

The **UCSC Sociology Colloquium Series** presents:

# **The Worker Co-operative Effect: Dispute Resolution in Co-ops versus Conventional Businesses**



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**12:00-1:45 PM**

**301 College 8, UCSC**

This study compares dispute resolution strategies of workers in hierarchical, conventional businesses with those of members of worker cooperatives, organizations in which all workers co-own and co-manage the business. Drawing on data from three industries (coal mining, taxicab driving, and food distribution), this study finds support for some predictions in the literature that assert that the cooperative's flattened structure and egalitarian ideology will affect workers' grievance resolution. Although the data do not indicate a single pattern in dispute resolution strategies (i.e., with all members of the cooperatives resolving their disputes one way and all non-cooperative employees using different strategies), the data do demonstrate that, when comparing matched cooperative and conventional businesses within each industry, the worker cooperative members possess more dispute resolution strategies than their conventionally employed counterparts.

**Elizabeth A. Hoffmann** is an Associate Professor at Purdue University, in its Law & Society Program and the Sociology Department. She holds a J.D. and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin. Researching at the intersection of law and the workplace, Hoffmann has written on a wide range of socio-legal topics, including workplace dispute resolution, sexual harassment and discrimination, deviance at work, and industry and organizational loyalty. She authored *Co-operative Workplace Dispute Resolution: Organizational Structure, Ownership, and Ideology*, which examines dispute resolution strategies in matched sets of worker co-operatives and conventional businesses across three industries (coal mining, taxicab driving, and food distribution). The book finds that members of co-operatives have a wider range of strategies to draw on to address workplace problems, even though these large worker co-operatives in her study sometimes fell short of ideal co-operative goals. Her work has won awards from the American Bar Foundation/Law & Social Inquiry, the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, and the Labor and Employment Relations Association. Hoffmann is currently exploring such issues as the tension between rights-talk and medical best-practices in achieving workplace accommodation, historical legal consciousness, and employees' negotiation of the private duties versus public rights at work.

**For Information about access**, please contact Barbara Laurence at [bal Lauren@ucsc.edu](mailto:bal Lauren@ucsc.edu).  
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