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CONFERENCE

The Polish Panel Survey POLPAN 1988-2013

Polskie Badanie Panelowe POLPAN 1988-2013

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Abstracts

POLPAN: *Od koncepcji do realizacji* / POLPAN: *From conceptualization to realization*,
Kazimierz M. Słomczyński, Zbigniew Sawiński

The POLPAN study is a panel survey conducted in 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008 and 2013, originally on a national sample of men and women aged 21-65. In addition of following many of the original respondents for 25 years, POLPAN also contains renewal samples of young cohorts. This presentation exposes the foundations of doing research on social structure in the second half of the 1980s in the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, with reference to the state of knowledge in this area at the time, both in Poland and the Western countries. We attempt to answer the following question: What was new in the survey that originated the POLPAN Project compared to earlier research projects worldwide? Addressing the theory, we focus on the integration of three approaches to social structure: social class, social stratification, and psycho-social groupings. Referring to methodology, we discuss the standards of preparing the questionnaire, organization of the field-work, and statistical analyses. Further on, we present the major features of the panel waves conducted in 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, and 2013. We conclude by pointing out the advantages of a long-time panel study over cross-sectional research projects.

POLPAN: *Z doświadczeń badaczy i uczestników badania* / *Reserchers' and respondents' experiences*, Danuta Życzyńska-Ciołek

This presentation depicts personal perspectives on the history of POLPAN and the sociological issues the project examines by looking at POLPAN through the eyes of people involved in this research since its very beginning. Interviews I conducted with different actors in the POLPAN study, such as researchers, respondents and interviewers, help us better understand (a) the origins of POLPAN, (b) the impact of social changes on the lives of these actors, and (c) some reasons for why respondents decide to participate in the survey.

Dynamika systemu nierówności społecznych: od uniformizacji do polaryzacji /

Dynamics of social inequality: from uniformization to polarization, Kazimierz M. Słomczyński, Krystyna Janicka, Irina Tomescu-Dubrow

Two necessary and sufficient conditions must be met for considering social classes essential categories of social structure: (a) the condition of mean differences: social classes differ considerably (both substantively and statistically) with respect to the average values of basic variables characterizing social inequality; (b) the condition of differentiation of variances: between-classes variability of values of basic variables characterizing social inequality is considerably larger (both substantively and statistically) than within-classes variability. From the statistical point of view the hypotheses about “death of class” are null hypotheses postulating no impact of social classes on various phenomena. Proponents of these hypotheses confirm them only when their social class operationalization is inadequate, which usually means keeping the same formal class operationalization when classes have actually become functionally different for different times and countries. We propose that stratification research on Poland considers different class conceptualizations corresponding to the country’s changing social realities. In practice, this means using one conceptualization for the period before 1989, another for the time of the transformation following the systemic change, and still another for the period after 2008. On the basis of such complex conceptualization we demonstrate the class foundation of social inequalities (specifically in income and material standard) changing historically from uniformity to polarization. Class polarization is also revealed in individuals’ opinions on the functioning of the market and on democratic principles.

Niepełnoetatowość zatrudnienia: implikacje dla badania struktury społecznej / Uncertainty of employment: implications for studying social structure, Anna Kiersztyn (IS UW)

The presentation focuses on the socio-economic consequences of the growth in non-standard employment arrangements, such as: fixed-term contracts, civil-law agreements, or temporary agency work, which took place in many countries over the last decades. Numerous studies found that such employment is concentrated among those with the weakest labor market position and is usually associated with lower wages. It has also been shown that in many cases non-standard employment becomes a permanent state, rather than serving as a stepping-stone to stable jobs, which makes it an additional source of economic insecurity for workers. With regards to the Polish labor market, the above points are well-illustrated by new analyses of data from the most recent wave of the Polish Panel Survey, POLPAN 2013. They show, first of all, that although the social distribution of nonstandard employment among production-age employees underwent some changes between 2008 and 2013, it is still very uneven. Second, preliminary results suggest that the type of employment contract in the previous panel wave is a significant predictor of the respondents' later labor market performance. These observations lead to the conclusion that in contemporary societies, the employment arrangement has become an important determinant of individuals' position in the social structure.

Gender, political knowledge and voting, Sheri Kunovich (South Methodist University), Robert Kunovich (University of Texas)

Using POLPAN data from 1998, 2003, and 2008, we examine gender differences in knowledge of the governing parties of the Sejm in 2003. After documenting a sizable gender gap in political knowledge, we focus on ability, opportunity, and motivation to explain why some men and women have more political knowledge compared to others. We also examine the effects of political knowledge on changes in political attitudes and behaviors from 2003 to 2008 separately for men and women. Similar to previous research, our results suggest that the gender gap in political knowledge persists despite the inclusion of numerous control variables. Also, the sources and consequences of political knowledge are very similar for men and women. There are only a few variables that predict knowledge for only men (cognitive ability) or only women (voting experience, work hours, and religious attendance). The impact of political knowledge on political interest, alienation, non-democratic attitudes, and voting behavior is the same for men and women.

Gender and transition to insecurity, Małgorzata Mikucka (University of Leuven)

This analysis describes the dynamics of interrupting employment and resuming paid work after an interruption in Poland in the period 1988–2008. I use the unique data on individual employment histories collected in the Polish POLPAN panel study over twenty years, and the statistical method of survival analysis. My results show that the postcommunist transformation brought unprecedented instability to employment: the risk of interrupting paid work grew about tenfold after the systemic change. Yet the chances of returning to employment after an interruption remained stable throughout the years. Regarding gender differences, I find that women in Poland do not suffer from a higher risk of interrupting work than men. However—once they do interrupt their work—it is more difficult for them to resume employment.

Changes in the preferred income inequality at the beginning of the post-communist transformation, Marta Kołczyńska (Ohio State University) and Joseph Merry (Ohio State University)

Rising trends in economic inequality are well-established across many affluent nations. However, researchers have accrued considerably less knowledge regarding the economic attitudes and preferences of individuals living within the context of increasing inequality, especially in developing or transition countries. To gain leverage on this topic, we utilize data from POLPAN, a panel study of Polish citizens, uniquely structured to include responses prior to Poland's transition to a market economy and at multiple points since then. Using data from four consecutive waves of POLPAN (1988-2003), we examine change over time in respondent's preferred levels of income inequality. Results of panel regression analysis show that Poles tend to accept higher levels of income inequality over time. This effect increases with time, even after controlling for respondents' meritocratic beliefs and attitudes toward state intervention. Specifically, in the fifteen year timeframe examined in this study, respondent's notions of what constitutes a 'just' earnings ratio between the highest and lowest earners increased by a factor of five. In addition, this rise in preferred income inequality changes in accordance with actual and perceived changes in the earnings distribution. After describing the patterns of variation in

acceptance of income inequality between different social groups, we discuss the implications of individuals' evolving benchmarks for preferred levels of inequality.

Attitudes toward the EU: Does the past matter? Peter Tunkis (Ohio State University)

In the time since European Union negotiations and accession, many changes have occurred in Poland, and different sectors of society have benefitted from membership at different times. This begs the question: have attitudes towards the EU remained stable across groups in society in Poland, or are individuals and groups capricious in their evaluations of EU membership? It has been argued that such evaluations depend on whether individuals find themselves amongst the winners or losers in the changes brought about. Thus, if individuals' circumstances change, we should expect a corresponding change in attitudes. On the other hand, it may be argued that those who once viewed the EU positively (or negatively) on the outset will continue to do so. Using panel survey data from Poland (POLPAN 1998-2013), this project evaluates whether or not Poles' attitudes toward the EU are stable over time, and why. I argue that the stability of public opinion on EU membership is dependent upon the arena of assessment. I hypothesise that when evaluated in the aggregate, EU attitudes should appear stable and consistent overall. However, when evaluated in the sub-aggregate, while socio-tropic evaluations of the EU's impact will remain stable, personal level assessments will not.

The Democratic Engagement of the Unemployed, Francesco Sarracino (GESIS), Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow (CONSIRT), Małgorzata Mikucka (University of Leuven)

In this new project we ask: To what extent and under what conditions are the unemployed politically engaged? The main theoretical inspiration to ask this question is that unemployment is a form of disadvantage, and that disadvantage lowers odds of political engagement. Yet, in theory, the unemployed share an economically debilitating condition that is caused, in part, by government economic policies, and who should therefore be motivated by their situation to complain to and seek the help of the government. At issue is whether unemployment, in and of itself, is a substantial enough experience that would impact political engagement. Most empirical research on this topic uses cross-sectional data. The value of using the Polish Panel Study, POLPAN 1993 to 2008 is that we can begin to examine causal arguments of whether exposure to unemployment lowers political engagement. We define political engagement as the behaviors and attitudes that connect individuals to the political system. Behaviors are understood generally as political participation, and in this case, it is membership in a political organization. We have a wide conception of political attitudes that include interest in politics, being pro-democratic (belief that democracy is the best form of governance), socio-tropic political efficacy (belief that citizens can influence government decisions) and prospective electoral participation (would vote if elections were held today). Preliminary results suggests that, in general, the unemployed are not significantly different from the employed, with the exception that they are more likely to feel that citizens have little influence over government decisions.