ties of color and how they see and remake each other in the face of macrostructural contexts, and Deeb-Sossa's work helps to fill in that gap.

The Informal and Underground Economy of the South Texas Border. By Chad Richardson and Michael J. Pisani. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012. Pp. xvi+335. $55.00.

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The Informal and Underground Economy of the South Texas Border is an engaging, important, and meticulously researched book that offers readers new insights about the intersection of locale and informal and underground economies. From the first page, Chad Richardson and Michael J. Pisani make it clear that geographies matter for our understanding of informal and underground economies. Local culture provides networks necessary for workers, bilocality provides access to different markets, and legal status provides both an impediment and a facilitation of economic success. Locale also has implications for what kinds of commodities and labor services are most likely to be exchanged: drugs, medicines, construction, or recycled clothes.

The informal economy in South Texas responds to the survival needs of vulnerable and inventive workers. The authors demonstrate the broad penetration of informality, from trade, to housing, to health care, to a variety of self-employed work, all intersecting with the border geography and its high concentration of undocumented workers. As previous researchers on informal economies have shown, informality permeates production, consumption, and work. The state role in promulgating informality is made clear throughout this book, as Texas government officials ignore informality so that workers' needs are addressed in the absence of any significant welfare state provision. States influence underground markets as well, both by making various commodities illegal and through immigration policy. Alejandro Portes and John Walton (*Labor, Class, and the International System* [Academic Press, 1981]) demonstrated how informality provides a safety valve for developing nations; Richardson and Pisani demonstrate how this function is also fulfilled in an advanced economy where formal work has shrunk.

This book, like several others, is the fruit of the authors' Border Project, which has collected a large number of oral histories in South Texas over the course of many years. This rich data has been augmented with surveys. Readers might perceive some problems in the qualitative data, including a lack of clarity regarding whether the same person was reinterviewed over time, or when in the course of recent years interviews were conducted. Such information would have added an important chronology, given the massive changes in Mexico that have influenced the growth of both informal and underground economies. Additionally, student interviewers were given great latitude regarding whom to interview. On the one hand, this freedom elicited good materials from interviewees who may have been re-

luctant to talk to others, but this gives readers pause regarding how much control student interviewers might have had in compiling the data more generally.

This book is important, and its strengths are many. The authors have gathered important data and presented them well; they have returned to discussing the informal economy, a topic that may wax and wane in academic popularity, but that continues to have important implications for changing global economies. Some questions remain as to the authors' interpretations, especially their argument regarding how structural bias has in some ways displaced discrimination as a causal explanation for segregation into the informal economy—a claim difficult to make in this current moment when racist rhetoric has forcefully reemerged. More important is the authors' position that structural bias appears to be causally linked to informality. This explanation does not fit decades of research on the informal economy in developing nations, where it is clear that the root of informality is changing national and global economies. Economic globalization suggests that structural bias is instead an intermediary variable, helping determine who the informal workers are and not explaining informality as such.

Of course, no book can address all potential critiques. Richardson and Pisani offer readers a book that is very useful in its unpacking of the structural and cultural forces that influence informality and underground activity and elegant in its telling of the compelling stories of the people who populate those economies. Questions for all of us remain, as they always have in the study of the informal economy: What does the strength of informal and underground economies mean for the political economy of the United States as a deindustrialized nation? How different is informal work, defined by the absence of state protections, from a labor market where workers have so little union protection and must always fear corporate threats of exit?

The Land of Too Much: American Abundance and the Paradox of Poverty. By Monica Prasad. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv+327. $39.95.

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Many scholars have sought to explain why public provision in the United States is so much stingier and so much more contested than in most of Europe. But despite the vast amounts of earlier research on these issues, Monica Prasad's new book *The Land of Too Much* offers a bold and original explanation for these trans-Atlantic differences.

Prasad's argument is deliberately provocative; she casts aside explanations that emphasize differences in the political strength of left or labor parties as well as those that stress differences in culture or public beliefs. She also challenges the conventional view that the central state in the United States