

Kunovich, Robert M. 2013. "Perceived Unemployment: The Sources and Consequences of Misperception." *International Journal of Sociology* 42(4):100-23.

Abstract:

A great deal of social research examines macro-micro linkages – for example, by examining how economic conditions influence people's political attitudes and behavior. Rarely, however, do researchers directly examine the mechanisms linking macro-level conditions to individual-level attitudes and behavior, the accuracy of people's perceptions of the larger context, or the consequences of their misperceptions. In this paper, using data from two waves of the Polish Panel Study (2003 and 2008), I examine individual and contextual sources of perceived unemployment as well as the consequences of perceived unemployment for economic and political attitudes. Results suggest that people do not possess accurate information on levels of local unemployment in Poland; on average, they overestimate the extent of local unemployment (some quite dramatically). Misperceptions of unemployment vary in predictable ways; misperceptions are related to resources, cognitive ability; and a heightened awareness of unemployment (e.g., by living in the same household with someone who is unemployed or in a region with high unemployment). Misperceptions of unemployment, moreover; lead to changes in people's economic and political attitudes. Actual rates of unemployment, however, are not directly related to changes in people's attitudes.