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Editorial Board:

Beth Bechky, Randall Collins, Paula England, Mauro Guillén, Douglas Massey, and Marshall Meyer.

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PAPERS ABSTRACTS

Sharing Meaning across Occupational Communities: The Transformation of Knowledge on a Production Floor

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Abstract:

There is increasing interest in how organizations manage, organize, and integrate knowledge. Most research that conceptualizes these challenges emphasizes general processes that organizations use to codify and transfer knowledge. Yet codification and transfer are impoverished terms for conceptualizing knowledge sharing, which is situated, cultural, and contextual. In this paper, I explore the complexities inherent in sharing knowledge and analyze the implications of situated knowledge for organizational activities. The findings indicate the significance of language barriers between occupational communities and demonstrate how members of these communities transform knowledge to generate a richer understanding of the product and the problems they face.

Collateralized Social Relations: The Social in Economic Calculation

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Paper downloadable from:
http://www2.gsm.ucdavis.edu/Faculty/Profiles/biggart/working_papers.htm

Paper to appear in:
American Journal of Economics and Sociology

Abstract:

Traditionally, economists have viewed social relations as "friction" or "impediments" to exchange and have excluded social relations from their analyses by assuming autonomous actors. Recently, however, a number of scholars - economists, sociologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists - have begun to discuss the numerous ways in which social arrangements both prompt and channel economic activity. Rational choice theory, social capital and network analysis, agency and game theory, are among those approaches that consider the effects of social relations on economic action. In this paper we extend that discussion by arguing that social relations can function as "collateral" or assurance that an economic transaction will proceed as agreed by the parties involved. We review recent microeconomic theories and conjecture how they might be developed following this observation which is derived from sociological and anthropological studies of economic action and organization.

The Wage Penalty for Motherhood

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Abstract:

Motherhood is associated with lower hourly pay, but the causes of this are not well understood. Mothers may earn less than other women because they 1) lose job experience, 2) are less productive at work, 3) trade off higher wages for mother-friendly jobs, or 4) are discriminated against by employers. Or the relationship may be spurious; women with lower earning potential may have children at higher rates. Using 1982-1993 NLSY data, we examine the motherhood penalty with fixed-effects models chosen to avoid spuriousness. We find penalties of 7% per child. Penalties are larger for married women. We show that women with (more) children have less job experience; after controlling for this, a penalty of 5% per child remains. We examine whether potentially "mother-friendly" characteristics of the jobs chosen by mothers explain any of the penalty, but find little evidence of this beyond the tendency of more mothers to work part-time. The portion of the motherhood penalty we cannot explain probably results from effects of motherhood on productivity and/or from employers' discrimination against mothers. While the benefits of mothering diffuse widely (to the employers, neighbors, friends, spouses, and children of the adult who previously received the mothering), the costs are borne disproportionately by mothers.

Bridge Decay

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Paper downloadable from:
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Paper to appear in:
Festschrift in Honor of Linton C. Freeman, edited by David Krackhardt

Abstract:

This paper is about three points: network bridges are critical to the advantage known as social capital, bridges relative to other kinds of relationships show faster rates of decay over time, and the faster decay has profound implications for the stability of social capital. I discuss these points with respect to network data on bankers in a large financial organization. For four years, at the end of each year, each banker was asked to name and evaluate colleagues with whom he or she had frequent and substantial business during the previous year. Most relations are within groups, but some are bridges between groups, and those bridges are social capital: bridges are associated with more positive peer evaluations and higher bonus compensation. So it is striking to see bridges decay so quickly. One in ten bridge relations this year are gone next year, though decay is less likely in bridges that survive for a few years. Bridges decay more quickly initially, but by the fourth year, bridges and non-bridge relations are down to the same number of survivors: one in a hundred. Thereafter, bridges decay more slowly than non-bridges. The trick is to make it past the high death rate in new bridge relationships. The key seems to be experience. Bridge decay is less likely in the networks of bankers who have more experience with bridges (which is consistent with laboratory results on people learning networks). In as much as bridges are social capital, and bridge relations are less subject to decay when they involve people more experienced with bridges, I conclude that social capital accrues to those who already have it.

Case Law and Corporate Politics: The Spread of Harassment Policies

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Abstract:

In an analysis of data on the adoption of anti-harassment policies, among 389 employers between 1965 and 1997, we find a surprising pattern in the effect of potential internal advocacy groups. While changes in the legal environment explain much of the variance in the diffusion of anti-harassment policies, the gender and minority composition of the workforce matters for two kinds of policies in particular. For the adoption of relatively costly sexual harassment training programs, workforce feminization has a significant positive effect. Where a potential advocacy group for such training exists, employers are more likely to adopt training. For the adoption of relatively obscure general anti-harassment policies targeting racist speech, workforce minority representation has a significant positive effect. Here as well, where a potential advocacy group for such a policy exists, employers are more likely to adopt it. We conclude that early institutional studies finding virtually no effect of workforce racial and gender composition on the adoption of extremely well publicized, and virtually cost-free, policies, such as equal employment complaint procedures, underestimate the role of internal advocacy groups in promoting anti-discrimination policies.

Constructing Polities and Markets: The Case of the European Union, 1958-1994

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Abstract:

The European Union (EU) is a unique polity. Some observers do not view it as a “state,” but instead characterize it as an intergovernmental organization that involves a voluntary pooling of sovereignty. Others see it as a federal structure. Still others see it as

a mixture between a supranational organization for some policy arenas (i.e. a state) and an intergovernmental organization for others. From our perspective, this larger debate over the degree to which the EU is a state is less important. Instead, we are interested in the EU as a rule making and rule enforcing system of governance. The EU organization was built from scratch according to somewhat vague provisions in the original Treaty of Rome. Once the EU institutions began to produce rules to expand trade, this created opportunities for more trade. We present quantitative evidence on rule changes and trade growth. The main result is that, over time, this produced a self reinforcing system whereby political and legal institutions were linked to an ever expanding trade regime.

Is Globalization Civilizing, Destructive or Feeble? A Critique of Five Key Debates in the Social-Science Literature.

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Paper to appear in:
Annual Review of Sociology (2001).

Abstract:

The sociological, economic, political and anthropological literatures are devoting increasing attention to globalization. This chapter discusses the various connotations of the term and puts it in historical perspective. Existing theoretical and empirical research on globalization is organized around five key issues or questions: is it really happening, does it produce convergence, does it undermine the authority of nation-states, is globality different from modernity, and is a global culture in the making? A plea is made for a comparative sociology of globalization that is sensitive to local variations and to how agency, interest and resistance mediate in the relationship between globalization causes and outcomes.

The Small World of Firm Ownership and Acquisitions in Germany: The Durability of National Networks

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<http://www-management.wharton.upenn.edu/jonesctr/papers/1999/wp99-10.pdf>

Abstract

The restructuring decisions of German firms and the pressure of the globalization of financial markets challenge the historical legacy of national systems of governance. We show that German ownership links constitute a 'small world' with consequences for understanding merger and acquisition activity. Compared to a random graph, ownership links form clusters of firms that are nonetheless highly connected globally. The incidence of mergers and acquisitions is much higher among members of a cluster. Despite increasing global competition, the German small world tends to replicate itself and become even 'smaller'. These results suggest that a more global economy in Germany need not lead to a fragmentation of ownership ties, but rather can be associated with a deepening of the network. We illustrate this robustness by simulating disruptions to the observed German network.

What Happened to Middle Management?

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Ivar Berg and Arne Kalleberg, eds., *Sourcebook on Labor Markets*, Kluwer/Plenum, 2001.

Abstract:

I begin this chapter with the notion of administration as a mark of modernity, which has pervaded the social sciences and organizational theory in particular. The work of Weber, Bendix, Stinchcombe, Simon, Chandler, and Williamson has a common theme: modern organizations internalize functions earlier performed by independent individuals or subcontractors, the task of coordinating these functions falls to managers, and hence modern organizations will be more intensely administered than their predecessors. I then point that this model of organizations has largely disintegrated in practice. I suggest three working hypotheses. First, the devolution of hierarchies into intermediate organizational forms and the redefinition of relationships between managers and subordinates have

caused traditional administrative functions and hence administrative intensity in organizations to atrophy. Second, managerial responsibilities have nonetheless increased because organizations no longer control all of their critical functions and managerial authority is no longer absolute. The new responsibilities of managers, importantly, are strategic rather than administrative. Third, as managerial responsibilities have increased, managerial intensity, as distinct from administrative intensity, has increased in organizations. Together, these hypotheses suggest that managerial intensity rather than administrative intensity has become the mark of modernity in organizations. The data I have assembled suggest that these hypotheses may be on target. Clearly, there has been substantial growth of managerial intensity in the U.S. since 1980, although the intensity of administrative support has diminished. Management, middle managers included, appears to be alive and well—indeed, very well.

Intimate Transactions

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Economic Sociology for a New Millennium (Russell Sage Foundation).

Abstract

The paper rejects both (a) radical dichotomies between intimate and impersonal social relations, with their implication of utter incommensurability between the extremes, and (b) reduction of such social processes to purely cultural, economic, or political phenomena. It proposes a view of differentiated ties—recognition that in all sorts of social settings people differentiate strongly among different kinds of interpersonal relations, marking them with distinctive names, symbols, practices, and media of exchange. Such differentiated ties compound into distinctive circuits, each incorporating somewhat different understandings, practices, information, obligations, rights, symbols, and media of exchange. Parallel difficulties and possible resolutions in these regards appear in three apparently unconnected literatures: economic sociology, legal philosophy, and feminist arguments.

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4. Papers must be at least 15 double-spaced pages long.
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