

The Social Grading of Occupations: A New Approach and Scale. By John H. Goldthorpe and Keith Hope. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974. Pp. viii+188. \$5.70.

Archibald O. Haller

University of Wisconsin—Madison

For at least 50 years sociologists have labored to determine the best ways to conceive of and to measure similarities and differences among occupations so that the results would be useful to researchers interested in social stratification. The basic idea is that in any society occupational roles are so important that they structure almost everything objectively required by or subjectively valued by their incumbents. They are thought to be the bases of the distribution of personal resources and of rewards. A hierarchical ordering of occupations would thus have a wide range of consequences.

Almost all, if not all, sociological conceptions of hierarchical orders in society can be construed as one or more of the status dimensions called "power," "wealth," "prestige," and "information"; or if not they themselves, then subdivisions or logically inseparable combinations of them. For the most part American sociologists have taken what they call "occupational prestige" to provide the most fundamental hierarchical order, and have gone on to map similarities (occasionally, differences) in occupational hierarchies at various times and places and recently to describe the effects of antecedent variables on the occupational prestige of individuals.

A great deal of effort has been devoted to attempts to establish these "occupational prestige hierarchies." The usual assumption is that occupations are differentially evaluated by the population at large and that the evaluation of an occupation constitutes its prestige. An individual is thought to be prestigious to the degree that his occupation is so defined. Typically, these hierarchies are determined by asking representative samples of adults to rate each of a sample of occupational titles according to some pertinent criterion, such as prestige or social standing, either as the rater himself sees it or as he thinks "most people" see it. Sometimes these data are combined with others so as to order larger numbers of occupations which were not directly evaluated.

Yet quite a few sociologists have been dissatisfied with this approach, often at the conceptual level, occasionally at the operational level. Regarding the former or theoretical level, there seem to have been two completely different lines of thought attacking the use of popular evaluations as bases for ordering occupations hierarchically. One would greatly simplify the categories, perhaps to a dichotomy of occupational roles, and would order them on a single dimension composed of both wealth and power. Followers of this line tend to be concerned with the differences in the resources available to each person in competitive struggles; they generally believe that these resources are essentially matters of control over the means of production; they regard popular evaluations and indeed prestige as epi-

phenomena of no serious consequence. Followers of the other line appear to see wealth, power, and prestige as different words for a single analytically irreducible dimension, and they often use the word "prestige" to denote it. Unlike the former, they do not view prestige as epiphenomenal, but they do view popular evaluations as a rather poor reflection of it.

The recent work of Goldthorpe and Hope grows out of the latter line of thought. Some years ago they set out to elaborate the concept of prestige in such a way as to make it useful for studies of stratification in which the fundamental dimension, as they see it, would be measured more appropriately. This book, the latest of a series of works, is addressed to the problem of measurement.

The authors agree that occupations are somehow the key units to be observed in the study of stratification, and they allow for a finely graded hierarchical order. They hold that the main empirical evidence of prestige differences is the order of deference, acceptance, and derogation. They deny that popular evaluations and prestige are necessarily related to each other and give two reasons for their denial. First, they say that when respondents rank or score occupations they really have in mind the rewards that incumbents obtain. They doubt that deference weighs greatly in such estimates. Second, in their own research they have found considerable disagreement among respondents regarding the order of occupations, and they think that if prestige were being measured validly, the interrater correlations would be much higher. Although this argument is not wholly clear to me I think they mean to imply that a unique, clear, and constant order of deference (in matter of honor, power, and wealth) exists among incumbents of the different occupations, and that questions validly eliciting this variable would show very high agreement among pairs of respondents.

Clearly, the writers were displeased with the results of their own attempts to measure occupational prestige. Yet they have produced quite an impressive rank order of occupations, apparently along the same evaluative dimension most others have called "prestige." Since they have quite obviously scaled something of interest to a great many sociologists, and since they apparently need it for their own research, they have made the resulting scoring system available, despite their own apparent dissatisfaction with it on theoretical grounds. They call it "social desirability." As an index of occupational standing, it has the same theoretical virtues as the other indexes based upon popular evaluations but usually called "occupational prestige" scales. In a preliminary study reported in their book, they demonstrate that respondents' ratings of occupations according to "standard of living," "power and influence," "level of qualification," and "value to society" may be described adequately by one underlying hypothetical variable, which at that point they call "social standing."

In developing the scale they were especially careful about sources of error in the scaling of occupations and in the scaling of people according to their occupations. They discuss inconsistency among raters and of the same rater at different times. They treat unreliability due to coding:

problems of establishing homogeneous classes of occupations, of identifying a particular occupational title as a member of a class, and of scoring a title. Some of these are problems of developing a valid and reliable scale, and some are problems of applying it to determine the social standing of individuals. In all, 860 occupational titles were rated. These are based firmly upon the system the British census uses to classify occupations. Ultimately they were formed into three scales of different levels of specificity. The most useful seem to be those given in tables 6.4 (pp. 96-108) and 6.6 (pp. 134-43). Detailed instructions are provided for users.

Technically, this is a commendable and interesting piece of research, and considering its complexity the report is well written. If sociologists normally paid as much attention to both theoretical and procedural detail, the conceptual and empirical bases of the field would be more solidly founded than they are today. Even so, a few critical comments may be in order.

1. We do not yet know just how the various status stratification dimensions and variables hang together. Present evidence does not permit us to conclude that one basic dimension accounts for all others. (Respondents' evaluations of different aspects of jobs are just that—evaluations. They are not measurements of objective status or status behaviors.) Deference behavior surely exists. But the extent of correlation of a deference-precedence hierarchy based upon observations of such behavior, with other variables describing influence as well as those describing wealth differences, etc., has yet to be determined. Thus it is also premature to conclude that there is but one status hierarchy, whether one calls "it" prestige or gives it any other name.

2. Evidently, the writers were convinced of the existence of a unique order of deference among occupations, such that those in any specific occupation would always take the same deference stance with respect to those in any other. The method they used, of course, failed to reflect such a variable. I think the search for it is doomed to fail, because it does not exist. A well-developed deference-precedence order would require an elaborate etiquette of interoccupational relationships, reinforced by a powerful and equally elaborate set of sanctions. Probably such a system exists in rudimentary form, but the occupational role structures of urban and, especially, modern societies are extremely complex. True, one probably has a good knowledge of the total stock of occupational roles or at least those of the people with whom he might normally interact. For strangers to enact an occupational deference-precedence etiquette would require that each identify the other's occupation, and this requires occupationally specific status symbols. We rarely provide those outside our workplace, and even then often only to persons who simply must know who we are in order to get their own jobs done.

3. In this research an unusual method was used to obtain ratings of occupations. Obviously, the ultimate purpose of the authors is to rate people. It would have been helpful if the scales had been applied to one or more samples so as to obtain data on their reliability and validity (as

distinct from the methods by which they were constructed). Surely, test-retest correlations and correlations with previous British occupational status scales, as well as with measures of the other main dimensions of status stratification, are required. The authors' disclaimer in the introduction, to the effect that different populations would yield different results, is not a strong justification for this serious omission. Such data should be provided before the scales can be used with confidence.

Because this work is apparently one of the foundations upon which future research on the British stratification system is to be built, it doubtless will be influential for a long time to come. Researchers working on comparative stratification will also find it useful. This is one more product of a long and serious research effort. I, for one, have found this and the previous writings of Goldthorpe and Hope enlightening, and I look forward to seeing their writings on the subsequent stages of the project.

I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother . . . : A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century. Edited by Michel Foucault. New York: Pantheon Books, 1975. Pp. xiv+288. \$10.00.

Egon Bittner

Brandeis University

The last execution of capital punishment in the United States was carried out when Luis Jose Monge was put to death by the State of Colorado on July 2, 1967. Since then, many persons have been condemned to death by the courts, and some of them are still awaiting their fate. The moratorium is due to the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court placed impediments upon the administration of the death penalty which have raised questions concerning its legality, at least as far as its present forms are concerned. The Court has agreed to review some further cases, but it is quite possible that forthcoming opinions will be limited to the consideration of matters pertaining to particular cases. In that event, abolitionists will continue struggling to save lives, while advocates of the death penalty will seek to frame norms than can be squared with binding judicial interpretations. Those who hope for it could await the arrival of total abolition by letting things go on as they have. But the outcome is uncertain. And it does not seem fitting for a civilization that has assumed responsibility for defining its own character to avoid the problem.

Though the death penalty is even now applicable to a number of crimes—among them, rape, treason, and kidnapping—the scope of its problematics is not substantially diminished by limiting discussion to the question whether a person who has killed deliberately may himself be killed deliberately by the state. At least, it seems plausible that if the state were restrained from putting murderers to death it would, a fortiori, be so restrained in punishing other crimes. More important, the concentration on murder as the definitive capital crime opens the possibility that