

RESPONSE TO VON BENDA-BECKMANN

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Picking up on our reviewer's theme, it is even a curiouser sensation to read a comment on an article that addresses almost exclusively issues not raised in the original work. Von Benda-Beckmann faults us for not doing what we never intended to do, and implicitly for not writing the review she would have written.

We admit to being somewhat ethnocentric in our review of the sociology of the law, but, in this, we have continued the tradition of other reviews published in *Law and Society*. Perhaps one tends to dwell on what is closest and give it greater prominence. Consequently, some of von Benda-Beckmann's references to European work serve as a useful addition to the review, and we welcome them. We also acknowledge a bias toward more quantitative studies and ones that involve large data bases. One image of the sociology of law is that it is primarily an applied subfield that attempts to understand and influence the law. This influence comes either from a parsimonious and integrated theory or from quantitative empirical research. Sociology does not possess the former, so the best opportunity for influence comes from the latter. Hence our focus on quantitative studies. This is not to say that more descriptive and qualitative work is not useful, but simply that it is unlikely to be influential. Our emphasis is not an uncritical endorsement of this type of work, but a realistic appraisal of the likelihood that this work can have influence outside of the discipline.

Taking up another theme in von Benda-Beckmann's review, a plausible explanation for the greater emphasis on research on civil matters in European societies may well be a function of the greater involvement of the state in personal affairs as well as the organization and role of the law in those societies. The greater the involvement of the state in welfare, education, sickness and health, housing, child care, and the like, the more civil law there is likely to be and the more opportunity for research.

We stand by our statements about the dearth of comparative work, and von Benda-Beckmann's citations only support our point. Many of her citations are interesting cases studies that describe well some portion of the legal system in a given society, but by and large they are not explicitly comparative. These pieces may provide the ingredients for comparative study, but do not themselves constitute a comparative literature. Our emphasis on the United States may have resulted in the omission of some legitimate com-

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parative work done within the European Community, although on page 842 we cite several themes that have been studied comparatively—for example, drug use, dispute management, drunk driving, the legal profession. Von Benda-Beckmann herself acknowledges that some of this work may not be widely available in English (and especially American).

Finally, we went about our review differently than our reviewer would have. We emphasized the social organization of the sociology of law and reviewed the major work emerging from that organization. Our reviewer would have reviewed the entire landscape and commented on the variety of the species. We think we have defined the contours of the forest more clearly by our approach, but probably missed some interesting trees along the way.