

Zeitschrift: Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Soziologie = Revue suisse de sociologie
= Swiss journal of sociology
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Soziologie
Band: 33 (2007)
Heft: 2

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[F] | Robin Tillmann and Monica Budowski

The paper is in keeping with the debate on the persistence or the decline of social classes. Following some general considerations concerning inequality and class, we present methodological aspects and the data which were used. We continue by testing a series of hypotheses on the alleged decline of social classes in terms of the change in social structure, income distribution and political positioning, with respect to contemporary Swiss society. These analysis allow for the conclusion that although some of the hypotheses hold true, the general and global theses that social classes are declining is not confirmed.

Keywords: social inequality, social class, Switzerland

213 Uncertainty and Decision-Making – Four Basic Orientations Exemplified on the Basis of Organic-Food Consumption [G] | Stephan Lorenz

The contemporary uncertainties about action orientations and the related decision-making problems constitute a central problem of sociology. In short, this is a question of how to deal with uncertainty, and there are opposing theoretical interpretations of the possible options. The study underlying this article therefore empirically and systematically reconstructs the orientation patterns in a concrete domain of action – the consumption of organic food. Here, it was possible to ascertain four distinct orientation patterns across an array of dimensions that can be depicted as ideal types. These can be methodically related to various theories. The results indicate that each of the theories examined only partially captures the empirical options of the domain of action.

Keywords: uncertainty, qualitative methods, sociological theory, organic food consumption

237 Delinquency as Rational Action [G] | Rolf Becker, Regula Imhof and Marcel Raimann

This article broaches the issue of essential determinants of criminal behavior as a sociological topic. The main questions hereby are, why and under which circumstances individuals become criminal. According to the economic theory of criminal behavior, general delin-

quency is an aggregate of individuals' rational choices and actions. From this theoretical view, it is stressed that people chose rationally between legal or illegal actions in order to realize goals or to satisfy needs. In an effort to optimize their outcome, the actors wish to avoid any disadvantageous consequences such as punishment, loss of social acceptance or any form of prosecution. In accordance to these theoretical premises, an enhanced rational choice model has been developed including different sociological and psychological theories such as anomie theory, differential association theory, social learning theory, socialization theory, strain theory, social control theory, and labeling approach. This general rational action model is examined in a survey in which the students of the University of Dresden (Germany) and the University of Bern (Switzerland) asked about their inclinations for illegal actions by questionnaire. The questions asked were about four criminal offences: shoplifting, tax-evasion, dodging the fare and insurance fraud. The empirical results confirm that the hypothesis of different sociological and social psychological theories could be integrated into a rational action model of criminal behavior in a systematic way, and they deliver relevant assumptions about the social conditions of individuals' criminal behavior.

Keywords: criminality, rational action theory, rational choice, opportunity structure, differential associations

261 The Precautionary Principle: a Strategic Tool for (Sub)Political Changes

[F] | Sébastien Brunet, Pierre Delvenne and Geoffrey Joris

Western societies seem today to be ruled by the precautionary principle. However, they are not taking the time to analyze the origin of this change and its implications.

By combining the approach suggested by F. Ewald and the concepts of risk society and sub-politics developed by U. Beck, the precautionary principle is presented as a political tool opening a reinterpretation of technico-scientist activities into the legitimate political decision-making process.

Thus, the precautionary principle could be considered as "the smuggler" allowing the crossing from a technonature to a politicized technonature in which scientific uncertainty reinstates the political decision-making processes.

Keywords: precaution, risk, technonature, uncertainty, subpolitics

279 Educational Expansion and Anti-Civic Morals: Attitudes Towards Easy Delinquency in Switzerland, West Germany and East Germany

[G] | Andreas Hadjar and Regula Imhof

The key question of this article is, whether the expansion of the educational system in Switzerland, West Germany and East Germany led to a change in anti-civic attitudes. First, the relationship between the individual educational level and the individual dispositions. Then, doing longitudinal analyses, the link between cohort-specific educational levels and the deeply rooted dispositions towards anti-civic moral delinquency will be analysed. Beside cohort effects, other temporal effects (period, age) will be integrated into separate models. The data base is the World Value Surveys 1990 and 1997. The results show, among other things, that a higher educational level goes along with less negative attitudes towards anti-civic moral delinquency.

Keywords: education, longitudinal analysis, cross-cultural comparison, anti-civic morals, expansion of the educational system

307 Reflections on the Bernese Sampling Plan [G] | Ben Jann

Three decades ago, Fritschi, Meyer, and Schweizer proposed in the Swiss Journal of Sociology an elegant procedure to draw a country-wide random sample for Switzerland by using the communal register of voters or of residents as a sampling frame. However, despite the advantages of their method, most surveys in Switzerland use the telephone register as a sampling frame, even though population coverage is problematic. In an attempt to revive their proposal, I present some reflections on Fritschi et al.'s sampling procedure. I analyze the theoretical properties of this procedure and propose a more parsimonious alternative, the ex ante separated sampling method. I then illustrate the proposal's advantages over a simple cluster sample using a simulation.

Keywords: cluster sample, register of residents, sampling plan, simulation

327 Scientific Peer Review – an Analysis of the Assessment Procedures Viewed by the Theories of Sociology of Science [G] | Lutz Bornmann

A great number of studies have been written about scientific peer reviews, but quite a few have referred to a theory. Most of them actually fail to make a connection between the empirical results and theory. Those which do relate to a theory are mostly issued of earlier research in peer review which was greatly influenced by the so called north american school of Robert K. Merton. The aim of the present contribution is therefore to present a theoretical frame that includes all recent theoretical developments and can thus serve to underlie future empirical research in peer review. Peer review are being examined using the three main theoretical orientations in sociology of science: (1) the north american school, (2) social constructivism as well as (3) the theory of social systems.

Keywords: peer review theory, sociology of science, ethos of science, social constructivism, theory of social systems

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