
Appendix Six

The Social Grading of Occupations

Although the Registrar General's classification of occupations was used in analysing the data from the national survey described in this report, it was not entirely suited to our purpose. By applying it, we could compare the survey material with data from the census and data from other sources, but could not easily distinguish non-manual from manual categories. An alternative eight-fold classification was adopted, which has been used more extensively in this report.

The eight-fold classification derives from a pioneering study of social class by Professor Glass and his colleagues in the early 1950s.¹ Some changes have been made, which should be explained. A seven-fold classification was described by Hall and Caradog Jones in 1950,² and further described by Moser and Hall in 1954.³ The main object was to divide the Registrar General's social class III into three distinct categories. The seven classes were as follows:

- (i) Professional and high administrative.
- (ii) Managerial and executive.
- (iii) Inspectional, supervisory and other non-manual, higher grade.
- (iv) Inspectional, supervisory and other non-manual, lower grade.
- (v) Skilled manual, and routine grades of non-manual.
- (vi) Semi-skilled manual.
- (vii) Unskilled manual.

Occupations were assigned to these seven categories, and subsequently two inquiries were carried out to validate the categorization. These were discussed by Moser and Hall.⁴ People were invited to grade thirty occupations according to their social status or prestige. These thirty occupations were then used as 'reference points', first in examining the seven-fold classification, and secondly in revising it for subsequent use. A principal conclusion was that

¹ Glass, D. V. (ed.), *Social Mobility in Britain*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1954.

² Hall, J., and Caradog Jones, D., 'The Social Grading of Occupations', *British Journal of Sociology*, March 1950.

³ Moser, C. A., and Hall, J. R., 'The Social Grading of Occupations', in Glass (ed.), *Social Mobility in Britain*.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 32-46.

the classification should be eight-fold.

The seven-fold status classification is too coarse. In particular, the findings of other studies in this volume show that there are important attitude and behaviour differences between persons in the manual and non-manual sections of category (v), which in our analysis covers routine non-manual as well as skilled manual occupations. Even if recombination had subsequently proved necessary, it would have been better to have begun by treating the manual and non-manual sectors separately.¹

The eight-fold classification was subsequently adopted in further studies.² In preparing our study, we therefore decided to use the classification for most of the cross-tabulations which involved a social class variable. In examining the updated list of 1,200 occupational titles available at the London School of Economics in the late 1960s, however, it became apparent that the allocation of some titles seemed to be inconsistent both with the Hall-Jones scale and with the Registrar General's 1961 classification. As MacDonald has explained, no account existed of the way in which the ranking of thirty occupations was used to rank many hundred more occupations.³ It may be that the interpretation of certain key decisions was left to coding personnel, without subsequent checking. While nearly all non-manual occupations seemed to have been coded logically, discrepancies were noticed among manual occupations - among codes 6, 7 and 8. Among striking instances was the categorization of coal hewer or miner, short-distance lorry driver, crane driver, sheet-metal worker, sawyer and tree feller in class 7 (or the partly skilled category). We considered these occupations should be listed in class 6.

We took the view that, if certain occupational titles seemed to be coded inconsistently with the scale implied by the revised Hall-Jones scale *and* were coded differently from the Registrar General's occupational classification, we would alter them in favour of the latter. Although this may seem to have been an arbitrary correction of the original list, we believe it both reflected the original intentions of Professor Glass and his colleagues, and their successors, using the scale, *and* more logically related the classification to the Registrar General's classification. To obtain some estimate of the size of the problem, we drew 200 occupations at random from our sample and checked the correspondence of coding between the revised Hall-Jones list and the Registrar General's occupational classification. In 75 per cent of cases, codes 6, 7 and 8 in the former corresponded with III, IV and V in the latter. In nearly two thirds of the remaining cases, the changes (usually one category up or down) seemed justified. But we felt that some, amounting to 9 per cent of the sub-sample, should be changed in favour of the Registrar General's classification. These decisions were taken before the survey began in 1968. Had we benefited from recent work on stratification, we would probably have attempted to review the ranking of many occupations in relation to the mean years of full-time education or the income levels of those following them⁴ - or other criteria. However, in view of the results reported in

¹ Glass, D. V., and Hall, J. R., 'A Study of Intergeneration Changes in Status', in Glass (ed.), *Social Mobility in Britain*, p. 217.

² For example, see the outline in Oppenheim, A. N., *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement*, Heinemann, London, 1966. Professor Glass has applied the scale in new research on fertility.

³ MacDonald, K., 'The Hall-Jones scale: A Note on the Interpretation of the Main British Prestige Coding', in Ridge, J. M. (ed.), *Mobility in Britain Reconsidered*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974.

⁴ On the lines described in Blau, P. M., and Duncan, O. D., *The American Occupational Structure*, John

this book for the scale adopted, we do not believe that the ranking of occupations would, in practice, have been very different. Of the list of some 1,200 occupational titles, we altered 121, or 10 per cent, nearly all of them by one grade only. A list of these changes, together with the original list, is obtainable on request from the author.

Wiley, New York, 1967, pp. 117-28. A group of Oxford sociologists have put forward a new scale. This consists of 124 subdivisions which can be collapsed into 36, and therefore remains rather unwieldy. Some of the changes in the ranking of certain occupations (for example, technicians and lorry and coach drivers) are on the face of it puzzling and are not discussed in relation to the special survey. See Goldthorpe, J. H., and Hope, K., *The Social Grading of Occupations: A New Approach and Scale*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974.