

MONOGRAPHIC STUDY

New Theories and New Methods

On the Importance and Limitations of Mechanism-based Explanation

..... *Zhao Dingxin* 1

Abstract: This article deals with common misunderstandings of social mechanism as a concept, discusses the basic types and characteristics of social mechanisms, and analyzes major weaknesses of mechanism-based explanation in social sciences. These weaknesses include: tensions between mechanism-based explanation and macro-structural explanation, tensions between structure/mechanism-based explanation and actor-based explanation, tensions between inductive mechanism-based analysis and deductive mechanism-based analysis, and two hermeneutic hurdles of the mechanism-based explanation, that is, over-determination and changing importance of social mechanisms. This article aims to help readers to better master the mechanism concept, better execute a mechanism-based explanation, and finally to foster the development of a sociological paradigm that is based on, but at the same time transcends, the mechanism-based explanation.

Complexity Studies and Opportunities to Expand the Boundaries of Sociological Study

Qiao Tianyu & Qiu Zeqi 25

Abstract: Based on discussions on the connection between complexity and social phenomena, the paper reviews the methods and development of complexity studies and the explorations and contributions made by sociologists in this area. In light of the development of information and communication technology, new social phenomena embrace an even closer relationship with complexity, which brings novel challenges to current sociological studies. Sociologists should understand and participate in the advancement of complexity study so that they can effectively respond to these

challenges. Working with complexity also offers new opportunities to expand the boundaries of sociology.

Social Reality from the Perspective of Situation and Practice: Merleau-Ponty’s Existential Marxism and Its Meaning for Social Science Methodology
..... *Sun Feiyu & Mou Sihao* 49

Abstract: Classical Marxism exercised a great influence on French intellectuals at the time of the Second World War. Combined with French existential phenomenology, Marxism shows typical French characteristics. Merleau-Ponty was an important scholar of the time. His work of perceptual phenomenology has a clear impact on the subsequent French sociological studies. Through his study of situation, and emphasis on the practicality of Marxism, Merleau-Ponty develops his own approach to “social facts” and sociological studies.

Grounded Theory:History and Logic
..... *Wu Suran & Li Minghui* 75

Abstract: As a methodological path of empirical research, grounded theory has had a wide-ranging influence on western social sciences in the past 50 years and Chinese social sciences in the past two decades. However, for many social researchers, the explanation and application of the grounded theory are blurred and confusing. This paper reviews the background and development of the grounded theory, and summarizes its technical features and methodological logics. Furthermore, we comb, clarify and summarize the internal divergences of the grounded theory and the external criticism it encounters. This article argues that, as a qualitative research methodology most closely affiliated with the sociology discipline, the advantages and predicaments of the grounded theory are determined by the characteristics of American sociology.

Local Governance and Government Behavior Studies

Institutional Inertia, Succession of Provincial Leaders and Changes in the Structure of Provincial Fiscal Expenditure
..... *Yao Dongmin, Zhu Yongyi & Yu Kai* 99

Abstract: This paper employs the method of L-kurtosis to identify the patterns behind the changes in the structure of provincial fiscal expenditure from the perspective of the

succession of provincial leaders. The analysis is based on provincial level panel data during 1996 – 2018 in China. The patterns for different categories of expenditure differ significantly. The fiscal expenditure on economic development conforms to the principle of punctuated equilibrium, as do the expenditures on science, education, culture, and health-care (SECH). However, the fiscal expenditure on public safety follows the principle of budgetary incrementalism. For the fiscal expenditure that conforms to the principle of punctuated equilibrium, the longer the tenure of the leaders is, the stronger their personal political authority becomes, which makes it easier to change the budget structure. For the fiscal expenditure that conforms to the principle of budgetary incrementalism, the length of tenure does not have a significant impact. Furthermore, this paper identifies the motivation behind the newly appointed leaders' adjustment of expenditure structure. They strive for the upper reaches in economic development and prefer to approach the national average in SECH.

Objective Balance and Process Control: An Analytic Framework for the Behavior Logic of Local Government Innovation *Feng Meng* 124

Abstract: This paper attempts to construct an analytic framework for “risk-performance” to help understand the logic of local government innovation. Local governments have two specific objectives, i. e. , risk aversion and administrative performance acquisition in innovative actions. On the one hand, local governments choose institutions with a high degree of controllability and relevant subject recognition to avoid innovation risks. On the other hand, local governments expand the scale of innovation factors and increase the combination of factors to obtain administrative performance. In the innovation case of community public welfare bidding in city K, the process can be divided into four stages: creative formation, innovation policy transformation, policy pilot and comprehensive implementation. Local government departments weigh the pursuit of goals at different stages, choose the corresponding action strategies, and maximize the effectiveness of innovation by strictly controlling the innovation process.

“Block and Line” Differences and Vertical Diffusion of Innovation *Chen Sicheng* 146

Abstract: This paper explores the differences between the vertical diffusion of innovation model launched by functional departments(line) and the model launched by government officials(block) , based on ten years' evolution of an ecological environment restoration policy. This research reveals that the vertical model launched by functional

departments can influence policy innovation of local government, however contributes little to policy diffusion. The influence is mainly based on pilot projects mechanism, lasts only during the project and has weak effect. The vertical model launched by government officials is the most important factor to promote local innovation in a short time. The influence is mainly based on personnel mechanism, lasts long and has strong effect. This study uses the organization theory to develop the theory of diffusion of innovation and provides insights for research on Chinese pilot project.

PAPER

Relational Memory and Obligatory Memory as Social Memory Structure —— Cultural Dimensions of Collective Memory of the Educated Youth

..... *Liu Yaqiu* 170

Abstract: By analyzing the content of the Educated Youth's collective memory, this paper summarizes structural characteristics of the collective memory of the Educated Youth and propose the concepts of relational memory and obligatory memory. Specifically, relational memory means that the content of the Educated Youth's memory is mostly regulated by "relationship". This "relationship" is often the key that triggers their recollection of the past, and contributes to the mainstream characteristics of the Educated Youth's memory. Obligatory memory is summarized through a specific type of "confession" memory of the Educated Youth. Some of the Educated Youth's narratives of atonement do not happen on a whim, but originate from cultural pressure, i. e. , the perception that the good must be encouraged and the evil must be punished. The two structural characteristics of memory—relationship and obligation—depend on specific cultural structures. For example, the cultural structure behind the relational memory contains the thoughts of "harmony is the most precious" and "putting oneself in another's shoes". The cultural structure behind obligatory memory mainly refers to the concept of "retribution".

Household Income, Wealth and Status Identification Among Chinese Adults

..... *Huang Chao* 195

Abstract: Based on considerations of absolute and relative position in social hierarchy, this paper finds that household wealth, as well as income, has a significant positive effect on individual's status identification. Detailed comparisons between the urban and rural subsamples reveal that people in rural areas regard community members as their

main reference group whereas urban residents do not. As a result, the subjective status identities of rural residents are largely determined by their relative position in the distribution of household income or wealth in the community. Moreover, household income and wealth tend to have a much weaker effect on status identification in highly unequal rural communities compared to ones that are more economically equal. According to these findings, the author proposes the “social contextuality of status identification” to emphasize the importance of social context in the formation of status identity.

REVIEW

Medicine as Disembedded from Society: Evolution and Debates of Medicalization Studies in the West (1970 – 2010)

..... *Han Junhong* 219

Abstract: From the 1970s on, medicalization has become an influential concept in medical sociology, as well as the sociology of health and illness. This essay examines three transitional stages of medicalization by reviewing relevant studies published since the 1970s. With further development of medicalization in the West, especially in the US, the medical profession and its relevant organizations as a whole becomes increasingly disembedded from the society. In this paper, I discuss the importance of demedicalization in general, especially for China’s public health policy.