Social Interactions

Yannis M. Ioannides

in From Neighborhoods to Nations: The Economics of Social Interactions

Published in print: 2012 Published Online: October 2017

This chapter discusses the theory and empirics of social interactions, with particular emphasis on the role of social context in individual decisions. It begins by introducing a sequence of models that highlight applications in different empirical social interaction settings, including a simple static model that is used to link social interactions theory with social networks theory, notably random graph theory. A dynamic model, where the social structure accommodates a variety of social interaction motives, is then described and solved as a dynamic system of evolving individual actions. The solution links social interactions theory with spatial econometrics. The chapter examines the econometrics of social interactions in social networks and social learning in urban settings before concluding with a review of the literature on social interactions in economics.

Fertility and Social Interaction

Hans-Peter Kohler

Considerable controversy exists among demographers, economists, and sociologists over the causes of fertility change in developing and developed countries. The neoclassical economic approach to fertility is embraced by its supporters because it facilitates the application of sophisticated consumer and household production theory to one of the most private and intimate questions: a couple's reproductive behaviour. Despite the theoretical appeal of the economic approach, it has been eschewed by many critics because of its lack of social and institutional context, its neglect of cultural factors and its requirements...
of ‘rationality’. The integration of social interaction with economic fertility models in this book emerges as a powerful tool to overcome many of these criticisms. First, the analysis provides a formal integration of economic, sociological, and other approaches to fertility and shows that there is a useful and promising agenda at the intersection of these schools. The second and more important goal is to sharpen the analytic lens with which theorists from different schools investigate fertility. For economists, the work shows the advantages of moving beyond individual decision-making and embedding the fertility decisions in a ‘local environment’ with interpersonal information flows, ‘atmospheric’ or social externalities, norms, and customs. For sociologists, this work intends to show that the theorizing about the interaction in social network can be more sophisticated. Thirdly, the findings have important implications for population policy. The analyses in this book show when family planning is likely to diffuse and lead to rapid adoption of birth control, and they derive conditions when Pareto-improving policy measures are likely to exist.

Summary and Conclusions

Hans-Peter Kohler

in Fertility and Social Interaction: An Economic Perspective

Published in print: 2001 Published Online: November 2003
Item type: chapter

Summarizes the main findings and discusses how social interactions can be used to extend the rational and individual-centred approach of economists with social norms, bounded rationality, social learning, changing values, and attitudes. The combination of these elements yields new insights about the dynamics and determinants of fertility change. More generally, the book also reveals how the economic approach to individual behaviour can be broadened in order to overcome many of its traditional criticisms.

Family Relationships

Catherine A. Salmon and Todd K. Shackelford (eds)

Published in print: 2007 Published Online: September 2007
Item type: book

Kinship ties — the close relationships found within the family — have been a central focus of evolutionary biological analyses of social
behavior ever since biologist William Hamilton extended the concept of Darwinian fitness to include an individual's actions benefiting not only his own offspring, but also collateral kin. Evolutionary biologists consider organisms not only reproductive strategists, but also nepotistic strategists. If a person's genes are just as likely to be reproduced in her sister as in her daughter, then we should expect the evolution of sororal investment in the same way as one expects maternal investment. This concept has revolutionized biologists' understanding of social interaction and developmental psychologists' understanding of the family. However, kinship ties have largely been ignored in other areas of psychology, particularly social psychology. This book illustrates the ways in which an evolutionary perspective can inform our study and understanding of family relationships. It is argued that family psychology is relationship specific: the relationship between mother and daughter is different from that between father and daughter or that between brother and sister or sister and sister. In other words, humans have evolved specialized mechanisms for processing information and motivating behavior that deal with the distinct demands of being a mate, father, mother, sibling, child, or grandparent. Such an evolutionary perspective on family dynamics provides a unique insight into human behavior.

From Experiential-based to Relational-based Forms of Social Organization: A Major Transition in the Evolution of Homo sapiens

Dwight Read

in Social Brain, Distributed Mind

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: January 2012
Item type: chapter

The evolutionary trajectory from non-human to human forms of social organization involves change from experiential- to relational-based systems of social interaction. Social organization derived from biologically and experientially grounded social interaction reached a hiatus with the great apes due to an expansion of individualization of behaviour. The hiatus ended with the introduction of relational-based social interaction, culminating in social organization based on cultural kinship. This evolutionary trajectory links biological origins to cultural outcomes and makes evident the centrality of distributed forms of information for both the boundary and internal structure of human societies as these evolved from prior forms of social organization.
Problematizing Interaction
Webb Keane

in Ethical Life: Its Natural and Social Histories
Published in print: 2015 Published Online: October 2017
Publisher: Princeton University Press
DOI: 10.23943/princeton/9780691167732.003.0004
Item type: chapter

This chapter looks at a variety of ethnographic cases to show how recognition and intentionality are elaborated and brought into focus in different cultural contexts. It studies the concept of dewa, which seems to thematize the role that other people play in one's own sense of self. This concept, however, is not simply just one way of describing a universal feature of interaction. Once crystallized as an object of reflections, something that Sumbanese consciously know about the world and can connect to other things they know about their world, it also guides them as they purposefully undertake ethical actions. Indeed, the chapter argues that if recognition and intentionality are basic features of all social interaction anywhere, they also serve as affordances for dealing with, or reflecting on, particular ethical questions that concern a given community.

Introduction
Lawrence E. Blume and Steven N. Durlauf

in The Economy as an Evolving Complex System, III: Current Perspectives and Future Directions
Published in print: 2005 Published Online: October 2011
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195162592.003.0001
Item type: chapter

The topics in this book are derived from work done at the conference The Economy as an Evolving Complex System III, held at the Santa Fe Institute in November 2001. To a great extent, the original motivation for the Economics Program revolved around the belief that economic research could benefit from an injection of new mathematical modes and new substantive perspectives on human behavior. This book deals with four important themes concerning the following: the nature of learning; the identification and analysis of pattern in individual and aggregate data, primarily in financial markets; the analysis of social interactions; and efforts to use insights from evolutionary theory to understand aspects of individual and social cognition.
This chapter explores what the interactions of individuals and firms in their vicinity and in broader communities reveal about the spatial structure of cities as self-organization by agents. It first introduces a benchmark, the Alonso–Mills–Muth model of a city in its bare essentials, and examines its implications for urban density and the associated pattern of land prices in the case with a predetermined center, the central business district (CBD). It then considers the geometry of spatial equilibrium when there is no predetermined center and social interactions are dispersed, along with the location decisions of firms in urban space, monocentric versus polycentric models of the urban economy, and the Lucas–Rossi-Hansberg models of urban spatial structure with productive externalities. It also analyzes neighborhood effects, urban equilibrium when proximity is a conduit for the transmission of job-related information, and the link between choice of job matching and spatial structure.

This chapter examines social interactions in human capital spillovers by focusing on spatial patterns in productivity, wages, and incomes, with particular emphasis on whether spatial concentration causes higher productivity. It begins with a discussion of aggregative spatial measures, such as economic activity at the level of states, regions, and counties in comparison with the smaller scale of cities and their neighborhoods. It then considers the interdependence between spatial interactions and spatial economic activity, the implications of spatial equilibrium for the urban wage premium, and human capital spillovers in microneighborhoods and in synthetic neighborhoods. It also shows how differences in patterns of productivity across locations and at different

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scales of spatial aggregation may be rationalized in terms of simple models of social interactions.

From Neighborhoods to Nations
Yannis M. Ioannides

Just as we learn from, influence, and are influenced by others, our social interactions drive economic growth in cities, regions, and nations—determining where households live, how children learn, and what cities and firms produce. This book synthesizes the recent economics of social interactions for anyone seeking to understand the contributions of this important area. Integrating theory and empirics, the book explores theoretical and empirical tools that economists use to investigate social interactions, and shows how a familiarity with these tools is essential for interpreting findings. It makes work in the economics of social interactions accessible to other social scientists, including sociologists, political scientists, and urban planning and policy researchers. Focusing on individual and household location decisions in the presence of interactions, the book shows how research on cities and neighborhoods can explain community composition and spatial form, as well as changes in productivity, industrial specialization, urban expansion, and national growth. It examines how researchers address the challenge of separating personal, social, and cultural forces from economic ones. It provides a toolkit for the next generation of inquiry, and argues that quantifying the impact of social interactions in specific contexts is essential for grasping their scope and use in informing policy. Revealing how empirical work on social interactions enriches our understanding of cities as engines of innovation and economic growth, the book carries ramifications throughout the social sciences and beyond.

Self- and Social-Regulation
Bryan Sokol, Ulrich Muller, Jeremy Carpendale, Arlene Young, and Grace Iarocci (eds)

New research on children's executive functioning and self-regulation has begun to reveal important connections to their developing social understanding (or “theories of mind”) and emotional competence.
The exact nature of the relations between these aspects of children's social and emotional development is, however, far from being fully understood. Considerable disagreement has emerged, for instance, over the question of whether executive functioning facilitates social-emotional understanding, or vice versa. Recent studies linking the development of children's social understanding with aspects of their interpersonal relationships also raise concerns about the particular role that social interaction plays in the development of executive function. Three key questions currently drive this debate: Does social interaction play a role in the development of executive function or, more generally, self-regulation? If it does play a role, what forms of social interaction facilitate the development of executive function? Do different patterns of interpersonal experience differentially affect the development of self-regulation and social understanding? In this book, the contributors address these questions and explore other emerging theoretical and empirical links between self-regulation, social interaction, and children's psycho-social competence. It will be a valuable resource for student and professional researchers interested in executive function, emotion, and social development.

Oral and Written Texts
Alexander Samely
in Forms of Rabbinic Literature and Thought: An Introduction

Rabbinic documents present themselves to some extent as having their root in the oral transmission of information. This chapter attempts to summarize some important aspects of the rabbis' own explanation of this, nowadays treated under the label ‘oral Torah’. It then explores the hermeneutic effect of oral contexts, as well as the constitution of ‘social texts’ in the interaction of several voices in conversation. For the latter, two scenarios are considered: the selective use of an existing text in a discussion setting; and a kind of ‘committee’ meeting in which a record of rabbinic information is created from scratch. The chapter concludes with a critique of the idea that rabbinic texts were shaped by or for oral performance.
This chapter examines the location decisions of individuals, with particular emphasis on neighborhood effects in housing markets and how they relate to the role of prices in rationing admission to communities and neighborhoods in market economies. It begins by introducing models of individual location decisions that rely on the characteristics approach in the presence of contextual effects and use individual dwelling units as the object of choice. It then presents examples of sorting models that allow for choice of neighborhood with endogenous contextual effects, followed by a discussion of models and associated empirical results for neighborhood choice and housing as a joint decision that allow for social effects. It also describes models of location decisions, proposed by Thomas Schelling, that take into account the influence of racial preferences and neighbors' reactions. Finally, it looks at hierarchical models of community choice with social interactions.

Schelling's Game Theory

Robert V. Dodge

Thomas Schelling won the Nobel Prize “for having enhanced our understanding of conflict and cooperation through game-theory analysis.” This came after he had taught a game theory and rational choice course for forty-five years at an advanced level. This book presents the concepts Schelling taught as they are useful tools for understanding decisions and consequences. Mathematics often makes game theory challenging but it is presented as something very simple in this book. Along with a summary of the material Schelling presented this book looks at problems from his course and similar less challenging questions. While considerable analysis is carried out with the basic game theory tool—the two-by-two matrix—much of the book is descriptive and rational decision-making is presented through stories and explanation. Chapter supplements are added to illuminate points presented by Schelling and two chapters are case studies for detailed analysis of
strategic thinking. The story of professional basketball coach Phil Jackson concerns the conflict between self-interest and group interest of star players in a multi-person form of the prisoner's dilemma. The second study illustrates the most dangerous decision-making moment in history, the Cuban missile crisis. This book is based on Thomas Schelling's course, which has provided guidance and insight to a great number of people around the world in academic and leadership positions.

Small Worlds, Material Culture and Ancient Near Eastern Social Networks
Fiona Coward

in Social Brain, Distributed Mind

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: January 2012
Publisher: British Academy
Item type: chapter

The cognitive, psychological and sociological mechanisms underpinning complex social relationships among small groups are a part of our primate heritage. However, among human groups, relationships persist over much greater temporal and spatial scales, often in the physical absence of one or other of the individuals themselves. This chapter examines how such individual face-to-face social interactions were ‘scaled up’ during human evolution to the regional and global networks characteristic of modern societies. One recent suggestion has been that a radical change in human sociality occurred with the shift to sedentary and agricultural societies in the early Neolithic. The discussion presents the results of a focused study of the long-term development of regional social networks in the Near East, using the distribution of different forms of material culture as a proxy for the social relationships that underpinned processes of trade, exchange and the dissemination of material culture practices.

Party Policies and Voter Choices
Anthony F. Heath, Roger M. Jowell, and John K. Curtice


Published in print: 2001 Published Online: November 2003
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: chapter

The authors offer a multiplicative model that provides a comprehensive framework to place the main findings of the volume. The model is based
on the standard ‘expected utility maximization’ model of the economists, which can be applied for understanding election outcomes. The idea is that the voter weights the utility of a given policy by the probability of its being implemented, sums this across the different policies, and then votes for whichever party gives the greatest expected utility. However, Heath, Jowell, and Curtice emphasize the fact that the rational choice model needs to be expanded to include some of the ‘non-rational’ processes observed in their research such as the possibility that voters’ preferences may be shaped by the political parties and should not to be treated only as independent factors. The model should also be modified to take account of other sorts of processes such as social interaction, social conformity and what the authors have termed the ‘forked-tail’ effect related to the generalization of the disillusionment from a specific party policy into a general disillusion with the party's competence.

Epistemic Flow and the Social Making of Minds
Charlie Lewis, Jeremy I. M. Carpendale, John Towse, and Katerina Maridaki-Kassotaki

in Self- and Social-Regulation: Exploring the Relations Between Social Interaction, Social Understanding, and the Development of Executive Functions

Published in print: 2010 Published Online: May 2010
Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: chapter

Correlations between an understanding of self and other in psychological terms, often referred to as “theory of mind,” and the control of action, often labeled “executive functions,” have been reported and debated. We suggest that claims about such relations rest on a prior assumption that these are two separate, coherent domains and children have stable, measurable abilities in these areas. Examining relevant research, however, indicates variability in a number of ways, suggesting that both social understanding and executive skills are substantiated and develop within the flow of interaction with people and objects. According to our alternative approach to social cognitive development, social understanding develops within social interaction as children learn to talk about situations of shared understanding. We suggest that executive function and social understanding may be interdependent and emerge through the same processes within social interaction.
From Individual Behavior to Aggregate Fertility Dynamics
Hans-Peter Kohler

in Fertility and Social Interaction: An Economic Perspective
Published in print: 2001 Published Online: November 2003
Item type: chapter

Shifts the emphasis from individual behaviour in the presence of social interactions to aggregate fertility dynamics. In particular, the chapter considers the implications of using non-linear models in empirical and theoretical models of social interactions and fertility. We show that with non-linear models, there may be both low and high contraceptive-use equilibria rather than just one equilibrium as in linear models. A sustained fertility decline can occur if a population experiences a transition from a low to a high contraceptive-use equilibrium. These transitions occur at a rapid pace—consistent with the empirical findings on past and present fertility declines—and they are often irreversible once they are initiated.

Ethical Types
Webb Keane

in Ethical Life: Its Natural and Social Histories
Published in print: 2015 Published Online: October 2017
Item type: chapter

This chapter focuses on the problem raised by some of the psychological research, the relationship between those processes that work beyond the scope of the individual's awareness, and what it is people actually think they are doing. It shows how empirical research fleshes out the philosophical idea that people act under the guidance of certain descriptions, frames for making sense of what is going on, what kinds of people are acting, and how actions should be judged. These descriptions circulate in a public world, where part of their power derives from their availability to others. They arise in social interactions where these are demanded, accepted, and rejected; here ethics is catalyzed into forms available to other persons. At this point, they are made available for further development, criticism, adoption, or rejection within a larger community.
Introduction
Yannis M. Ioannides

in From Neighborhoods to Nations: The Economics of Social Interactions

Published in print: 2012 Published Online: October 2017
Publisher: Princeton University Press
DOI: 10.23943/princeton/9780691126852.003.0001

This book examines the economic dimensions of social interactions, with an eye towards enriching our metaphors for understanding and modeling the fabric of communities, their neighborhoods, and their consequences for studying larger regional and national economies. To this end, the book considers urban externalities that economists and other social scientists see as instances of social interactions, as well as the location decisions of individuals and firms. Focusing on the city, the book also explores urban structure, industrial specialization and diversification, and urban growth in the context of national economic growth. Finally, it discusses new economic geography, an approach that seeks to integrate urban and regional economics, both in a national and an international context.