A research opportunity that extends from Massengill's already excellent work would be to focus on how the Wal-Mart controversy influences and is influenced by contemporary narratives about inequality. A reignited debate about the culture of poverty seems to be an appropriate venue in which to discuss Wal-Mart's activities. Indeed, throughout much of the book, supporters of Wal-Mart appear to embrace the culture of low-cost shopping as part of their everyday lives. In addition, Wal-Mart's community appeal, and its own rhetoric about this, seems only to further impose a Wal-Mart-specific culture on the consumption (and even labor-seeking) patterns of low-income communities. Relating this case to emerging work in inequality would therefore help our understanding of Wal-Mart not only as an economic actor, but also as an institutional one.

Buying Into Fair Trade: Culture, Morality, and Consumption. By Keith R. Brown. New York: New York University Press, 2013. Pp. xii+188. $65.00 (cloth); $21.00 (paper).

Daniel Jaffee
Portland State University

The past decade has seen a proliferation of social science literature exploring the potentialities and limitations of social movements that use market-based tactics in efforts to achieve greater social and economic justice in an era of market fundamentalism. The international fair-trade movement epitomizes these dynamics. The bulk of scholarly attention to fair trade has focused either on sites of production in the global South—evaluating the social and economic benefits to farmers and artisans of participation in this value-added market—or on the fraught politics of the international fair-trade movement as it wrestles with the contradictions of rapid growth (global fair-trade sales were expected to surpass $7 billion in 2012) and increasing corporate participation. Yet there is a dearth of substantive analysis regarding the dynamics of fair-trade consumption. While some recent books have partially addressed this issue (e.g., April Linton, *Fair Trade from the Ground Up* [University of Washington Press, 2012]), Keith R. Brown's *Buying Into Fair Trade* is the first book-length social science work to focus exclusively on the consumption side of fair trade, and as such it represents a much-needed contribution.

Through an ethnographic study of fair-trade retailers, consumers, and activists in Philadelphia, Brown examines both the strategies by which consumers manage the moral contradictions involved in attempting to purchase ethically and the tensions that small fair-trade retailers experience between their desire to offer socially just products and the need for profitability. He argues that the movement's moral power rests largely on the ability of retailers and consumers to tell "stories" about the social relations embodied in particular goods, whether or not those stories actually correspond to reality.

Brown's central arguments focus on both consumers and activists. He claims that ethical consumers compete for moral status within the marketplace through their purchases, yet are reluctant to discuss these buying choices publicly; that their purchases frequently do not square with their professed ideals; and that they manage these contradictions in a number of ways. He ultimately argues that "if consumers want to get serious about enacting social change through the marketplace . . . they need to adopt a much more radical approach to shopping" (p. 29). Yet he also claims that the fair-trade movement's success and future growth are hampered by a stigma deriving from its association with "upper-class, cosmopolitan consumers" (p. 134) and that fair-trade activists ought to redirect their energies away from critiques of neoliberal capitalism toward increasing the material benefits to producers that are conferred by the participation of even large corporate firms in fair trade.

After an introduction briefly reviewing the literature on ethical consumption, chapter 2 presents an extended narrative of one fair-trade retailer, a coffee shop owner in Philadelphia whose enthusiasm for selling socially just coffee exceeds his business acumen. Chapters 3 and 4 present the bulk of the ethnographic data, focusing on two of the three groups in Brown's typology of ethical consumers whom he terms "promoters" and "conscientious consumers." He argues that the former—highly informed fair-trade activists and retailers who attempt to align nearly all their shopping choices with their political values—are typically motivated by transformative travel experiences visiting fair-trade producers in the global South or by interactions with farmers and artisans on tours to consuming countries. He then examines how the latter group, a much larger segment of consumers, navigates the confusing landscape of ethical consumption. Chapter 5, "How to Appear Altruistic," is a tongue-in-cheek "how-to manual" that critiques the "status-seeking dimension of ethical consumption," including consumers who reflexively eschew corporate retailers such as Wal-Mart and Starbucks. The concluding chapter is the strongest, with much of the analytical material developed here.

The book's greatest strength is its focus on a single ethnographic case study of fair-trade consumers, activists, and retailers. Brown's choice to examine both the agrifood and artisan facets of the fair-trade market is particularly welcome. The book helpfully addresses major recent developments within fair trade, notably the controversial 2012 decision by the certifier Fair Trade USA to break with the international movement and create its own standards that now permit certification of coffee and other products produced by waged laborers on plantations, rather than by democratically organized small farmers. *Buying Into Fair Trade* is also written in a direct style that makes it accessible to both scholars and nonspecialists.

There are some areas where the book might have been strengthened. The key arguments could be identified more clearly up front; the reader only gains a complete sense of the author's aims in the final chapter. Brown's project comes across as more empirically than theoretically driven, although

this is partly because much of the material engaging theory has been placed in the endnotes, rather than in the text. *Buying Into Fair Trade* situates itself primarily within the consumer culture theory literature emerging from business and marketing studies, but would have benefited from more substantial engagement with the extensive body of social science scholarship on fair trade. Much of this work addresses political-economy dimensions that would help address Brown's questions regarding the gap between consumers' incomplete understandings of fair trade and the realities of that market and movement. Among these dimensions are the changing provenance of fair-trade products—particularly the rapid shift away from fair trade's historical focus on small producers toward agribusiness plantations with hired labor, a result of changes in fair-trade standards driven by demands from large corporate retailers for increasing volumes of certified products. Brown argues that both models benefit producers equally, yet the distinction between these two modes of production is important: many studies have indicated that the material benefits of fair-trade markets are real and often significant for smallholders but marginal or even nonexistent for waged plantation laborers. Brown elides these differences, terming all southern fair-trade participants "farmers." Finally, in analyzing consumers' seemingly contradictory purchasing behavior, the book would have benefited from engaging the central problem of limited access to reliable information about production and labor practices and critically assessing the claims of firms selling fair-trade products.

These issues notwithstanding, *Buying Into Fair Trade* represents a valuable addition to the literature on fair trade, one that I hope will inspire future comparative studies. It would serve as a useful text for undergraduate courses in the sociology of consumption and globalization, among other areas, and it should stimulate debate and self-reflection among ethical consumers and fair-trade activists alike.

Conservatives versus Wildcats: A Sociology of Financial Conflict. By Simone Polillo. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013. Pp. x+297. $45.00

Emily Erikson
Yale University

Conservatives versus Wildcats is an ambitious and accomplished book tackling not one but several core problems in economic sociology as well as comparative historical research. These include a theory of finance, the historical evolution of banking in the United States and Italy, the relationship between capitalism and democracy, the definition of money, and the social construction of creditworthiness. More tangentially, the contents inform theories of institutional emergence and research on the larger Western social transition from patrimonialism to bureaucratic and legal rationalism. If this seems like a lot, it should. Simone Polillo was written a book that is both