

B.A. THESIS REVIEW

Emelie Berneking: Mental Health and Well-being in Comparison between East and West Germany: A Literature and Data Overview. Prague 2024: Faculty of Humanities, 63 pages.

The thesis by Emelie Berneking is a secondary data study, based on the available statistics, showing some crucial social well-being indicators like suicide or alcohol rate between the regions of Germany that formerly belonged to the West and to the East, proving the substantial disparities and discrepancies within one society, when it comes to mental health and well-being.

The student herself decided to pursue the topic of her own academic interest and worked very independently on it, at the same time having been open to my (her supervisor's) comments and suggestions. I do appreciate student's own curiosity about the subject that is not an easy one, emotionally loaded, also in the current political context in Germany, and at the same time personally close to the student as a German citizen, originally from the East.

The aim of the thesis is, according to the thesis: *The aim of my thesis is to determine what exactly this disparity in mental health and wellbeing between East and West Germany entails, why it exists and what it is correlated to, given studies conducted on mental health and well-being in Germany over the past thirty years.* (p. 4)

The theoretical part of the thesis is based on the paradigm of social realism, which states that: *the lens applied in medical sociology of when material and social reality are seen to shape human action in certain ways, it is not deterministic though. At the core of its focus of analysis lies the causes for human normative or non-normative behaviour; these causes can be biological, environmental or individual all the same.* (p. 10) Nonetheless, the study would welcome more of a literature debate than one main publication "A Sociology of Mental Health and Illness". This might enrich the data analysis and further elaboration.

When it comes to the methodological part, I do appreciate the visual work with data, which is not a common part of B.A. theses, as well as a part devoted to the researcher's own positionality within the studied problem.

In the analytical part, the student works well with all the data and literature, matching the data with already published information about the problem of mental health in Germany. In the final part of the thesis, four main research questions are answered.

The thesis is written properly and meets all the formal requirements for a B.A. thesis. I evaluate it as well-written, based on a well-sourced and analysed quantitative data, and therefore, recommend the thesis for a defense and propose the grade 1.

Questions for the defense discussion:

1. What are the limits of the data you worked with?
2. When you conclude: *In terms of the first one, I found no studies conducted on direct effects of the reunification on the people of either East or West Germany for instance.* (p. 56) - what kind of study and data this should be?

Prague, 7th February 2024

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