

‘Instruments du travail’ and
the travails of instruments:
*Reflections on the cross-national
measurement of social class*

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Menu du jour

1. How I became interested in the language and social structure of France
2. How (and why) social scientists try to put people into classes
3. Why this is so difficult cross-nationally (but especially in France)
4. Why language matters for the argument
5. What are the implications?

1. Notes on International Collaboration

What am I doing here?

- 2004 – 2006: EU-funded project to develop a European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC)
- Aim was full adoption by Eurostat
- Multi-national consortium of academics and statistical offices (ONS, INSEE)
- Disagreement and dissent within the group: indeterminate outcome
- Account of consortium differences in literature (Rose and Harrison; Brousse)

What happened next?

- Now working in comparative survey methodology
- Central Coordinating team of the European Social Survey since 2006
- 34 countries have participated in at least one round: 18 in all five rounds so far
- Three Francophone units: France, Wallonia, Switzerland
- Hour-long face to face interview including attitudes and demographics

Have experience of creating a set of measures out of theory...

And now I have to ensure their implementation in the field

Not directly observable, but collected through the prism of language

2. Notes on the Measurement of Class

Why Class?

- A unique concept: most disputed but most powerful
- Division of labour between those studying class structure with large data sets and those doing case studies of class-related behaviours and consciousness
- Different and complementary – but which is the independent variable?

Starting from theory

Why do we need a clear conceptual framework for class?

If we want to explain the variations in life chances we see, we need to know what we are actually measuring, if we can hope to find the mechanism

Induction v Deduction

Only a conceptual rationale allows us to maintain and revalidate a classification

A (very) brief history of (Anglo-Saxon) class schemas

- Employers, self-employed, employees
- Then within employees....
- Lockwood – Market situation v Work situation
- Goldthorpe – redevelops and formalises this in terms of ‘contractual hazards for employers’
- Asset specificity (market situation)
- Monitoring problems (work situation)

Different forms of employer response

Service relationship

Labour contract

Pure and modified forms of both (lower managers & professionals, skilled workers)

‘Mixed’ forms of employment regulation where one dimension is high and one low

Why class analysts need social surveys

- Class positions are not inherently known to respondents – they are rooted in a person's employment relations
- Can't directly measure the subtleties of a person's individual work and market situation (latent variable)
- We use a series of proxy questions to establish the employment relations that are typical of what we do know about that person's employment relations

We just need a few questions....

- Current job (in work), last job (unemployed), career typical job (retired) (1)
- Employment status (emp/self-emp) (1)
- If self-employed, how many workers, if employed how many co-workers (2)
- Supervisory responsibility? If so, how many for? (2)
- Industrial sector of job (1)
- Occupation (3)

And that's just respondents!

- Not all are economically active: if not, need to ask all those questions about partner (8)
- If no partner in place and/or if respondent living at home , may revert to status of principal parent (maybe 5, closed coded 'crude' occupation measure)
- May be interested in father and mother's class position anyway (social origins and destinations) so ask questions about them too

Occupation is Key

- Though it's nice to have full information, occupation drives 85%+ of a class allocation.
- Employment relations emerge out of occupation-specific custom and practice
- This makes its measurement crucial
- Accuracy of posting to main group (0-9)
- Precision in specifying detailed occupation within this (up to 4 digits)

Question 1 - Industry description

"What did the firm/organisation you worked for mainly make or do (at the place where

you worked)?"

(Open)

DESCRIBE FULLY - PROBE MANUFACTURING or PROCESSING or DISTRIBUTING ETC. AND MAIN GOODS PRODUCED, MATERIALS USED, WHOLESALE or RETAIL ETC."

Question 2 - Occupation title current or last main job

"What was your (main) job?"

(Open)

Question 3 - Occupation description current or last main job

"What did you mainly do in your job?"

(Open)

CHECK SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING NEEDED TO DO THE JOB

Employment status/size of organisation

Question 4 - Employee or self-employed

"Were you working as an employee or were you self-employed?"

1. Employee Go to question 5
2. Self-employed Go to question 7

The division between employees and self-employed is based on RESPONDENTS' OWN ASSESSMENT of their employment status in their main job.

Question 5 - Supervisory status

"In your job, did you have any formal responsibility for supervising the work of other employees?"

1. Yes Go to question 6
2. No Go to question 6

Include people who say they are managers

DO NOT INCLUDE:

- *supervisors of children, e.g. teachers, nannies, childminders;*
- *supervisors of animals;*
- *people who supervise security or buildings only, e.g. caretakers, security guards*

Question 6 - Number of employees (Employees)

"How many people worked for your employer at the place where you worked?"

This should be coded to 1-9; 10+. If categories are 1-10; 11+, then code to this. If 1-4; 5-19, code to 1-19, 20+.

We are interested in the size of the 'local unit of the establishment' at which the respondent works in terms of total number of employees. The 'local unit' is considered to be the geographical location where the job is mainly carried out.

Question 7 - Self-employed working on own or with employees

"Were you working on your own or did you have employees?"

1. On own/with partner(s) but no employees
2. With employees Go to question 8

Question 8 – Self-employed working on own or with employees

"How many people did you employ at the place where you worked?"

Were there ... (RUNNING PROMPT)...

0, 1-9, 10+. For other size bands, see question 6 above.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															



Class matrix for ESeC			Employment status					If missing	
Code	Description	se10+	se<10	seno	sup	emp	ess sc	mode	
010	Armed forces (officers)	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
011	Armed forces (other ranks)	3	3	3	2	3	3	emp	
100	Legislators, senior officials and managers	1	4	4	1	1	1	sup	
110	Legislators and senior officials	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
111	Legislators and senior government officials	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
114	Senior officials of special interest organisations	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
120	Other corporate managers	1	4	4	1	1	1	sup	
121	Directors and chief executives	1	4	4	1	1	1	sup	
122	Production and operations managers	1	4	4	2	2	2	sup	
123	Other specialist managers	1	4	4	1	1	1	sup	
130	Managers of small enterprises nes	1	4	4	2	2	4	self	
131	Managers of small enterprises	1	4	4	2	2	4	self	
200	Professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	emp	
210	Phys, math, engin science professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
211	Physicists, chemists and related professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
212	Mathematicians, statisticians and related professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	emp	
213	Computing professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	emp	
214	Architects, engineers and related professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
220	Life science and health professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
221	Life science professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
222	Health professionals (exc. nursing)	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
223	Nursing and midwifery professionals	1	2	2	2	2	2	sup	
230	Teaching Professionals	1	2	2	2	2	2	emp	
231	College, university and HE teaching professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	emp	
232	Secondary education teaching professionals	1	2	2	2	2	2	emp	
233	Primary and pre-primary education teaching professionals	1	2	2	2	2	2	emp	
234	Special education teaching professionals	1	2	2	2	2	2	emp	
235	Other teaching professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	emp	
240	Other professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
241	Business professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	emp	
242	Legal professionals	1	1	1	1	1	1	sup	
243	Archivists, librarians and related information professionals	1	2	2	2	2	2	emp	

The European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC)

	ESeC Class	Common Term	Employment regulation
1	Large employers, higher grade professional, administrative and managerial occupations	Higher salariat	Service Relationship
2	Lower grade professional, administrative and managerial occupations and higher grade technician and supervisory occupations	Lower salariat	Service Relationship (modified)
3	Intermediate occupations	Higher grade white collar workers	Mixed
4	Small employer and self employed occupations (exc agriculture etc)	Petit bourgeoisie or independents	Not applicable
5	Self employed occupations (agriculture etc)	Petit bourgeoisie or independents	Not applicable
6	Lower supervisory and lower technician occupations	Higher grade blue collar workers	Mixed
7	Lower services, sales and clerical occupations	Lower grade white collar workers	Labour Contract (modified)
8	Lower technical occupations	Skilled workers	Labour Contract (modified)
9	Routine occupations	Semi- and non-skilled workers	Labour Contract
10	Never worked and long-term unemployed	Unemployed	Not applicable

3. Making all this work cross-nationally

Occupation and Education

- Difficult enough to achieve in one country
- Challenge of equivalence between systems
- Income: absolute and relative (and relative to other countries)
- Education: politics and history of each system
– start from national and map to ISCED
- Respondents may ‘misclassify’ or misreport

Relying on Respondents...

- Occupation established through series of open-ended questions
- But complemented by closed coding frames in other modes (telephone, web), cheaper surveys or for proxy information (parents)
- Not naturally quantitative information like a strength of affiliation or attitude: 'thick description'
- Titles that are meaningful to respondents but officially recognised – translation exercise

...hence the importance of language

- Cadres untranslatable
- Location in public and private sector
- Managers *and* professionals
- 'Employés'
- French word for occupation is profession

- Also methodological issues:
- *PCS* about the job and the person; more inductive approach to classes

Seeing Stars?

A French view of social structure

- Not a pyramid of elite, intermediary, mass
- Not a Marxian polarisation: bourgeoisie v proletariat
- Simmel's triad and the triumph of the central group

- Cosmographic view of French society: 'clusters of stars form a number of different constellations, which are variable in size and more or less clear to behold' (Henri Mendras)

4. Some examples of language nuances

Employment Status: Source Qu.

- F12 In your main job are/were you... READ OUT...
- ...an employee,
- self-employed,
- or, working for your own family's business?

'French' French

- F12- Dans votre emploi principal êtes-vous (étiez-vous)...
- *1 ...un salarié*
- *2 ...à votre compte, travailleur indépendant*
- *3 ou collaborateur(trice) dans l'entreprise familiale*
- *4 [Ne sait pas]*
- *5 [refus]*

Belgian and Swiss French

- F12 Dans votre emploi principal êtes-vous (étiez-vous)...?
- *1: employé/e,*
- *2: indépendant/e,*
- *3: ou collaborateur/trice dans l'entreprise familiale?*
- *8: Ne sait pas*
- *7: Refus*

Supervision: Source Questionnaire

- In your main job, do/did you have any responsibility for supervising the work of other employees? [*Yes/No*]
- Key is to distinguish those whose main task is the supervision of others: avoid 'false positives'

Supervision

France/Belgian/Swiss

- F16- Dans votre emploi principal, av(i)ez-vous la responsabilité **d'encadrer d'autres personnes ? (Fr)**
- F16 Dans votre emploi principal, av(i)ez-vous la responsabilité **de superviser le travail d'autres employés ? (Be)**
- F16 è Dans votre emploi principal, av(i)ez-vous la responsabilité **de superviser le travail d'autres employés? (Ch)**

Stability of French supervision measure:

Percentage answering Yes

R1 36.0

R2 36.3

R3 38.5

R4 37.1

F54^ CARD 80 Which of the descriptions on this card best describes the sort of work he did when you were 14?

CODE ONE ANSWER ONLY

Professional and technical occupations such as: doctor – teacher – engineer – artist – accountant 01

Higher administrator occupations such as: banker – executive in big business – high government official – union official 02

Clerical occupations such as: secretary – clerk – office manager – book keeper 03

Sales occupations such as: sales manager – shop owner – shop assistant – insurance agent 04

Service occupations such as: restaurant owner – police officer – waiter – caretaker – barber –armed forces 05

Skilled worker such as: foreman – motor mechanic – printer – tool and die maker – electrician 06

Semi-skilled worker such as: bricklayer – bus driver – cannery worker – carpenter – sheet metal worker – baker 07

Unskilled worker such as: labourer – porter – unskilled factory worker 08

Farm worker such as: farmer – farm labourer– tractor driver– fisherman 09

(Don't know) 88

Categories 2 /9:

Higher Administrator occupations/Farm workers

- Membres des corps législatifs et cadres supérieurs de l'administration publique (FR)
- Cadres supérieurs (BE)
- Fonctions de direction et d'encadrement (CH)

- Agriculteurs et ouvriers agricoles, pêcheurs (FR)
- Métiers de l'agriculture (Comme : agriculteurs et ouvriers agricoles – pêcheurs) (BE)
- Travailleur agricole: **Exemples : exploitant agricole, ouvrier agricole, conducteur de tracteur (CH)

5. Challenges to Cross-national Class Analysis

More broadly

- In cross-national research, concepts have to 'travel' (as concepts, as language)
- Attitudinal items have to be 'salient'
- Terms like 'skilled', manager, supervisor, manual, blue-collar, craft, etc
- Logic of French approach is to treat labour market position more like other variables

More broadly

- Two traditions in social science
 - A) impose expert concepts from outside based on what we see
 - B) build them up from those of lay actors
- Both speaking different languages – need to understand both and move between them – ‘double hermeneutic’
- Triple hermeneutic of cross-national research!

Thanks for listening!

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