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SUSHILA NILES

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Up to now there has been no serious attempt to study the prestige ranking of occupations in Sri Lanka. In 1953 Green studied the vocational attitudes of a group of graduate teachers, using a list of some thirty occupations, some of which are not quite relevant in present day Sri Lanka.¹ This lack of an occupational scaling proved a great handicap to those who sought to carry out research in the social sciences, because some kind of social classification of the population seemed necessary. Rather than ignore the effects of 'social class' on whatever subject they wished to examine empirically, most researchers tried to adapt some British classification, such as the Hall and Jones (1950) scale or the Registrar-General's classification, to group occupations into five or six categories, in a rather ad hoc manner. Although this seemed to have empirical validity, no one could claim consensus of public opinion for their classification. Therefore the writer felt that this was inadequate for any serious research, especially when social status would constitute a significant variable.

Recently however Treiman (1975, 1977) has presented us with a valid alternative in the Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale, which should also prove extremely useful in cross-cultural research. His work is well documented and reasoned out and is based on as many as 85 different occupational prestige studies from 53 widely varying countries, and the average inter-correlation of prestige ranking across a pair of countries was .79 (SD = .14). The structural theory of prestige, on which he bases his arguments in support of an international scale, is well argued and we certainly agree that "the division of labour give rise to differences among occupations with respect to knowledge and skills, economic control and authority" and "because these differences derive from the definition of occupational roles, the nature of the functions to be fulfilled and the tasks required to fulfil them, they will be relatively invariant across societies". We make an important proviso, which is derived from Treiman's work itself, that similarity is more common among complex societies. Treiman admits that the degree of industrialisation will influence the degree of similarity between any two pairs of countries. Although the 'functional imperatives' faced by all societies in the occupations that are commonly practised, result in some basic similarities and account for the high correlations

1. For instance, Green used the occupational title 'Civil' Servant' which under the present more elaborate administrative structure is not very meaningful.

between different countries, some of the individual variations cannot be entirely ignored. For example, the correlation between U.S.A. and peasant India is as low as .19. Although this is an extreme case, it is evident that differences between industrialised and non-industrialised countries are bound to exist.

Ideally therefore there is no substitute for a scale constructed for a particular society, especially if the society is not highly industrialised and the so-called 'modern' occupations have come to be superimposed on previously rigid caste structures. Although the main occupational categories found in industrialised countries are replicated in the modern sector occupations in countries like Sri Lanka, we do not know how they are perceived by the general population or whether they are influenced by any caste considerations.

Therefore, we considered that it would be a useful exercise to examine the prestige ranking of the common occupations found in Sri Lanka.

Method

A list of the 90 major occupations found in Sri Lanka was compiled from data presented by the Department of Census and Statistics, and a pilot study was carried out for the purpose of 'testing' our methodology² for making a preliminary survey of how these occupations were perceived and also for the purpose of reducing the number of occupations, because even a range of 90 occupations would be difficult to cope with, especially for certain strata of the population. Therefore, the list was ranked by 7 persons. Four of the seven were of high status and consisted of a retired Assistant Commissioner of Labour, a University Professor, a Tax Assessor and a Doctor. The other three were from middle level occupational status ranging from technical to clerical personnel in an Engineering establishment. Based on agreement between 5 or more persons, the 90 occupations were grouped into seven categories which the raters agreed seemed to fit the following descriptive titles.³

- (1) Professional and High Administrative
- (2) Managerial and Executive
- (3) Inspectional, Supervisory, Technical and other non-manual (higher grade)
- (4) Inspectional, Supervisory, Technical and other non-manual (lower grade) ;
- (5) Skilled manual and routine grades of non-manual
- (6) Semi-skilled ;
- (7) Unskilled.

2. We followed the methodology adopted by Hall and Jones (1950).

3. This categorisation is the standard British Occupational code. See Hall and Jones (1959.)

It may be argued that such an elaborate categorisation usually applicable to more complex societies may not be appropriate for Sri Lanka, but although occupations in Sri Lanka lack the range and variety within each category, occupations which fit each of these categories could be readily found.

The pilot study was, as we mentioned earlier, intended to reduce the list of occupations that a rater would be required to rate. We therefore reduced the list to only 38 occupations by equating those occupations the pilot sample agreed were equivalent. Thus Scientist was equated with University Don, Postmaster with StationMaster, Staff Assistant, Librarian, and Foreman with Supervisor. Further, confirmation of the legitimacy of this was obtained by having two independent judges examine the groupings made.

Lists of the 38 occupations were made and distributed to a sample of fifty. Since we lacked the time and the resources⁴ necessary for any large scale and sophisticated sampling, a purposive sample was picked to represent as wide a range of occupations as possible. Some preliminary work with lower grades of personnel revealed that occupational ranking cannot be successfully carried out by persons of the manual or lower occupational categories, chiefly because they lacked the knowledge concerning the type of job performed by people in some of the occupations they did not seem to have much personal experience of. For instance, they were unfamiliar with occupations such as Scientist or Air Pilot, and did not quite know what a Tax Assessor or an Auditor did. This effectively limited our sample to those of the skilled and non-manual occupations. But within this range we tried to obtain as much variety as possible. Our sample therefore consisted of university dons as well as post-graduate and undergraduate students, engineers, technical officers and foremen, administrative officers, tax assessors, statisticians and clerks and even a film director, businessman and small trader. We were therefore satisfied that we had a fairly representative sample. We categorised the effective sample broadly into six occupational groups, Category 1 consisted of students but the other five categories were based on the scores given to the occupations on Treiman's International Scale and then reduced to five main categories. The breakdown of the sample was as follows.

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	10.7
2	17.9
3	21.4
4	10.7
5	21.4
6	17.9

4. This project was carried out as part of a major research project for the purpose of coding occupations, hence the limitations of time and resources.

Category 2 consisted largely of clerical personnel, and category 3 of technical officers and other skilled men, category 4 of businessman, administrative officer and statistician, category 5 of engineers, tax assessor, film director and finally category 6 of university dons and equivalent occupations. This demonstrates that we had a fairly even spread across a variety of occupations.

The rate of return for the 'questionnaire' was disappointing and only 60 per cent (30) returned them completed. Many persons in the sample expressed the opinion that rating the middle-level occupations was quite a difficult task, which, therefore, some obviously seemed to shirk.

The instruction given to the sample was to group the occupations broadly into seven, (the pilot group had agreed that the occupations best fitted a seven category grouping) beginning from the highest (1) to the lowest (7) in terms of the social prestige each occupation seemed to have. When this was done, they were required to rank in order of importance (prestige) the occupations in each category. They were also instructed to make their judgements in terms of the general consensus about an occupation and not limit themselves to their own personal judgements. They were cautioned that they should focus on the majority of people in a particular occupation and not be influenced in their judgement by the few they had personal knowledge of. This seemed particularly relevant for occupations like Member of Parliament.

We gave rank scores to the responses of each of our sample, ranging from 1 for the lowest, to 38 for the highest occupation. At this stage we decided to ignore the grouping into the seven categories, especially because categorisation was largely for the purpose of making scoring easier. It would be worth mentioning that since we did not describe each category the distribution into the seven categories was widely varying. To arrive at the final rank order of these occupations we summed the scores assigned by the whole sample and obtained the mean score. On the basis of the mean scores we then ranked the occupations in order of prestige. The occupation with the lowest score, labourer was ranked 1 and thus we proceeded up the scale to the highest, judge, which was ranked 38.

The final scale that was worked out was an extended version.⁵ The occupations that were equated were included but since they were not all completely equal in prestige value and since our shorter scale correlated very highly (.95) with Treiman's scale, the researcher with the assistance of a Sri Lankan

5. The extended version was specially designed to cover all occupations reported by our sample for the main study and therefore covered 103 occupational titles.

post-graduate student and a Sri Lankan engineer worked out the extended version, by interpolating the rank order obtained on the International Scale, to rank order the equated occupations. These were also grouped into 7, for the use of those who were interested only in broad categories.

Some Results and Discussion

Taken as a whole there was some consistency about the way different individuals from different walks of life perceived the different occupations. On the overall ranking Judge was given the highest position, Doctor ranked second and Engineer third. Similarly there was high consensus about which occupation had the lowest prestige. An unskilled Labourer came at the bottom of the scale and Domestic servant and Gardener ranked just above the Labourer, obviously skilled and even semi-skilled occupation had higher prestige. All this suggests the idea that prestige ranking is fairly universal and variations across cultures are few.

The ranking of especially the familiar occupations was consistent over the whole sample. For example 60% of the sample ranked Judge first or second (actually as many as 40% placed him first). Similarly 53.3% ranked Doctor in first or second position (20% placing him at the top). It was also proved that ranking was guided by considerations of prestige rather than wealth because a Company director was not ranked first by even a single individual though 20% ranked him third.

The ranking of occupations by the different social strata in our sample was also fairly consistent. However there is a suggestion that those who are socially distant may tend to overrate the importance of an occupation near the top, more than people nearer the top would tend to do. For example the average score for Doctor assigned by category, consisting of university dons etc was 33.4, while categories 2, 3 & 4 assigned scores of 35.1, 35.0 and 35.3.

Although a general consensus seemed to exist in the ranking of a large number of occupations, there was wide dispersion in the ranking of a few of them. Therefore, while there was very little disagreement concerning the social position of a Judge there was wide variation in prestige ranking of, for instance, Member of Parliament, demonstrated by standard deviations of 1.91 for Judge and 9.33 for M.P. The other occupations which had high consensus were as follows :

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>SD</i>
Labourer	2.18
Doctor	2.43
Peon	2.18
Lorry Driver	2.54
Postmaster	3.10
Director	3.19
School Principal	3.26

Of the 38 occupations 12 had SDs of less than 4.0 and 31 less than 6.0 (5.89 to be exact). From the list of occupations presented above and from the other more stable occupations, we found that the more familiar occupations, and usually those unambiguously belonging either to the top or the bottom ends of the scale showed higher consensus.

There were a few items which had marked variations in their ranking. We could attempt several explanations for this, depending of course on the individual case. The highest dispersion was for Member of Parliament and we believe that despite our cautionary instructions, individual raters made judgements based on their personal experience/knowledge of MPs. The same reason could be valid for the high dispersion in the rating of Police Sergeant. But in the case of occupations like Writer and Scientist, which are comparatively new or not common, raters seemed uncertain about their status. Since we had only one category each to encompass the range of farmers or businessmen, who could have different statuses depending on the size and return from their farms or business, it must have been difficult to decide where they should be placed. Also the farmer in Sri Lanka does not really fit into the modern sector occupations and therefore despite high caste status seemed to occupy a low status generally, although one rater did actually rank him first!

An examination of the actual spread of scores also gave us some useful insights. For instance, in the case of Judge the range of scores was very small, between 31 and 38, but in the case of Farmer scores ranged from 2 to 38, and Pharmacist ranged between 7 to 27. We attempted an explanation about Farmer, but in the case of Pharmacist, we suspect that this occupation does not occupy the same status as it does in a western society. When we compare its position with that on Treiman's Scale we find that it is only equivalent to Uncertified Pharmacist or Pharmaceutical Assistant despite the fact that the majority of them have received specialised training.

Despite these differences, our scale bore a remarkable similarity to the International Scale, with a rank correlation of .95. It also had a high correlation with Green's (1953) scale (0.957), although there were only 15 common titles and Green's work needed validating and updating. Naturally the question arises as to whether the International Scale should do just as well or even better, because it is a more elaborate scale. We believe that an elaborate scale is not necessary when occupational structuring is not elaborate and there are certain important differences, which are significant.

A rank difference of 11 was found in the ranking of Pharmacist, and while it was placed ninth on a comparable International scale, it ranked twenty-first on ours. A rank difference of 7 was found between Engine Driver in the two scales. Engine Driver seemed to enjoy higher status in Sri Lanka. Farmer was placed 6 ranks higher in the international Scale. There were four or more rank differences between occupations such as Auditor, Stenographer, Mason, Fisherman, Midwife and Trader. Although these are not big differences, they could be meaningful differences and point to significant differences in the way different societies perceive different occupations. We strongly suspect that caste influences play some part in the prestige attached to certain occupations, specially by certain strata of society. For instance, during the pilot study, we found that Blacksmith, which is a skilled occupation was ranked very low by our 'lower middle-class' raters. When questioned why they explained that it was an occupation usually performed by those who belonged to a lower caste group !

Further differences between our scale and the International one, which support our argument that our own scale would be more useful, is that certain occupations are unique to our structure or enjoy unique status. For example, the Ayyurvedic Physician is a traditional occupation which has been modernised and absorbed into the modern sector. But although he is the native equivalent of the Doctor (who ranks 83), he occupies a much lower position (and ranks 58). Similarly the Estate Superintendent, who is not selected primarily by any educational qualification and therefore would not be expected to occupy a very high status position, is ranked quite high (70). This however is not surprising when we consider the fact that tea and other plantations occupy an important place in our economy, as primary foreign exchange earners, therefore although Estate Superintendents are not chosen for their educational qualifications, they occupy an important position, formerly held mostly by British personnel and now by those who have the right family and/or school connections.

Although our work is based on a very small sample, the correlations we obtained, especially with the International Scale, give us the confidence that it would be a useful scale for the purpose of assigning rank scores to the occupations commonly found in Sri Lanka today, until further work is carried out with larger and more representative samples. We are however confident that such further work will not contradict but only complement our present scale.

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Group 1

- 84 Judge
83 Doctor
82 Engineer
81 Accountant
80 Scientist/University Don

Group 2

- 79 Director/Head of Department
High Government Official
78 Principal
77 Education Officer
76 Police Superintendent
75 Member of Parliament
74 Lawyer
73 Tax Assessor
72 Pilot
71 Army Major
70 Estate Superintendent
69 General Manager/Asst.
Director

Group 3

- 68 Police Inspector
67 Businessman

- 66 Auditor (non-Professional
Accountant)
65 Actor
64 Postmaster
63 Stationmaster
62 Customs Officer
61 Librarian
60 Staff Assistant/Middle Mana
gement Executive
59 Teacher (Graduate or Special
Training)
58 Ayurvedic Physician
57 Surveyor
56 Draughtsman
55 Shroff
54 Film Director
53 Writer
52 Artist
51 Journalist
50 Supervisor/Manager of small
Establishment
49 Technical Assistant/Foreman
48 Sales Representative
47 Farm Manager

Group 4

- 46 Sergeant/uncertified Teacher
- PHI'/Co-op Inspector
- 45 Pharmacist
- 44 Railway Guard/Cashier
- 43 Contractor
- 42 Clerk
- 41 Laboratory Technician
- 40 Stenographer/Typist
- 39 Engine Driver
- 38 Nurse/Translator
- 37 Secretary
- 36 Storekeeper

Group 5

- 35 Dispenser
- 34 Policeman
- 33 Seaman/Soldier
- 32 Overseer
- 31 Farmer/Trade:/Astrologer/
Co-op Manager
- 30 Midwife
- 29 Mechanic/Engineman
- 28 Tailor
- 27 Electrician
- 26 Bus Driver
- 25 Conductor
- 24 Minor Supervisor
- 23 Security Guard/Tide waiter

- 22 Operator
- 21 Lorry Driver
- 20 Welder
- 19 Carpenter
- 18 Tinker
- 17 Mason/Blacksmith/Market
Trader

Group 6

- 16 Mail sorter
- 15 Book Binder
- 14 Painter
- 13 Butcher
- 12 Shoe maker
- 11 Medical Attendant

Group 7

- 10 Salesman
- 09 Peon/Packer/Sleeping Car
Attendant
- 08 Waiter
- 07 Fisherman
- 06 Watcher
- 05 Street Vendor
- 04 Gardener
- 03 Domestic Help
- 02 Labourer
- 01 Unemployed