

International Journal of Sociology; vol. 42, no. 1, Spring 2012, pp. 3–5.
© 2012 M.E. Sharpe, Inc. All rights reserved.
ISSN 0020–7659/2012 \$9.50 + 0.00.
DOI 10.2753/IJS0020-7659420100

KAZIMIERZ M. SLOMCZYNSKI
AND IRINA TOMESCU-DUBROW

Guest Editors' Introduction

The Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN 1988–2008

Abstract: The introduction describes the Polish Panel Survey (POLPAN), on which all articles in this issue are based. POLPAN is a survey among a random (probability) sample of the adult population in Poland interviewed in 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, and 2008. Most of the articles use all five waves of the survey or contrast the 1988 wave with the 2008 wave. The substantive articles in this issue deal with structural constraints, the gender gap in voting behavior, and the psychology of social inequality. The introduction ends with comments on the accessibility of the data from the Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN 1988–2008, for future analyses.

The research presented in this issue of the *International Journal of Sociology* is based on the Polish Panel Survey (POLPAN), which gives a history of societal transformation over twenty years. This survey covers a random (probability) sample of the adult population in Poland interviewed in 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, and 2008. The core of the sample was interviewed in all these years. In 2008 the respondents from the core panel sample were forty-one to eighty-five years old. However, POLPAN also covers subsamples of younger respondents. In 1998 a subsample of respondents twenty-one to thirty years old was selected and included in the study. In 2003 and 2008 the study was extended to subsamples of respondents twenty-one to twenty-five years old. Thus, POLPAN is a panel study with consecutive additional subsamples of younger people.

POLPAN provides a large database for both the description of changes in the

Kazimierz M. Slomczynski (Slomczynski.1@osu.edu) is director of the Cross-National Studies: Interdisciplinary Research and Training Program (CONSIRT), affiliated with the Ohio State University and the Polish Academy of Sciences. Irina Tomescu-Dubrow (tomescu.1@sociology.osu.edu) is an associate professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences and program coordinator of CONSIRT.

social structure and the testing of theoretically motivated hypotheses about the transition from communism to democracy and capitalism.

Substantively, the list of topics of the POLPAN project is extensive. It includes the old and new elements in the social structure; specific changes in class composition and class inequalities; social mobility and status attainment; the formation of postcommunist meritocratic society, including the effects of intellectual abilities on economic success; various elements of the standard of living; the impact of individuals' location in the social structure on their support for Poland's transformation; the relationship between social structure and political behavior, especially voting behavior; perception of social conflicts; and determinants of support for Poland's joining the European Union. These diverse topics are not motivated by a single overarching theory or theoretical perspective on the transition period from communism to democracy and capitalism. On the contrary, the scholars involved in the project at its various stages have represented different theories and perspectives in analyzing specific problems, as the current issue of the *International Journal of Sociology* illustrates.

Structural Constraints: Employment Relations and Friendship Patterns

Anna Kiersztyn analyzes employment stability using a new instability indicator that takes into account the detailed employment histories of working-age individuals over a period of ten years. The findings suggest that in Poland, employment relations are generally stable, consistent with the results of earlier analyses of overall worker mobility. A comparison of instability rates between two ten-year periods (1993–2003 and 1998–2008) did not confirm the expected growth in the percentage of workers moving into and out of short-term jobs. Overall, stable employment relationships still appear to be the norm in Poland, as they do in other industrialized countries. Kiersztyn discusses the implications of this finding.

Henryk Domański and Dariusz Przybysz explore whether some significant changes in friendship patterns took place and to what extent these patterns were followed by social openness in marital choices. They discover some decrease in both friendship and marital homogamy, with the most remarkable decline taking place in the category of higher managers and professionals, which suggests that the intelligentsia was more open in 2008. However, they also show that the higher permeability of occupational barriers might be partially offset by the lack of significant changes in educational choices. Patterns of educational selection in friendship and in marriages were essentially stable during 1988–2008.

Gender Gap

Sheri Kunovich examines the extent to which a gender gap in voting is present among Polish citizens. She uses a model of voter participation previously found to predict differences in men's and women's rates of participation in Western industrialized nations. The findings show that, controlling for family structure, socioeconomic resources, religious attendance, and political interest, women were less likely to vote in

Poland in 1989 and 1991 but were more likely to vote in 1993. From 1993 to 2007, gender differences in voting disappear. In the 2007 elections, however, the effects of marital status, children, and work hours on voter participation differ for men and women. This finding suggests that as more voters who did not directly experience communism begin to vote, important gender differences in voting are emerging.

Psychology of the Social Structure: Perceptions and Misperceptions

Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow shows that people differentiate the reputations of parties with respect to the parties' representing of disadvantaged groups of women, poor, and elderly citizens. Belonging to disadvantaged groups has only a small impact on the view as to whether a given party represents the interest of these groups. The overall image of the party system with respect to representing disadvantaged groups has a sizable impact on political attitudes, view of democracy, and intention of voting.

Zbigniew Karpiński's article analyzes data concerning popular perceptions of earnings in five occupations: medical doctor in general practice, owner of a small shop, manager (director) in a large enterprise (or factory), unskilled worker, and minister in a national government ministry. Agreement on these evaluations is growing over time, suggesting that society is becoming increasingly integrated regarding the understanding of justice in the distribution of occupational rewards.

Accessibility of Data for Future Analyses

The POLPAN survey data contain a large number of variables ($nV > 2,500$) describing respondents' locations in the social structure and their various attitudes and behaviors. Because the articles published in this issue focus on specific topics of the causes and consequences of the location of individuals in the social structure, only a part of all the variables included in the original data set has been used.

The data are in the public domain. They are archived in the Polish Data Archive (Archiwum Danych Społecznych, www.ads.org.pl) and the German organization GESIS–Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (www.gesis.org). The data set is also available through the Comparative Social Inequality section of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Nowy Swiat 72, 00-330 Warsaw, Poland) or the Department of Sociology, The Ohio State University (238 Townshend Hall, Columbus, OH 43210). Initially, Sheri Kunovich prepared the data files with English-language labels, and the data for 1988, 1993, 1998, and 2003 were archived with help of Marcin Zielinski. Currently, management of the entire database is in the hands of Zbigniew Sawiński. The principal investigator of the POLPAN project and the coeditor of this issue, Kazimierz M. Slomczynski can be contacted by e-mail at slomczynski.1@osu.edu.