

imagery is no longer appropriate. Rather than representing a reality *sui generis*, a community exists at the nexus of various discourses. The articles by David Altheide and Terra McDaniel reveal that communities can be established without recourse to the usual objective markers of interaction. A community, simply put, reflects an existential commitment instead of a structural imperative.

4. Politics is also thought to be destroyed by postmodernists. Marxists, specifically, stress this issue. Nonetheless, Scott Renshaw and Ronald Hitzler and Michaela Pfadenhaur argue that this philosophy has simply changed how persons, particularly young persons, view activism. New strategies have been invented recently for resisting economic and other modes of domination that are very subtle, and thus different from traditional methods of confrontation. Postmodernism has spawned a new style of rebellion according to these authors.

In general, the material contained in this volume is theoretically informed, sophisticated, and innovative. Therefore, anyone who is interested in how sociologists who have been inspired by postmodernism pursue their work should consult this text. Nonetheless, one additional point should be made. As a sociologist who appreciates the contribution made by postmodernism and supports the kind of research and writing in this book, I have begun to question the relevance of this philosophy for the world outside the United States and Europe. After several years of working in Central America, and engaging in serious discussions with my Latin colleagues, the role of postmodernism in reversing the damage caused by neoliberalism and other policies supported by the corporate and political elite is unclear. Therefore, the work organized by Kotarba and Johnson in this book should be expanded and address, for example, the problems facing those who live in Latin America. Can postmodernism supply insights that may be overlooked by Marxism?

Many writers in Latin America who agree with the methodological critique offered by postmodernism believe that this philosophy has no social or political relevance. Those who contend that postmodernism can advance the discipline of sociology will have to confront eventually the concerns of those who reside outside the United States and Europe. Perhaps Kotarba and Johnson, or other supporters of postmodernism, will undertake this task.

Informalization: Process and Structure. Edited by Faruk Tabak and Michaeline A. Crichlow. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Pp. xii+228. \$ 47.00.

József Böröcz
Rutgers University

We have most inefficient means of disposing of dead theory. The ghost of Weber's illegitimate offspring—modernizationism—is, for instance, still

with us, despite not only repeated pronouncements of its death, but also some recent attempts at its resurrection (which ought to be a sure proof of death). There would be little reason for an explicit sociology of informality, were it not for a previous moment of teleological simplification that strategically overlooked the existence, belittled the significance, and distorted the meanings of economic practices beyond the pale of formal or bureaucratic relations.

Faruk Tabak and Michaeline A. Crichlow's edited volume fights the good fight. It addresses informality, a phenomenon often pronounced to be ubiquitous but seldom placed in a theoretical context that takes that ubiquitousness seriously, as an object of world-historical inquiry. Tabak's repeated references to world history signal that the work is written in the Binghamton dialect of historical macrosociology. Indeed, what the book delivers is true to the Wallersteinian promise in some crucial respects. Its sweep is wide, its world is indeed a tightly interwoven whole (albeit connected mainly through west European history), and it locates the essence of capitalism not on the shop floor but in the interconnectedness of the parts. Informality ought, indeed, to be seen as part of this world of global history.

This approach also comes, however, with two Achilles' heels. One has to do with the absence of any explicit concern for cultural practices, preventing any analysis of informality as a culturally encoded, that is, intergenerationally transferred (hence also local-historical), phenomenon with resilient realities of its own. This results in scholarship that is not sufficiently attuned to a number of voices and meanings that could enrich it. Considerations of gender, "race," ethnicity, and many other mechanisms of social closure have a tendency to be overshadowed by a global version of the master concept of class in such theorizing. (In this volume, for instance, those latter concerns are tucked away, by and large, in the conclusion written by Michaeline Crichlow.)

The other vulnerability stems from a matter-of-fact, tacit disregard for one particularly pronounced geopolitical location of informality: The social experiences and material practices of a good one-fifth of humankind that continues to live some version of state socialism even after the Soviet collapse. If the sex workers of Bangkok or the street vendors of Dhaka are crucial constituents of world capitalism as a historical system, it is not obvious, at least to this reviewer, why the sex workers of Havana or the street vendors of Hanoi would be considered less so. A sociology of the increasingly compelling ways in which the People's Republic of China—a rather significant political-economic and geopolitical entity—is integrated into the capitalist world economy today would be outright absurd without addressing up front the myriad sophisticated practices of Chinese informality that both enable and impede growth. This turn away from the deep structural ways in which state socialist societies have been embedded in, transformed by, and are transforming global capitalism, also prevents much of macrosociology—including the brand represented

by this volume—from being able to recognize the post-state-socialist condition as a meaningful site for world-historic analysis and a set of coherent and meaningful social practices with serious implications for global change.

In the introduction, Tabak faults the “case study” approach to informal economic activities for its limited scope. As an antidote, this volume offers studies that are less particularistic in their focus than are case studies. It consists of a series of erudite essays about some aspects of the historical political economy of labor relations, very broadly speaking. Much of the volume consists of a set of dense commentaries about countless details in changes in the global political economy, presented without any explicit geographical or temporal anchor (other than the omission of state socialism). In this sense, the project has truly managed to surpass the spatiotemporal constraints of case studies. This approach opens up much room for general discussion, generates very illuminating insights (as, in this volume, Saskia Sassen’s and Çağlar Keyder’s contribution) while suffering from an equally significant loss in formal demonstrative power.

Modernization theories tout formal law and bureaucratization as their prescription to all the ills of “backwardness” in the world. Without identifying the telos of *rationalization* as the ghost that is battled, it would be difficult to comprehend why this volume frames the world-historic analysis of informality via a concept—“informalization”—that, despite its stark contrast to rationalization in some key respects, also reproduces the teleological language of its opponent, leaving even this strongly sympathetic reviewer with a certain unease about the internal tension of this project of the sociology of historical systems.

Engaging Cultural Differences: The Multicultural Challenge in Liberal Democracies. Edited by Richard Shweder, Martha Minow, and Hazel Rose Markus. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002. Pp. xiv+485. \$49.95.

Kogila Moodley
University of British Columbia

This comprehensive volume explores the challenge posed by multiculturalism in contemporary liberal democracies. It is divided into four parts: the first, “One Nation Many Cultures,” looks at the processes, such as globalization, which gave impetus to increased migration across the world, newer cultural collisions, and contestations over customary practices; the second, “Contested Practices and the Place of Groups in Liberal Democracies,” investigates forms of cultural practices other than group rights to assess the chances for accommodation between more open liberal values and the less yielding assumptions of conventional practice; the third part, “Cultural Accommodation and Its Limits,” explores the relationship be-

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