Best Practices in Conceptualizing and Measuring Social Class in Social and Economic Research

Henryk Domański
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology
Polish Academy of Sciences

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Introduction

- Occupational classifications are applied in economy and other social sciences, but mostly in empirical sociology.

- In economy they „measure" structure of the labor market, employment, organization of firms, productivity, etc.

- In sociological studies they are regarded as most valid indicator of social position. In „explanation" of lifestyle, values, patterns od consumption, political activity and all other social aspects, we use occupation as the basic independent variable.

- The highest empirical validity of the occupation in measurement of social position is confirmed by sociological research. On average it has the highest explanatory power (in statistical terms) as compared with other measures of social location (education, incomes, ...)

Purpose

- The core of my presentation resides in that occupational classifications employed by economists and statistical offices are used in their face value that limits empirical validity in measurement of social position.

- Due to these reasons the International Classification of Occupations – ISCO (which is applied in the most of statistical offices, also in GUS) „explains" less as compared to sociological classifications.

- It is important since – athough GUS focus on economy – many of its research concern so-called „social phenomena" concerning consumption, lifestyle, time budgets, incomes, or so, which are affected by social position of individuals/respondents.

- My purpose is to show the lower explanatory power of ISCO in social research.

Analytical design

- In doing so I will compare explanatory value of ISCO with the most popular sociological classification referred to EGP (Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero).

- For analytical purposes I reduced 10 Major Groups of ISCO into 6. To make it comparable with EGP I reduced the latter into 6 as well.

- To compare of explanatory values of ISCO and EGP I estimated effects of 6 ISCO categories with 6 EGP classes on several variables.

Major Groups

- 1 Managers
- 2 Professionals
- 3 Technicians and associate professionals
- 4 Clerical support workers
- 5 Service and sales workers
- 6 Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers
- 7 Craft and related trades workers
- 8 Plant and machine operators, and assemblers
- 9 Elementary occupations
- 0 Armed forces occupations

The Erikson-Goldthorpe class schema

1. Higher-grade professionals, administrators and officials; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors

2. Lower-grade professionals, administrators and officials; higher-grade technicians; managers in small industrial establishments; supervisors of nonmanual employees

3. Routine nonmanual employees, higher-grade (administration and commerce)

4. Small proprietors, artisans, etc., with or without employees

5. Farmers and smallholders; other self-employed workers in primary production

6. Lower-grade technicians; supervisors of manual workers; skilled manual workers

7. Semi- and unskilled manual workers and routine nonmanual employees, lower-grade (sales and services)

Data, variables

- The research was pursued from February to June 2019 by the consortium of DANAE/REALIZACJA.
- Nation-wide probabilistic sample of population aged 15+
- 2007 interviews were completed.
- Overall response rate: 50.4% (calculated according ESS standards).
- Variables:
    - **Dependent variables** – family incomes, education, musical taste, and lifestyle indicators.
    - **Independent variables –** 6 categories of **ISCO** and 6 categories of **EGP** class scheme, with controls: sex, age.

Explanatory power of the ISCO and the EGP for selected variables. Poland 2019

Material resources, Education, Lifestyle	Explained by:		EGP - ISCO
	ISCO	EGP	
	R-square's		
Family income per capita	.095	.115	.020**
Educational level	.423	.425	.002
Size of place of residence	.008	.148	.040**
Educational level of mother	.087	.175	.088**
Weekend in the countryside	.044	.081	.037**
Number of books read	.094	.120	.016**
Going to library	.074	.101	.027**
Attending museums	.008	.008	0
Attending art galleries	.076	.091	.015**
Attending philharmony	.110	.132	.022**
Attending theatre	.108	.144	.036**
Sport recreation	.007	.021	.014**
Eating in restaurant	.074	.136	.062**

Explanatory power of the ISCO and the EGP for selected variables. Poland 2019 (cont.)

Material resources, Education, Lifestyle	Explained by:		EGP - ISCO
	ISCO	EGP	
	R-square's		
Watching (television) game	.009	.016	.007**
Listening music from internet (paid)	.009*	.011*	.002
Listening music from digital files	.024	.064	.040**
Liking classical music	.068	.058	-0.010**
Liking jazz	.044	.046	.002

Family incomes per capita by the EGP and the ISCO categories

Social classes (EGP)	Family incomes per capita (in PLN)	ISCO	Family incomes per capita (in PLN)
Professionals, highest managers	6598	Managers, professionals	6065
Lower non-manuals	4608	Technicians, clerical, sales and service	4309
Owners	5253	Craft and related machine, plant workers	3804
Skilled manual workers	3821	Operatives and assembly manual workers	4002
Unskilled manual workers	3786	Elementary occupations	3388
Farmers and agricultural workers	2697	Agricultural skilled laborers	3397
Total	4314	Total	4314

Number of books read last year by the EGP and the ISCO categories

Social classes (EGP)	Family incomes per capita	ISCO	Family incomes per capita
Professionals, highest managers	1.85	Managers, professionals	1.84
Lower non-manuals	1.64	Technicians, clerical, sales and service	1.58
Owners	1.56	Craft and related machine, plant workers	1.38
Skilled manual workers	1.26	Operatives and assembly manual workers	1.28
Unskilled manual workers	1.24	Elementary occupations	1.20
Farmers and agricultural workers	1.17	Agricultural skilled laborers	1.24
Total	1.46	Total	1.46

Attending theatre by the EGP and the ISCO categories

Social classes (EGP)	Attending theatre	ISCO	Attending theatre
Professionals, Highest Managers	1.92	Managers, professionals	1.92
Lower non-manuals	1.64	Technicians, clerical, sales and service	1.54
Owners	1.70	Craft and related machine, plant workers	1.43
Skilled manual workers	1.25	Operatives and assembly manual workers	1.25
Unskilled manual workers	1.22	Elementary occupations	1.11
Farmers and agricultural workers	1.10	Agricultural skilled laborers	1.23
Total	1.49	Total	1.49

Conclusions

- These outcomes confirm earlier work focusing on validity of measurement of social position.

- It shows that we had better apply sociological occupational classification in social research for reason being that these capture not only content of occupational roles but also other factors affecting social position, cultural activity, values, orientations, etc.