

The long arm of social classes: a longitudinal study of the social structuring of leisure activities in old-old age

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TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AT BASELINE

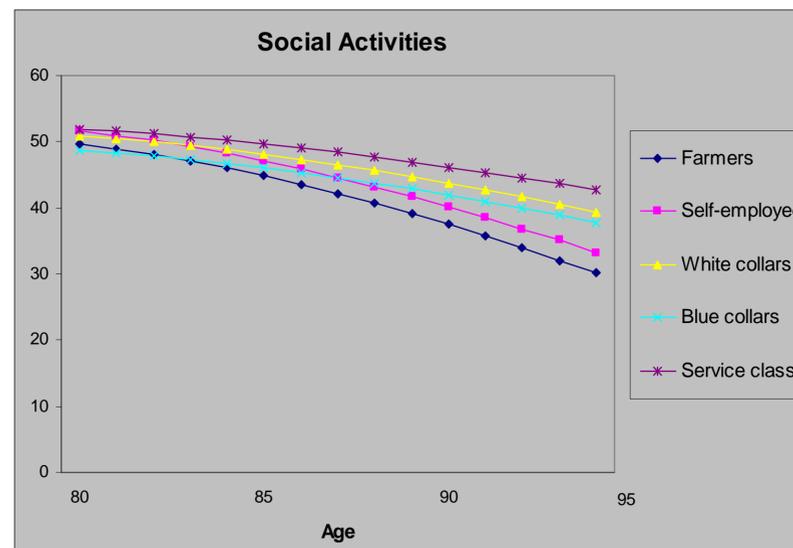
	Mean	SD	Range
Age (years)	84.22	2.68	[79.21-93.93]
Gender (women=1)	0.49	0.50	[0-1]
Region (metropolitan=1)	0.52	0.50	[0-1]
Robustness	0.44	0.50	[0-1]
Frailty (=reference group)	0.47	0.50	[0-1]
ADL-Dependence	0.09	0.29	[0-1]
Living with someone (yes=1)	0.51	0.50	[0-1]
To have a child (yes=1)	0.79	0.41	[0-1]
To have a sibling (yes=1)	0.66	0.47	[0-1]
To have an intimate friend (yes=1)	0.74	0.44	[0-1]
Farmers	0.09	0.29	[0-1]
Self-employed	0.18	0.38	[0-1]
White collars	0.18	0.38	[0-1]
Blue collars	0.23	0.42	[0-1]
Service class (=reference group)	0.32	0.47	[0-1]

TABLE 2: TYPES OF ACTIVITIES BY SOCIAL CLASSES AND OTHER COVARIATES (multi-levels modelling)

	Media	Leisure	Manual	External-Physical	Social	Religious
<i>Fixed effects</i>						
Intercept	52.59 ***	50.06 ***	51.30 ***	51.91 ***	52.03 ***	49.51 ***
Age	-0.13 **	-0.19	-0.53 ***	-0.07	-0.16 ***	-0.07
Farmers	-3.50 *	0.25	1.77	-3.64 *	-2.15	3.47 **
Self-employed	-3.58 **	1.67	-2.18	-0.72	-0.19	-0.47
White collars	-0.54	0.71	-2.27	0.13	-1.00	-0.33
Blue collars	-2.56 *	-0.13	1.49	-2.79 **	-3.20 **	1.53
Age*Farmers	0.02	-0.07	-0.07	-0.06	-0.09	-0.05
Age*Self-employed	0.10	-0.01	0.16	0.01	-0.08	-0.02
Age*White collars	-0.03	0.00	0.32	-0.15 *	-0.02	0.10
Age*Blue collars	-0.10	0.02	-0.12	-0.02	-0.03	0.08
Region (metropolitan)	-0.79	1.27	-2.82 **	-2.75 **	1.95 *	-7.77 ***
Gender (women)	1.07	1.84	0.14	-2.79 **	-1.45	3.88 ***
Age*Region	0.02	0.11	0.09	0.02	0.01	0.05
Age*Gender	-0.02	0.09	-0.12	0.04	0.02	0.08
Robustness	0.85 *	1.01 **	1.06 **	2.09 ***	1.82 ***	0.10
ADL-Dependence	-2.14 **	-1.55 *	-2.84 ***	-3.18 ***	-3.05 ***	0.23
Living with someone	0.95	0.50	1.31 *	-2.09 **	-1.31 *	-0.43
To have a child	0.54	1.65	2.23 **	0.46	1.00	0.10
To have a sibling	-1.21 *	0.16	0.02	0.37	-0.31	1.17 **
To have an intimate friend	0.82 *	0.54	0.16	0.61	1.45 **	-0.09

*p.<0.05; **p.<0.01; ***p.<0.001

FIGURE 1: SOCIAL ACTIVITIES BY SOCIAL CLASSES ON AGE



QUESTIONS

1. Are levels of activities in old-old age patterned by social classes?
2. If yes, are these differences levelled with increasing age?

DATA

The empirical data are issued from the Swiss Interdisciplinary Longitudinal Study on the Oldest Old (SWILSO-O) - an interdisciplinary study on aging in Switzerland. Two cohorts of octogenarians were assessed, the first one (N=340) for 9 waves from 1994 to 2004, and the second one (N=377) for 5 waves between 1999 and 2004. The starting samples of each cohort were stratified by sex and region (metropolitan vs semi-rural). The analyses were processed on the subsample of those living at home and directly interviewed (N=627 individuals; 2188 observations).

INDICATORS AND ANALYSIS

➤ **Activities:** Participants were asked with which frequency they engaged in a total of 16 items. A factor analysis was computed to estimate composite activity scores: six mean indices of activities were constructed. To facilitate the interpretation of the results, we scaled the activity scores to the T metric (M=50; SD=10) at Wave 1 (for further details on operationalization, see Ghisletta, Bickel & Lövdén, 2006, *J. of G.*, 61B (5), P253-61).

➤ **Social classes:** Individuals were classified on the basis of their socio-professional status (or the one of their partner) in five categories: farmers, self-employed, white collars, blue collars and service class.

➤ **Other covariates:** Age (as centered on age 79); gender; region; health, distinguishing 3 statuses: robustness, frailty (=reference group), ADL-dependence; social networks: living with someone, to have a child, to have a sibling and to have an intimate friend.

➤ **Multi-level analyses** were computed for each type of activities. For 3 types of activities (religion, leisure, manual) the relationship with time was shown as linear, for the 3 other types as a curvilinear one (modelled as age^{1.5}). For brevity, only the fixed effects are presented here (Table 2).

CONCLUSIONS

- **For some types, social classes are associated with strong differences in level of activities:** the service class and white collar employees are more involved in outdoor activities and media-reading. The other types are socially homogeneous.
- **No levelling effect is observed**, even for the types of activities which are declining with age (see Fig. 1 for an illustration).
- **Women** have a lower level of external-physical activities, but a higher one in religion.
- In the **metropolitan area**, people are less active in 4 of the 6 types.
- Except for religion, **frailty** is associated with a lower level of practice.
- Results for the **personal network** indicators are mixed and thus in need of further inquiry; friendship appears more uniformly positively associated with levels of activities.