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Study on vocational prestige across different generation

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Abstract

The study aimed to understand differences in vocational prestige across different generations in Taiwan. There were 510 fifth and sixth grade elementary students and their parents sampled by the cluster random method from Taipei city, Taichung city and Kaohsiung city. Data were collected using a 9-point scale of thirty vocations, and analyzed by mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The results indicated students gave higher points to certain vocations than their parents did, but the points differed widely. The parents showed more agreement in terms of vocational prestige. Seventy percent of the highest respected jobs and lowest respected ones assessed by students were the same as the parents. The scientist, doctor, grand justice, firefighter, and lawyer received the highest honors from students and their parents. The vendor, journalist, carpenter, councilor, barber, driver, and model received the lowest respect. Students showed more respect for police and entertainers than parents, but less to elementary school teachers. Since there are different concepts of value between parents and children, more useful information about vocations will be helpful in reducing the sense of loss between honor and reality.

Keywords: Vocational prestige, generational difference, across generations.

INTRODUCTION

Jobs exist owing to the functional request of social structures. A Chinese saying goes, "The need of one day requires hundreds of persons to prepare for." All jobs should be respected and treated equally. However, in the real world, occupations were classified distinctively, and also were the prestigious. Davis and Moore (1945) proposed that a society requires various degrees of talents and abilities to perform, and the society must have some rewards that act as inducements to fill the positions and ensure the duties are well performed. Vocational prestige is a type of the rewards.

Since 1969, Taiwan has had research on vocational prestige (Ho and Liao, 1969). Scholar Lin (1971, 1980, 1991) had also done research every 10 years to understand the development of vocational prestige. The participants of those studies were adults, showing the top 10 occupations adults recognized were those with high-level of education, high income, and proficient, such as scientist, doctor, grand justice, high school principal, university president, professor and lawyer. The last 10 occupations were those with lower-level of education, lower requirements of proficient, lower income, and lower

contribution. The results showed no significant differences between men and women. Thus, there was a universality of assessing vocational prestige (Liu and Huang, 1984). However, as social cultures swift quickly, the wealth of knowledge would contribute to the value of critical thinking and universal education, the Internet provides a large number of messages and social progress in democracy, people tend to view things with diverse values. If a job could not fit to perform, it would lose the reward, the position, or prestige. Compared with the vocational prestige researches for the last 40 years in Taiwan, the researcher found that some vocational prestige changed, such as councilor, journalist decline apparently. Will the vocational prestige affect the children? That's what the research concerned about.

Ginzberg (1951, 1972, 1984) proposed that an individual reached his ultimate decision was not at any single moment, but through a series of decisions over many years. Occupational choice is a process, there are three phrases for the process: fantasy choice (before 11); tentative choice (between 11 and 17); and realistic choice (between 11 and young adulthood when a person finally

determines his choice). The early adolescent is in the stage of tentative choice. An eleven-year-old adolescent would begin to explore occupations. He would think of his interests, capacities, and values about occupational choice.

David (2002) pointed out the perception of vocational status of adolescents had developed. Processes of child and adolescent vocational development include acquisition of knowledge, beliefs, and values about work options and requirements (Brenda et al., 2006). The main places for learning above mentioned should be in school and family. Career education is an important issue in the national compulsory education in Taiwan. Teachers have to design related curriculum and lead students to recognize a variety of vocations. So, the fifth and sixth graders of elementary school should have some ideas about certain occupations. So this study concerns how present students assess various vocational prestiges.

Besides, families have a specific influence on this process. Children's vocational aspirations tend to mirror the class and gender of their parents (Gottfredson, 1981). Parents convey their values to their children; and their perception of prestige might influence their children's selection of vocations (Terrance and Tracy, 2012). During the development of adolescence, male adolescents would discuss about job or career and share work and recreational activities with their fathers; but female adolescents perceive the lack of certain relationship with their fathers. Daughters stayed closer to their mothers. Female adolescents developed intricate and complicate relationships with their mother involving intimacy and conflicts (Balk, 1995). So the researcher is more interested in the vocational prestige assessments between students and parents to see if there is any coherence and difference.

Changes in values are attributable to the changes in society. Therefore, this study compares the differences in the assessments of vocational prestige between parents and their children to figure out if there is consistent assessment of vocational prestige between fathers and boy students, as well as mothers and girl students.

To sum up, the main concern of this study is whether students honor various jobs in the same way as their parents do. The study purposes are:

1. To investigate if assessments of vocational prestige between parents and their children are coherent.
2. To understand if the assessments of vocational prestige between fathers and male students are coherent.
3. To understand if the assessments of vocational prestige between mothers and female students are coherent.

METHODOLOGY

Study participants

The objects of this study were the fifth and sixth graders in

elementary school and their parents. Geographically, the researcher selected Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung cities by way of sampling, and the example schools by "Evenly Sampling". Seven elementary schools were randomly sampled in each city, and a class from every school was randomly cluster sampled. There were 30 persons in each class, including students and their parents. In total, there were 21 schools, and 630 questionnaires were sent out.

Study instrument

The questionnaires were designed based on documents and the "Vocational Classification Standard of Republic of China" (<http://www.stat.gov.tw/mp.asp?mp=4>), which classifies 10 main classes, 37 medium sorts, 114 minor sorts and 394 items about jobs. The researcher selected 50 vocations familiar to the public according to the 37 medium sorts. The questionnaires were designed in the form of a 9-point scale. When the questionnaires were completed, sixty fifth and sixth graders were asked to select 30 vocations they were familiar with. The final list consisted of 30 vocational titles chosen by the students using a 9-point Likert-type scale (1=not prestigious at all to 9=very prestigious). To compare, there were two versions of the same questionnaire: one for students and the other for their parents.

The 30 jobs chosen by students were: scientist, doctor, dentist, grand justice, architect, firefighter, lawyer, musician, pilot, vet, primary school principal, primary school teacher, president, nurse, farmer, police, postman, anchor, captain, soldier, chef, professional player, carpenter, journalist, entertainer, councilor, hair dresser, driver, model, and vendor.

Data collection

All questionnaires were sent to the homeroom teachers of selected schools or their official employees. The homeroom teachers dispatched the questionnaires to the students and their parents. After all questionnaires were filled in and collected, the homeroom teachers sent back all questionnaires to the researcher. The time for data collection was from May to June in 2011. There were 630 copies dispatched and 547 returned. The effective copies were 510 copies out of 547, for an effective response rate of 80.95%. Among them, 185 copies were from fathers, equaling 36.5%; 322 copies from mothers, 63.5%; 230 copies from male students, 45%; and 280 copies from female students, 55 % (Table 1).

Data analysis

The data of this study was based on 510 questionnaires,

Table 1. List of stratified cluster random sampling.

	sampling retrieve		effective					Total
	n	n	male students	female student	Total	fathers	mothers	
Taipei	210	178	73	93	166	56	108	164
Taichung	210	160	59	99	158	64	93	157
Kaohsiung	210	199	98	88	186	65	124	189
Total	630	547	230(45%)	280(55%)	510	185(36.5%)	325(63.5%)	510

and analyzed via SPSS 18.0 statistical software. The margin of error was accepted as .05. It utilizes mean, standard deviation to calculate the assessment points for vocational prestige as assessed by parents and students. The correlations were then used as independent measures in a t-test to analyze the differences in vocational prestige assessments between parents and students, fathers and boy students, and mothers and girl students.

STUDY RESULTS

Differences in the vocational prestige between the parents and their children

The assessment comparison between students and their parents shows among the 30 jobs, the prestige ranking of the top 10 is 70% similar to the last ten. However, for the middle 10, there is only 30% similarly ranked by students and their parents. According to the test result of mean deviation, there were 13 jobs whose vocational prestige points did not reach a significant level, and 17 jobs whose mean deviation in vocational prestige did not reach a significant level. In general, students assess higher points than their parents, but the standard deviation among students is also higher than their parents. Assessments by parents tended to be coherent (Table 2).

Differences in comparison of vocational prestige between fathers and male students

Among the vocational prestige assessments, there are 16 jobs showing no significant differences between fathers and male students, and 14 of them showing significant differences. Most male students gave higher points than their fathers did. In addition, standard deviation of the male students' is higher. Therefore, the assessments among male students are more different, but those among fathers are more coherent.

There were six jobs among the top ten assessed by male students that were the same as the fathers: scientist, doctor, pilot, firefighter, grand justice, and lawyer. In boys' mind, scientist's vocational prestige ranked 1st ($M=7.71$,

$SD=1.79$), which is the same as the fathers, and the statistic is obvious ($t=-2.52^{**}$). In 2nd place was police ($M=7.47$, $SD=2.24$) which was ranked 20th by the fathers ($M=5.85$, $SD=1.77$). The difference was significant ($t=-7.46^{**}$). Moreover, in 3rd place as ranked by boys was grand justice ($M=7.38$, $SD=2.21$), which received a higher mean and rank than from the fathers. President ($M=7.24$, $SD=1.94$, 5th), professional player ($M=7.15$, $SD=2.16$, 7th), and soldier ($M=7.08$, $SD=2.24$, 8th) showed the same result. While the questionnaires were being sent out, there was news about point-shaving of professional baseball players reported by various media, which led to serious blame. However, the event seemed not to affect boys' aspect of them. Besides, the Glory of Taiwan, Chien-Ming Wang's excellent performance in the US has aroused people's attention in Taiwan and he has become the idol of many boys.

Though male students gave firefighters and lawyers more points than the fathers, both are ranked in the top ten by the fathers and students. The data indicates boys show the same honor to firefighter as the fathers.

Viewing the jobs ranked from the 11th to 20th by mean, boys and the fathers don't show significant differences in assessing dentist, architect, musician, farmer, postman, vet and elementary school principal. However, boys rank the dentist, architect, musician, and farmer at lower places than fathers who rank these four in the top 10. In addition, boys have clearly different assessments of the entertainer ($M=6.71$, $SD=2.21$, 11st) and chef ($M=6.63$, $SD=2.19$, 12th) from the fathers ($M=5.19$, $SD=1.93$, 24th; $M=5.83$, $SD=1.86$, 21st), and give greater respect to those jobs than the fathers ($t=-7.44^{**}$; $t=-4.02^{**}$).

There are seven jobs among the last ten ranked by boys at the same level as the fathers: vendor, model, journalist, hair-dresser, councilor, driver, and carpenter. Though the assessment of nurse ($M=5.71$, $SD=2.49$, 24th) by boys was not significantly different from the fathers ($M=6.06$, $SD=2.02$, 17th), their status in the boys' mind is lower than in the fathers'. Note, primary school teachers spend more time with the boys, and their assessments showed no significant difference from the fathers', and even though the teachers spend more time with the boys than their fathers, the boys only ranked elementary teacher in 22nd place. However, the fathers ranked the job in 11th place. The boys' assessment of a primary school teacher in this

Table 2. Vocational prestige assessment and ranking by students and their parents

	parents			students			t
	M	SD	rank	M	SD	rank	
scientist	7.43	1.81	1	7.47	1.94	1	-.37
doctor	7.21	1.57	2	7.25	1.92	5	-.38
dentist	7.03	1.62	3	6.73	2.14	11	2.51*
Grand- justice	6.78	2.05	4	7.35	2.10	3	-4.34***
architect	6.71	1.68	5	6.59	2.14	14	1.01
Fire man	6.68	1.96	6	7.32	2.13	4	-5.01***
lawyer	6.62	1.92	7	6.99	2.09	7	-2.91**
musician	6.60	1.78	8	6.92	2.16	8	-2.58**
pilot	6.49	1.74	9	6.84	2.17	9	-2.89**
vet	6.47	1.79	10	6.55	2.20	15	-.62
Primary school Principal	6.45	1.81	11	6.25	2.33	17	1.54
Primary school Teachers	6.42	1.85	12	6.11	2.41	21	2.32*
President	6.40	1.87	13	7.04	2.01	6	-5.26***
Nurse	6.27	1.89	14	6.21	2.29	18	.42
Farmer	6.06	2.23	15	6.14	2.62	20	-.58
Police	6.03	2.04	17	7.45	2.10	2	-10.98***
postman	6.03	1.91	16	6.15	2.31	19	-.92
anchor	6.02	1.71	18	6.01	2.30	22	.06
Captain	5.91	1.87	19	5.80	2.39	23	.86
Solider	5.87	1.93	20	6.82	2.21	10	-7.27***
Chef	5.80	1.85	21	6.62	2.05	12	-6.71***
Professional player	5.58	1.83	22	6.53	2.29	16	-7.31***
carpenter	5.34	2.15	23	5.27	2.59	29	.52
Journalist	5.31	1.97	24	5.46	2.45	28	-1.10
Entertainer	5.30	1.84	25	6.60	2.24	13	-10.09***
Councilor	5.21	2.32	26	5.74	2.35	25	-3.60***
Hair dresser	5.11	1.84	27	5.67	2.21	26	-4.42***
Driver	5.01	2.08	28	5.48	2.41	27	-3.31**
Model	4.98	1.84	29	5.80	2.40	24	-6.18***
Vendor	4.90	2.20	30	4.82	2.49	30	.56

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

study differs from previous studies. In previous studies in Taiwan, teachers used to receive higher prestige, but this study showed male students did not give more points to them. On the one hand, the comparison data indicates boys' respect for various jobs is not the same as the fathers; on the other hand, it indicates elementary teachers' status in boy students' mind has decreased (Camadan, 2010 (Table 3)).

Differences comparison of vocational prestige between mothers and female students

In this study, mothers' assessments of vocational prestige still ranked scientist (M=7.54, SD=1.70), doctor (M=7.25, SD=1.51) and dentist (M=7.09, SD=1.52) in the top three, which is the same result as existing studies. There are 13 jobs whose vocational prestige comparison between mothers and female students reached a significant standard. Girls gave more points for jobs than the mothers, and the points also differed a lot.

There are eight jobs ranked in the top 10 by girl students as well as the mothers. What stands out is the girls rank police (M=7.44, SD=1.99, 1st) the 1st place among the 30 jobs, which is significantly different from the mothers (M=6.13, SD=1.99, 15th). Obviously, girls show more honor to police than the mothers, and have different views of vocational prestige from their mothers.

Girl students gave architect, primary school teacher, and elementary school principal less point than the mothers. Note, the girl students rank primary school teacher (M=6.20, SD=2.30, 18th) and principal (M=6.17, SD=2.36, 19th) lower respectively, than nurse (M=6.64, SD=2.01, 12th), chef (M=6.62, SD=1.94, 13th) and entertainer (M=6.51, SD=2.28, 16th). This result is quite different from existing studies. Why are teachers and principals of elementary school not honored by students nowadays?

Except for chef and entertainer, there are still eight jobs ranked in the last ten by the girl students and the mothers. They were vendor, driver, model, carpenter, hairdresser, councilor, journalist, and professional player. These jobs are also ranked in lower places in many domestic studies

Table 3. Differences comparison of vocational prestige between fathers and male students

	fathers			male students			t
	M	SD	rank	M	SD	rank	
Scientist	7.24	1.97	1	7.71	1.79	1	-2.52**
Doctor	7.13	1.68	2	7.24	2.01	4	-.61
Dentist	6.89	1.78	3	6.60	2.27	14	1.47
Pilot	6.69	1.76	5	7.07	2.23	9	-1.95*
Fire man	6.69	2.01	4	7.23	2.33	6	-2.48**
Musician	6.58	1.87	6	6.57	2.43	15	.01
Architect	6.57	1.75	7	6.62	2.16	13	-.25
Grand justice	6.37	2.43	8	7.38	2.21	3	-4.38**
Lawyer	6.26	2.15	9	7.02	2.09	10	-3.61**
Farmer	6.25	2.12	10	6.14	2.77	18	.48
Primary school teacher	6.24	1.88	11	5.93	2.50	22	1.09
Postman	6.22	1.96	12	6.06	2.39	19	.75
Vet	6.21	1.87	13	6.33	2.30	17	-.58
President	6.17	2.07	14	7.24	1.94	5	-5.36**
Primary school Principal	6.16	1.97	15	6.35	2.32	16	-.90
Captain	6.09	1.99	16	5.95	2.60	21	.62
Nurse	6.06	2.02	17	5.71	2.49	24	1.60
Solider	6.01	2.08	18	7.08	2.24	8	-4.98**
Anchor	5.95	1.77	19	5.98	2.49	20	-.15
Police	5.85	2.11	20	7.47	2.24	2	-7.46**
chef	5.83	1.86	21	6.63	2.19	12	-4.02**
Professional player	5.63	1.85	22	7.15	2.16	7	-7.74**
carpenter	5.52	2.20	23	5.20	2.69	29	1.34
Entertainer	5.19	1.93	24	6.71	2.21	11	-7.44**
Driver	5.18	2.11	25	5.42	2.58	27	-1.03
Councilor	5.08	2.65	26	5.89	2.41	23	-3.25**
Hair dresser	5.00	1.81	27	5.21	2.38	28	-1.00
Vendor	4.96	2.28	28	4.55	2.63	30	1.70
Journalist	4.95	2.09	29	5.58	2.59	25	-2.71**
model	4.83	1.83	30	5.55	2.55	26	-3.32**

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

(Ho and Liao, 1969; Lin, 1971, 1980, 1991; Liu and Huang, 1984), moreover, the images of politicians and journalists are often negative and have difficulty gaining the public's respect (Table 4).

DISCUSSIONS

This study found 70% of the assessments are same for the highest and lowest vocational prestige between parents and students. They both concerned with the public figures' words and behaviors, but the public figures do not receive high prestige anymore. The main reasons may be the inappropriate words and actions of people's representatives and journalists' faulty reports on TV, Internet, and various media. In addition, each job has its social function. When the performances of certain jobs do not meet social expectation, it is difficult for them to receive favorable social assessments. On the contrary, when the jobs are related to peoples' living and devotion, they will get higher prestige even if

their statuses not high, such as the police and fire fighters.

Note, both boy and girl students gave higher points to entertainers than their parents, and boys gave more respect to professional players. Students' views on vocational prestige differ from their parents means they have different concepts of value. Some jobs valued by students may not be as important to the parents'. However, this is a way to appreciate multiple values and remind the parents to notice the students' concept of value and their potential development in the future.

We must notice that students' assessment at teachers of elementary school is lower than their parents, and the ranking is far below 50%. As we know that technology is well-developed, so network offers a wide range of messages. Teachers are no longer the only important sources of knowledge. Whether teachers teach effectively is much more important. In addition, teachers of elementary school spend 8 hours with their students on average each day. If students do not feel their teachers' care and love, they will not honor teachers.

Table 4. Differences comparison of vocational prestige between mothers and female students

	mothers			female students			t
	M	SD	rank	M	SD	rank	
Scientist	7.54	1.70	1	7.29	2.03	4	1.58
Doctor	7.25	1.51	2	7.28	1.87	5	-.18
Dentist	7.09	1.52	3	6.84	2.04	9	1.67
Grand justice	7.03	1.75	4	7.31	2.02	3	-1.86
Lawyer	6.81	1.75	5	6.97	2.09	7	-.98
Architect	6.80	1.65	6	6.57	2.14	15	1.43
Fire man	6.67	1.94	7	7.39	1.96	2	-4.54**
Primary school principal	6.62	1.68	8	6.17	2.36	19	2.66**
Musician	6.62	1.72	9	7.24	1.85	6	-4.24**
Vet	6.60	1.72	10	6.73	2.12	10	-.84
Primary school teacher	6.53	1.79	11	6.20	2.30	18	1.96*
President	6.51	1.73	12	6.87	2.06	8	-2.33*
Nurse	6.39	1.78	13	6.64	2.01	12	-1.60
Pilot	6.38	1.72	14	6.65	2.11	11	-1.70
Police	6.13	1.99	15	7.44	1.99	1	-8.05**
Anchor	6.06	1.68	16	6.07	2.13	22	-.06
Farmer	5.96	2.24	17	6.17	2.50	20	-1.11
Postman	5.93	1.87	18	6.23	2.26	17	-1.75
Captain	5.81	1.79	19	5.67	2.21	25	.83
Solider	5.79	1.85	20	6.60	2.17	14	-4.88**
Chef	5.77	1.85	21	6.62	1.94	13	-5.50**
Professional player	5.57	1.81	22	6.02	2.28	23	-2.69**
Journalist	5.51	1.85	23	5.39	2.33	28	.68
Entertainer	5.38	1.78	24	6.51	2.28	16	-6.71**
Councilor	5.28	2.12	25	5.62	2.30	26	-1.88
Carpenter	5.25	2.11	26	5.35	2.50	29	-.49
Hair dresser	5.17	1.85	27	6.08	1.98	21	-5.78**
Model	5.07	1.83	28	6.01	2.27	24	-5.53**
Driver	4.91	2.05	29	5.52	2.26	27	-3.45**
Vendor	4.88	2.16	30	5.07	2.36	30	-1.02

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

In general, there is high coherence between parents and students for the first ten vocational prestige items and the last ten. In this study, students assessed the vocational prestige for 30 jobs. The most respected ten and last respected ten vocations of students have a 70% similarity to their parents. Students tend to give more points than their parents do, but the points also differ greatly. On the contrary, the points parents gave to jobs were more similar than students were. Scientist, doctor, grand justice, lawyer, and firefighter are all regarded as the most honored ones. Vendor, driver, journalist, councilor, hairdresser, and carpenter are assessed as the lowest. This result is the same as most other studies. That is, students' value assessments are influenced by their families, and their vocational aspirations tend to mirror the class and gender of their parents.

There are some differences in vocational prestige between parents and the students. This study finds

students' respect for various jobs may differ from their parents, which shows they have different concepts of value. One thing worth noticing is some jobs valued by students may not be so important in parents' eyes. However, this is a way to understand differing values and remind parents to notice the students' concept of value and their possible development in the future. Male students are more interested in jobs with high profession, high power, and high popularity, and they also gave more points to those than their parents. Girl students honor official jobs serving the public the most. Both boy and girl students gave more respect to the police and entertainers than their parents did. However, they gave less respect to teachers of elementary schools, which shows there is a difference between parents' and students' concept of value.

In this study, students gave less points to teachers and principals of elementary schools than their parents, which shows "Honor the teacher and his teaching" may only exist in adult's world. It seems elementary students of this study do not respect their teachers and principals much, which is worthy of the educators' attention.

Suggestions

Students' assessments of vocational functions should be valued, and we should teach elementary school students to sincerely honor various jobs.

Since there are different concepts of value between parents and children, there must be sufficient negotiation between the two generations in choosing jobs for the future. More useful information will be helpful in reducing the sense of loss between honor and reality.

Elementary school teachers who are not highly respected by students should pay attention to enhance their professions.

This research focused mainly on early adolescents. Nevertheless, it is worth increasing study participants to compare the differences of vocational prestige among the middle and late adolescents and their parents in the future.

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