

Steven Gregory

Labor, Intimacy and the Informal Economy in the Dominican Republic

Informal economic activities are typically defined by what they are not: that is, they are not regulated by the state, and they do not conform to the wage-labor relations found in the “formal economy.” Seldom addressed in studies of informal economies is the degree to which they rely upon and, indeed, *structure* intimacy—that is, networks of intimate relations among the providers and consumers of goods and services. Using data from my ethnographic research in the Dominican Republic, I direct attention to the logic of intimacy underpinning informal economic activities. I examine the ways in which informality coexists and collides and with neo-liberal structures of economic governance. I argue that informal economic activities produce networks of mutual rights and obligations, and cultural meanings that not only challenge dominant arrangements of power, but also recast the significance of labor and commodities.