

# **Social Stratification: Resources, Opportunities, and Barriers**

Polish Panel Survey POLPAN 1988–2013

Edited by  
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## **ABSTRACTS**

### **Introduction**

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The empirical foundation of this book are analyses of the Polish Panel Survey POLPAN (1988–2013), a series of integrated surveys based on face-to-face interviews conducted every five years since 1988 with a representation of adult residents of Poland. In this introduction we show how POLPAN researchers explore four social and economic phenomena that are fundamental to radical transformations of the social structure. In particular, this book centers on labor market inequalities, income inequalities and economic conditions of life, human capital – education and health, and social perceptions of public issues and life chances.

## **Part I: Labor Market Inequalities**

### **Chapter 1.**

#### **Job and Occupation – Two Forms of Social Structuration**

Krystyna Janicka

This chapter addresses (a) the persistence of the social structuration that is a result of traditional socio-occupational divisions and (b) the significance of a new type of segmentation based on employment status, sector of ownership, and workers' position in their firms' organizational hierarchy. The latter segmentation is claimed to have gained in importance as a result of market-driven and technological change, which influences the labor market and firm-level organizational practices. Given the nature and rate of this social change, the relative importance of these two forms of social structuration, one based on occupation and the other on worker status within firms, becomes an important

topic of research. Each of these two structures constitutes an important aspect of social inequality, due to their specific relation to social location, measured by education and skills, occupational complexity and material rewards. The objective of this chapter is to assess and compare the stratifying function of both types of factors in different phases of the systemic transition. The empirical analysis is based on POLPAN data covering the period 2003–2013, for an evaluation of long-term trends in social stratification.

## **Chapter 2.**

### **Fixed-term Employment and Social Structure: New Tendencies**

Anna Kiersztyn

Given the high rates of non-standard job arrangements in Poland, this study focuses on two theoretically important and policy-relevant research issues. The first question is whether such arrangements are structurally determined and cumulate in the lowest segments of the labor market. Although previous research has found a significant correlation between fixed-term employment and a weak labor market position, some researchers claim that in recent years, job insecurity associated with non-standard arrangements has also become more prevalent in higher-status, white-collar occupations. The second question is whether non-standard jobs function as stepping-stones to employment stability or as traps that lead to prolonged job insecurity and high unemployment risks. Both issues are addressed using data from the two most recent waves of POLPAN (2008 and 2013). The results suggest that certain structural characteristics, such as occupational position, have lost significance as determinants of fixed-term employment during the studied period, consistent with the hypothesis that job insecurity is no longer restricted to the lowest-status workers. The findings of this chapter also point to significant scarring effects of non-standard jobs: they are associated with higher odds of subsequent unemployment, and transitions from fixed-term to open-ended employment are relatively rare.

### **Chapter 3. Gendered Patterns of Occupational Career Interruptions**

Zbigniew Karpiński, Kinga Wysieńska-Di Carlo

Gender inequalities in the labor market take the form of pay and promotion gaps, as well as different risks of experiencing career interruptions and varying lengths of unemployment spells. Whereas gender pay gaps and various kinds of occupational segregation are relatively well-researched in Poland, the risk of career interruptions and the chances of finding a job after such interruptions require more examination. The chapter fills this knowledge gap by describing and interpreting gender differences in occupational career interruption patterns, using data from five waves of the Polish Panel Survey POLPAN (1993–2013). Our analyses suggest that gender is significantly linked to the risk of career interruption, even after controlling for differences in human capital characteristics and available measures of productivity.

### **Chapter 4. Uncertain Participation: Youth at the Onset of Their Careers**

Anna Kiersztyn

Previous research in Poland and elsewhere has shown that the process of youth entry into the labor market has become longer, more complicated, and less predictable, as young graduates are increasingly affected by unstable employment relations and persistent job insecurity. This chapter analyses youth school-to-work transitions in Poland based on data from the 2008 and 2013 waves of POLPAN. According to the findings, one source of job precarization for Polish 21–30-year-olds is the tendency to enter into employment at a younger age, and to combine work with school or university attendance. However, regression analyses also suggest that the completion of education, even at a higher level, no longer protects younger workers against non-standard employment. Descriptive analyses of career sequence patterns among Polish youth demonstrate that the most common pattern, experienced by more than 50% of individuals whose first job was on a fixed-term contract, is that of precarious employment, characterized by a higher number of job episodes and longer spells of unemployment between jobs. These results raise doubts regarding the role of non-standard employment at labor market entry as facilitating subsequent labor market integration.

## Part II: Income Inequality and Economic Conditions of Life

### Chapter 5.

#### The Dynamics of Change in Household Composition and Households' Position in the Income Distribution

Marcin W. Zieliński

The first part of this chapter discusses general trends in household size in Poland throughout the past decades and tests the hypothesis that regardless of household size in a given wave, changes in the number of household members between waves are correlated with changes in these households' relative income position. In the second part, multi-level difference score models are used to examine how changes in the structural characteristics of households determine their upward or downward movement between *per capita* income quintiles. The chapter is based on data from five waves of POLPAN (1993–2013). Findings confirm that changes in household size and composition are associated with a higher likelihood of households' movement in the income distribution. The main conclusion is that households that increased in size deteriorated in their relative income position. These negative changes were particularly related to the addition of children to the household but also to the presence of children in the household at any given time.

### Chapter 6.

#### Network, Market, or Hierarchy: What Best Explains Poland's Housing Situation?

Anna Gromada

Housing inequality is usually described as differences in housing qualities, measured by size and other attributes of peoples' dwellings. The chapter has two goals: (a) to examine the extent to which housing inequalities in Poland have increased after the political transition of 1989, and (b) to analyze the explanatory power of network, market, or political hierarchy in accounting for the housing situation. To that end, the study uses ANOVA and linear regression models and presents descriptive statistics, using data from all six waves of the Polish Panel Survey POLPAN (1988–2013). The chapter concludes that housing inequalities have risen but can no longer be accounted for by differences between the 14 socio-occupational categories that, according to various analyses conducted in Poland on the basis of *Social Classification of Occupations*, demarcate

class boundaries. In turn, the floor area per person is explained primarily by market logic and, secondarily, by network, albeit by its “family”, not “friends” component. Political hierarchy remains statistically insignificant.

## **Chapter 7.**

### **A Sense of Economic Deprivation: Growing Aspirations or Actual Poverty?**

Danuta Życzyńska-Ciołek

This chapter describes the subjective sense of economic deprivation declared by POLPAN respondents and its relationship with objective indicators of poverty and household resources. The main goal is to determine whether the sense of economic deprivation indicates true hardship, or is, in an increasingly affluent society, a result of social comparisons. Hypothetically, subjective feelings of deprivation could occur even as one’s objective economic situation improves, reflecting increasing consumption aspirations. Using various methodological tools, this study (a) focuses on cross-sectional comparisons of data between 2008 and 2013 to analyze changes in subjective deprivation and its correlation with objective indicators; (b) explores panel data to determine whether the strength of this correlation changes if subjective deprivation is a lasting or repeated experience; (c) analyzes the relationship between the sense of economic deprivation in 2013 and socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and their households, controlling for the sense of deprivation reported five years earlier. In statistical terms, persons declaring a sense of deprivation do in fact experience true economic hardship and their declarations are not entirely explained by growing aspirations. Generally, however, subjective deprivation reflects both objective circumstances and subjective assessments of one’s wealth, and the relative importance of these two changes through time.

## Part III: Human Capital – Education and Health

### **Chapter 8.**

#### **Gender, Meritocracy, and Market Transition**

Zbigniew Sawiński

In this chapter, two models of meritocracy were developed to explain the earnings of men and women under state socialism in Poland. The first model,

called “progressive meritocracy”, applies mainly to men. Young males who chose well paid manual jobs in industry began their careers relatively early, after basic vocational training. Some years later, their earnings were higher than the initial earnings of secondary and tertiary graduates who entered the labor market at an older age. In subsequent years, these differences were reversed due to the higher availability of promotion opportunities among the more highly educated. In contrast, among women, the relationship between earnings and education is explained by an alternative model, called “stable meritocracy”. Women were rarely promoted at work, so the initial differences in the earnings of graduates with various levels of education did not change in later career years. The presence of these gender differences under socialism has been confirmed by the results of the POLPAN 1988 study. However, data from the 2013 wave of POLPAN demonstrated that both models of meritocracy, progressive for men and stable for women, persist after the transition to a market economy. This indicates the importance of gender roles. Other studies referenced in this chapter confirm that when gender roles are more traditional, men achieve higher financial returns to education at later stages of their careers.

## Chapter 9.

### How Do We Age? Health of Men and Women Aged Sixty and Older

Małgorzata Mikucka, Weronika Boruc

Because of the backdrop of increasing life expectancy and an aging population, the quality of life among the elderly gains importance from the perspectives of the individual and social policy. This study aims to describe health and its changes among elderly people (aged 60+) in Poland, and tests the hypothesis that economic and social resources correlate with (a) better health status and (b) a slower health decline in old age. We apply first difference and random-effects models to POLPAN (2008–2013) data, accounting for changes in time. Our results show that material resources, such as socioeconomic position and income, correlate positively with physical and emotional health. Moreover, people with better material resources experience a slower health decline as they age. Social resources and their changes correlate with better mental health, and better physical health, at least in some dimensions. Our study emphasizes the multidimensional character of social inequalities and points to the importance of social resources for various aspects of life.

## **Chapter 10. English or Russian? Foreign Language Skills and Their Structural Determinants**

Ilona Wysmułek, Olena Oleksiyenko

The main purpose of this chapter is to analyze the effect of structural factors, such as parental socio-economic status, respondents' age, gender, and place of residence, on the probability of speaking foreign languages, English and/or Russian. Despite the great importance of foreign language proficiency for the chances of finding employment, its determinants are rarely a subject of sociological analysis. Our analyses, overcoming this deficiency, explore POLPAN (2013) data in which ca. 50% of respondents declare the ability to fluently communicate in at least one foreign language. This ability depends, to a great extent, on social origin: the higher the parental status the higher the probability of knowing a foreign language. The relationship with age is non-linear: younger and older people have higher chances of speaking a foreign language than middle-aged people. We hypothesized that younger and older people differ with respect to the language spoken. Indeed, younger people (especially from medium and large-sized cities, having a mother with higher education) are more likely to speak English, while older people (especially from rural areas, with a mother without higher education) have a larger probability of speaking Russian. While we found no correlation between gender and English language skills, in the case of knowing Russian, females are more likely to speak this language than males.

## **Chapter 11. Do Overweight and Obesity Correlate with Social Disadvantage and Worse Health?**

Małgorzata Mikucka, Weronika Boruc

This study tests two hypotheses that till now have been largely ignored by Polish researchers. First, we test whether excessive body weight is a symptom of negative social privilege. Second, we investigate whether being overweight or obese increases the risk of experiencing health problems. We apply regression methods for panel data of POLPAN (2008–2013). Our results show a modest and inconsistent correlation between an increased risk of obesity and overweight on the one hand and social disadvantage on the other. This

suggests that excessive body weight results from lifestyle choices and habits rather than from limited access to economic resources. Second, we show that obesity, but not overweight, correlates with poor physical health, as measured by various indicators: Nottingham Health Profile scores for pain and impaired mobility, and the respondents' subjective assessments of their general health. However, overweight correlates positively with mental health and negatively with emotional problems. This leads to the conclusion that being overweight in Poland does not constitute a health risk factor as such; the main risk is the increased risk of obesity later in life.

## Part IV: Social Perceptions of Public Issues and Life Chances

### Chapter 12.

#### **Perceived Determinants of Success: Factors, Directions and Dynamics of Change**

Anna Baczko-Dombi, Ilona Wysmułek

Perceived determinants of success are understood as factors that people consider important for individuals' success in life, subjectively defined. POLPAN (1988–2013) contains items on such determinants of success, including ambition, knowing the right people, hard work, political influence, coming from a rich family, a good education, luck, and innate ability and talent. Using factor analysis, we develop two indexes capturing the latent constructs of “meritocracy” and “family and friends.” We investigate how these constructs are influenced by socio-demographic characteristics and social class. In addition, we analyze changing attitudes towards the particular determinants falling within each construct. We also examine how individual opinions regarding the determinants of success change over time. Since our analyses are based on data from all six waves of POLPAN, we compare attitudes towards success just before the start of the post-communist transition to those observed every five years thereafter, emphasizing the most recent changes in attitudes.

## **Chapter 13. Self-interest and Attitudes Towards the Welfare State**

Kinga Wysieńska-Di Carlo, Matthew Di Carlo

We present the results of our analysis of the relationships between selected indicators of individual socio-economic position and attitudes towards redistribution and welfare state. The selection of indicators was based on their assumed links to perceived self-interest. The results of a cross-sectional analysis using POLPAN 2013 data indicate that a relationship between the measures of socio-economic and class position on the one hand, and preferences regarding the welfare state on the other, is substantively and statistically significant. We show that subjectively perceived socioeconomic position is systematically related to such preferences, even after controlling for traditional measures of objective social status and class. Moreover, using a dynamic model based on data from all six waves of POLPAN, we demonstrate that changes in subjective and objective social status and class positions are mirrored in individual support for redistribution and the welfare state. Advancement in educational level and increases in income have a negative effect on support for redistribution. However, gaining full-time employment, after a spell of unemployment, is only linked to changes in opinion about the state's role in creating jobs. Similarly, changes in subjective socioeconomic position are shown to be related only to changes in opinions regarding the state's involvement in providing free education for poor children.

## **Chapter 14. The Government against Corruption? Public Perceptions of Efforts to Fight Corruption**

Ilona Wysmulek

This chapter examines changes in the perception of corruption and the evaluation of government efforts to reduce it in the context of economic and political changes during the post-1989 transformation in Poland. I use data from four waves of the Polish Panel Survey POLPAN (1993, 2003, 2008, 2013). The 1993 data provide information on perceptions of corruption, while data from the 2003 and 2008 waves on the respondents' views of the potential impact of government on corruption. The analyses focus on the 2013 wave to investigate socio-demographic characteristics and political attitudes of those who are unsatisfied with the government's efforts in fighting corruption. The results point

to a strong association between the perception of government effectiveness and party affiliation, age, and the level of political trust. The results also show that, regardless of changes in the ruling parties, Poles tend to consider the government to be highly corrupt and persistently ineffective in fighting corruption.

## Chapter 15. Dynamics of Eurosceptic Attitudes

Katarzyna Andrejuk, Dariusz Przybysz

Eurosceptic attitudes appear to be increasingly common in the public discourse of various countries. “Bottom-up” Euroscepticism is reflected, among other things, in the results of the Brexit referendum (2016), when UK citizens supported the exit of their country from the EU. The article uses data from three successive waves of POLPAN (2003, 2008 and 2013) to present how attitudes towards the EU in Poland changed from 2003 to 2013, that is, before the accession, and after a decade of Polish membership in the EU. The analyses demonstrate how Eurosceptic attitudes were influenced by occupational categories, education, migration experience, and access to friends or family networks abroad. The results indicate that Eurosceptic attitudes are relatively more frequent among older respondents and those with a lower level of education. Supporters of EU membership are well-educated, and come from the occupational categories of experts, managers, and entrepreneurs. Data for 2013 also shows that EU integration is positively evaluated by migrants (people who took advantage of free movement among the EU countries) and agricultural workers (beneficiaries of EU financial subsidies).

## Conclusion

Anna Kiersztyn, Kazimierz M. Słomczyński

In conclusion, we locate the contributions of this book in the context of Polish sociology which reveals increasing interest in social classes understood in relational terms, including their cultural component. We underscore that this book is written from a social stratification perspective and contains dynamic analyses, based not only on cross-sectional comparisons in time, but also on individual-level changes or more advanced techniques of mixed effect regression models suited to the panel data.