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# Introduction

Alice Barth

This edited volume is dedicated to Jörg Blasius in honor of his retirement from the chair of sociology and social research methods at the University of Bonn. Throughout his career, Jörg has combined statistical methods, most prominently methods for the analysis of categorical data, with sociological questions on social inequality, lifestyles, gentrification processes, and urban neighborhoods; he has also focused on the assessment of the quality of survey data and applied a broad range of social research methods. This plurality of research interests is also reflected in the book at hand, where long-term collaborators (who are usually long-term friends at the same time), former PhD students, and research assistants have written papers on research topics they share with Jörg.

In total, the contributions show that Jörg does not only look back on an extremely active and productive scientific career, but he also has an extraordinary record in supporting fellow scientists and fostering international networks. Editing a volume that represents the full scope of Jörg's scientific network would have been a quite impossible task – with this book, we have aimed at drawing a representative sample of the huge population of friends, colleagues and collaborators. The book is organized into five parts, each of which reflects one of Jörg's areas of interest.

The first part of the book treats the discussion of *statistical properties of correspondence analysis and related methods*. Jörg began exploring correspondence analysis as a scaling method for multivariate categorical data in his student days (see Blasius 1987 and Michael Greenacre's reminiscence on [page 241](#)); the publication of his habilitation thesis (Blasius 2001) cemented his status as Germany's leading scholar in this area. Michael Greenacre's contribution elaborates on the relationships between principal component analysis and correspondence analysis as methods of dimension reduction and the visualization of data tables. Michael Greenacre and Jörg Blasius have shared a passion for correspondence analysis as a means for analyzing categorical data for more than 30 years, resulting, among others, in the organization of 9 conferences (since 2003 under the name of CARME – Correspondence Analysis and Related MMethods), four books (Greenacre & Blasius 1994, 2006; Blasius & Greenacre 1998, 2014) and two special issues (Blasius et al. 2009; Balbi et al. 2017; see also [p. 244](#)). Complementary to Michael's contributions as a long-term correspondence analysis specialist, *Jörg Breitung* approaches correspondence analysis from the perspective of an "alien from the planet Econometrics". He also compares principal component analysis and correspondence analysis, focusing then on the properties of the

chi-square distance measure and suggesting possible alternative measures of distance. Finally, *Frédéric Lebaron*, *Brigitte LeRoux* and *Aykiz Dogan* discuss possibilities for drawing combinatorial inferences in the framework of geometric data analysis. They exemplify their approach by constructing a “social space” of members of the European Central Bank’s Governing Council.

Their contribution also segues into the next part of the book, where *sociological applications of correspondence analysis and other multivariate scaling methods* are discussed. Alongside to his methodological and statistical interest in the analysis of categorical data, Jörg Blasius has applied (multiple) correspondence analysis to a myriad of empirical examples from sociology and related disciplines. Among these are the social distribution of young people’s perception of work (Thiessen & Blasius 2002), social norms in poor neighborhoods (Friedrichs & Blasius 2003), a Swiss health space (Lengen & Blasius 2007), the effects of cultural distance, free trade agreements, and protectionism on perceived export barriers (Korneliusson & Blasius 2008), response effects of item phrasing (Blasius & Friedrichs 2009), and the (strong) relationship between perceived corruption, trust and, interviewer behavior (Blasius & Thiessen 2021a), to name just a few. Many of his works are theoretically and methodologically grounded in the oeuvre of Pierre Bourdieu, who used correspondence analysis to objectify social phenomena and relationally (re)construct social spaces and fields. Jörg has often applied the “social space approach”, assessing relations between lifestyles and economic and cultural capital (e.g. Blasius & Winkler 1989; Blasius 1994; Blasius 2000; Blasius & Friedrichs 2008; Blasius & Mühlichen 2010). The empirical investigation of social space has also been the topic of two conferences (Cologne 1998 and Bonn 2015) that brought together scientists who work empirically with Bourdieusian concepts from all over Europe (Blasius & Schmitz 2017; Blasius et al. 2019). Following this methodological approach, *Alice Barth*, *Felix Leßke*, *Rebekka Atakan*, *Manuela Schmidt* and *Yvonne Scheit* have reconstructed Jörg’s “space of social relations” by collecting data from more than one hundred of Jörg’s friends, colleagues, and collaborators and analyzing these using multiple correspondence analysis. The resulting space is characterized by the contrast between a public/professional and a private/leisure pole and the frequency of respondents’ contact with Jörg. In a different vein, *Martin Fritz* and *Yasemin El-Menouar* discuss the relationship between attitudes towards climate change and religiosity, which they empirically assess by means of multiple correspondence analysis using data from the European Social Survey. *Rahim Hajji*, *Simone Pollak*, *Gunnar Voss*, *Ulrike Scorna* and *Jessica Schäfer* analyze connections between health inequality, working conditions in vocational education, and inequality of education by applying categorical principal component analysis and hierarchical cluster analysis. Apart from presenting sociological applications of multivariate scaling methods for categorical data, all three contributions

in this section are authored by former or current PhD students of Jörg Blasius, demonstrating his success in “spreading the correspondence analysis virus”.

The third part of the book addresses another topic that has accompanied Jörg throughout his academic life: the analysis of *social inequality and change in (urban) space*. Starting with his PhD thesis (Blasius 1993), he has frequently worked on the subjects of gentrification and social inequality in urban neighborhoods (e.g., Friedrichs & Blasius 2001; Blasius & Friedrichs 2007; Friedrichs & Blasius 2016; Blasius et al. 2016; Friedrichs & Blasius 2020), including several DFG-funded projects on life in disadvantaged neighborhoods, neighborhood effects, and gentrification processes. The majority of these projects and publications were conducted together with Jürgen Friedrichs, who awakened Jörg’s interest for urban sociology in his student days, and was one of his most valued collaborators and friends until his sudden death in 2019. *Jens Dangschat*, who has also known Jörg since his days as a student assistant at the University of Hamburg (see [page 234](#)), reflects on developments, debates, and results in gentrification research and suggests, inspired by Bourdieusian concepts, a “macro-micro-meso model of place and space” to organize and instruct analyses of gentrification. A historical view on a very peculiar space is presented in *Karl van Meter’s* contribution: the rise and fall of a sociological space in the east. From the perspective of an eyewitness, he portrays how the Soviet Union and East Germany came to host two international sociological conferences shortly before the dissolution of the Eastern bloc, narrates the experiences he, Jörg, and other colleagues made there, and describes the potential political controversy of a correspondence analysis which was to be carried out on Soviet leaders’ power networks. *Nina Baur* and *Elmar Kulke* present a comparative analysis of housing and eating practices and the structure of food retail in the three cities Nairobi, Singapore, and Berlin. They discuss how class-specific practices of distinction vary in the different social contexts, and how they interact with characteristics of the urban space. Next to their shared interest in urban sociology, Nina and Jörg are close collaborators who together have accomplished the mammoth task of editing the German “Handbook of Empirical Social Research Methods” (*Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*; Baur & Blasius 2022): Currently in its third edition, it has grown to two volumes comprising 122 chapters by 161 authors over 1743 pages – while the print version weighs more than 3 kg and is thus handy both as a reference work and a weapon, the online version (of the first edition) has accumulated the unbelievable figure of more than 22 million downloads (see also Nina’s personal note on [page 232](#)). Untiringly, Jörg and Nina are already preparing a fourth, even larger edition.

Accordingly, the fourth section of the book features contributions that dovetail with Jörg’s interest in imparting knowledge on *data quality and statistical education*. When explaining the significance of statistics, Jörg attaches

importance to embedding statistical numbers in a sociological context (Blasius & Thiessen 2021b). In line with this, *Rainer Diaz-Bone* elaborates on teaching statistics in sociology. In his contribution, he discusses disciplinary complexities, interdisciplinary challenges, and the perspectives provided by differentiating between different “data worlds”. Jörg has repeatedly shown how the conditions of producing survey data (study architecture, institutional practices, and respondent behavior) are reflected in differential quality of datasets and indicators that are widely used in the social sciences. In particular, he worked on this theme with his Canadian friend Victor Thiessen (Blasius & Thiessen 2001a, 2001b, 2006, 2012, 2021a), who regrettably passed away in 2016. Unsurprisingly, Jörg applies correspondence analysis and related scaling methods when testing data quality, as do *Pieter C. Schoonees*, *Patrick J.F. Groenen*, *Michel van de Velden* and *Hester van Herk* in assessing how the priming of respondents with the task of estimating the capacity of a cylinder affects the subsequent use of rating scales.

Finally, there is a fifth section which does not present research works, but rather *reminiscences, anecdotes and greetings* from some of Jörg’s long-standing companions, reflecting the prominent role friendships and cordial personal relations have always played for him. *Miriam Trübner* and *Andreas Mühlichen* – as former research assistants cognizant of Jörg’s fondness for numbers and the visualization of data – present figures for several aspects of his working life, such as his lifetime total number of lectures or the most frequently used words in his publications. *Clemens Albrecht* reflects on the role of personal friendships in academia. *Jens Dangschat*, *Nina Baur*, *Robert Helmrich*, *Rahim Hajji*, *Yasemin El-Menouar*, *Martin Fritz*, *Patrick Groenen* and *Michael Greenacre* recount their first encounters and memorable experiences with Jörg, and the volume is rounded off with a poem which *Wendelin Strubelt* has dedicated to him.

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