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Review of "Systemumbruch, Arbeitslosigkeit und Individuelle Bewaltigung in der Ex-GDR" by Thomas Kieselbach; Peter Voigt

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recreational pursuits. The solution Coleman offers lies in a welfare system that individually rewards social investments in youth, so that the education of each child receives a value or "bounty" based on probable social costs and returns. In this "Wild West capitalist" view of education, any person or organization willing to make the investment will receive the return. The point, Coleman says, it to "get property rights right" this time; however, he does not provide a complete exposition of what this new social policy would entail.

Summoning historical and cross-national data, John Modell responds to Coleman's theory and prescription for change. He argues that social capital is not underdeveloped in the United States. The debate is extended through rejoinders from Coleman and Modell, and in the concluding chapter to the book by Heinz. The inclusion of this debate adds an engaging philosophical dimension to this volume. Youth unemployment becomes just one aspect of a larger and more threatening reorientation occurring in modern societies.

One need not be especially interested in the problems of youth to find value in this book. Most chapters are very well written and provide clear explanations of the theoretical issues for a diverse audience. The chapter bibliographies alone would be quite valuable to those with interests in life course transitions to adulthood, education and training, employment and underemployment, or marginality. Indeed, those who have grown comfortable with their approach to any of these areas might profit from reading the entire book, for it reveals the interconnections that research in a single area tends to miss.


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This interesting volume, jointly edited by an east German sociologist (Peter Voigt) and a west German psychologist (Thomas Kieselbach), studies mass unemployment after the end of the communist regime in east Germany, the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). It focuses on individual reactions to unemployment.

The authors of these 33 essays are social scientists or psychologists from both the east and west. The first section of the book focuses on the existing conditions in eastern Germany, while the second reports the results of research done on the unemployed and those with reduced hours at work. The third and final section discusses political interventions in the employment market as well as other social-political efforts, including therapeutic help for those affected.

With unification, the political system and the socioeconomic institutions of western Germany were transferred wholesale to the east. Industries as well as educational and cultural institutions were restructured and, in many instances, severely reduced. This political and economic transformation of the east German economy resulted in massive unemployment. Close to 40 percent lost their work, if one counts not only the formally unemployed but also those on reduced hours, in retraining, in temporary publicly created jobs, or in early retirement.

Unemployment creates a strong sense of general dissatisfaction, though this is still moderated in east Germany by the hope that conditions will eventually improve. The greatest dissatisfaction is expressed by the unemployed generally, by women who make up approximately 65 percent of the unemployed, by those with a low level of occupational training, and by older people who were especially affected by the restructuring.

Work outside the house was nearly universal in the former GDR, and it was secure. As surveys after 1989 have shown, it had acquired an even greater importance for self-respect, social identity, and a place in social life than we in the West take for granted. Thus, it is not surprising that the loss of work had dramatic implications for feelings of security and self-confidence, and resulted in increased alcoholism (already high in the GDR), disorientation, powerlessness, and depression. The empirical research results in the second section of the book focus on changes in family atmosphere, the relation to friends, the readiness to change...
location for work, the assessment of future employment possibilities, and the impact on general health. Retraining courses and the creation of publicly supported jobs are important, but temporary, arrangements; they do not necessarily result in long-term employment that both men and women in the former GDR took for granted.

Fittingly, the introduction to the volume was written by one of the most popular east German politicians, Regine Hildebrandt, a Social Democrat and Minister for Work, Social Policy, Health, and Women in the state of Brandenburg. Hildebrandt pleads for a politics oriented to norms of social justice in order to prevent further human and social costs. Long-term unemployment is likely to remain the major social problem in Germany. It will be of critical importance in the continuing process of unification, and it will continue to be a central issue in German politics.

The alternative model, for the most part implicit here, is the dominant rationalist paradigm of organizational change as a progressive process, driven by the pressures of scale, technology, and competition, toward ever greater efficiency. Yet Guillén is also critical of neo-Marxist labor process theories of organizing modes as dialectically evolved from successive escalations of labor-management struggle. As against these evolutionary frameworks, his own view is that the shift from one organizing paradigm to the next is fundamentally a process of institutionally determined pendulum swing.

The real strength of this book is the painstaking comparative social history it offers. Guillén’s methodology consists of exhaustive content analysis of management and technical journals, tracking the onset and spread of management ideas, assessing their ideological bent, and determining their acceptance or rejection by key social constituencies.

The weakness lies in the portrayal of the three paradigms. Scientific management is not a problem. Its core ideas are distinct enough and its descent from Frederick Taylor sufficiently transparent that Guillén’s claims to have revealed instances of scientific management thinking in these four countries over a wide swath of time are wholly credible. The diffusion of Taylorism as management ideology is not, of course, a new undertaking, but any qualms a reader has on this score are by and large dispelled by the comparative scope and detail of this inquiry.

His characterization of the “human relations” paradigm is more troublesome. He is not explicit on where its boundaries lie and at times it seems to cover, particularly in his discussion of Spain, any perspective on management that calls attention to the needs and interests of workers as human beings. Even in the United States, where, as Perrow has shown, the human relations school has a clear genealogy in the Hawthorne Studies and the writings of Elton Mayo, Guillén departs from convention, I feel, in including in this tradition, first, the employee involvement/job redesign movement and, secondly, the recent focus on organizational culture. This elision glosses over some real substantive and ideological differences, though admittedly—particularly in the work of Freder-