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Coming to Grips with a Changing Class Structure

An Analysis of Employment Stratification in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland



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abstract: Over the last 30 years, trends such as service sector growth, welfare state expansion and rising female participation rates have promoted increasing heterogeneity within the occupational system. Accordingly, this article argues that the class map has to be redrawn in order to grasp these changes in the employment structure. For that purpose, it develops the bases of a new class schema that partly shifts its focus from hierarchical divisions to horizontal cleavages. The middle class is not conceptualized as a unitary grouping and the manual/non-manual divide is not used as a decisive class boundary. Instead, emphasis is put on differences in marketable skills and the work logic. The schema is expected to more accurately reflect the class location of unskilled service employees and to make visible the political divide within the salaried middle class. This expectation is empirically examined with survey data from Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. Findings for earnings and promotion prospects indicate that the schema successfully captures the hierarchical dimension in the class structure. Moreover, results for party support and union membership suggest that the schema grasps a salient horizontal cleavage between managers and sociocultural professionals.

keywords: class analysis ♦ class voting ♦ electoral sociology ♦ employment structure ♦ socioeconomic inequalities

Introduction

In the 1990s, political scientists and sociologists engaged in a heated debate on the salience of the concept of class. Some authors argued that social classes are dying, others made a case for the persistent significance of class for the understanding of modern societies' workings (e.g. Lee and Turner, 1996; Evans, 1999, 2000; Clark and Lipset, 2001; Brettschneider

et al., 2002). While this controversy attracted much interest, surprisingly little attention was paid to the fact that class analysis still rests on concepts developed during the Golden Age of Capitalism. The dominant class schema in European sociology, associated with the writings of Robert Erikson and John H. Goldthorpe, largely reflects the occupational system prevailing up to the mid-1970s, typical of high industrialism. Yet over the last 30 years, trends such as service sector growth, welfare state expansion and rising female participation rates have substantially altered Western Europe's employment structure. At the upper end of the occupational hierarchy, educational upgrading has fostered the growth of the salaried middle class. At the lower end, deindustrialization has reduced the numbers of the unskilled industrial workforce, while routine service jobs taken on by women have been on the rise. The occupational system has thus become both more heterogeneous and more opaque.

Accordingly, this article argues that the class map has to be redrawn in order to integrate into class analysis these shifts in the employment structure. For that purpose, the theoretical bases of a new class schema are outlined that partly shifts its focus from hierarchical boundaries to horizontal cleavages: the salaried middle class is not conceptualized as a unitary grouping and the manual/non-manual divide not used as a class boundary. Instead, heavy emphasis is put on the difference in the work logic of various occupational groups. In a second step, this new class schema is used to empirically analyse aspects of employment stratification in Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. Based on individual data stemming from socioeconomic surveys, my comparative analysis looks at two different sets of variables: it first focuses on the distribution of material advantages across the class schema, examining earnings differentials and promotion prospects. Second, it explores the sociostructural context of political mobilization and looks at party support and trade union membership of different classes.

Employment Shifts and an Opaque Class Structure

Over the last 30 years, the spectacular expansion of service jobs stands in sharp contrast with deindustrialization and the massive decline in the ranks of blue-collar workers. In parallel, new production methods have led to a skill upgrading of the shrinking industrial workforce and thus blurred the distinction between worker and employee status (Gallie, 1996; Müller and Noll, 1996; Kern, 1998). In terms of class enquiry, these developments pose an analytical challenge on the level of both the working and the middle classes.

On the level of the working class, low-skilled occupations have not

disappeared from labour markets dominated by large service sectors: sales assistants, cooks in fast-food outlets, call centre clerks or assistant nurses are all employed in jobs to which no middle-class status attaches. Although employees in routine sales and service occupations do not benefit from more advantageous working conditions than (mostly) male production workers, these mainly female workers do not fit easily into established class schemas. Division lines typical of industrial employment such as the blue-collar/white-collar boundary or the manual/non-manual divide are of little use when dealing with these occupational groups. Hence, it has been argued that the transformation imposed upon production workers and the presence of various types of 'service workers' and 'low-level employees' have created 'a twilight zone between the working and the middle classes' (Sainsbury, 1987: 508).

A similar problem of analytical opacity emerges when shifting the focus to the salaried middle class. Educational upgrading, service expansion and welfare state development have not only fostered the growth of managerial and professional staff, but also promoted increasing heterogeneity within its ranks (Crouch, 1999; Goos and Manning, 2003). In consequence, it has become quite unpromising to account for the political behaviour of the salaried middle class conceptualized as a unitary category: variance in party support within the middle class has come to approximate variance within the entire population (Kriesi, 1998). Yet while it is apparent that the salaried middle class is made up of factions that occupy very different positions in the labour market, attempts in the literature to account for this heterogeneity have been few (Joye and Schuler, 1995; Müller, 1999; Güveli et al., 2003; van de Werfhorst and de Graaf, 2004) and, to a large extent, concentrated on the difference between professionals and managers (Savage et al., 1992; Manza and Brooks, 1999). The bulk of research into social mobility and class voting continues to rely on the manual/non-manual divide and to treat the salaried middle class as a monolithic bloc (e.g. Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1993; Shavit and Müller, 1998; Evans, 1999). Hence, my objective in constructing a new class schema is to shed light on the twilight zone making up the working class and to enquire into the monolithic bloc of the salaried middle class.

A New Class Schema Based on Differences in the Work Logic

As starting point of the schema, I adopt Erikson and Goldthorpe's concept of employment relationship in order to differentiate between more or less advantageous positions within labour markets and production units (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1993: 37). Although Erikson and Goldthorpe repeatedly insist on the categorical and non-hierarchical properties of their

schema, their concept of employment relationship indisputably contains a major hierarchical component (see Prandy, 2000: 250; Oesch, 2003: 250–1). This hierarchical dimension results from employers' rational action: depending on the importance of an employee's marketable skills, employers will offer a more or less advantageous employment relationship in order to obtain maximal productivity from their personnel (Evans and Mills, 2000; Goldthorpe, 2000: 206–29). Hence, when seen from the employer's perspective, members of the middle class on the one hand, and the large category comprising the 'twilight zone' of low-skilled service employees and production workers on the other, may appear to be relatively homogeneous – to the extent that a comparable degree of advantage applies to their employment relationship. However, when looked at from the employee's perspective, important horizontal differences persist within these two categories (Müller, 1999: 143). This is quite evident for industrial operatives, clerical employees and service workers, three groups that clearly evolve in different work environments and production units. Likewise, structural cleavages appear to run through the salaried middle class and separate professionals in the social and cultural services from technical experts and managers (Kriesi, 1989). In consequence, I argue that greater analytical salience is attained by adding a horizontal criterion to the vertical class criterion. Hence, mounting employment heterogeneity is analysed by combining the hierarchical perspective of the employer (the demand side of the labour market) with the horizontal perspective of the employee (the supply side of the labour market).

While hierarchical differences are usefully captured by varying degrees of advantage attaching to the employment relationship (Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1993), horizontal differentiation is less easily conceptualized. Unlike Wright (1985), Runciman (1990) or Savage et al. (1992), I do not believe horizontal differences to be primarily rooted in diverse assets, sources of economic power or educational resources. In particular, the division between managers relying on organizational authority and professionals depending on expertise seems too simplistic. With the proliferation of business schools, managers have become increasingly skill-dependent and thus professionalized. Moreover, the use of an asset-based dividing line is strictly limited to the middle class, as assets and educational resources are of little value when distinguishing within the large group of production workers and routine sales and service employees. It appears more productive to enlarge the asset-based approach by drawing on contributions made by authors such as Kriesi (1989), Esping-Andersen (1993b), Kitschelt (1994), Gallie et al. (1998) or Müller (1999). In their attempt to capture shifts in stratification, these authors put heavy emphasis on the nature of employees' work experience, their work role and their insertion into the division of labour. Whether conceptualized as

a threefold antagonism within the salaried middle class (Kriesi, 1989, 1998; Müller, 1999), as an opposition between a 'Fordist' and a 'postindustrial' class hierarchy (Esping-Andersen, 1993b) or as a contrast between occupations dealing with 'human individuality' as opposed to occupations involving object- or document-related tasks (Kitschelt, 1994: 18; Gallie et al., 1998), the decisive element of horizontal differentiation is in all three cases the work logic in which employees evolve.

Taking this criterion a step further, I identify three basically different work logics within the large category of employees: a *technical work logic*, an *organizational work logic* and an *interpersonal work logic*. Depending on whether an occupation involves the deployment of technical expertise and craft, the administration of organizational power or face-to-face attendance to people's personal demands, the work logic and primary orientation differ in fundamental ways. I argue that this criterion of work logic horizontally discriminates between categories that may appear homogeneous with respect to their employment relationship. The concept of work logic captures differences between occupations: in (1) the setting of the work process (the potential for division of labour), (2) the nature of authority relations, (3) the ensuing primary orientations and (4) the skill requirements. Based on these four dimensions, the salient features of each work logic are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 *The Dimensions at the Basis of the Three Different Work Logics of Employees*

	Technical work logic	Organizational work logic	Interpersonal work logic
1. <i>Setting of work process</i>	Work process determined by technical production parameters	Bureaucratic division of labour	Service setting based on face-to-face exchange
2. <i>Relations of authority</i>	Working outside the lines of command for higher grades, working within a clear-cut command structure for lower grades	Working within a bureaucratic command structure that corresponds to a career sequence	Working largely outside the lines of command
3. <i>Primary orientation</i>	Orientation towards the professional community or group of trades	Primary orientation towards the employing organization	Orientation towards the client, student, patient or petitioner
4. <i>Skill requirements</i>	Scientific expertise for higher grades, crafts and manual skills for lower grades	Coordination and control skills for higher grades, clerical skills for lower grades	Expertise and communicative skills for higher grades, social skills for lower grades

Although the distinction between the three work logics is schematic, it closely overlaps with empirically observable cleavages in the employment structure. Hence at the level of the middle class, it reflects central differences between categories such as technicians (e.g. computer assistants), associate managers (e.g. junior financial managers) and sociocultural semi-professionals (e.g. social workers) who otherwise, on the basis of their similarly advantageous employment relationships, would be placed in the same class.¹ The associate manager, as part of the bureaucratic division of labour, depends on his/her ability to coordinate and control others, while evolving him/herself in a clear-cut command structure. Through his/her (present or future) participation in organizational power, the associate manager is expected to show a high level of loyalty towards the employing organization. In contrast, the sociocultural semi-professional is primarily dependent on communicative skills (and expertise) and evolves in an autonomous work setting where authority relations are diluted. As the sociocultural semi-professional depends on the cooperation of her/his 'clients' (students or patients) in providing her/his services, she/he is likely to advocate their interests against organizational interference. Finally, the technician is in an intermediate position. The technician's daily work experience makes him/her more likely to direct his/her primary orientation towards his/her professional community than the organization. At the same time, the technical nature of his/her work tasks provides more potential for the division of labour than is the case in the interpersonal service logic. At the level of the working class, the same criterion of work logic captures the horizontal differences between categories that in terms of hierarchy are not easily separated, such as routine operatives (e.g. assemblers) in the technical work logic, routine office clerks (e.g. mail sorting clerks) in the organizational work logic and routine service workers (e.g. nursing aides) in the interpersonal work logic.

Table 2 assembles the class schema resulting from the combination of the two axes: the vertical axis differentiates classes according to the level of marketable skills attaching to an occupation and provides a proxy for the degree of advantage in the employment relationship; the horizontal axis discriminates between different work logics. Based on the employment status, I separate into a fourth work logic employers and the self-employed from employed wage-earners. By adding this *independent work logic*, I obtain the 17-class schema shown in the table. Each work logic gives rise to a separate hierarchy that is dominated by a professional or managerial class and ends off with a routine class, defined by low skill levels. For each class I have listed two frequent and characteristic occupations (for a more in-depth discussion of the schema, see Oesch, 2006).

While this 17-class schema permits a detailed analysis of the employment structure, there are practical reasons speaking in favour of a tighter

Table 2 *The 17-Class (and Collapsed Eight-Class) Schema Based on Different Work Logics*

Self-employed		Employees			
Independent work logic		Technical work logic	Organizational work logic	Interpersonal service work logic	
Large employers (>9) Firm owners Salesmen	Self-employed professionals Lawyers Accountants	Technical experts Mechanical engineers Computing professionals	Higher-grade managers and administrators Business administrators Financial managers	Sociocultural professionals University teachers Journalists	Professional/ managerial/
Petite bourgeoisie with employees (<9) Restaurant owners Farmers		Technicians Electrical technicians Safety inspectors	Associate managers and administrators Managers in small firms Tax officials	Sociocultural semi-professionals Primary school teachers Social workers	Associate professional/ managerial
Petite bourgeoisie without employees Shopkeepers Hairdressers		Skilled crafts Machinery mechanics Carpenters	Skilled office Secretaries Bank tellers	Skilled service Children's nurses Cooks	Generally/ vocationally
		Routine operatives Assemblers Machine operators	Routine agriculture Farm hands Loggers	Routine office Mail sorting clerks Call centre employees	Low/ unskilled

Marketable skills:

Solid lines indicate how classes are to be collapsed into the eight-class version.

version of the schema. Besides having the merit of greater parsimony, collapsed versions often respond to the statistical necessity of having sufficiently large cell counts. Accordingly, the detailed 17-class version can be collapsed into an eight-class version as indicated by the solid lines in Table 2.

It is obvious that these categories are not social classes in the Weberian sense of groupings that share a collective identity and a common organization over time. Our use of the class concept comes closer to what Scott (1994: 934) labels class locations – defined as the present market and work situation pertaining to the individual – than to the more encompassing concept of social class, defined as the larger demographic unit pertaining to the family household. Scott's concept of class location is very similar to what Kocka calls an economic class: individuals who, due to a common economic position, may share latent interests, but not necessarily anything else (Kocka, 1980: 104). The concept stands in contrast to the more ambitious notion of social class, understood as a unit sharing a collective identity and a common organization. Hence, our use of the class term is not fundamentally different from theoretically less burdened concepts such as occupational category or social stratum.

Data, Target Population and Class Operationalization

This study examines employment stratification for Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. The first three countries constitute prime examples of Esping-Andersen's (1990) different welfare regimes: Britain stands for the liberal, Germany for the conservative and Sweden for the social democratic regime. Switzerland is a hybrid case, 'a continental model with a liberal face' (Armingeon, 2001: 150). For these four countries exist datasets that are both sufficiently large and include detailed information about employment, the workplace and political behaviour. For Britain, data are taken from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), year 1999, for Germany from the German Socioeconomic Panel (GSOEP), year 2000, for Sweden from the Level-of-Living Survey (LNU), year 2000, and for Switzerland from the Swiss Household Panel (SHP), year 1999.² If not otherwise stated, I work with cross-sectional weight variables in order to improve the representativeness of the British, German and Swiss sample. There has been no weighting of the Swedish LNU data.

As my focus lies on class locations as opposed to social classes, I prefer the individual over the household as unit of analysis. In the target population, I analyse only men and women aged 20–65 years, who spend at least 20 hours per week in paid work, thus avoiding deriving a class position from the employment of individuals that are only marginally

involved in the labour market.³ This leaves me with large samples of between 11,477 (Germany) and 3304 (Sweden) individuals.

When allocating individuals to the class schema, I rely on information from three variables:

1. About the *employment status*, separating employers and the self-employed from the much larger group of employees;
2. About the *number of employees*, distinguishing between large and small employers on the one hand and the self-employed without employees on the other;
3. About the *occupational title*, assigning individuals to different work logics and different hierarchical levels on the basis of their occupation.

Indisputably, the last information is of greatest consequence for the construction of the class schema. In order to distinguish as precisely as possible between different occupations, I have used the International Standard Classification of Occupations 1988 (ISCO-88) at the detailed four-digit level for the British, German and Swiss samples. For the Swedish sample, data are classified according to NYK-83 (Nordic Occupational Classification) at the three-digit level. The degree of specificity is rather similar for the four datasets: 216 occupational codes are distinguished in the Swiss sample, 267 in the Swedish, 298 in the German and 300 in the British. The allocation process undoubtedly implies subjective judgement about the work logic and employment relationship of occupational groups, and thus provides large ground for disagreement. I answer this concern by making my choices as transparent as possible and thus display in the Appendix the ISCO codes attributed to each class (see Table A1). For a series of intermediate jobs, occupational information is, even at the detailed level of ISCO four-digit, too general for allocation within the schema.⁴ Hence, although I agree that skills only matter if they are exploited, I have chosen to include educational information when allocating individuals employed in intermediate occupations to the class schema.⁵ I summarize the procedure followed to apply the class schema in Table A2 in the Appendix.

In the literature, controversy occurs over the question whether education may be used to construct class variables. While, in theory, it is desirable to keep the effects of education and class separate (Rose and Pevalin, 2003), in the practice of commonly used occupational data, the two concepts are closely linked to each other (Elias, 1997). In effect, the international standard ISCO-88 has explicitly been designed around the skills required for competent performance of the job and is thus strongly related to the amount of formal education and training generally associated with competent task performance (Elias, 1997: 7). Besides the (dominant) practical concern, there is also a theoretical rationale for integrating educational

information when allocating individuals employed in intermediate jobs, as it allows us to account for the crucial skill barrier that separates vocationally (or generally) trained workers from their unskilled colleagues. Particularly in Germany and Switzerland, vocational training is a precondition for entering the labour force in a skilled rather than an unskilled occupation (Müller et al., 1998; Buchmann and Sacchi, 1998). This skill barrier basically remains insurmountable for unskilled workers over time (Blossfeld et al., 1993: 114).⁶

Comparing the Class Distribution of the Workforce

The focus of this empirical analysis lies on both vertical and horizontal segregation within the employment structure. Accordingly, variables are selected to reflect, on the one hand, the distribution of material advantage across the schema (a dimension that I expect to follow hierarchical lines), and, on the other, the structural context of political mobilization (a dimension that may reveal horizontal differences). Analyses are divided into three parts. In the first part, I briefly map out the class distribution of the workforce in the four countries under study, paying attention to differences in the work logic and gender. In the second part, focus is shifted to the vertical dimension of the schema by examining the relationship between class and different hierarchical indicators such as work income and promotion chances. Finally, I enquire into the class character of party support and trade union membership.

The analysis starts out with a look at the distribution of economically active individuals across classes and work logics (Table 3). Employment shares for the different work logics closely reflect national differences in the economic trajectory. To begin with, Britain's employment clusters heavily in the organizational work logic and features an unusually large share of both managerial and clerical jobs. This is likely the result of the expansion of business services in general and finance in particular. In comparison, Sweden features a much lower share of managerial and clerical personnel. The finding that Sweden is 'undermanaged' is not new and has been accounted for by the country's large public sector (Ahrne and Wright, 1983: 223). In effect, Table 3 clearly reveals the importance of Sweden's social democratic welfare regime: a third of Swedish employment is set in the interpersonal work logic that comprises jobs in health, education and social services. In contrast, the still markedly industrial character of the German economy is apparent from the large proportion of individuals employed as crafts workers or routine operatives: 25 percent of total employment. Finally, Switzerland combines a substantial share of managers with a comparatively large proportion of self-employed: as in Sweden, the two categories forming

Table 3 *Distribution of Economically Active Individuals Across the Four Work Logics and Classes (in Percentages); Women's Share in Each Class in Percentages (as Part of Total) is Shown in Parentheses*

	Britain 1999		Germany 2000		Sweden 2000		Switzerland 1999	
Independent work logic	11.5	(21)	9.9	(30)	14.9	(33)	15.2	(29)
Large employers	0.8	(35)	0.5	(14)	1.2	(23)	1.1	(26)
Self-employed professionals	1.6	(31)	2.2	(22)	2.0	(21)	2.8	(19)
Petite bourgeoisie w. employees	2.7	(21)	3.1	(28)	3.4	(33)	4.0	(26)
Petite bourgeoisie w/o employees	6.4	(17)	4.1	(37)	8.4	(36)	7.3	(35)
Technical work logic	27.3	(17)	36.1	(15)	30.2	(19)	31.3	(18)
Technical experts	3.8	(16)	4.5	(14)	5.9	(25)	6.0	(8)
Technicians	3.6	(35)	4.9	(27)	6.0	(28)	5.5	(21)
Skilled crafts	9.9	(7)	13.1	(6)	8.6	(9)	9.7	(7)
Routine operatives	8.9	(23)	12.0	(20)	9.0	(18)	8.5	(31)
Routine agricultural	1.1	(6)	1.6	(26)	0.6	(10)	1.6	(39)
Organizational work logic	35.6	(51)	27.2	(54)	21.8	(57)	27.4	(46)
Higher-grade managers	12.2	(33)	7.3	(30)	7.7	(42)	9.4	(28)
Associate managers	7.5	(47)	8.1	(58)	8.2	(52)	8.2	(40)
Skilled office	11.4	(69)	9.0	(65)	3.2	(95)	6.5	(71)
Routine office	4.5	(60)	2.8	(68)	2.7	(74)	3.3	(64)
Interpersonal service logic	25.7	(65)	26.9	(61)	33.1	(71)	26.1	(53)
Sociocultural professionals	4.4	(58)	4.8	(51)	5.1	(51)	6.2	(36)
Sociocultural semi-professionals	5.9	(80)	6.7	(75)	7.9	(80)	6.9	(63)
Skilled service	6.1	(54)	4.3	(47)	9.4	(74)	3.7	(50)
Routine service	9.3	(67)	11.1	(62)	10.8	(73)	9.3	(57)
N	6851		11,979		3304		3869	

Sources: Britain BHPS 1999; Germany GSOEP 2000; Sweden LNU 2000; Switzerland SHP 1999.

the petite bourgeoisie account for more than 10 percent of total employment in Switzerland.

With respect to gender, the figures showing women's share within each class (figures in parentheses in Table 3) reveal heavily segregated labour markets. Among the self-employed and in the technical work logic, women are a small minority in all four countries. In particular, the skilled crafts appear almost exclusively reserved for men. In contrast, women make up a large majority within the interpersonal service logic: this is not surprising as it is in these classes that traditional domestic tasks such as laundering, food catering, care of preschoolers and the elderly have been incorporated into the formal economy. Growth in these classes is, to a large extent, the consequence of the expansion of public welfare (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Charles, 2000). The most balanced composition in terms of horizontal gender segregation is found in the office. However, this conceals considerable hierarchical gender segregation: in all four countries, men tend to work in managerial positions and women fill the clerical ranks (Charles, 2003).

The Distribution of Advantage across Classes

I focus on two indicators to measure the hierarchical dimension within the employment structure: work income and promotion prospects. As a measure of material advantage, heavy emphasis must be laid on the role of earnings: an employment relationship essentially boils down to an exchange of work effort for economic resources. In order to separate the class effect from that of other determinants of earnings such as age and gender, I resort to multivariate analyses and estimate a basic wage equation with ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. The converted regression coefficients are displayed for all classes in Table 4. Their interpretation is straightforward: the percentages shown present the wage increase that goes along with being in a given class as compared to being in the lowest-paid class of routine service workers, sex, age and employment status being held constant. They reveal a clear-cut contrast between the most and the least advantaged classes. Moreover, it is apparent that routine operatives earn in all four countries higher wages than routine service workers. This gives us a first hint as to the misfit of the manual/non-manual divide. In terms of work income, the two manual classes of craft workers and operatives are nowhere situated at the very bottom of the hierarchy. Low income is concentrated – besides in the very small agricultural class – among routine service workers, a category whose standard work tasks cannot be described as manual.

In terms of pay, there is no evidence for a manual/non-manual divide. But by focusing on presently received compensation, I make an essentially

Table 4 *Wage Differentials and Promotion Prospects of Different Classes*

	Wage premium associated with being in a given class as compared to the routine service class (in %) ^a (converted OLS regression coefficients)				Share of individuals having promotion prospects in current job ^b			
	GB 99	DE 00	SE 00	CH 99	GB 99	DE 00	SE 00	CH 99
Large employers	28	116	46	63	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Self-employed professionals	18	75	27	66	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Petite bourgeoisie w. employees	(1)	36	0	(9)	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Petite bourgeoisie w/o employees	-14	(10)	(-14)	(-7)	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Technical experts	109	92	57	75	62	80	94	58
Technicians	61	44	20	32	52	73	85	45
Skilled crafts	37	16	8	17	43	67	75	44
Routine operatives	15	(4)	(3)	11	38	53	68	38
Higher-grade managers	116	81	60	60	60	77	80	49
Associate managers	53	45	25	59	56	70	84	44
Office clerks	33	38	7	31	51	70	72	39
Sociocultural professionals	118	90	30	66	59	75	77	31
Sociocultural semi-professionals	94	50	19	63	63	72	77	28
Skilled service	24	21	10	25	56	73	67	43
Routine service	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	42	57	60	32
Adjusted R ²	.313	.390	.277	.281	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Total share in workforce	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	52	67	75	41
N	6568	9687	3168	2846	5838	9507	2756	3178

Sources: Britain BHPS 1999; Germany GSOEP 2000; Sweden LNU 2000; Switzerland SHP 1999.

^a The dependent variable is the logarithm of monthly work income (standardized for working hours). Independent variables controlled for are: age, age squared, sex, class, employment status (full-time/part-time) The technique used is weighted OLS regressions in SPSS. For reasons of parsimony, we have merged routine office clerks and skilled office clerks, whose earnings are everywhere very similar except in Germany. With the exception of numbers in parentheses, all classes are significant at the .05 level or better.

^b Question wording differed from one country survey to another: the question asked in the German sample makes career improvement dependent on extra educational effort. In the case of Sweden and Switzerland, I have translated variations of the Likert scale into a dichotomous variable: 'yes, some promotion chances'/'no, no promotion chances at all'. Accordingly, absolute levels are not directly comparable between the countries.

static analysis of stratification and overlook that social classes are groupings that share particular sets of social relations over time (Weber, 1964: 679). Esping-Andersen's (1999: 157) use of Schumpeter's omnibus analogy is very illustrative in this respect: the bus of low-skilled service workers may always be full of people, but if they are never the same, the experience is unlikely to have lasting consequences for life chances. Accordingly, people's mobility prospects appear to be at least as consequential for life chances as are momentary earnings: low-skilled service workers may earn less than operatives, but if their jobs imply a different trajectory in the labour market than do manual occupations, earnings differences are of limited relevance (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1993a; Tåhlin, 1993; Evans and Mills, 2000). Our cross-sectional research setting does not permit an in-depth analysis of these issues of career mobility. Still, we can look more closely at differences in promotion prospects. These are displayed for employee classes in Table 4. Although question wording differed between the four datasets, the answers capture roughly the same phenomenon of career advancement. Results show that promotion prospects are everywhere distributed in a hierarchical way: classes at the top of a work logic benefit from consistently better prospects than classes at the bottom. Technical experts, managers and sociocultural professionals have the best chances of career advancement in their current job, whereas operatives and routine service workers are equally unlikely to get promoted.

The finding about the hierarchical character of promotion chances is reinforced by calculations (not shown here) of the mean age of each class. Among the large category of employees, a double-peaked age structure can be observed: individuals are oldest either in the most or the least desirable classes. At the top, this is due to a ceiling effect: it is at the end of a career that people arrive at the executive or expert level. At the bottom, it suggests that workers on the most routine level are to a considerable extent imprisoned in low-skilled jobs. This places them in opposition to individuals in the skilled service, office or craft classes who on average are youngest and seem thus more likely to improve their positions over time (see Oesch, 2006).

Party Preferences and Union Membership

In a last set of analyses, I shift my attention to the structural context of political mobilization and enquire into the demand side of politics by examining party preferences and collective organization of different classes. For this reason, I have computed in Table 5 (columns I–III) for each class the share of individuals who support Labour in Britain or the social democratic parties in Germany and Switzerland (unfortunately, the

Table 5 Party Preference of Different Classes

	Support for the Old Left in (%) ^a			Support for the New Left (%) ^a			Odds of supporting a party on the New Left (Exp[B] of binary log regressions) ^b		
	I GB 99: Labour Party	II DE 00: Social Democrats	III CH 99: Social Democrats	IV GB 99: Liberal Democrats	V DE 00: Green Party	VI CH 99: Green Party	VII GB 99: Liberal Democrats	VIII DE 00: Green Party	IX CD 99: Social Democrats
Large employers	<u>13</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>22</u>	21	<u>0</u>	9	2.2	(0.0)	0.6
Self-employed professionals	48	<u>21</u>	32	<u>9</u>	17	8	0.8	3.6***	1.2
Petite bourgeoisie w. employees	<u>27</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	0.8	0.9	0.4*
Petite bourgeoisie w/o employees	<u>37</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>10</u>	9	<u>5</u>	0.9	1.4	0.7
Technical experts	48	<u>39</u>	<u>30</u>	11	16	5	1.2	2.6***	1.0
Technicians	46	<u>57</u>	42	<u>10</u>	11	5	0.9	1.9*	1.5
Skilled crafts	53	<u>56</u>	37	<u>8</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	0.8	0.4**	1.3
Routine operatives	67	57	<u>31</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3.5</u>	8	0.5*	0.5*	0.9
Higher-grade managers	<u>41</u>	42	<u>30</u>	13	11	5	1.2	1.6*	0.8
Associate managers	46	52	<u>28</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	0.9	0.9	0.8
Office clerks	49	54	35	11	<u>7</u>	6	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Sociocultural professionals	54	44	57	18	21	6	1.8*	4.3***	2.2**
Sociocultural semi-professionals	53	44	63	21	19	11	1.9**	2.7***	2.6***
Skilled service	53	54	<u>32</u>	11	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	1.0	0.6	0.89
Routine service	56	47	36	12	<u>4</u>	5	1.0	0.6	1.08
Total share in workforce	49.0	46.8	35.8	11.4	8.8	5.2	n.a	n.a	n.a
Public sector job	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	1.2	1.0	1.7***
Pseudo R ² (Nagelkerke)	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	.030	.118	.103
N (nationals only)	4055	4488	1953	4055	4488	1953	4024	4488	1950

Sources: Britain BHPS 1999; Germany GSOEP 2000; Switzerland SHP 1999.

^a **Bold** figures signify: 15 percent higher support than on average; underlined: 15 percent lower support than on average.

Question wording: GB and DE: 'which party do you feel closest to?'; CH: 'which party would you vote for if elections were held tomorrow?'

^b Besides class and public/private sector, we have introduced controls for sex and age. Figures shown are the odds ratios of the chance of supporting a given party as to the chance of not supporting that party with respect to the reference category of office clerks.

*** significant at the .001 level; ** at the .01 level; * at the .05 level; Ref. = reference category.

question about party support is not asked in the Swedish LNU survey). Findings for Britain and Germany show that despite Blair and Schröder's explicitly business-friendly stance, their labour parties remain significantly more popular among the working classes than among employers and managers. In Britain, Labour receives largest support from classes with few socioeconomic resources such as low-skilled operatives and service workers and is least successful among capital owners such as large employers and the petite bourgeoisie. In Germany, the Social Democratic Party still has its stronghold among the industrial classes of technicians, skilled craft workers and operatives, but remains strongly underrepresented among employers and the self-employed.

Figures for social democratic support in Switzerland, while revealing no hierarchical pattern, clearly point to a cleavage within the salaried middle class. This cleavage opposes managers, who – comparable to employers and the petite bourgeoisie – manifest little sympathy for the left, with sociocultural (semi-)professionals, who strongly support the Social Democratic Party. In Switzerland – and arguably in the Netherlands (Güveli et al., 2003; van de Werfhorst and de Graaf, 2004) – professionals in education, social welfare, health and cultural services appear to have become the class that most clearly leans towards parties on the left (see also Kriesi, 1998). However, the question remains why this divide is only visible in Switzerland, but not in Britain and Germany. One hypothesis is that employees in the sociocultural professions vote not so much for traditional social democratic politics, but for postmaterialist policies that increase individual autonomy and civil liberties, and reduce market dependence and bureaucratic control. In sum, they may opt for what has been called 'libertarian politics' (Kitschelt, 1994: 26) or 'new politics issues' (Müller, 1999: 145). While in highly fragmented party systems as in Switzerland or the Netherlands, these issues are primarily promoted by social democratic parties, in systems coming closer to a bipartisan competition as in Germany or Britain, these policies may chiefly be advocated by smaller, left or centre-left parties such as the German Green Party or the British Liberal Democrats. Accordingly, I have computed support for these 'New Left' parties in Table 5 (columns IV–VI). In effect, these figures confirm that the strongest supporters of Liberal Democrats in Britain and the Green Party in Germany are professionals and semi-professionals in the social and cultural services. There thus is an obvious similarity between support for the New Left in Britain and Germany and support for the Social Democrats in Switzerland.

However, it has been argued that the bivariate relationship between left support and class may be misleading, as a large majority of the core constituency of the New Left, sociocultural (semi-)professionals, work in the public sector. Accordingly, left-wing support of 'welfare and creative'

professionals has been explained by the public sector setting of their jobs (e.g. Kitschelt, 1994; Heath and Savage, 1995; Knutsen, 2001). In order to examine whether the political divide within the salaried middle class is due to public sector employment, I resort to multivariate analysis and run binary logistic regressions for the determinants of Liberal Democrat (Britain), Green (Germany) and Social Democratic support (Switzerland). I introduce a control variable for public sector employment (as well as sex and age) into these regressions. Results confirm that in Britain, Germany and Switzerland, preferences for parties of the New Left is strongest among sociocultural professionals and semi-professionals (see Table 5, columns VII–IX). Public sector employment is only significant in Switzerland, yet does not cancel out the strongly positive relation between sociocultural professions and Social Democratic Party support.

Thus, so far, I do not find any evidence for Goldthorpe’s expectation that the service class is ‘an essentially conservative element within modern societies’ (Goldthorpe, 1995: 322). However, Goldthorpe (1995) also stresses the importance of the consolidation process within the middle class. Hence, the service class may still be heterogeneous politically – but as it is consolidating, each new cohort is expected to move more towards a homogeneous conservative position. I examine this expectation by comparing middle-class support for conservative parties within three different age groups: individuals aged 20–35 years, 36–50 years and 51–65 years.⁷ Figure 1 presents the unambiguous finding of a widening

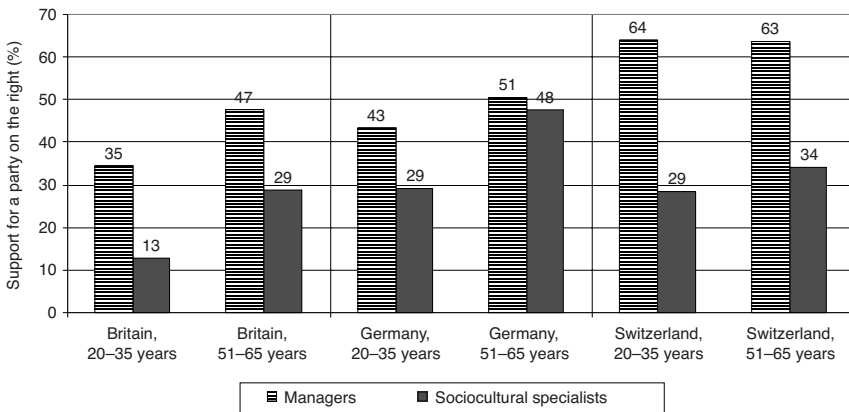


Figure 1 *Cleavage in Support for a Bourgeois Party^a within the Salaried Middle Class (Differentiated for the Youngest and Oldest Cohort of Gainfully Employed Individuals)*

^a As bourgeois parties, we counted the Conservative Party in Britain, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU/CSU) and Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) in Germany, the Christian Democratic Party (CVP), Radical and Liberal Democratic Parties (FDP, LPS) and Swiss People’s Party (SVP) in Switzerland.

cleavage for younger generations. In all three countries, the disparity in conservative support is larger between young managers and sociocultural specialists than between their older counterparts. I thus find no evidence for an increasingly homogeneous and conservative salaried middle class. On the contrary, over the generations, managers and sociocultural professionals appear to become increasingly dissimilar political blocs.

These explorative analyses indicate that different cleavages run through the class structure as regards party support. Within the salaried middle class, we find in all three countries a dividing line between managers and sociocultural professionals with respect to support for the New Left. In Britain and Germany, the working classes diverge from the middle classes with respect to their still solid support of the 'Traditional Left'. In contrast, analyses not shown here reveal that Switzerland's working-class voters, notably craft workers and operatives, are strongly overrepresented among non-voters and populist right-wing voters, choosing either abstention or the anti-establishment and anti-immigration Swiss People's Party, SVP (Oesch, 2005), the Social Democratic Party being only the third option (see also Mazzoleni et al., 2005). These findings confirm the importance of the distinction between traditional class voting and total class voting: in all three countries under study there is evidence for total class voting, understood as the way in which classes systematically differ from each other at the polls (Hout et al., 1995: 806). Yet while class voting continues to be at work, it seems to involve new alliances (sociocultural professionals and the New Left) and to reverse traditional links (Swiss workers preferring the populist right-wing alternative over the Social Democrats).

Before concluding, I briefly examine the issue of collective organization and compute the share of individuals who are members of a trade union or professional association in each class (see Table 6). In spite of the disparity in total membership between high Swedish and low Swiss levels, the class pattern of unionization is strongly comparable across the four countries: everywhere, sociocultural professionals and semi-professionals are the categories that succeed best in organizing their members, followed by the class forming the backbone of industrial unionism, skilled craft workers. In contrast, union membership is below average among managers, office clerks and routine service workers. Hence, also as far as collective organization is concerned, we find no indication for a unitary service class. Moreover, these findings suggest that routine service workers are not only at the margin of the class system, but also struggle unsuccessfully to get effective representation.

Table 6 *Share of Individuals Organized in a Trade Union or Professional Association within Each Class, Employee Classes Only (in Percentages)^a*

	Britain 1999	Germany 1998	Sweden 2000	Switzerland 1999
Technical experts	<u>23.6</u>	28.6	74.5	<u>16.1</u>
Technicians	31.0	38.5	85.4	27.6
Skilled crafts	31.5	34.6	88.0	29.5
Routine operatives	30.7	38.6	86.0	22.6
Higher-grade managers	<u>20.6</u>	27.8	<u>64.4</u>	<u>20.0</u>
Associate managers	<u>16.2</u>	<u>18.0</u>	77.9	21.9
Office clerks	<u>21.9</u>	<u>22.5</u>	80.8	<u>19.5</u>
Sociocultural professionals	48.6	46.3	91.1	32.5
Sociocultural semi-professionals	53.6	32.2	90.4	37.6
Skilled service	28.9	29.5	90.9	25.7
Routine service	25.6	<u>18.5</u>	78.9	<u>15.8</u>
Total share	28.0	29.8	82.6	23.9
N	5949	6327	2788	3214

Sources: Britain BHPS 1999; Germany GSOEP 1998; Sweden LNU 2000; Switzerland SHP 1999.

^a **Bold** figures signify: 10 percent higher union membership than on average; underlined, 10 percent lower union membership than on average.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that an individual's location in the employment structure continues to determine his or her life chances and to affect his or her political behaviour. Yet in order to make this link visible, these locations must be differentiated more precisely. For this reason, this article presents a new and very detailed class measure. My analysis of labour market stratification rests on the premise that Western Europe's employment structure is not usefully summarized by class schemas based on a monolithic middle class and a working class separated along the manual/non-manual boundary. On the contrary, I have proposed a schema that partially shifts its focus from the vertical axis to the horizontal axis, combining the hierarchical criterion of marketable skills with the distinction between different work logics. Within the category of employees, heavy emphasis is given to a threefold horizontal division between occupations governed by technical expertise and craft (the technical work logic), occupations involving the administration of bureaucratic power (the organizational work logic) and occupations employed in the face-to-face servicing of people's social demands (the interpersonal service logic).

The combination of marketable skills and work logic produces a detailed 17-class and a collapsed eight-class schema.

When applying the schema to individual data from Britain, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, two principal findings are noteworthy. With respect to material advantage, a bicephalous working class emerges from the analysis: it consists of mainly male routine operatives employed in production and mostly female workers engaged in low-skilled sales and service activities. The comparison of present and future compensation for work reveals that routine service workers do not have a more advantageous employment relationship than routine operatives – on the contrary: in all four countries, routine service workers come last in terms of earnings and share the poor promotion prospects of operatives. Finally, in terms of workplace organization, routine service workers are clearly disadvantaged: unlike operatives, they do not benefit from the organizational support of powerful industrial trade unions. At the level of the middle classes, my analyses confirm the marked difference between managers and sociocultural professionals with respect to party support and collective organization. Although specialists of the social and cultural services benefit from an employment relationship that is comparable to that of managers, they are significantly more likely to support 'New Politics' parties on the left. The divide within the salaried middle class is underpinned by figures for union membership, revealing a large disparity between sociocultural specialists' high levels of collective organization and managers' low levels. In conclusion, my enquiry into employment stratification suggests that neither the salaried middle class nor the working class are usefully operationalized as unitary categories.

Appendix

Table A1 ISCO-88 Codes of Each Class (Identical for British, German and Swiss Samples)

Large employers SELF and 10 or more employees	Self-employed professionals SELF and 2000–2470 (and less than 10 employees)	Technical experts 2100–2213		Higher-grade managers and administrators 1000–1251, 2410–2419, 2441, 2470	Sociocultural professionals 2220–2323, 2350–2351, 2359, 2420–2440, 2442–2443, 2445, 2451, 2460
Petite bourgeoisie with employees SELF and less than 10 employees (and not 2000–2470)		Technicians 3100–3213, 3471		Associate managers and administrators 1252–1319, 3410–3449, 3452	Sociocultural semi-professionals 2330–2340, 2352, 2444, 2446–2450, 2452–2455, 3220, 3222–3224, 3226, 3229–3232, 3240–3400, 3450–3451, 3460–3470, 3472–3480
Petite bourgeoisie without employees SELF and no employees (and not 2000–2470)		Skilled crafts 110, 7120–7142, 7200–7233, 7240–7423, 7430–7520, 8311, 8324, 8333		Skilled office 4000–4112, 4114–4141, 4143, 4190–4210, 4213–4221	Skilled service 3221, 3225, 3227–3228, 5122, 5141, 5143, 5110–5113, 5150–5163, 5200–5210, 8323
		Routine operatives 7100–7113, 7129–7130, 7143, 7234, 7424, 8000–8310, 8312, 8334–8400, 9160–9162, 9300–9333	Routine agriculture 6010–6210, 8330–8332, 9200–9213	Routine office 4113, 4142, 4144, 4211–4212, 4222–4223	Routine service 5120–5121, 5123–5130, 5131–5140, 5142, 5149, 5169, 5220–5230, 8320–8322, 9100–9153

Table A2 Operationalization of the Class Schema

1. Construction of target population	
Conditions	
• Full-time or at least 20 hours weekly of paid employment	
• Age equal to or higher than 20 years	
• Age equal to or lower than 65 years	
2. Employment status	
Employer/self-employed as opposed to employee	yes/no
<i>If employer/self-employed:</i>	
• Large employer: 10 or more employees	yes/no
• Self-employed professionals	yes/no
• Small employer: 1–9 employees	yes/no
• Self-employed without employees	residual
<i>If employee:</i>	
3. Occupational title without adjusting for education	
ISCO codes 1000–3000	technical experts/managers/sociocult. professionals; technicians/junior-managers/sociocult. semi-professionals
ISCO codes 9000	routine operatives/routine office/routine service
4. Occupational title adjusted for education	
ISCO codes 4000–8000 classified as <i>skilled</i> , individuals with at least secondary education:	= allocated to skilled crafts/skilled office/skilled service
ISCO codes 4000–8000 classified as <i>skilled</i> , <i>but</i> individuals without secondary education:	= corrected to: routine operatives/routine office/routine service
ISCO codes 4000–8000 classified as <i>routine</i> , individuals without tertiary education:	= allocated to routine operatives/routine office/routine service
ISCO codes 4000–8000 classified as <i>routine</i> , <i>but</i> individuals with tertiary education:	= corrected to: skilled crafts/skilled office/skilled service

Note: The dominance order is *self-employment* > *management* > *professionals*.

Notes

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1. In the Erikson and Goldthorpe class schema, these occupations are all allocated into 'service class II' of lower-grade professionals, administrators and officials.
2. For references, see Taylor et al. (2001) for the British BHSP, Haisken-DeNew and Frick (2001) for the German GSOEP, Jonsson and Mills (2001) for the Swedish LNU and Zimmermann et al. (2004) for the Swiss SHP.
3. This applies mostly to women working short hours in auxiliary clerical and service jobs.
4. In the Swedish survey, occupational NYK codes are often not precise enough (as, for instance, 'mechanical engineers and technicians' or 'environment and health protection workers'). In these cases, we have used an additional variable about the 'socioeconomic position' (the SEI variable) to complete occupational information.
5. Intermediate occupations are occupations situated at the third skill level of ISCO codes 4000-8000, and include clerks (4000), service and sales workers (5000), agricultural workers (6000), craft workers (7000) and machine operators (8000).
6. See also Erikson and Goldthorpe (1993: 149): 'the possession or non-possession of an apprenticeship has been shown to be especially consequential for German workers as regards both their occupational life-chances and their standards and style of living'.
7. For these analyses, we have merged higher-grade managers with their lower-grade colleagues, and sociocultural professionals with their semi-professional counterparts.

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