

## Summaries

### *Images of National Character: the French, the English, and the Germans* Nico Wilterdink

The article presents results of an investigation among members of an international, European (EC) organisation, who were asked to express their ideas on - among other things - the typical mentality or character of the French, the English, and the Germans. In contrast to other research on 'national stereotypes', the questions were kept open-ended, in order to elicit more varying and more authentic responses. For each nation central tendencies in the answers were found, showing a clear differentiation between the images of the three nations. Thus, while the French were regarded by many respondents as nationalistic, arrogant and/or refined, the English were often described as reserved, inhibited, self-controlled or withdrawn, and the Germans as orderly, bureaucratic, disciplined, rule-obeying. From a comparison with the results of other investigations on national stereotypes and published descriptions of the character of the three nations, the conclusion is drawn that most attributions largely conform to widespread, conventional and traditional national images. In explaining this, the thesis is advanced that people will affirm learned images as long as these are not clearly contradicted by other kinds of relevant information, in particular direct experiences with people from the nation in question (interactions and direct observations) and mass media information on phenomena regarded as representing the nation as a whole (e.g. important political events). Tentative explanations of the images and more specific attributions are offered. It is argued that these explanations should, on the one hand, refer to different types of relevant information (see above) and, on the other hand, to the functions the images have for the people who entertain them. On a general level, three main functions are distinguished: cognitive ordering by classification; explanation by psychologising; and the rationalisation of emotions by moralising.

### *Typically Dutch... Ruth Benedict on the 'national character' of Netherlanders* Rob van Ginkel

Ruth Benedict's studies represent an example of wartime anthropology of the national character of peoples involved in World War II. Many of the memoranda she produced for the Office of War Information remained unpublished, neither was her 'Dutch material' ever published. This article examines Benedict's remarks on the national character of Dutchmen and compares her ideas with those of contemporary Dutch scholars who have dealt with the same topic. The article critically assesses the discussions pertaining to the problems and pitfalls involved in the use of the concept of 'national character' and its Dutch equivalent '*volkskarakter*'.

## *Law of inheritance and changing relationships between family members*

Ali de Regt

This article deals with changes in the law of inheritance in the Netherlands since its introduction in 1838. Ever since that time, discussions about a modification of that law centered on the need for a stronger position of the surviving spouse. A revision of the law in the 1920s restricted the rights of distant relatives and gave spouses more rights on the estate. In the near future these rights will be extended. This change of the law has negative consequences for the position of children: they cannot dispose of their legal portion until both parents have died. The changes in the law of succession are explained by an intensification of nuclear family relationships, which strengthened the bonds between spouses and their children at the cost of the wider family. Changes in favour of spouses at the expense of children are explained by economic developments that made the inheritance of capital less urgent for children's future social position.

## *On the economization of the world view*

C. Schmidt

'Economy' is a notoriously complex concept. This essay attempts to reduce this complexity somewhat. It is argued that 'economy' refers to the way people meet their daily needs, 'economy' refers to a morality, an ideology and science at the same time. In connection with the intricacy of the concept a rough sketch is given of the ideological origins of the antithesis between the 'economic' and 'social' view of society. In the third section an attempt is made to outline the main phases of 'economization' as a long-term process. These phases coincide with the aforementioned four denotations of 'economy' and merged successively into each other until, finally, 'the economy' in the complex modern sense was born. The fourth section deals with the economization of public discourse in the 1980s. This phenomenon is examined in a long-term perspective. The essay concludes with some remarks on problems connected to the highly necessary 'ecologization' of the present economy.

## *The clock's regime. On the chronological organization of the modern life course*

Jan Baars

In the context of an idealtypical theory of modernization, it is shown how a modern approach to time, as developed in chronological measurement, has come to shape the social organization of the life course. This process has been stimulated by the work ethic of the modern bourgeois, as well as by the societal organization of social provisions. The phenomenon of chronological organisation is discussed in connection with the socialization process, work careers and certain provisions by the welfare state. The predominant influence

of chronological regulation in these areas is in contrast with a recent trend towards a declining importance of chronological categories in the domain of primary relationships.

*The household as an arena*

Christien Brinkgreve

Except in rural sociology the household (in the sense of domestic housekeeping) has remained an underexposed area of research in sociology. Mainly under the influence of the Women's Movement interest in the household has grown. The household was thus primarily examined in the light of unequal power relations between men and women and the ways in which this inequality makes itself felt in the division of labour at home. This article puts forward questions about the social appreciation of caring and paid labour. Moreover, it is argued that attention should be given to social class or socio-economic position, a factor largely neglected in Women's studies. The household may well be (or have become) an arena but not all arenas are alike.