1949

Social status of occupations

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Boston University

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/21590

Boston University
The Social Status of Occupations

by

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Boston University
School of Education

Thesis

SOCIAL STATUS OF OCCUPATIONS

Submitted by
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B. S. in Education, Boston College, 1938
M. A., Boston College, 1939

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

1949
Gift of
Richard Francis Canavan
school of Education
June 11, 1949
30903
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CHAPTER I

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

Prestige values associated with the hierarchy of occupations have long been tacitly accepted. From a vocational guidance viewpoint, the importance of the problem of social attitudes with respect to the position of an occupation in the hierarchy has not received the attention it deserves.

I THE PURPOSE

Purpose of the study. It was the purpose of this study (1) to demonstrate objectively that a hierarchy of occupations, based upon social prestige values, does exist; (2) to compare the results obtained with two similar studies which were carried out twenty one years apart; and (3) to focus attention on an aspect of vocational guidance which is recognized, but not seriously considered.

Importance of the study. That certain occupations enjoy a prestige value higher than others is recognized by trained and experienced counselors. In the counseling situation they are cognizant of the manner in which social attitudes influence, either consciously or unconsciously, an objective comparison of the capacities and abilities.
of the individual with respect to occupational demands, as well as in the determination of a suitable occupational objective. The presence of these attitudes impeding and hindering a suitable occupational choice creates a guidance problem. The solution of the latter is not restricted only to guidance personnel, but extends to all agencies of our society with the attendant responsibility "to bring about changes in social attitudes so as to include an appreciation of every occupation which contributes to our social and economic existence".¹

II THE BACKGROUND

Initial study. Attention to the problem of social status of occupations was suggested by a study published by Deeg and Paterson² in 1947, in which they attempted to ascertain the variations in the group attitude toward this problem from the findings of the original study published by Counts³ in 1925.


The first study with respect to the opinions and attitudes that people might have with respect to the social status of occupations was made seventeen years after the inception of the guidance movement. Heretofore it had been assumed that certain occupations were more "looked up to" than others, but in 1925 Counts made the first quantitative rankings of the social status of occupations. Counts not only desired to ascertain the social status of the teaching profession, but he also wished to direct attention to the fact that in occupational information research the important and fundamental problem of the social status of occupations was being neglected. His findings indicate that there are clear cut differences in the social status of occupations.

1947 study. In 1946, while discussing the problem of prestige factors before a group organized by the Minneapolis Vocational Guidance Association in which Counts' study was referred to, Paterson was challenged by a school

4 Ibid., p.16. Chapter II will give a more detailed discussion of this paper.

counselor who doubted that the 1925 results would be typical in 1946 in view of the effectiveness of the vocational guidance movement in the intervening 21 years. Furthermore, it was felt that the emphasis placed upon certain occupations due to the economic upheaval resultant from the depression, as well as the exigencies of the military needs during the period of recent hostilities, might be expected to influence upwards the social prestige values of certain occupations. For these reasons, Paterson decided to duplicate the study made by Counts to see if any great changes in the social status of occupations had occurred during the previous twenty-one years. The results of the 1946 study indicate, in general, that the social status of occupations has changed very little in the intervening twenty-one years.

Present study. The present study was planned to duplicate the study made by Deeg and Paterson to determine what agreement in findings would be obtained when an analogous population in a different geographic area was polled.

6 Deeg and Paterson, op. cit., p. 205, footnote #2.

7 Ibid., p. 205.

8 Ibid., p. 207. Chapter II will present a more detailed discussion of this paper.
The succeeding chapters will indicate (1) the results of studies pertinent to the problem under discussion; (2) materials used in conducting the survey and a discussion of the groups surveyed; and (3) the findings of this study in relation to the 1946 study and the original study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Occupational research has been carried on since the inception of the guidance movement in Boston in 1908 and the detailed information gathered has been voluminous, but in comparison, quantitative information with respect to social attitudes toward occupations is scarce.

A brief summary of the more important and outstanding works on the question of social attitudes toward occupations will be given.

I LITERATURE ON QUANTITATIVE STUDIES OF THE SOCIAL STATUS OF OCCUPATIONS

Definite evidence is available to indicate that social approval is at least of average importance in the choice of an occupation.¹ Another study indicates that future vocational choice is unrealistic; that 63 per cent of a group of girls and 60 per cent of a group of boys, who expressed the intention of continuing their education beyond high school, preferred professional positions, when the percentage of

professional workers in the U. S. does not exceed 10 per cent of those gainfully employed. Is this choice unrealistic, or is it because youth is sensitive to social judgments and hence recognizes the prestige attached to professional occupations? Counts maintains the latter, while Myers maintains the former.

The first quantitative study of the social status of occupations was made by Counts in 1925, although an earlier study implied the social classification of occupations when an occupational hierarchy was set up with intelligence as the basis of the groupings.

In his study, Counts surveyed 450 students and teachers to ascertain how they would rank 45 occupations from a viewpoint of social status. His investigations indicated that difference in social background and vocational future have little effect

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3 Counts, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

4 Myers, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

on the attitude toward an occupational choice; and that the section of the country represented by the group has little effect on the ranking of the occupations presented. Furthermore, he found that the "rankings represent group judgments rather than individual judgments". His conclusions indicated that there are clear cut difference in the social status of occupations and that youth's attitude toward occupations will respond to social forces.

Hartmann maintained that "forces external to an occupation as such is mainly responsible for its displacement in the prestige hierarchy", thereby indicating the influence of social approval on an occupation. He followed Counts in that he surveyed 450 people to learn how they would rank 25 occupations. Within the limits of his study, he found

---

6 Counts, op. cit., p. 19.
7 Ibid., p. 22.
8 Loc. cit.
The text on the page is not legible due to the quality of the image.
that the geographic location of a person had little
influence on the final rank;\textsuperscript{11} and that a hierarchy
of occupations based upon the social status of occupa-
tions does exist.\textsuperscript{12}

The depression in the early thirties and its
possible relationship to the social status of occupa-
tions drew the attention of Nietz.\textsuperscript{13} He was con-
cerned not only with the influence of the depression
upon the social status of occupations, but also to
ascertain if Counts' findings would compare equally
with those of a group of high school seniors. To
these ends he surveyed 1622 high school seniors in
Ohio and Pennsylvania, during 1928, 1932, and 1934.
Following Counts' recommendations and techniques, he
had these students rank forty occupations. The con-
cclusions which Nietz drew were (1) that a hierarchy
of occupations does exist, ranging downward from
professional workers through unskilled laborers,\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 146.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 144.
\textsuperscript{13}J. A. Nietz, "The Depression and Social Status
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 460.
and (2) that the depression had not affected the social status of occupations as might be expected.\textsuperscript{15}

Faced with the problem of substantiating their belief that the social status of occupations had not changed measurably since the original findings of Counts, Deeg and Paterson determined to repeat the study of 1925.\textsuperscript{16} Accepting Counts' recommendation that ranking of twenty-five occupations, instead of forty-five, would probably increase the reliability of the final ranks and would make it easier for the student to score, Deeg and Paterson surveyed 475 high school seniors, college students, and graduate students.\textsuperscript{17} Their findings indicate that the social status of occupations had changed little, if any, in the previous twenty-one years.\textsuperscript{18}

The most recent study of this problem confirms the conclusion of Deeg and Paterson. Welch\textsuperscript{19} surveyed 500 male and female college students utilizing the list of twenty-five occupations as derived by Deeg and Paterson from Counts. She found that clear lines of demarcation

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 460-461.

\textsuperscript{16}Deeg and Paterson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 205-207.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 205.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 207.

\textsuperscript{19}Welch, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 238.
with respect to occupational social status existed; professional occupations ranked the highest, semi-skilled and unskilled ranked the lowest.\textsuperscript{20} Being concerned with the influence that a difference in sex might have in regard to occupational prestige values, Welch found that differences in sex do not appear to affect the prestige value associated with the various occupations.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, Welch drew the conclusion that "experience, schooling, and the passage of time have little influence on attitudes toward occupational prestige".\textsuperscript{22}

That socio-economic factors in a given society do affect the social status of occupations is substantiated in part by Davis'\textsuperscript{23} study of Russian school children. In 1927, with the permission of the Russian Government, Davis had 112 Russian school children rank forty-five occupations and found that they ranked peasant, aviator, and Member of the Central Executive Committee of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{20} Welch, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 239.
\item\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Loc. cit.}
\item\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Loc. cit.}
\item\textsuperscript{23} Jerome Davis, "Testing the Social Attitudes of Children in the Government School in Russia", \textit{American Journal Sociology}, 32:947-952, November, 1927.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Government as being the three occupations which they considered the highest in their hierarchy of occupations; factory manager, business man, and minister ranked the lowest on their scale of occupations. Other studies, closely following Counts' procedure, were made by Lehman and Witty in 1931; and by Duncan and Duncan in 1935. The former surveyed 26,878 pupils, ranging in age from 8 to 19, with respect to their occupational preferences. Their conclusions coincide with that of Counts, that an occupational hierarchy based upon social status does exist. Discussing this study at a later date Smith implies that discretion is in order when

24 Ibid., p. 949.
25 Ibid., p. 950.
28 Lehman and Witty, op. cit., p. 105.
interpreting their results since Lehman and Witty's list of occupations does not include occupations in the lower strata.\(^{30}\)

Duncan and Duncan had ninety-two college women and 182 college men indicate their preference of certain professions in order of desirability. The results showed that medicine, law, and business were the most desirable;\(^{31}\) thereby implying that, even within a group of occupations, a hierarchy of occupations based upon social status does exist.

The wider aspects of this problem of the social status of occupations have been noted by other authors. Wilkinson\(^{32}\) was concerned to learn why and how social distances varied between occupational groups. The results of a survey administered to 861 students indicate that (1) little distance shown to exist between doctor, lawyer, and teacher;\(^{33}\)

\(^{30}\)Ibid., p. 48.

\(^{31}\)Duncan and Duncan, op. cit., p. 204.


\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 237.
(2) a great distance exists between dope seller, bootlegger, and hobo; and (3) "social distance toward occupational groups seemed to be controlled by social norms". With respect to the latter statement, Wilkinson seems to be in agreement with Counts.

Stone and Paterson's study on occupational dissatisfaction of adult workers provides more information with respect to the problem under discussion. Their study indicates that there is an occupational hierarchy of job satisfaction. In conducting the survey, the questionnaire method was used. An affirmative answer to the question, "If you could go back to the age of 18, would you start life all over again in a different occupation?" brought responses from three groups who desired a change; street car men, city firemen, and clerical workers. These groups preferred a higher level type of work than that which they were now enjoying; ranging upwards from skilled trades to

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34 Loc. cit.
35 Ibid., p. 239.
37 Ibid., p. 220.
professional and managerial positions. This seems to imply that there exist in their own minds definite attitudes toward occupations which are reflective of their personal social status scale of occupations.

In 1932 Menger desired to ascertain if there was a social status scale of occupations for women. Following Counts' procedure, Menger had 704 women rank thirty-five occupations for women and found that a hierarchy of occupations for women does exist. Physician, lawyer, and dentist ranked the highest, and houseworker, laundress, and scrubwomen ranked last.

Emulating Menger, and utilizing Counts' procedures, Stevens surveyed 150 Elmira College women to ascertain, among other things, the social standing of twenty-five occupations in the community. His conclusions indicate that a hierarchy of occupations for

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38 Ibid., p. 221.


40 Ibid., p. 703.

women does exist.\textsuperscript{42}

A third study on the social status of occupations for women was published by Baulder and Paterson\textsuperscript{43} in 1948. Their procedure in conducting the survey was similar to that originally employed by Counts. Twenty-nine occupations for women were ranked by 763 boys and girls whose educational level ranged from high school seniors to graduate psychology students. The final ranks obtained demonstrate that "those women's occupations which are at the professional level ... are ranked high. Conversely, those which are at the unskilled or semi-skilled levels of work ... are ranked low".\textsuperscript{44}

\section*{II LITERATURE ON ESTABLISHING SCALES TO MEASURE THE PRESTIGE VALUES OF OCCUPATIONS}

The problem of establishing scales with which to obtain a proper measure of the prestige value of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 626.
\item \textsuperscript{43}Lucille Baulder and D. G. Paterson, "Social Status of Women's Occupations", \textit{Occupations}, 26:421-424, April, 1948.
\item \textsuperscript{44}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 423.
\end{itemize}
occupations was manifest during this period. Smith suggested that 600 slips, each containing the name and definition of an occupation, be given to an individual and that he break them down into groups which would be the basis of a metric scale. Eight years later Smith published the results of 345 persons who rated 100 occupations according to his suggested scale. He found that high government officials and professional workers obtained the highest ratings on this scale, and that skilled workers were given medium ratings, while unskilled were given the lowest.

Osgood and Stagner in their attempt to analyze a prestige frame of reference found that social prestige is based upon "such characteristics as hopefulness, being noticed, financial return, brains, excitingness, and pleasantness". Furthermore, they indicated that

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48 Ibid., p. 289.
the presentation of an occupational frame of reference for judgment resulted in the spontaneous establishment of a prestige frame work which then determined in a highly reliable manner judgments on the occupational traits listed.\textsuperscript{49}

Like Smith, Hall\textsuperscript{50} felt that a scale could be established to aid in the measurement of the social status of occupations by means of sorting cards. He suggested that small cards with occupational designations on them be divided into eleven categories on the basis of prestige. He carried out this procedure by having 100 adults sort 252 cards into eleven categories.\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., p. 289.
\textsuperscript{49}Loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{50}C.W. Hall, "Social Prestige Values of a Selected Group of Occupations", Psychological Bulletin, 35:696, October, 1938.
\textsuperscript{51}Loc. cit.
\end{flushright}
CHAPTER III

GROUPS SURVEYED AND MATERIALS USED

The present chapter includes a brief discussion of the several groups surveyed and a description of the survey instruments.

I GROUPS SURVEYED

Surveyed groups. Counts surveyed 450 persons; high school seniors, trade school seniors, college freshmen, and school teachers.\(^1\) Deeg and Paterson obtained 475 returns from general college freshmen and sophomores; junior, senior, and graduate students in Psychology; academic high school seniors; and vocational high school seniors.\(^2\) The present study attempted to obtain a representative sample of the groups covered by the two aforementioned studies. Table I indicates the several educational groups surveyed in the present study.

Although Deeg and Paterson accepted Counts' findings that geographical differences exert little or

\(^{1}\)Counts, *op. cit.* , p. 19.

\(^{2}\)Deeg and Paterson, *op. cit.* , p. 206.
## TABLE I

EDUCATIONAL GROUPS SURVEYED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>General College</th>
<th>High Schools</th>
<th>Number of Pupils</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haverhill</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weymouth</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York Village</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Boylston</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Univ.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Contact Info</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>555-1234</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>555-5432</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Intern</td>
<td>555-6789</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>555-9876</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Account</td>
<td>555-4321</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
no influence on the final rankings and hence did not attempt to secure responses from groups in different parts of the country,\(^3\) it was believed that a greater degree of reliability between this study and Counts' could be obtained if provision were made to include groups from different geographic and economic areas.

All of the educational groups surveyed are in Massachusetts with one exception; York Village, a rural community in Maine. Of the other eight schools, two are representative of industrial communities; Springfield in western Massachusetts and Haverhill in the northeast. The Boston metropolitan area is represented by Boston University General College and Weymouth, a suburban town south of Boston. Suburban communities are represented by Beverly in the eastern part of Massachusetts; West Boylston in central Massachusetts; and Northampton in the west.

II MATERIALS USED

Survey form and its administration. In 1925 Counts selected forty-five occupations for rating, but later stated that the rankings of twenty-five occupations

\(^3\)Loc. cit.
would be less difficult for the student to score and would probably increase the reliability of the rankings. Deeg and Paterson accepted this recommendation and utilized twenty-five occupations in their study. They selected every other occupation as originally listed by Counts and then added, at widely separated points, three of the original occupations. In this manner the twenty-five occupations selected were a faithful representation of the range of prestige values originally set up by Counts. One other major change was made by Deeg and Paterson; they substituted the term "Truck Driver " for the term "Teamster", as used by Counts, because of the important changes in the transportation industry since 1925.

In the present study, Deeg and Paterson's list of twenty-five occupations was utilized so as to insure comparability of results; not only with their study, but also with that of Counts.

A mimeographed response sheet was prepared with directions identical with those of Counts heading the

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4Counts, op. cit., p. 18.
5Deeg and Paterson, op. cit., p. 205.
6Loc. cit.
The occupations were listed alphabetically, double spaced, and each was briefly described by a parenthetical phrase. The response sheet utilized in this study was similar to that of Counts' with one exception; inasmuch as the term "Truck Driver" had been substituted for the term "Teamster", a new descriptive phrase had to be devised to fit the new occupational title. The response sheet is reproduced in Figure I.

In conducting the survey, it was felt that a standardization of administration would tend to increase the reliability of the rankings. To this end a mimeographed set of instructions was prepared for the use of the teacher who was to administer the response form. The instruction sheet explained why the survey was being conducted and listed the instructions to be followed by the pupils in completing the survey form. This instruction sheet is reproduced in Figure II.
FIGURE I

SOCIAL STATUS OF OCCUPATIONS

In most communities certain occupations are accorded a higher rating than others. There is a tendency for us to "look up to " persons engaged in some occupations and "down on" those engaged in others. We may even be ashamed or proud of our relatives because of their occupation.

In the following list are occupations which you are to arrange in order of their social standing. After that occupation which is "most looked up to ", place the number 1; after that occupation which occupies the second place in this respect, place the number 2; and so on until finally you place the number 25 after the occupation which receives the lowest social rating.

Use a pencil so you can erase if you want to change your ranking for any occupation.

1. Army Captain (U.S. Army) ______
2. Banker (Part owner of a bank of moderate size) ______
3. Barber (Does not own shop in which he works) ______
4. Carpenter (Works for a building contractor) ______
5. Civil Engineer (Designs and directs construction of bridges, tunnels, etc.) ______
6. Coal Miner (Drills, blasts, and digs coal in a mine) ______
7. Ditch Digger (Works with a pick and shovel) ______
8. Electrician (Wires houses for electricity) ______
9. Elementary School Teacher (Teaches in a city system) ______
10. Farmer (Owns and works a farm of 160 acres) ______
FIGURE I (continued)

SOCIAL STATUS OF OCCUPATIONS

11. Foreign Missionary (Works in India)
12. Grocer (Owns a grocery store of moderate size)
13. Hod Carrier (Carries bricks, mortar, and stone in house building)
14. Insurance Agent (Sells life insurance)
15. Janitor (Looks after private residence)
16. Lawyer (Practices law in courts)
17. Machinist (Highly skilled in making and repairing machinery)
18. Mail Carrier (Carries U.S. Mail)
19. Motorman (Operates a street car)
20. Physician (Practices medicine)
21. Plumber (Fits and repairs gas and water pipes, bathroom fixtures, etc.)
22. Soldier (U.S. Army)
23. Superintendent of Schools (In a city of 50,000 inhabitants)
24. Truck Driver (Driver of a 1½ ton truck or larger)
25. Traveling Salesman (Represents a wholesale drug company)

City or Town ________________ Grade ________________
FIGURE II

ADMINISTRATION OF SURVEY FORM

In 1925 an evaluation of the social status of occupations was made; being based upon a survey conducted among high school and college students, as well as among school teachers.

The purpose of the present survey is to determine to what degree, if any, the social status of occupations has changed in the past twenty-three years.

Distribute the form to the students. The teacher should then read the following directions to the students.

1. The form you have just received is for the purpose of determining the social value that you as an individual place upon each of the listed twenty-five occupations. This value will be determined by the social ranking that you will assign to each occupation, starting from the one you regard as ranking the highest in your social scale; through twenty-five which you regard as the lowest ranking occupation.
FIGURE II (continued)

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SURVEY FORM

2. Your names need not be signed to this paper. Merely complete the statements "City or Town" and "Grade".

3. If each will take his printed form, I will read to you the printed instructions at the top of the page. Please follow me carefully as I read. (The teacher then reads the printed material at the top of the page.)

4. Before we begin, "Does anyone have any questions? Are there any directions which you do not understand?"

5. (If there are questions, be sure to answer them adequately;) If no questions are put forth, then say, "Be sure to rank every occupation. There is no time limit. You may begin now".
CHAPTER IV

SURVEY RESULTS

In the chapter to follow, the tabulation of the rankings assigned the twenty-five occupations by the nine educational groups surveyed will be presented; first, from the viewpoint of median ranks assigned each occupation; second, from the consideration of the rank orders derived from the median ranks; and finally, a comparison will be made of the median rank orders of the 1925, 1946, and the 1948 studies.

The statistical method utilized by Counts in 1925 and followed by Deeg and Paterson in 1946 -- median ranks -- was followed in this study to insure as much comparability as possible between the three studies.

Table II, which follows on the next page, indicates the median rank assigned each occupation by each of the educational groups surveyed.

Table III portrays the rank order of the median ranks assigned to each of the twenty-five occupations.

The rank difference correlation (rho) between
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Median Ranks Assigned to Twenty-Five Occupations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army Captain</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banker</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Engineer</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Miner</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditch Digger</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
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<tr>
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TABLE II
BASIS OF SOCIAL STATUS BY NINE EDUCATIONAL GROUPS
TABLE II (continued)

MEDIAN RANKS ASSIGNED TWENTY-FIVE OCCUPATIONS
ON THE
BASIS OF SOCIAL STATUS BY NINE EDUCATIONAL GROUPS

<table>
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<th>Boston Univ. General College</th>
<th>Beverly High School</th>
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TABLE III

RANK ORDER OF THE MEDIAN RANKS ASSIGNED
TWENTY-FIVE OCCUPATIONS ON THE BASIS OF SOCIAL STATUS BY
NINE EDUCATIONAL GROUPS

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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>11</td>
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</table>
the several educational and vocational groups surveyed ranged from +.94 to +.99.¹ The close similarity of the rank orders assigned by such variegated groups — educationally, economically, and geographically — justifies the combining of the results obtained into a consolidated rank order.

The results of the rankings of 1925, 1946, and 1948 are consolidated in Table IV. These ranks are based upon the median ranks assigned to each of the twenty-five occupations by 450 persons in 1925, by 475 persons in 1946, and by 527 persons in 1948. The occupations are listed according to the rankings obtained by Counts in 1925.²

The correlation (rho) between the 1925 and 1946 rankings is +.97;³ between the 1925 and the 1948 rankings, +.97; and between the 1946 and the 1948 rankings, +.99.

As indicated by the correlation obtained, it is significant that the present study correlates

¹Cf. Appendix I.
²Deeg and Paterson, op. cit., p. 206.
³Loc. cit.
null
TABLE IV

COMPARISON OF THE MEDIAN RANK ORDER ASSIGNED TO TWENTY-FIVE OCCUPATIONS ON THE BASIS OF SOCIAL STATUS IN THE PRESENT STUDY WITH THAT ESTABLISHED IN THE DEEG AND PATTERSON STUDY, AND ALSO THE COUNTS STUDY.

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<tr>
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<td>Superintendent of Schools</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Engineer</td>
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<td>Army Captain</td>
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</table>

*Occupations are listed according to the rankings obtained by Counts in 1925.*
extremely high, not only with the study of 1925, but also with the study of 1946.

In Deeg and Paterson's study, it was learned that there were only three changes of more than two ranks; namely, "traveling salesman" dropped from the eleventh to the sixteenth rank; "farmer" declined from the ninth to the twelfth rank; and that "insurance agent" rose from the fourteenth to the tenth rank.\(^4\)

The occupation of "insurance agent" continued to rise in the 1948 survey; moving up to the eighth rank, an increase of six ranks over the original study and an increase of two ranks over the 1946 study. An increase of two ranks over the 1946 survey, but still a decrease of three ranks over the 1925 study, marks the rank of the occupation of "traveling salesman" in the present study. The occupation of "farmer" did not change from that rank arrived at in the Deeg and Paterson study.

The only other occupation which displayed a change of more than two ranks was "electrician", which increased one rank over the 1946 study and

\(^4\)Deeg and Paterson, op. cit., p. 206.
three ranks over the original study of 1925.

Welch,⁵ in her study published in January, 1949, found that the occupation of "electrician" decreased three ranks over the present study and two ranks over the rank assigned by Deeg and Paterson to this occupation, but is the same as originally found by Counts. Other than the above, there are no other changes of more than two ranks between the present study and Welch's.

A correlation (rho) of +.983 exists between the rankings of Deeg and Paterson and that of Welch.⁶ The present study correlates very high with that of Welch; +.986.

From the foregoing we are in agreement with Deeg and Paterson that, in general, the social status of occupations has changed little since 1925.⁷

⁵Welch, op. cit., p. 240.
⁶Loc. cit.
⁷Deeg and Paterson, op. cit., p. 207.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS REACHED IN STUDY

Within the limits of this study, it appears that the following tentative conclusions may be drawn:

Social status of occupations. According to the expressed attitudes of 527 subjects surveyed, definite viewpoints toward occupations exist and these attitudes are reflected in a hierarchical social status scale, which, in general, has remained unchanged since it was first established in 1925. The highest ranking occupations were those of a professional nature. Semi-professional, technical, and skilled classifications followed in that order. Semi-skilled and unskilled occupations ranked the lowest respectively in the scale.

Furthermore, that a hierarchy of occupations based upon occupational prestige values does exist, is substantiated by five different studies. The first quantitative study with respect to the social status of occupations was made by Counts in 1925.
Adhering to Counts' original procedures and techniques, Hartmann, Nietz, Deeg and Paterson, and Welch demonstrated the validity of the findings of the original study.

**Influence of sex.** Difference in sex does not appear to influence the prestige values associated with the several occupations considered in the present type of survey.

**Socio-economic factors.** Socio-economic factors in a given society do affect the social status of occupations.

**Geographic differences.** Geographic differences have little or no effect upon the social status of occupations.

**Educational, social, and vocational factors.** Educational social background, as well as vocational future exerts little or no influence in the attitudes toward occupational choice.

**Reason for hierarchical scale of occupations.** Individuals look to particular occupations, not because they have a defective knowledge of the world of work, but because these occupations reflect social
judgments, and they recognize the prestige value associated with these occupations; hence if any occupation carries great social prestige it will attract youth in large numbers.

**Guidance implications.** The existence of a hierarchy of occupations based upon social status has an influence upon the individual as he makes or as he contemplates an occupational choice; and, because this influence exists, a vocational guidance problem arises. To meet this problem, school administrators, counselors, and teachers must accept the task of bringing about those changes in social attitudes so as to develop an appreciation of every occupation which contributes to our social and economic well being.

Counselors, teachers, and school administrators should be the first to develop in themselves that recognition of the value of all occupations. Without such an understanding on the part of the school leaders, the students could not be expected to develop the proper attitudes toward the "dignity of labor".

The biased or negative attitudes toward certain occupations, developed in school officials and teachers as a result of personal experience or because of their invincible ignorance, could be broken down through a
program of in-service training; a result of which would be the germination and flowering of positive unbiased attitudes toward the same occupations.

The fundamental purpose of education is to enable individuals to adjust themselves to life situations and become useful citizens and thereby contribute their share to the common good. Help toward vocational adjustment, which includes an appreciation of the "dignity of labor", is one of the more important services of education and should be foremost in the minds of those who are directly concerned with the education of our youth. Consequently provision should be made in the curriculum for those courses which would bring about an understanding and appreciation of the part that all occupations play in our society.

In so far as this present study is concerned, the objectives of a functional occupational course would be (1) to provide a broad general survey of occupations in order to broaden the pupil's outlook on vocational life; (2) to provide accurate and unbiased sources of information about occupations (3) to develop proper attitudes of respect for and an appreciation of socially useful work; (4) to study occupational relationships, to understand the significance of the interdependence of workers
and to see the part that each worker contributes to the good of society.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


### APPENDIX I

**RANK DIFFERENCE CORRELATION TABLE OF THE SEVERAL EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL GROUPS**

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<tr>
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REDI COVER

USE "W5" FASTENERS FOR BINDING SHEETS
TO SIMULATE NUMBER TO NUMBER

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