

Abstracts

Arco Timmermans

Policy agreements, conflicts, and coalition hazards

Coalition agreements have become important political phenomena in most multiparty systems, but they have received little attention in theoretical and empirical research. In the formation of coalition governments, political parties engage in exhaustive negotiations over coalition policy. The written agreements resulting from these negotiations are seen to have different functions, of which the reduction of conflict potential in the coalition has particular importance. This article deals with the emergence of coalition agreements, their contents, the problem of enforcement and with the question whether or not written agreements have a conflict prevention function. This question is considered for Dutch coalition governments. An analysis of two coalition governments shows that recurring conflict is not prevented but that different types of enforcement mechanisms created by the coalition partners help to contain these conflicts. These enforcement mechanisms relate to informal policy making structures, political transaction costs and institutionalized rules of the game. Under certain

conditions they limit political hazards and enhance government life expectancy.

Yvette Bartholomée en Karin Bijsterveld

The ethnic elderly and the 'accelerated' modernisation theory

The situation of the ethnic elderly is getting ever increasing attention of policy makers. This article will show that the so-called 'accelerated' modernisation theory is a central assumption within the analysis of the problems of this group. The accelerated modernisation theory assumes that a quick change from a traditional to a modern society decreases the status of the elderly. Moreover, such a change causes a gap between the expectations of the ethnic elderly, such as the expectation that their children will take care of them, and the children's modern idea that taking care of the elderly is a state responsibility.

The accelerated modernisation theory seems to correspond with the classical modernisation theory, which has been an accepted theory in the historiography of the elderly for quite some time. Recently, however, it has been strongly criticised. By

studying a selection of reports about the ethnic elderly, it becomes clear that much research into the situation of the ethnic elderly is only based on reviews and on the consultation of key persons. Moreover the results of research that focuses on directly interviewing the ethnic elderly are more in tune with part of the criticism of the modernisation theory than with the modernisation theory itself. Therefore other perspectives to the problems of ethnic elderly, such as the ethnic compensation model and the double jeopardy hypothesis, may be of use for the analysis and improvement of the situation of specific groups of ethnic elderly.

Herman Steensma

**Psychologists on justice: theory, empirical facts,
and new research trends**

What is perceived as fair and just, and why? And how do people react upon a situation of injustice? These questions are answered in this review of research done by psychologists. First, research on distributive justice is discussed. The main theories are summarized, and three principles of distributive justice turn out to be very important: equity, equality, and need. Also, factors that influence perceptions of justice are listed, and attention is paid to results of large-scale 'vignette' and survey research.

Then, procedural justice is presented, and important aspects of procedural justice are briefly summarized. The relative weight of procedural and distributive justice seems to be determined at least partly by the order in which information concern-

ing these two forms of justice is presented to persons. Studies focussing on cross-cultural differences and on differing justice behaviours of men and women are summarized, too. Some personality characteristics (Just World Belief; sensitivity to befallen injustice) are important determinants of justice perceptions and justice behaviours. Finally, it is demonstrated how research results can be used to formulate and implement policy.

Willem Trommel en Romke van der Veen
**Ten years of social security reform in the
Netherlands**

During the last ten years the Dutch social security system has been restructured. This article evaluates the major changes that were realised in this process. It is argued that the moral objectives of the social security system have not been violated seriously by the politics of reform. Mainly the various policy measures seek to enlarge the controllability of the system by means of institutional reform. This strategy can be characterized as a process of 'managed liberalization' which involves a more market-oriented approach to social policy implementation. Thus far, empirical evidence shows positive effects with respect to the control of social security consumption. However, unintended effects do occur which may have moral consequences in the long run. Especially the tendency towards 'risk selection' at the labour market might threaten the standards of social protection in case of a future economic decline.