

Elements of Occupational Stereotypes

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The ever-increasing numbers of occupations existing in modern industrialized societies present a confusing picture to the layman and tend to overwhelm him by their great variety. Many attempts have been made by administrators as well as by social scientists to subdivide these occupations into large categories which can then be surveyed at a glance. For example, statistical yearbooks of many nations classify occupations according to their level of income, required degree of education, or kind and area of activity. This could be called an 'administrative' categorization.

On the other hand, social scientists are generally more interested in the subjective evaluation of different occupations by members of various strata in a particular society. This can be achieved by attempting to measure the stereotype of a particular job and then comparing it with the stereotypes of other occupations. Particular attention is usually paid to the aspect of *social status* awarded to the various occupational groups.

Many investigations have been made in this area (e.g. North and Hatt, 1954, Hatt, 1961, Thomas, 1962), and it was frequently found that a fairly clear rank order of occupations according to their individual status exists:— a rank order which is fairly consistent even when differing cultures are compared (e. g. Inkeles and Rossi, 1956). Due to the findings of O'Dowd and Beardslee (1960), as well as Triandis (1960), it appears doubtful whether the criteria according to which occupational judgement

takes place are only one-dimensional as most investigations seem to have assumed. Rather, there seem to exist several relatively independent factors which individually contribute towards the evaluation of occupations.

In order to investigate this last-mentioned point, the three traditional criteria of social status, viz. wealth, prestige, and power (Dahrendorf, 1965) were included in the investigation, as mirrored in the use of the following adjective pairs:—

wealth :	rich	—	poor
	unprofitable	—	profitable
prestige :	despicable	—	respectable
	unpopular	—	popular
power :	powerless	—	powerful
	influential	—	uninfluential
	weak	—	strong

Furthermore, three other adjective pairs were used, since these seemed to be especially significant for an evaluation of occupational stereotypes, viz.:—

desirable	—	undesirable
successful	—	unsuccessful
important	—	unimportant

In order to allow relatively valid generalizations about occupational stereotypes to be made, the present investigation was undertaken after two important factors had been taken into account:—

- 1) The twenty occupations* to be rated were chosen to represent as many of the administrative criteria as possible (such as income, education etc., mentioned above) so that the relevance of the results would not be limited to a particular occupational category.
- 2) The test was not only administered to one ethnic group, but to four. Samples taken from these groups differed as

* see Appendix I

regards their language, religion, and historical background. Common to all subjects was the fact that they resided in South Africa during the time of the investigation, which means that in spite of cultural differences (which are specifically accentuated due to the various 'Apartheid' laws) they were all expecting to find employment in the framework of that country's economy. Moreover, the educational level of the four samples was the same:— only students during their first year at university were tested. The numbers were as follows:—

- a. 82 English-speaking Gentiles (persons of mainly British descent, who belong to the financially most powerful group)
- b. 48 English-speaking Jews (persons of mainly Eastern European and German descent, who belong to a group which has joined the English-speaking Gentiles as leaders in business and finance)
- c. 29 Cape Coloureds (persons of mixed African European and Malay descent, who belong to a group which has Western language and culture, and whose members predominate in skilled blue-collar occupations).
- d. 48 Afrikaners (persons of mainly Dutch ancestry, who belong to the politically most powerful group).

All 207 subjects were asked to rate 20 occupations on a seven-point Semantic Differential Scale (Osgood et al., 1957), by using the ten adjective pairs mentioned previously.

Results and Discussion

Intercorrelations between the adjective pairs were calculated over all occupations and subjects (according to Osgood et al., 1957), for each one of the four groups separately. It was possible to extract three factors in each group by means of

Thurstone's centroid method. The rotation of the factors was carried out according to the normalized Varimax method (Kaiser, 1958). The rotated factor matrices of all groups are shown in Appendix II.

A further discussion will be preceded by a brief characterization of the factors extracted in the various groups, which are as follows:—

	<i>Afrikaners</i>	<i>Cape Coloureds</i>	<i>English-speaking White Gentiles</i>	<i>English-speaking Jews</i>
Factor I	powerful status	success and wealth	power	power and importance
Factor II	profitable success	power	profitable success	desirable and successful prestige
Factor III	desirability	importance	desirable popularity	profitable success

A glance at the table shows that subjects of the three South African groups officially classified as "White" regarded "power" as the most important factor when evaluating an occupation. This is not the case with the Cape Coloureds, since their most important criteria are "success" and "wealth", which were regarded as being interconnected. What could this be due to? On the average, the Cape Coloureds are financially much poorer than members of the "white" groups. This explains the fact that wealth is held in high regard by the former since money can bring about living conditions which resemble those of the "Whites", e. g. the possession of a house, car, or a radio. The positive regard for "wealth" stands out all the more since "power" is not regarded as being very desirable. This, again, is due to the particular position in which the Cape Coloureds find themselves in South Africa. "Power" can, on the one hand, imply that one co-operates with the Afrikaner-controlled government:— something that is rejected by the majority of the Cape Coloureds, since most of the segregation laws place the latter at a serious disadvantage. Cape Coloureds who, on

the other hand, strive for power in order to oppose the "Whites" are seriously endangering their own occupational and economic future. For the Cape Coloureds tested, the "successful" person thus seems to be someone who is rich:— the wealthier, the better.

The criterion of wealth is also important in the case of the Gentile "White" groups, although here it takes second place after "power". Since the criteria of "wealth" and "success" appear jointly on one factor in all four groups, it can be expected that there is a strong link between them, irrespective of ethnic differences. This indicates that those occupations which offer a high income are also regarded as "successful". It is interesting to note that such jobs are not necessarily seen as being very "desirable" by the "White" subjects. This might be due to the fact that most of these subjects come from well-to-do homes where the acquisition of wealth is taken for granted.

The jobs which are considered to be "powerful" are, on the other hand, the ones least connected with "desirability". This clearly holds true for all four groups tested.

It is further evident that "power" is strongly connected with "status" only in the minds of the Afrikaans subjects, whereas "power" and "popularity" are not as strongly linked among the English-speaking Gentiles; and among the Jewish subjects "power" is considered "important", but not especially "desirable", "respected", "profitable" or "successful".

All in all it can be stated that "prestige" does not represent a factor all by itself in any one sample since it goes hand in hand with other criteria which, however, vary from group to group. Future investigations would have to show whether status is more dependent on cultural characteristics than are "power" and "wealth", which tend to show a greater degree of stability across different cultures.

In conclusion it can be stated that "social status" is not a

uni-dimensional concept in the minds of the subjects tested. Two of its constituent factors ("wealth" and "power") appear in all four groups in spite of their cultural differences, whereas others (e. g. "desirability", "importance", and "prestige") vary in their relative strength from group to group.

It can also be seen that the three "White" groups which play a fairly similar role in the economic structure of South Africa are also more alike in their factorial configuration of occupational stereotypes. The question thus arises whether societies whose occupational structures differ significantly from that of South Africa might not also display differences in the factorial structure of occupational stereotypes. A study of these issues among Asian students in countries of dissimilar degrees of industrialization is thus indicated. (本学助教授)

APPENDIX I

Occupations rated by the subjects

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. the teacher | 11. the actor |
| 2. the librarian | 12. the shop owner |
| 3. the bookkeeper | 13. the carpenter |
| 4. the musician | 14. the policeman |
| 5. the engineer | 15. the typist |
| 6. the business manager | 16. the medical doctor |
| 7. the psychologist | 17. the politician |
| 8. the nurse | 18. the porter |
| 9. the journalist | 19. the farmer |
| 10. the clergyman | 20. the postman |

APPENDIX II

FACTOR LOADINGS OF THE ADJECTIVE PAIRS IN THE FOUR GROUPS TESTED

ADJECTIVE PAIR*	White Afrikaans-speaking subjects			Cape Coloured subjects			White English-speaking Gentile subjects			White English-speaking Jewish subjects		
	F I	F II	F III	F I	F II	F III	F I	F II	F III	F I	F II	F III
1. <i>desirable-undesirable</i>	.24	.32	.58	.35	.04	.12	.18	.19	.60	.07	.66	.28
2. <i>successful-unsuccessful</i>	.32	.70	.24	.61	.19	.14	.31	.54	.46	.22	.50	.60
3. <i>powerful-powerless</i>	.54	.28	.28	.12	.64	.18	.71	.35	.12	.80	.08	.28
4. <i>important-unimportant</i>	.49	.38	.28	.40	.21	.47	.50	.18	.41	.58	.37	.12
5. <i>strong-weak</i>	.70	.25	.09	.15	.50	.14	.64	.16	.14	.75	.11	.26
6. <i>rich-poor</i>	.29	.59	.30	.55	.15	-.13	.23	.75	.14	.32	.29	.59
7. <i>respectable-despicable</i>	.62	.25	.24	-.01	.10	.32	.49	.13	.43	.21	.50	.29
8. <i>popular-unpopular</i>	.53	.39	.25	.40	.42	.28	.10	.15	.55	.17	.52	.15
9. <i>influential-uninfluential</i>	.52	.43	.20	.49	.20	.35	.53	.46	.19	.55	.42	.17
10. <i>profitable-unprofitable</i>	.37	.65	.22	.42	.36	.04	.23	.69	.32	.34	.34	.55

* The factor loadings refer to the *more positive* adjective in each pair, which is *italicized*.

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