Cohen’s unique gift is intellectual, political and moral clarity in the midst of that confusion” (pp. 422–23).

Cohen’s interest in human rights traces back to his youth in apartheid South Africa.

In the 1950s and 1960s, struggles for rights and justice there and across much of the globe were influenced less by international law than by anti-colonial and anti-racist aspirations for self-determination. In the late 1980s, Cohen emigrated from the UK to Israel several months after the start of the first Palestinian intifada (uprising) in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza. His earlier work on moral panics and social control provided a critical intellectual grounding for understanding Israeli responses to Palestinian anti-occupation activism; in that period, Israel/Palestine had the highest per capita incarceration rate in the world. In 1987, Israel had become the first state to officially “legalize” torture, euphemized as “moderate physical pressure” and rationalized as “necessary” to combat “hostile terrorist activity” (a term used to characterize all Palestinian resistance to foreign occupation, including non-violent civil disobedience).

In 1991, Cohen and Daphna Golan published a report on Israeli interrogation of Palestinians for the new Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem, which challenged the official Israeli account that “moderate physical pressure” did not constitute “torture,” and that this “pressure” was used sparingly to avert “ticking bombs.” Cohen had
expected harsh reactions from Israeli officials, the right, and even liberal Zionists whose views of Palestinians as existentially threatening disinclined them to acknowledge the illegitimacy of violent interrogation practices. However, he had not anticipated the “post-modern” critique by some leftist Israeli intellectuals, who criticized the report’s conventional methods and modernist presumptions that “truth” could be known. Cohen, who had a poster of Michel Foucault by his desk, was initially stunned by the accusation that this report might betray the kind of critical analysis with which he personally identified. Laurie Taylor’s chapter in the honoring volume, an interview with Cohen, provides his account of how this episode of Israeli reactions and non-reactions to evidence of pervasive torture of Palestinians motivated a turn in his research toward the politics of denial.

Cohen’s States of Denial: Knowing about Suffering and Atrocities (2001), which won the British Academy Book Prize in 2002, is a socio-political meditation about how and why people, organizations, states and whole societies can ignore and deny the realities of human suffering and atrocities. The word “knowing” in the subtitle could be interpreted as Cohen’s pointed response to denials, premised on the idea that truth is inherently subjective and thus “unknowable.” Truth is subjective and socially constructed, but violence and suffering have causes and consequences that beg the concern of scholars. The insight that there is no inherent incompatibility between critical theory and politically engaged research on suffering and atrocities is one of Cohen’s contributions to sociology of human rights.

The thirty-essay collection, Crime, Social Control and Human Rights, is uneven and perhaps unavoidably unwieldy, given the richness of the career being honored. The best chapters describe how Cohen’s life as a scholar-activist influenced theirs and/or analyze how his intellectual contributions shaped their fields. Daphna Golan concludes her reflection on her collaboration with Cohen by stating that the essay was painful to write because human rights activism in Israel/Palestine failed to prevent the conflict from continuing to worsen. Albie Sachs’ chapter on the fight against apartheid includes a statement of unbridled optimism rarely found in a scholarly edition: “Because we rejected terrorism, we got a country, we got a constitution, we got our dignity. It worked! Idealism works! Principle works!” (p. 362). That both Golan and Sachs might be correct—human rights “fails” and “works”—is an appropriate homage to Cohen’s enduring commitment to a Foucauldian pessimistic activism that “the present,” however promising or dispiriting, is never “the end.”

While some contributors to Crime, Social Control and Human Rights make little or no explicit reference to Cohen’s writings, others offer compelling and competing views of the impact of his work. Malcolm Feely and Jonathan Simon’s chapter, subtitled “an appreciation from North America,” opines that his first book, Folk Devils and Moral Panics (1972), is arguably his most important and influential for its introduction of the concept of “moral panic . . . into the lexicon of social sciences” (p. 40). Thomas Blomberg and Carter Hay’s chapter assesses how his predictions in Visions of Social Control (1985) hold up after two decades. They (like many contributors) commend Cohen’s prescience in anticipating—and providing frames of analysis to understand—technologies of control and surveillance, and the social context for accepting or embracing them that would intensify in the post-9/11 era.

Claire Moon’s chapter traces Cohen’s sociology of human rights to a 1995 article in Law and Social Inquiry in which he first proposed the taxonomy of “literal,” “interpretative” and “justificatory” denial. That article, she notes, “played a pivotal role in initiating early debates on issues around how states might deal with a violent past, a practice and field of enquiry that came to be known as ‘transitional justice’” (p. 316). Ron Dudai’s chapter takes Cohen’s views on transitional justice as a point of departure to advance an original and forward-looking argument about how these lessons might be applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Practice of Human Rights, a more analytically cohesive collection, is composed of ten chapters and four section introductions by leading figures in the field (Laura Nader, Balakrishnan Rajagopalan, and two by co-edi-
work on human rights reflects the field’s crisis of identity in the 1980s when “the local” could no longer be sustained analytically as environments of discrete cultures. Anthropologists who took up the ethnographic study of international and transnational processes, discourses and networks as they intersected with and influenced localities around the world transformed the field itself, as this collection reflects.

Co-editor Mark Goodale’s introductory chapter assesses how the ethnographic attention to practices drew anthropologists to human rights because of the ways in which “locals” have adopted, embraced, or in some cases, repudiated “the idea of human rights,” and how ethnography can contribute to an “anthropological philosophy of human rights” that avoids the problems of a reified universalism (p. 4). The word “between” in the volume’s subtitle, as Goodale explains, is an “analytical device” to understand the nonuniversality of human rights practices, and to “create an intentionally open conceptual space which can account for the ways actors encounter the ideas of human rights through the projection of the legal and moral imagination” (p. 22).

Many of the chapters substantiate the above-mentioned point that human rights both “works” and “fails,” even simultaneously in the same places. Daniel Goldstein’s chapter on Bolivia is a particularly strong example; he begins with an observation that the recent election of Evo Morales, the first indigenous person to head a Latin American state, “can be attributed to his command of the transnational discourse of human rights” (p. 49). Morales and the Bolivian majority that put him in power concur that neoliberalism and human rights are incompatible. However, Bolivia’s deep structural poverty, rampant crime (Latin America has the highest regional homicide rates in the world), and the infinitely fungible discourse of “security” have forged an interesting twist on rights, specifically the development of localized notions of a “right to security.” Why, residents of poor barrios ask, should criminals’ rights be defended by human rights activists when the state fails to prevent crime, and when many victims are revictimized by corrupt police? Goldstein documents how some people, in the face of these conditions, regard lynching (of criminals and delinquents) as a form of “community justice,” construable as a human right to local customs. The example vividly illuminates the larger point of the book that the very meaning of human rights is being debated and reworked around the world, including in Bolivian barrios.

Kay Warren’s chapter on the 2000 UN Human Trafficking Protocol, and John Dale’s on the civil suit against Unocal operations in Burma, are models of transnational human rights research. The protocol, developed under the auspices of the UN Convention against Transnational Crime, criminalizes human trafficking for prostitution and sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery-like working conditions, servitude, and commodification of organs. As this list suggests, “piling on” and “protocolization” of a diffuse set of issues into a “universalizing” framework is characteristic of the consensus-building approaches favored in the UN system. Warren’s research on the drafting process traces the disparate stances of several NGOs. Sex industry abolitionists emphasize the eradication of prostitution and the vulnerability of women and children, seeking enforcement that targets men; for them, decriminalizing prostitution (whether it involves trafficking or not) is out of the question. Advocates for workers’ rights oppose the special emphasis on prostitution and on women and children; they insist that the protocol be interpreted to target exploitations that constitute trafficking while recognizing that some people may choose to cross borders to engage in sex or other kinds of work. Representatives of sex worker networks are ambivalent about the entire liberal rights-based language which contrasts a worker rights-versus-victim rescue polarity.

Dale uses the Doe v. Unocal Corp. case as an example of “transnational legal space.” In the early 1990s, when the Burmese junta opened the country to foreign investment, the transnational “Free Burma” movement expanded its agenda to target transnational corporations that abet the regime’s authoritarianism and human rights violations. Unocal was a particularly egregious offender, having relied on slave labor to build a new pipeline. In 1996, a dozen peasants brought suit in a US court against
Review Essays

Versions of the “sameness versus difference” question have long engaged sociologists from a variety of subfields, and these two books both take on the question within the realm of health. Both books consider the social consequences associated with defining social problems and inequalities through a biological difference lens. Taken together, the books deliver an especially powerful message about the implications of increased medical surveillance of our bodies.

Peter Conrad’s book is largely comprised of a series of case studies used to illustrate the changing nature of medicalization. The book is not intended to be a comprehensive review of medicalization scholarship but instead utilizes these case studies to illustrate how medicalization has evolved and where it is headed. With his 30-year history of studying this topic, Conrad is just the right person to take on the task, and this book represents a significant contribution to the area.

The first half of The Medicalization of Society consists of case studies that explore four different features of medicalization: extension, expansion, enhancement, and continuity. To illustrate the process of extension, Conrad considers the ways in which men’s bodies and problems are increasingly subject to medical surveillance and control as women’s bodies long have been; in essence, the medicalization project has been extended to include conditions such as andropause, baldness, and erectile dysfunction. The expansion of medical categories over time is demonstrated through an examination of the incorporation of ACTA-related litigation and legislation in the US. Doe v. Unocal, the first attempt to use ACTA against a private corporation, ended when the corporation reached a settlement with plaintiffs rather than counting on a winning ruling.

Many chapters in these two volumes reveal that activism and scholarship are often inseparable, sometimes compatible, but never indistinguishable. To study human rights requires the ability to utilize the research process to apprehend the multiple and contested meanings that attach to “humans” and “rights,” not to mention “justice,” “freedom,” “violence” and “power.” Stanley Cohen’s ability to draw intellectual inspiration from suffering and atrocity is a model for understanding how human rights works and fails, and the importance of both.

References


Medical Practices

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Versions of the “sameness versus difference” question have long engaged sociologists from a variety of subfields, and these two books both take on the question within the realm of health. Both books consider the social consequences associated with defining social problems and inequalities through a biological difference lens. Taken together, the books deliver an especially powerful message about the implications of increased medical surveillance of our bodies.


poration of adults into the ADHD diagnostic system, and the mechanisms of enhancement are shown through a consideration of how drugs that are approved to treat one condition may come to be used as enhancements for others. Whereas the first three cases illustrate the forward march of medicalization, Conrad’s discussion of continuity is situated within a consideration of the opposite force—demedicalization. The case of homosexuality represents one of only a few examples of true demedicalization, but Conrad argues that changes over the last several decades may facilitate the remedicalization of homosexuality. He contends, for example, that the emergence of a “born gay” philosophy in the gay community shows the growing acceptance of a biological model of homosexuality.

The second half of Conrad’s book focuses on the constraints and consequences associated with medicalization, including the challenges associated with measuring medicalization, the emergence of new engines of medicalization, the expansion of medical social control, and the emergence of new medical markets. He sounds an important call of concern about the widespread medicalization of society, arguing that it transforms “human differences into pathologies” (p. 148). What might be considered simple human variation or socially-related problems become defined instead as biologically-related medical problems in need of medical treatment.

One of the most pathbreaking contributions of the book is Conrad’s identification of the new engines driving medicalization (i.e., consumers and commercial interests such as the pharmaceutical industry). I am convinced that this insight positions medicalization studies to attend to important new political and economic realities. Conrad’s identification of the new engines of medicalization has been published elsewhere. In fact, as Conrad acknowledges, at least part of each of the book’s chapters has already been published. Some chapters depart in significant ways from the published articles, though some stick quite closely to those pieces. For that reason, followers of Conrad’s work will not find much that is entirely new here. Yet, even keeping this in mind, I believe that scholars in the area will find value in having all this work synthesized and integrated into one volume. Indeed, one of the accomplishments of the book is its uniting of what had been separate pieces of research into an overarching consideration of the forces of medicalization. The book is also written in a very accessible style and promises to be indispensable for any undergraduate or graduate course on the topic of medicalization.

Steven Epstein’s *Inclusion*, an insightful examination of how medical research came to be seen as an area in which political problems can be worked out, focuses on the ironic turn to biomedical conceptualizations of racial/ethnic and sex/gender differences by those seeking justice in the realm of medical research and treatment. This work, which won a well-deserved American Sociological Association award for the best recent book published in science and technology studies, is an in-depth case study of the adoption and consequences of what Epstein calls the “inclusion-and-difference paradigm,” which he defines as “the research and policy focus on including diverse groups as participants in medical studies and in measuring differences across those groups” (p. 17). A main goal of the book is to understand how a particular way of thinking about medical difference led to a strategy to make medical research more inclusive. Ultimately, Epstein succeeds in telling a highly complex story in a clear manner, and his situation of his main questions within various academic literatures—including science studies, political sociology and gender/race studies—ensures that the book will be of interest to people from a variety of specializations within sociology.

In the first half of *Inclusion*, Epstein uses an array of interview data—collected from Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) officials, clinical researchers, drug company scientists, health activists, members of Congress, and others—and analyses of government documents and reports to explain how the inclusion-and-difference strategy gained support and became institutionalized in the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other agencies and organizations. A primary inclusion-and-difference reform was the passage of the NIH Revitalization
Act in 1993, which required that women and those from racial/ethnic minority groups be included as subjects in NIH-funded research. Epstein expertly maps out the strategies used by a coalition of reformers to get this policy and other related policies enacted. As Epstein tells it, the reform coalition argued that it is unsound and unfair to extrapolate medical conclusions from “standard” (white male) research subjects to women or racial/ethnic minorities, and a core strategy of this coalition was to bring together “political” and “scientific” categories as if they were one and the same.

The second half of the book explores the consequences of these reforms for government agencies, biomedical researchers, drug companies, impacted social groups (in particular, racial/ethnic minorities and women), and society at large. In his evaluation, Epstein maintains that even though the reformers’ characterizations of biomedical research were not completely accurate (e.g., throughout history, there are various examples of women and ethnic minorities being included, albeit problematically, as subjects of medical research), they brought attention to an important problem. Yet, he also argues quite convincingly that the reforms have had problematic unintended consequences, including raising the risk of improper racial or sex “profiling” in medicine and fostering a belief that race/ethnicity and sex/gender are biological in nature.

Epstein’s book is timely, as there is growing attention to the problem of health disparities in the United States, and he considers whether a focus on difference can eliminate these disparities. Arguing that the inclusion-and-difference paradigm reinforces the mistaken conclusion that social inequalities can be remedied with a focus on biological difference, Epstein ultimately concludes that these reforms are unlikely to eliminate health disparities: “I consider it highly debatable whether an opportunistic use of medical essentialism, rooted in the biological-differences frame, truly can be employed to serve the cause of justice in the domain of health” (p. 296).

Both books in different ways caution that a focus on “difference” can end up serving commercial ends. Epstein argues that one of the consequences of the inclusion-and-difference paradigm is that medical treatment becomes standardized at the group level (what he calls “niche standardization”), leading to the rise of “niche marketing” by drug companies seeking to capitalize on growing interest in women’s health or minority health. In discussing examples of new “ethnic drugs” such as BiDil and “gendered” drugs such as Zelnorm, Epstein raises an important warning: “[T]hese and the other examples of the affinity between niche standardization and niche marketing demonstrate how reforms advanced under the banner of identity politics can end up promoting the commercialization of those identities in the service of profit-making” (p. 180). In a like manner, Conrad argues that drug companies are constantly creating new medical categories and markets and are increasingly attuned to the profitability of products aimed at alleviating gender-related and other insecurities. Within this context, then, gender/sex and racial/ethnic “differences” become “medical categories” to exploit for commercial intent.

In reading the two books together, it is interesting to consider the ways that sex and race differences are “different differences” (Epstein, p. 255, emphasis in original). Whereas women’s bodies have long been heavily medicalized, and the idea of sex differences is now “thoroughly reified and naturalized in biomedical research” (Epstein, p. 256), racial/ethnic differences have not yet been highly medicalized (though this may change with the development of drugs like BiDil). Although “difference findings” pertaining to sex/gender tend to be praised, those pertaining to race/ethnicity are more often subject to ongoing controversy. Epstein links this “non-debate over sex profiling” (p. 248) to an emerging trend in women’s health research advocacy groups to embrace notions of biological differences by sex, which stands in stark contrast to the politics of earlier women’s health organizations: “[W]here the earlier groups often sought to ‘demedicalize’ women’s experiences, the new advocacy, often led by women inside medicine and science, seeks to extend scientific
These two books pursue a common theme, yet are a study in contrasts. Duncan, Huston and Weisner’s *Higher Ground* uses both ethnographic and quantitative data to tell the story of a Wisconsin experiment called New Hope, which was designed to determine whether a specific set of supports for low-wage workers would help them to escape poverty. Blank, Danziger and Schoeni’s edited volume, *Working and Poor*, provides a detailed statistical picture of low-wage workers that is both descriptive as well as analytical. It addresses how the demographic composition of this group has changed over time, how economic trends have affected this group, both in terms of earnings as well as other measures of economic and social well being, and how state and federal policies have impacted this group. The two books were prepared as companion volumes. They provide welcome insights as they pose one of the most important questions we address as sociologists: what works, and what doesn’t work, as we provide evidence useful in constructing programs and policies to promote upward mobility of the working poor.


Higher Ground tells the story of a program designed to address a paradox: if one is working, how can one be poor? It is the story of an experiment designed to determine whether a system that required thirty or more hours of work per week (if needed at a temporary community-service job), coupled with an earnings supplement to lift income above the poverty level, subsidized child care, subsidized health insurance, and both help and respect from project staff, could help a randomly assigned group of adults escape poverty over the long term, i.e., after the experiment ended. While quantitative data are provided in appendices, the meat of the book is conveyed through the stories of three participants randomly assigned to the experimental group: Inez, Lakeisha and Elena. We get to know them and their family members, and follow their stories as they enter the program while it is ongoing, and after it ended. The findings suggest that New Hope worked: it reduced poverty substantially during the program and modestly afterward. It improved children’s school performance, especially in reading and it promoted stronger social behavior among boys. Among girls, there were positive effects on social behavior at home while worsening social behavior at school. There was some improvement in adult mental and physical health and increases in child participation in center-based child care and after-school programs.

Working and Poor pursues some of the same themes, but uses very different strategies. Authors in this volume are primarily economists and policy analysts who use data derived from sources such as the U. S. Census, the Survey of Economic Opportunity, and the Current Populations Surveys. Data are frequently derived from multiple waves of these data sets, and analytic techniques emphasize econometric modeling. The book contains four sections. In Part 1, the authors explore the changing labor market landscape for low-skilled workers, and suggest causes for these changes. For example, George Borjas argues that downward wage trends among disadvantaged Hispanic low-wage workers are largely due to the increase in low-wage immigrants into this population, immigrants whose wages are particularly sensitive to fluctuations of the business cycle. Part 2 addresses how economic trends affect less-skilled workers. French, Mazumder and Taber study changes in wage growth for low-skilled workers, and conclude that workers who enter the workforce during a recession are not seriously disadvantaged in wage growth over time relative to comparable workers who entered during more robust markets. They argue that workers’ growth in experience may be an important mechanism for escaping poverty. Part 3 studies how macroeconomic change affects elements of personal well-being other than household income. For example, Haider and McGarry argue that resource sharing, particularly co-residency, is prevalent among the poor and such resource sharing has considerable potential to improve financial status. They urge that private transfers be studied in analyses of the effects of welfare reform which have, too often, neglected the study of private transfers in assessing the effects of welfare policy changes on households over time. A substantial Part 4 investigates the joint effects of policy and economic changes on low-wage workers. Autor and Houseman study whether the temporary work agencies help to alleviate poverty. Their findings suggest that positive effects of temporary work placements are short term, while placements in direct-hire jobs modestly increase the chances of workers leaving poverty. Similar chapters in this section explore the role of child support and tax policies on the long-term prospects of low-income workers.

Taken together the two volumes provide considerable insight into what works to help low-wage workers escape poverty. The books are also explicitly intergenerational and longitudinal. In Higher Ground, we learn how children of program participants are affected both academically and socially, as well as how their mothers fared in labor market participation. In addition, analyses of these same families after the experiment ends tell us whether the program produced lasting benefits, or only a temporary boost. The longitudinal data sets used in many of the Working and Poor chapters allow those researchers to evaluate the long term effects of specific governmental policies. The two
volumes are also useful both to researchers and in the classroom. Working and Poor would be a valuable reference for researchers, knowledgeable about econometrics, who also had an interest in low-wage workers and public policy. Higher Ground would also interest these researchers, but in addition could be useful in both graduate and undergraduate classrooms studying poverty, inequality and applied public policy.

These two volumes provide useful perspectives to both sociologists concerned with economic inequality as well as to those with interests in other fields. First, the volumes clearly signal that both quantitative and qualitative methods are needed to understand the most challenging problems in social science. From the quantitative studies we learn whether program features have discernable effects on workers' incomes, and how important respective supports might be. From the qualitative studies we develop more insight into how and why given program elements may be working; we also become more attuned to the nuances of effects across households, because even if a program has an overall salutary impact, this is an average composed of different experiences across participants.

Second, the volumes also reflect the fact that scholarship in the social sciences is increasingly interdisciplinary. Gone are the days when we could ignore the theories and methods used in related disciplines such as anthropology and economics. It is all too easy to become caught up in debates internal to our own field, or to frame research questions narrowly as a career strategy. And, of course, not every theory or method derived from other disciplines will fit our problems. But these volumes demonstrate that colleagues from other disciplines may have much to offer us as we pursue the study of longstanding questions, ones that have resisted facile explanations and easy resolution. This trend is analogous to the longer-term trends in the biological, physical and engineering sciences to build interdisciplinary teams to address the most challenging questions such as those involving energy or the human genome. While it is therefore disappointing that the obvious influence of sociologists in these volumes is modest, it remains true that the scholarship they report is significantly a product of interdisciplinary collaboration that is valuable in the study of low-wage workers.

Third, the volumes dramatize what we gain when we focus analysis on one portion of the economic spectrum. To be sure, economic sociology has advanced greatly owing to analysis of social mobility of entire populations, or studies of wealth accumulation that compare such processes among class/wealth groups. Indeed, for many years this was the dominant strategy for studying economic inequality. At the same time, however, many sociologists outside of economic sociology and social stratification have long focused on specific populations. Students of occupational sociology have performed many analyses of occupations (e.g., physicians and lawyers) and thus have long embraced studies of specific groups. That is the strategy these two volumes adopt, and the results are encouraging. In this case, the singular focus on low-wage workers allows for greater depth of study. The questions posed are essentially interactive ones: among the working poor, what are the effects of child care subsidies or changes in tax policy? More generally framed studies of the effects of family support on workers across the economic spectrum would not likely produce insights regarding strategies to promote upward mobility of a single subgroup. What we gain with breadth of coverage in the studies of more general populations often reduces the depth with which we can analyze any one sub-group. And given the importance of understanding the situation of the working poor group, such neglect would be regrettable.

Finally, the volumes also connect us to the world of social policy. A traditional argument from sociology is that we do not yet know enough to make sound inferences regarding specific policies. While some colleagues fear the potential for harm that under-informed policy statements may inflict, others eschew these debates by preferring scientific discovery that leaves possible policy derivation to others. These two volumes take a very different approach. Their policy statements are both detailed
and nuanced. *Higher Ground* explores such questions as whether the New Hope experiment is scalable to populations within or across states, rather than being confined to one community. Each chapter in *Working and Poor* seriously addresses possible policy implications of respective findings, and not just in a cursory way. Both of these works hit head on the very challenging issue of how knowledge can and should be used to construct social policy. It is worthwhile for us to consider what advantages, and risks, such scholarship entails.