Social class, social capital, social practice and language in British sociolinguistics

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There are of course many systems that ethnographic research can attend to, operating in many different macro/meso/micro linguistic, cultural and social processes, and there is also always a risk of over-schematisation, building elegant analytic models for processes that are actually rather indeterminate.

Ben Rampton (2011:1237)
Today’s talk

- Some preliminaries from my own research
- Three main UK sociological schools
  - and critiques thereof
- What would I recommend?
Some preliminaries

- Social class and linguistic variation
- RP, Native (vernacular) RP and construct RP
“Everyone in Britain has a mental image of RP, even though they may not refer to it by that name and even though that image may not be very accurate. Many English people are also regularly exposed to RP in personal face-to-face contact. For a small minority it is their own speech”

John Wells (1982:279)
What makes real time comparisons easy/difficult?

- 1997/8
- 2008
The interviewees

- CAMSIS on parental occupations
- Schooling
- University
- Social and cultural capital
- Stances on background
Stratification research in the UK: Three main schools

- Who’s not in here: Beck and Giddens

- Who’s in here:
  - The NS–SEC and the Goldthorpe schema
  - CAMSIS
  - The Great British Class Survey
1. National Statistics Socio-economic classification

The NC–SEC works ‘to combine occupational categories whose members would appear, in the light of the available evidence, to be typically comparable

- in terms of their sources and levels of income, their degree of economic security and chances of economic advancement [market situation]
- location within the systems of authority and control governing the processes of production in which they are engaged, and hence in their degree of autonomy in performing their work–tasks and roles [work situation]’

### Schema as of 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Large employers and higher managerial and administrative occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Higher professional occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Intermediate occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Small employers and own account workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lower supervisory and technical occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semi-routine occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Routine occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Never worked and long-term unemployed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NS-SEC Analytic categories**

Evaluation

- The social theory behind this economic model?
- Post-hoc adjustments?
- Homogeneity within classes?
- Clear dividing lines between classes?
- Infrastructure
- Connection to sociolinguistics?
2. The CAMSIS model

- [http://www.camsis.stir.ac.uk/](http://www.camsis.stir.ac.uk/)

- Cambridge-based research group in the 1990s

- Kenneth Prandy, Wendy Bottero, Paul Lambert
CAMSIS

- CAMSIS: Social Interaction and Stratification Scale
- From structure to interaction
- From interaction to structure
Evaluation

- The value of social interaction distance scales
- Occupation is prominent, but …
- Social capital
- Sociolinguistic connections
3. The Great British Class survey

- Background

- Mike Savage and Fiona Devine (LSE, Manchester; ESRC Research Centre for the Study of Socio–Cultural Change)

- The ‘cultural turn’ in sociology
- Bourdieu as major inspiration
GBCS Schema

- **Elite** - the most privileged group in the UK, distinct from the other six classes through its wealth. This group has the highest levels of all three capitals.

- **Established middle class** - the second wealthiest, scoring highly on all three capitals. The largest and most gregarious group, scoring second highest for cultural capital.

- **Technical middle class** - a small, distinctive new class group which is prosperous but scores low for social and cultural capital. Distinguished by its social isolation and cultural apathy.

- **New affluent workers** - a young class group which is socially and culturally active, with middling levels of economic capital.

- **Traditional working class** - scores low on all forms of capital, but is not completely deprived. Its members have reasonably high house values, explained by this group having the oldest average age at 66.

- **Emergent service workers** - a new, young, urban group which is relatively poor but has high social and cultural capital.

- **Precariat, or precarious proletariat** - the poorest, most deprived class, scoring low for social and cultural capital.

Looking at methods

- Online survey
- Co-constructed with BBC LabUK and BBC
- The GfK social survey (market researchers)
- The ‘Great British Class Calculator’ as publicity
Table 1. Proportions in occupational classes from GBCS web survey and GfK nationally representative surveys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/group in %</th>
<th>Web sample</th>
<th>National sample</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior manager</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional professional</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern professional</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle/Junior manager</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical craft worker</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-routine worker</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine worker</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never worked</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Great British class calculator: What class are you?

Traditional British social divisions of upper, middle and working class seem out of date in the 21st Century, no longer reflecting modern occupations or lifestyles.

The BBC teamed up with sociologists from leading universities to analyse the modern British class system. They surveyed more than 161,000 people and came up with a new model made up of seven groups. To find out where you fit in use this calculator below:

Take the test

The results from BBC Lab UK's Great British Class Survey reveal a brand new class system of seven groups.

Answer five questions to see where you fit in:

Tell us about you
Which of these people do you know socially?
Select all the people who you know:

- Secretary
- Nurse
- Teacher
- Cleaner
- University lecturer
- Artist
- Electrician
- Office manager
- Solicitor
- Farm worker
- Chief executive
- Software designer
- Call centre worker
- Postal worker
- Scientist
- Lorry driver
- Accountant
- Shop assistant

Coloured wedges represent your details, select icons to find out more.
You

Which of these people do you know socially?
Select all the people who you know

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- Call centre worker
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Coloured wedges represent your details, select icons to find out more.

Result: the class group you most closely match is:

Drug Dealer

This class group sells drugs to everyone.
Result: the class group you most closely match is:

**Spaniel**

You are a type of gun dog. You originated from Spain, and were originally bred to flush game out of dense brush. According to Wikipedia, you:

- You have a long silky coat and drooping ears
- Possess a great share of intelligence, affection, and obedience
- Are highly prized as companions

Share your result

Select the categories below to explore the class groups
Academic Critiques

- *The Sociological Review*, volume 63

- Published May 2015

- Critical papers by Mills, Lui, Latimer and Munro, Tyler, Toscana and Woodcock, among others (including Skeggs, special issue editor)

- The sociolinguistic connection?
My conclusion

- Economic capital (economic access related to occupation): NS SEC has coding available
- Social networks (social interaction distances) CAMSIS
- The problem of cultural capital = consumption as in GBCS
- Therefore: NS SEC has infrastructure; CAMSIS coding has potential and geographical spread and historical depth
- An ongoing dialogue, also with SID researchers
National Versions of CAMSIS

...or go straight to CAMSIS Downloads...

On this page you can find slightly more extended information on current versions of CAMSIS scales and in some cases on potential versions which are in development. Updates and additions to this page are ongoing.

See also:
- Accessing and using CAMSIS scales scores
- Occupational classifications

**INDEX TO NATIONAL VERSIONS**

How to use the CAMSIS scores:
- Notes and downloadable files giving details of occupational classifications used in the CAMSIS countries.

CAMSIS scales for the period 1900-1938, for Belgium, Britain, Netherlands, Germany, France, Sweden and Canada.

**CLICK ON THE LINKS BELOW FOR MORE DETAILS**

- Australia
- Austria/ Österreich
- Belgium/ Belgique/ Belgien
- Britain
- [Canada]
- [Colombia]
- Czech Republic
- Denmark/ Danmark
- [Estonia/ Eest]
- Finland/ Suomi
- France
- Germany/ Deutschland
- Ghana
- Hungary/ Magyarország
- Ireland
- Italy/ Italia
- [Kenya]
- Luxembourg
- Mexico
- Netherlands/ Nederland
- [New Zealand]
- Philippines
- Poland/ Polska
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain/ España
- Sweden/ Sverige
- Switzerland/ Schweiz/ Suisse
- Turkey/ Türkiye
- USA
- Venezuela
- Vietnam
Thanks to Chris and Malcah for the invitation! Thank you for your attention!

(An extended bibliography provided on handout)