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Abstract

This study has two objectives. First, it suggests conceptual tools, which allows without breaking methodological consistency to sum up divergent commonsense views explaining why devaluation of symbols of academic status takes place and how to resist it. Second, it investigates possibilities for convergence of three separate perspectives in economics and sociology: a) reflexive pragmatics of social symbolism by Goffman and Garfinkel [Goffman 1951; Goffman, 1959; Goffman 1969; Garfinkel 1967]; b) research on "social dilemmas" [Axelrod 1984; Ostrom 1990; Ostrom 1997]; c) information economics, especially see Spence [Spence 1976; Spence 1973; Spence 2002; Akerlof 1970; Stiglitz 2000; Riley 2001].

Keywords: devaluation of academic degrees; status-symbol system; signal system; academic status; Erving Goffman.

New Translations

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The Strength of Weak Ties (translated by <i>Zoya Kotelnikova</i>)	31
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Abstract

Analysis of social networks is suggested as a tool for linking micro and macro levels of sociological theory. The procedure is illustrated by elaboration of the macro implications of one aspect of small-scale interaction: the strength of dyadic ties. It is argued that the degree of overlap of two individuals' friendship networks varies directly with the strength of their tie to one another. The impact of this principle on diffusion of influence and information, mobility opportunity, and community organization is explored. Stress is laid on the cohesive power of weak ties. Most network models deal, implicitly, with strong ties, thus confining their applicability to small, well-defined groups. Emphasis on weak ties lends itself to discussion of relations between groups and to analysis of segments of social structure not easily defined in terms of primary groups.

Keywords: social networks; weak social ties; social groups; small-scale interaction; social structure.

Insight from the Regions

Olga Vasilenko

Social Regulation of Consumer Risks in Present Conditions 51

Abstract

The paper is devoted to consumer risks resulted from the consumer choice of food and non-food goods and services. Consumer risk is considered as a probability for a partial loss of human potential (health, emotional balance, money) which may occur after a non-reflexive purchasing behavior. Consumer risks fall into four interconnected models which are likely to emerge at all stages of consumer choice.

The paper presents outcomes of an empirical research of consumer risks in Volgograd region. It examines mechanisms of social regulation of consumer risks, including consumption culture, formation of partnerships between market actors, construction of information and communicative environment.

Keywords: consumer behavior; consumer risk; human potential; mechanism of social regulation.

Debut Studies

Darya Prisyazhnuk

The National Project “Health”’s Effects on the Status of Medical Personnel (A Case-Study of Medical Polyclinics in a Large City) 72

Abstract

The paper discusses changes in status attributes of employees at medical polyclinics under the National project “Health Care”. The research focuses on formal and informal strategies of different groups of medical personnel to maintain their statuses. Based on case-studies (interviews and observations) in two clinics in the city of Saratov and the content-analysis of official documents and mass media it provides a detailed analysis of medical employees’ economic practices that have been changed under the transformation of health care system.

Keywords: national project “Health”, medical employees, medical professional status, transformation of health care system, privileged /non-privileged groups of medical employees, informal practices; professional prestige, informal economic exchanges.

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