

Public Abstract

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Title: What Changes in Media Risk Frames Reveal about Changing Attitudes toward Modern Life: The Case of the Greek Press, 1977-2004

Abstract

Some social scientists note that Westerners have become disenchanted with their society, which they see as promoting industrial development and a soulless consumerism that are out of control and destroying the natural environment. The same social scientists also note that ambivalent attitudes towards institutions and people accompany the disenchantment and weaken bonds of trust among people. The result is an acute anxiety about uncertainty, which predisposes people to view human activity and the future through the prism of vulnerability and risk.

These sociologists see this predisposition as constituting a new global paradigm of understanding society and social experience, which they sum up with phrases like "world risk society" (Beck) and the "culture of fear" (Furedi). According to these sociologists, concern about risks now colors the way people see themselves, society, and the future.

This study attempted to draw together media research and sociology, by examining what the sociologists mean by risk and risk awareness, and testing their claim that a risk paradigm has emerged and consolidated over the past three decades, by seeing if such a trend was apparent in the Greek press. Content analysis of news and editorials in two Greek newspapers over a thirty-year period found no evidence of a shift toward risk as a dominant frame of social experience.