

Survey research on social structure in Poland: An overview

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Harmonized longitudinal data on social structure: Polish research in a cross-national perspective

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I. Concerning main topics and approaches

Empirical research on social stratification in Poland are conducted since the late of the 1950s.

1. They started (as it seems) from investigations made by the Jan Szczepański's team focusing on selected occupational categories, referred to the working class and intelligentsia. Mostly descriptive and local.

They: (i) casted light on occupational structure, (ii) provided theoretical background for research on social stratification defined in terms of socio-occupational categories.

1. (cont.)

Followed e.g. by Borucki's empirical studies (1971-72) on selected categories of the Polish intelligentsia.

Almost in a standstill until now – with exception of the study on coaching (Mokrzan 2019).

2. Studies on various dimensions of occupational hierarchies (e.g. Sarapata) – assessment of occupational position according to prestige, attractiveness, hardship, social utility, *iustum pretium*, and other features (local studies and administrative data).

3. Studies on occupational prestige hierarchies – since 1958 until now (Wesołowski, Sarapata, Pohoski, Słomczyński, Reszke, Domański, Sawiński, CBOS, ...).

4. Research on social stratification following design developed in the United States and applied in most Western countries was initiated by the “łódzko-szczecińsko-koszalińskie” research (1964-1967) – in various areas (social mobility, material resources, cultural consumption, stratification of values, marital choices, ...).

5. Studies on educational inequality
– Białecki, mostly Sawiński, then
e.g. Kwiek, Herbst and Rok, ...

6. Intergenerational mobility
(Zagórski, Janicka, Pohoski, Mach,
Domański, Sawiński, Przybysz,
.....)

7. Patterns of marital choices
(Warzywoda-Kruszyńska,
Kacprowicz, Domański and
Przybysz), and patterns of
friendships (Domański and
Przybysz).

8. Studies on social classes

-the working class carried out in
1950-1990 (Szczepański,
Widerszpil, Wójcik, Gilejko,
Malanowski,...)

-followed by the studies on the
working class, and small proprietors
since the 1990s (Gilejko,
Gardawski, Osborn and
Słomczyński)

9. Studies on social classes (cont.)

-”new” intelligentsia under the communist Poland (Palska)

-qualitative, local, studies on the „people’s class” (Gdula, Sadura, Szcześniak,)

-qualitative studies on how post-fordism reshapes class structure in Poland (E. Dunn, D. Ost, Gardawski).

10. Studies on social classes (cont.)

-the peasant class, basically Gorlach.

Also Halamska.

11. Formation of the „new” social classes,
typical for the market society:

-underclass (Domański)

-middle class (Mokrzycki, Domański,
Kurczewski, Leszkowicz-Baczyński, ...)

-old and new intelligentsia (Kulas) –
mostly intellectuals

-upper class, or rather business elite
(Jasiecki)

-political elites (Wasilewski, Wesołowski et
al.)

12. Studies on effect of socio-occupational position on self-direction (Słomczyński & Kohn).

13. The PGSS era (1992-2010) –
Cichomski, Zieliński, Sawiński, ...

14. Cultural stratification
researched in a systematic way –
patterns of eating, musical tastes
(Domański et al., Cebula).

Also selected questions of cultural
stratification (Žuk et al...)

15. Non-standard job forms, precariousness, and other new developments on the labor market affecting social stratification (Kiersztyn, Gardawski).

It was preceded by studies on the class structure under communist system defined in terms of social divisions (legal and illegal) created by command economy, and policy of state (Z. Zagórski). Mostly descriptive, based on local samples.

II. Concerning most important results. General tendencies, cross-time changes

Occupational prestige – stability until 1989-1990, then rapid decline in prestige of politicians.

Specificity of the Polish context:

- top position of the university professor

- still high esteem of the skilled manual workers (miner)

- very high esteem of firefighter, nurse.

Decomposition of social status
under the communist system

Followed by some rise of
meritocracy after systemic change

With **basic decline** in effect of
formal education on occupational
career since 1989/1990

Stability in educational inequalities
– displayed in non-regular changes
in effect of social origin on
educational career.

Stability in mobility patterns –
displayed in basically unchanged
effect of intergenerational mobility
on social distances.

The same holds for the class
homogamy of spouses and friends.

The “compositional” effect in mobility patterns – educational expansion **should lead** to increase in relative mobility since a large share of individuals move to an educational level for which social destinations are decoupled from social origins.

But in Poland it occurs almost **other way round**.

Thank you