

Social Definition of Occupational Prestige¹

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Abstract

Occupational prestige is one of the most explored research problems in history of sociology. However, the concept of prestige remains blurred (and in many questionnaires this word is replaced with other). In the research for my PhD thesis I aimed at constructing social definition of occupational prestige. I was mainly interested in individual perspective of members of occupational groups that are considered prestigious. My research plan was based on triangulation of methods and sources of data. In this paper I present results of my quantitative research and qualitative (IDI interviews) research.

Key words: occupational prestige, occupational group, work satisfaction

Introduction

Occupational prestige is one of the most explored subjects in the history of sociology (Domański 1991). However, majority of this research, both in Poland and globally, use very similar methodology consisting of questionnaire with list of occupations and scale (pattern established by G.S. Counts in 1925). Worthy of note is also the ambiguity

¹ Research described in this paper was conducted for my PhD thesis elaborated under the guidance of professor Małgorzata Fuszara in the Institute of Applied Social Sciences, University of Warsaw.

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of the concept of 'prestige'. Social research should take into consideration also the fact that this term is used both in colloquial and academic language. Moreover, its different connotations in various languages make intercultural comparisons difficult (Wejland 1983). It is also important that in questionnaires of Polish research on occupational prestige other word than prestige is used ('poważanie' which can be translated rather as 'respect').

One of the research aims in my research for PhD thesis was elaborating social definition of prestige on the labour market (occupational prestige). My research plan was based on triangulation of data sources and research methods. I used explanatory-sequential research design – results of first, quantitative stage were used for constructing sample in second, qualitative stage. In this paper I will present chosen results of both stages.

1. Quantitative Research

1.1. Methodology

Questionnaire research was realized on the purposive sample of incumbents of the occupation, that according to CBOS study (CBOS 2013) is considered as most prestigious – firefighters. Thanks to the consent of authorities of Main School of Fire Service I was able to realize auditory questionnaire research on sample of students of Faculty of Fire Safety Engineering. It included students of I and IV year of full-time studies and II year of extramural studies for firefighters in active service. This enabled me to describe changes that occur during occupational socialization.

There were only 15 women (5.36%, all civilians) in the sample which corresponds with general situation in National Fire Service².

Detailed data on respondents in presented in the table below.

² According to the report for the twentieth anniversary of foundation of National Fire Service, in 2011 women comprised 8% of all employees (2524 job positions). Source: '20 years of National Fire Service', access on-line: <http://psp.opole.pl/uploads/info-o-ppsp-na-xx-lecie.pdf> (25.11.2016).

Table 1. Respondents by gender and year of studies (n=280)

Gender	Year of respondents' studies							
	I		IV		II		Total	
	LM	%	LM	%	LM	%	LM	%
Male	114	91,94	50	87,72	99	100,00	264	94,29
Female	9	7,26	6	10,53	0	0,00	15	5,36
No data	1	0,81	1	1,75	0	0,00	1	0,36
Total	124	100,00	57	100,00	99	100,00	280	100,00

Source: Own research.

1.2. First Associations with 'Occupational Prestige'

First question in the questionnaire concerned initial associations with term 'occupational prestige'. Answers were divided into eight groups:

- 1) Respect, esteem, admiration
- 2) Qualifications and competences, being 'occupational elite'
- 3) Social trust, responsibility of the job
- 4) Wages, good economic position
- 5) Satisfaction and pride connected with work, possibilities of self-realization
- 6) Social utility
- 7) Job security, good situation on the labour market
- 8) Fame, popularity, success, professionalism.

Depending on its complexity, each answer was prescribed up to four codes³. Most numerous groups of associations were included into first category – they were connected with positive reception of a person or occupational group by the society (176 answers, 46.19% codes). This kind of associations dominated in all years of studies. It is worthy of note that according to Irena Reszke in Polish research on occupational prestige it is equated with respect and esteem (Reszke 1984: 26). Dominance of this kind of answers may be therefore connected with social knowledge of such research.

Next most frequent were answers concerning competences and fulfilling occupational duties that not all would be able to fulfil (44 answers, 11.55% codes). It is interesting to note that this kind of answers was less frequently given by respondents starting their occupational education. Both those categories of answers can be

³ Only seven of the answers did not match any of the codes and were placed in category 'Other'.

connected with functional theory of stratification, according to which prestige is one on immaterial rewards awarded by the society to the individuals caring functionally important and demanding tasks (Davis, Moore 1944).

On the third place in terms of frequency were associations with trust that the society is giving to some persons or occupational groups and the responsibility connected with it (41 answers, 10.76% codes). Next were the associations with good economic situation (37 answers, 9.71% codes) – it is interesting that extramural students (firefighters in active service that have already some experience in high prestige occupation) gave such answers less frequently, which may be related to their feelings about their income.

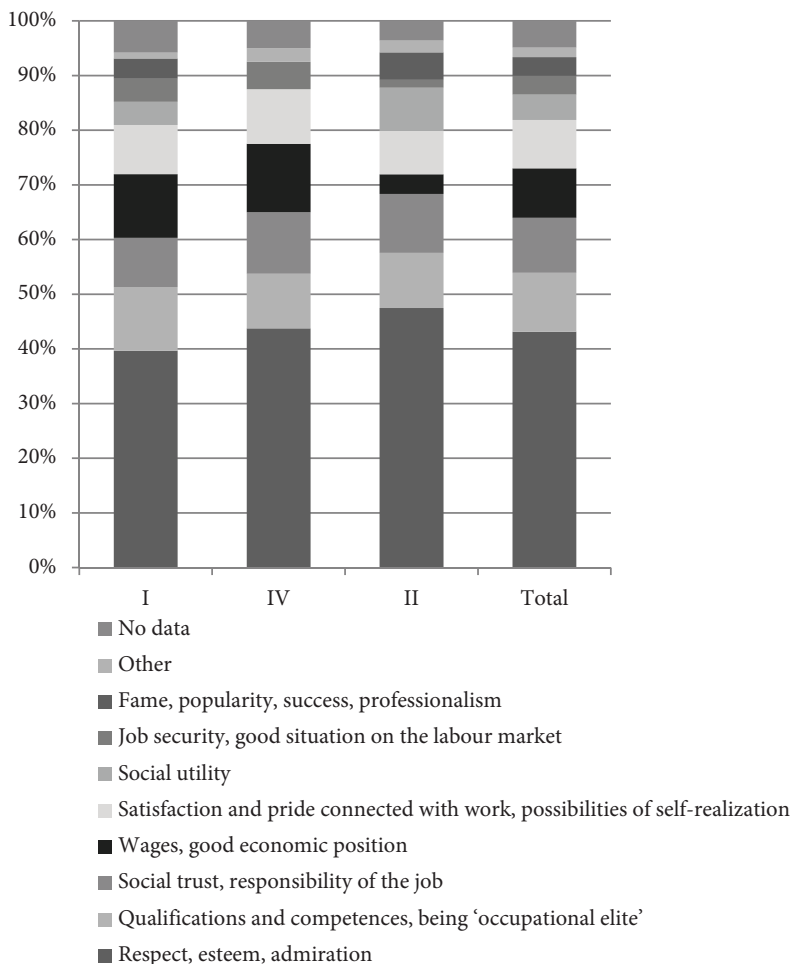
Table 2. Respondents answers for the question about initial associations with term ‘occupational prestige’ (n=280)⁴

Associations	Year of respondents' studies							
	I		IV		II		Total	
	LM	%	LM	%	LM	%	LM	%
Respect, esteem, admiration	75	60.48	35	61.40	66	66.67	176	62.86
Qualifications and competences, being ‘occupational elite’	22	17.74	8	14.04	14	14.14	44	15.71
Social trust, responsibility of the job	17	13.71	9	15.79	15	15.15	41	14.64
Wages, good economic position	22	17.74	10	17.54	5	5.05	37	13.21
Satisfaction and pride connected with work, possibilities of self-realization	17	13.71	8	14.04	11	11.11	36	12.86
Social utility	8	6.45	0	0.00	11	11.11	19	6.79
Job security, good situation on the labour market	8	6.45	4	7.02	2	2.02	14	5.00
Fame, popularity, success, professionalism	7	5.65	0	0.00	7	7.07	14	5.00
Other	2	1.61	2	3.51	3	3.03	7	2.50
No data	11	8.87	4	7.02	5	5.05	20	7.14
Total	176	100.00	74	100.00	131	100.00	381	100.00

Source: Own research.

⁴ Multiple choice questions- percents do not sum up to 100%.

Graph 1. Respondents answers for the question about initial associations with term ‘occupational presti



2.1. Occupational Prestige and Respect for Occupational Groups

Next question concerned factors that according to respondents are influencing level of prestige on the labour market. Participants were asked to choose the ones their perceived as most important.

Respondents regarded as the most important *Social meaning of the work* (178 answers, 63.57%). It was the most frequent choice regardless of the year of study. This answer can be related to functional theory of stratification (Davis, Moore 1944) and

it is therefore coherent with answers for the first, open-ended question. Next most common choice was *Occupation* (176 answers, 62.86%) which shows that individual situation on the labour market tends to be connected with being part of occupational group. This kind of opinion can be result of occupational socialization during duty.

On the third place in the ranking was *Professionalism and work ethos* (178 answers, 63.57%). It is worthy of note that this answer was chosen less frequently by I year students, the group which just starting their occupational education and socialization.

It should be underlined that more visible differences between years of studies appeared lower in the hierarchy of importance. Most visible was higher frequency of answer *Income* among IV year students (38.61% compared with 20% in all sample).

Table 3. Respondents' answers to the question about factors influencing the level of prestige on the labour market (multiple answer questions) by years of respondents' studies

Factor	I year		IV year		II year		Total	
	LM	%	LM	%	LM	%	LM	%
Social meaning of the work	81	65.32	33	57.89	64	64.65	178	63.57
Occupation	78	62.90	35	61.40	63	63.64	176	62.86
Professionalism and work ethos	48	38.71	26	45.61	59	59.60	133	47.50
Education and competences	46	37.10	20	35.09	31	31.31	97	34.64
Power and responsibility of the position	43	34.68	18	31.58	27	27.27	88	31.43
Income	22	17.74	22	38.60	12	12.12	56	20.00
Attitude toward co-workers	20	16.13	12	21.05	20	20.20	52	18.57
Difficulties that the person overcome in their career	21	16.94	8	14.04	11	11.11	40	14.29
Company/ institution of employment	17	13.71	7	12.28	14	14.14	38	13.57
Fame, popularity	12	9.68	3	5.26	9	9.09	24	8.57
Other	0	0.00	0	0.00	3	3.03	3	1.07

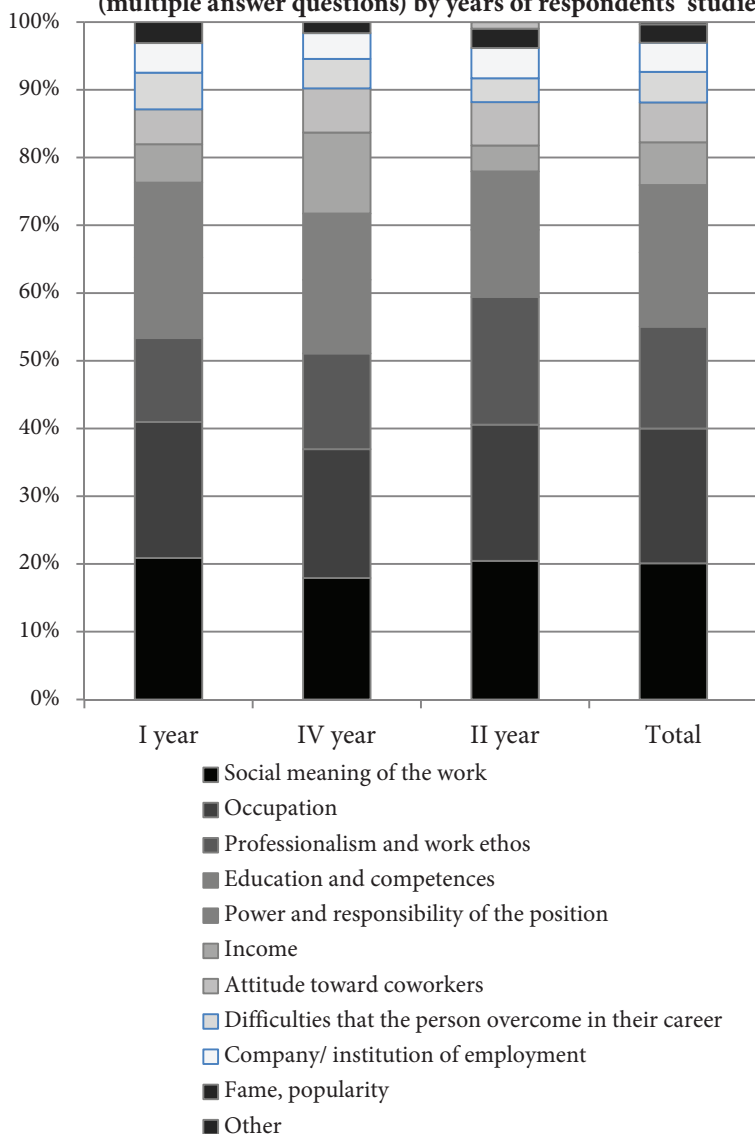
Source: Own research.

In the next question respondents were asked to rate the impact of personal characteristics independent form occupation or position on occupational prestige. List included both characteristic that can be basis of discrimination (gender and age) and those connected with ethics (occupational and general).

Highest mean rates were prescribed to answer: *Character, charisma, attitude towards co-workers* (3.23). Next were: *Way of obtaining current position* (2.87) and *Standards and work ethics* (2.77). Demographic characteristics were considered less important (*gender* – 1.27, *age* – 1.94).

It may be said therefore that respondents have optimistic vision of labour market as they think that hierarchy of occupational prestige is based on substantial criteria (or at least – criteria that can be shaped by the individual).

Graph 2. Respondents' answers to the question about factors influencing the level of prestige on the labour market (multiple answer questions) by years of respondents' studies



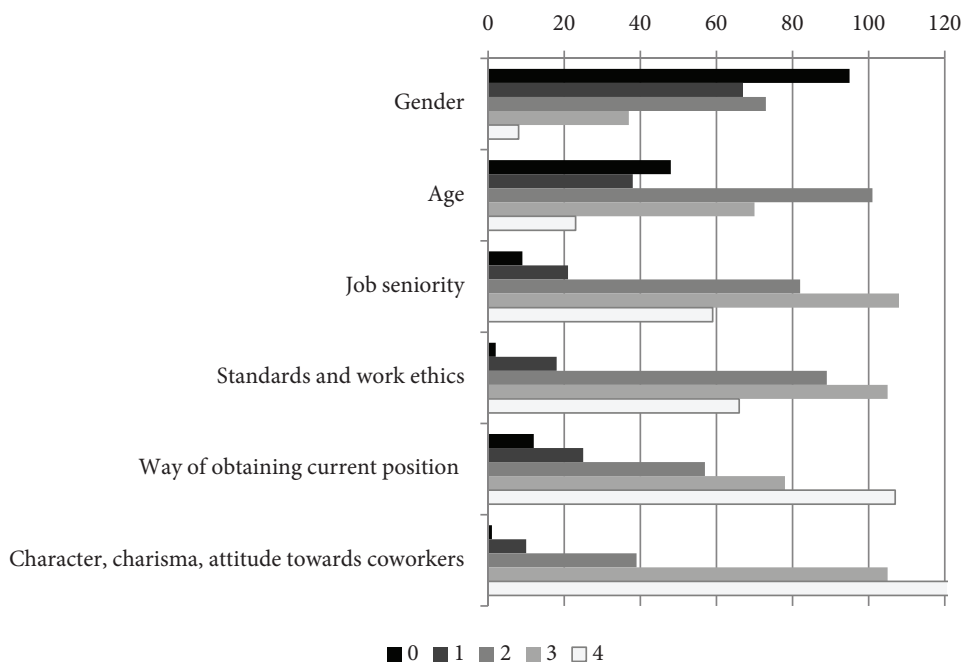
Source: Own research.

Table 4. Respondents' answers to the question about personal characteristic independent from occupation and position influencing the level of prestige on the labour market

Factor		0	1	2	3	4	Mean (of valid answers)
Gender	LM	95	67	73	37	8	1.27
	%	33.93	23.93	26.07	13.21	2.86	
Age	LM	48	38	101	70	23	1.94
	%	17.14	13.57	36.07	25.00	8.21	
Job seniority	LM	9	21	82	108	59	2.67
	%	3.21	7.50	29.29	38.57	21.07	
Standards and work ethics	LM	2	18	89	105	66	2.77
	%	0.71	6.43	31.79	37.50	23.57	
Way of obtaining current position (by own determination, accident, protection)	LM	12	25	57	78	107	2.87
	%	4.29	8.93	20.36	27.86	38.21	
Character, charisma, attitude towards co-workers	LM	1	10	39	105	125	3.23
	%	0.36	3.57	13.93	37.50	44.64	

Source: Own research.

Graph 3. Respondents' answers to the question about personal characteristic independent from occupation and position influencing the level of prestige on the labour market



Source: Own research.

Next question about prestige of occupations was formulated in a way corresponding to CBOS methodology (ex. CBOS 2013), so that comparisons could be made.

Due to the length of questionnaire I had to limit list of occupations to ten most interesting in light of research aims. I decided to include four groups:

- Occupations from the top of CBOS prestige hierarchy (CBOS 2013): *Firefighter* and *High education professor*
- Occupations from the bottom of CBOS prestige hierarchy (CBOS 2013): *Member of Parliament* and *Political party activist*
- Popular culture occupations – connected with fame and mass media: *Actor*, *Model* and *Dancer*
- Postmodern occupations – relatively new, that appeared on the Polish labour market due to economic and social changes typical for XXI century society: *Elderly care assistant*, *Call centre employee* and *PR agency employee*⁵.

Regardless of the year of studies, highest number of positive rates (*Very high* and *High*) was given to *Firefighter* (270 answers, 96.43%), on the second place was *High education professor* (208 answers, 74.29%) – the occupations form the top of CBOS hierarchy (CBOS 2013). What is more surprising is that among the rest of occupations the one with highest level of positive rates was *Elderly care assistant* (161 answers, 57.50%).

All three occupations meet criteria of prestige according to functional theory of stratification – they are functionally important for the society and demand special qualifications. Certainly the most ‘unexpected’ is high prestige of *Elderly care assistant*, partly because of unique character of care work which tend to be under-rewarded economically (Folbre 2003).

Table 5. Respondents’ answers to the question about occupations’ prestige – positive rates (high esteem and very high esteem) by respondents’ years of studies

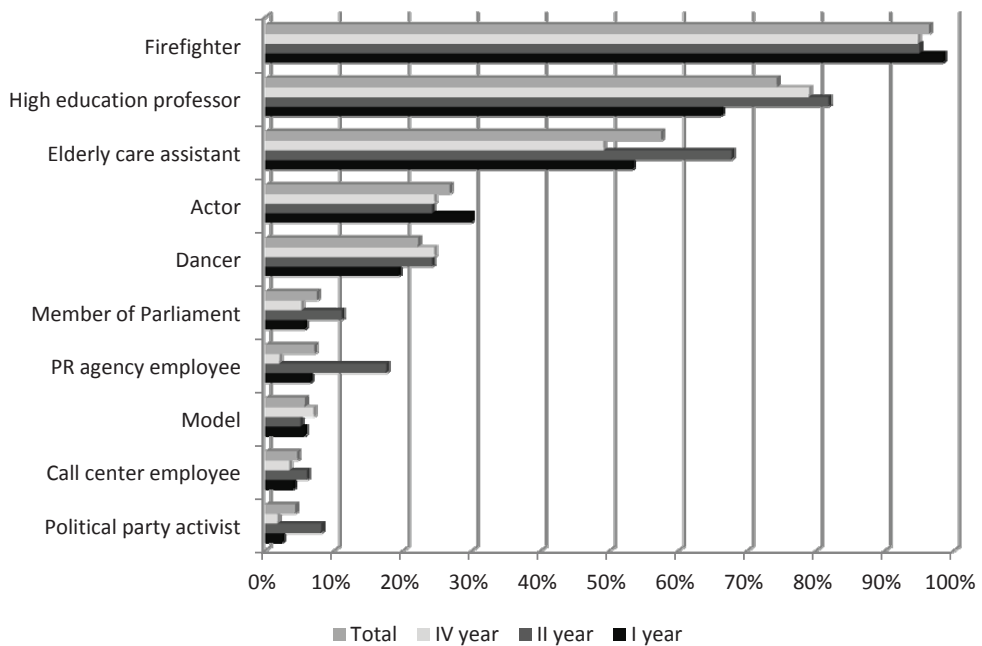
Occupation		I year	IV year	II year	Total
Firefighter	LM	122	54	94	270
	%	98.39	94.74	94.95	96.43
High education professor	LM	82	45	81	208
	%	66.13	78.95	81.82	74.29
Member of Parliament	LM	7	3	11	21
	%	5.65	5.26	11.11	7.50

⁵ In Polish questionnaire all names of occupations were given both in masculine and feminine forms.

Occupation		I year	IV year	II year	Total
Political party activist	LM	3	1	8	12
	%	2.42	1.75	8.08	4.29
Actor	LM	37	14	24	75
	%	29.84	24.56	24.24	26.79
Dancer	LM	24	14	24	62
	%	19.35	24.56	24.24	22.14
Model	LM	7	4	5	16
	%	5.65	7.02	5.05	5.71
Elderly care assistant	LM	66	28	67	161
	%	53.23	49.12	67.68	57.50
Call centre employee	LM	5	2	6	13
	%	4.03	3.51	6.06	4.64
PR agency employee	LM	8	2	10	20
	%	6.45	2.02	17.54	7.14

Source: Own research.

Graph 4. Respondents' answers to the question about occupations' prestige – positive rates (high esteem and very high esteem) by respondents' years of studies



Source: Own research.

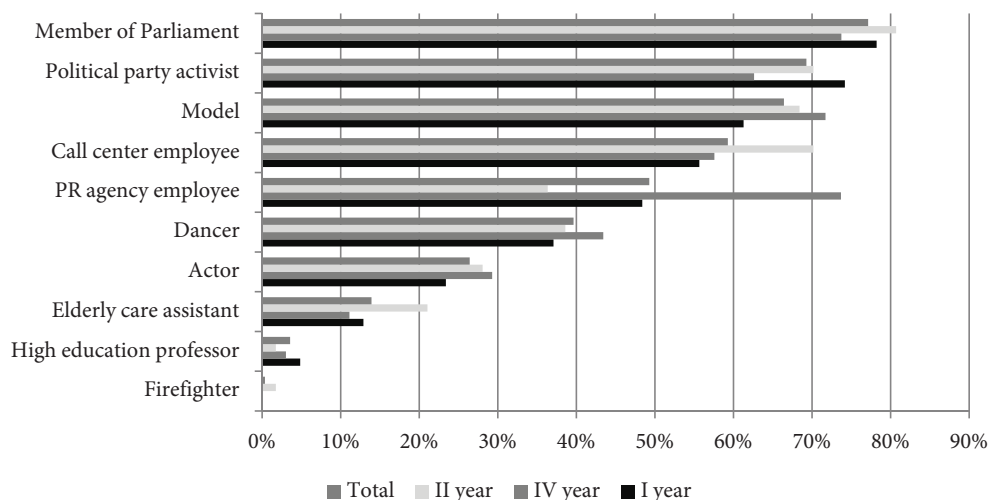
Also in terms of negative rates answers (*Very low* and *Low*) given by the Respondents were very similar to those in CBOS study (CBOS 2013). Most negative rates were given to *Member of Parliament* (214 answers, 77.12%) and *Political party activist* (194 answers, 69.29%). Next were *Model* (186 answers, 66.43%) and *Call centre employee* (166 answers, 59.39%).

Table 6. Respondents' answers to the question about occupations' prestige – positive rates (low esteem and very low esteem) by respondents' years of studies

Occupation		I year	IV year	II year	Total
Firefighter	LM	0	1	0	1
	%	0.00	1.75	0.00	0.36
High education professor	LM	6	1	3	10
	%	4.84	1.75	3.03	3.57
Member of Parliament	LM	92	40	62	194
	%	74.19	70.18	62.63	69.29
Political party activist	LM	97	46	73	216
	%	78.23	80.70	73.74	77.14
Actor	LM	29	16	29	74
	%	23.39	28.07	29.29	26.43
Dancer	LM	46	22	43	111
	%	37.10	38.60	43.43	39.64
Model	LM	76	39	71	186
	%	61.29	68.42	71.72	66.43
Elderly care assistant	LM	16	12	11	39
	%	12.90	21.05	11.11	13.93
Call centre employee	LM	69	40	57	166
	%	55.65	70.18	57.58	59.29
PR agency employee	LM	60	36	42	138
	%	48.39	36.36	73.68	49.29

Source: Own research.

Graph 5. Respondents' answers to the question about occupations' prestige – positive rates (low esteem and very low esteem) by respondents' years of studies



Source: Own research.

Following table presents complete answers of the Respondents.

Table 7. Respondents' answers to the question about occupations' prestige by respondents' years of studies

Occupation		Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	N/a	Total
Firefighter	LM	1	0	7	46	224	2	280
	%	0.36	0.00	2.50	16.43	80.00	0.71	100.00
High education professor	LM	2	8	61	137	71	1	280
	%	0.71	2.86	21.79	48.93	25.36	0.36	100.00
Member of Parliament	LM	88	106	65	14	7	0	280
	%	31.43	37.86	23.21	5.00	2.50	0.00	100.00
Political party activist	LM	95	121	52	10	2	0	280
	%	33.93	43.21	18.57	3.57	0.71	0.00	100.00
Actor	LM	17	57	130	70	5	1	280
	%	6.07	20.36	46.43	25.00	1.79	0.36	100.00
Dancer	LM	28	83	107	58	4	0	280
	%	10.00	29.64	38.21	20.71	1.43	0.00	100.00
Model	LM	74	112	75	14	2	3	280
	%	26.43	40.00	26.79	5.00	0.71	1.07	100.00

Occupation		Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	N/a	Total
Elderly care assistant	LM	9	30	77	120	41	3	280
	%	3.21	10.71	27.50	42.86	14.64	1.07	100.00
Call centre employee	LM	68	98	98	9	4	3	280
	%	24.29	35.00	35.00	3.21	1.43	1.07	100.00
PR agency employee	LM	45	93	118	15	5	4	280
	%	16.07	33.21	42.14	5.36	1.79	1.43	100.00

Source: Own research.

2. Qualitative Research

2.1. Methodology

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted in the second stage of my research. They were realized on the purposive sample of incumbents of high prestige occupations. Choice of occupational groups was made according to the results of first, quantitative stage that included (apart from questionnaire described before): quantitative analysis of media discourse and desk research. Finally I have chosen five occupations groups:

- State Fire Service – choice based on auditory questionnaire and Public Opinion Research Centre nationally representative study form 2013 (CBOS 2013)
- High education professors – choice based on auditory questionnaire and Public Opinion Research Centre nationally representative study form 2013 (CBOS 2013)
- Elderly care assistants – choice based on auditory questionnaire
- Popular culture artists – choice based on quantitative media analysis.

After the first wave of interviews I decided to add fifth group – medical doctors, the reason being that my Interviewees mentioned this group as example of high prestige occupation.

My analysis was based on Kristi Maltreud methodology inspired by systematic text condensation (Maltreud 2012). For efficiency I used OpenCode software.

2.2. Definition of Prestige

Significant part of my Interviewees had difficulties with giving exact answer for the question about their understating of occupational prestige. Their definitions varied significantly what confirms ambiguity and complexity of the term.

I organized possible meanings of prestige that appeared in the interviews into three-dimensional typology based on three oppositions:

- Internal/external
- Collective/individual
- Functional/non-functional

2.2.1. Internal and External Prestige

In some interviews appeared understating of prestige as a phenomena concerning how the person is treated by others. In this meaning prestige has a relational and subjective character, because it depends on the social environment. Synonyms of this meaning of prestige are: esteem, respect and reverence.

I understand occupational prestige as this situation when one is, because of their occupation, regarded in a more positive way, and people think that what this person does is great, ambitious, and they admire it. And they respect person because of their occupation (popular culture, M, 30)⁶.

I think that this is being shown respect by the people one meets (medical doctor, W, 67).

Near this understanding of prestige was common desire to be in position of some person or group, performing their occupational duties. It is important that this was a wish of positive character (without jealousy).

Well, prestige is when people want to do this job (popular culture, W, 46).

Contrary to the external, internal prestige has an individual character. It is therefore strictly connected with self-esteem and inner satisfaction with both character of occupational duties and way of fulfilling them.

It's that one should like his occupation. (elderly care, W, 55).

For me work should always give you pleasure, this is something basic for me. It shouldn't be a chore. (National Fire Service, M, 41).

⁶ Codes describe occupational group, gender and age of the Interviewee.

2.2.2. Collective and Individual Prestige

Connecting prestige with membership of occupational group seems to be common, which may result from social conscience of research on occupational prestige. In some of the answers occupational prestige was actually identified with occupation.

This is occupation that is respected and appreciated by others, so it is noticed and valued, I think. By the society and others (National Fire Service, W, 27).

Fact that occupational prestige is associated with occupational group may be connected with general meaning of occupation as an individual's characteristic. In modern societies it is crucial factor influencing one's position in social structure. It may be also treated as a source of data on various other attributes such as income or education (Domański, Sawiński, Słomczyński 2007).

In some Interviews however, an opposite understanding appeared that can be linked with negation of whole concept of prestige. Interviewees who put forward such egalitarian postulates were against hierarchizing occupations or social roles. They were convinced that individual characteristics and behaviours are more important – assessment of the person should be independent from their position on the labour market. Therefore every work can be performed outstandingly.

For example, here <on the University> I have this lady, who is caring about cleanliness, and she is really good at what she does, she cares about it all ... and her job is different, but it doesn't mean that we should somehow classify people in that or other way ... what matters the most is to be a decent person, to do decently what one is doing, to do one's best, well, that is what matters the most (high education, W, 61).

Moreover, various times Interviewees noted that prestige level may vary between members of one occupational group, according to their individual competences or engagement in work. Groups frequently given as an example of such differences were medical doctors.

... I Either one is a very good doctor and have prestige and respect or one is a quack and do things that are not fair and then, what prestige? And it is similar with others, in other occupations (popular culture, M, 41).

Medical doctors who took part in the interviews confirmed existence of such differences inside their occupational group. Factors that may, according to them, determine the differences seem universal and may have importance also in other occupational groups. They were connected with qualifications (academic degree) and place of employment, as well as personality and attitude towards patients.

... degree gives prestige, you can see even that if someone is ill with a more serious disease they want to consult with the professor, even if this professor doesn't specialize

in this particular disease, because it is degree in itself that changes a lot. (medical doctor, W, 67).

Well, I think that occupation is occupation, but apart from that, you know, how one apply oneself, it is their qualifications and also the place one works in (medical doctor, W, 67).

It is important to underline that this opposition is analogical to difference between personal and positional prestige proposed by Henryk Domański (Domański 2007: 42).

2.2.3. Functional and Non-Functional Prestige

Crucial opposition appearing in the interviews was the opposition between functional and non-functional prestige.

First category was most widely described by the Interviewees. It is based on the hierarchy of importance of roles and task in social division of work. My Interviewees mentioned utility of work and meaning of particular tasks for the society. This understanding of occupational prestige seems to correspond with functional theory of stratification (Davis, Moore 1945).

... high-prestige occupations are this when one does not simply do things, but does something good, something good in a way... well, for people, helping somebody or something like that, being useful and when this is appreciated. (popular culture, W, 41).

Well, it is some social recognition of competence of this person, their utility in her occupational goals, precise goals, like elaborating an expertise, a project, presenting an invention and recognition of the person as competent an utile in the society, that this person feels that their specialization, field is utile, is needed, meets society's needs (high education, M, 56).

According to the functional theory of stratification occupational prestige is motivating the members of society to gain qualifications and undertake important social roles. My research shows that 'basic level of prestige' connected with position may be supplemented with personal prestige, connected with assessment of individual work. Certainly those two dimensions merge – a hypothesis may be made, that in occupations with special functional meaning 'stake is higher'. Members of high prestige occupational groups are given prestige a priori and the verification (based on their behaviours) comes next. In other words, generalized positive opinion on the occupational group is basis of setting expectations as to its members. If those expectations are not met, disappointment is bigger than in case of low-prestige groups.

Well, I think that for the beginning there is a credit of trust, that this is a doctor, so this trust is given as a credit, 'cause this is a high prestige occupation, but I think that as in every other occupation, some persons have after all lower and some higher prestige (medical doctor, M, 40).

Obviously there is also connection between prestige of the occupational group and its members. Behaviours of individuals are, in longer perspective, building group's prestige. It means that every member of the group should try to represent it decently.

For example, for me, doctor used to be very prestigious occupation. But lately... also because I had doctors in my family, the old-fashioned doctors, the social activists. And from what I see, from my experiences, I think that now such doctors are in minority. I'm always glad to meet this kind of a doctor, acting and feeling that way. But for me this is a sad example of, I don't know, the fall of occupation I used to respect very much (high education, M, 56).

Opposite to the functional prestige there is also non-functional prestige that is not connected with the social meaning of work. It is superficial admiration that society has for individuals on the privileged positions in the social structure. In this dimension prestige is not a reward for undertaking socially important role, but rather admiration for the ones that, thanks to luck or own resourcefulness, were able to organize a comfortable life for themselves.

... it's rather some people in positions of power. Not the humble ones (elderly care, M, 26).

What is interesting is that my Interviewees presented in this subject the syndrome of pluralistic ignorance. They were confirmed that society as the whole gives much respect to the persons they do not respect or even – have negative opinion about them (Katz, Allport 1931).

Well, it surprises me that actors, singers, so called celebrities, of course I don't like this word... they have prestige, 'cause for people... 'cause they are not presented in a truthful manner, but it is always polished, photoshopped, and so on... (popular culture, W, 46)

2.3. High Prestige of Groups and Individuals on the Polish Labour Market

Another component of definition of occupational prestige is identification to whom it is given. Question I asked was general, not to direct my Respondents towards any particular unit of assessment (person, occupation, occupational group, etc.). Answers form net of possible meanings that may be analysed with the use of mentioned dimensions of prestige. The answers concerned characteristics connected with prestige which are in causal-effect relation with it.

2.3.1. Quality of work

Assessment of quality of performance of occupational tasks was the basic criteria of occupational prestige. This factor is connected with functional prestige (both internal and external).

... what counts in any other occupation is also professionalism (National Fire Service, M, 51).

I will say it this way: life is all or nothing. Either you are good at what you are doing and that's it, or you are lousy and people see it (National Fire Service, M, 44).

Majority of the Interviewees focused in that respect on the personal prestige, independent from the occupation. Moreover, they saw quality of work as a factor contributing to differences in terms of prestige inside one occupational group.

If one is really applying oneself, giving it all time, energy, I don't know, heart, then... and engagement, well, one can have more prestige than a person who, in the same occupation would be like... with less engagement (high education, M, 53).

2.3.2. Personality

Another significant factor, connected with external, personal individual is personality. It links career and private life, is also important for society as the whole because it conditions quality of work (functional prestige). Is especially important in work that is connected with constant contact with work-recipients (patients, clients, students). Basic form in which personality affects work is the attitude toward others.

Person who respects others is more respected (elderly care, W, 55).

The way one treats others, respect for others, willingness to help, selflessness, I think this kind of people is more respected (National Fire Service, W, 33).

One of my Interviewees noticed that character is sometimes more important than qualifications, what she personally sees as unjust.

... sometimes somebody tells me that some doctor isn't nice, and I say, doctor doesn't have to be nice, he should be just a good doctor (medical doctor, W, 67).

Other aspect of character that impacts person's occupational prestige is humility. My Interviewees' opinions confirm Domański's statement that seeking prestige gives opposite result. Additionally this kind of self-promotion engages time and attention needed for occupational duties (Domański 2007: 25).

... I know great doctors, for example from hospice in XXX., really those people work behind the curtain, really hard, they do their best and they don't care about prestige (elderly care, M, 58).

2.3.3. Qualifications

Other characteristics, important mostly for the functional dimension of prestige are qualifications and competences. Also this factor may have both internal and external character. In case of prestige of occupation it concerns general requirements, and when it comes to individual – if and (to what extent) they meet this requirements.

Qualifications connected with prestige may be inborn or acquired. Second are connected with the effort one has to put into education.

... to have, I don't know knowledge, abilities, qualifications, well, high, to... and this is where this prestige comes from, so we think that this person had to work a lot to be where they are (higher education, W, 61).

Especially worthy of respect are highly specialized qualifications. Only a few persons have them, which corresponds with supply and demand law described in context of prestige by Henryk Domański (Domański 2007: 12).

I think that now, engineers, who hold MSc degree, have high prestige, because this is kind of narrow specialization, and so difficult that unattainable for many, because one has to have scientific mind, and there are few of them. So I think that engineers have high occupational prestige. (medical doctor, W, 24).

However, not only gaining qualifications required to start occupational career is important, but also the attitude of constant learning and increasing one's competences. It is not only a necessity (due to constant development of knowledge) but also autotelic value and part of work ethos.

It's best, if everyone does what they are good at, and try to progress, because what bugs me with people is when they don't progress (National Fire Service, M, 41).

Also the importance of practice as source of competences should be underlined, what is connected with orientation on the constant development and importance of occupational socialization after finishing formal education.

... studies can't teach you practice, I bet. For me there is no school that prepare for work. School gives you basics, some general understanding, but, it's like that everywhere – one have to work a little to get to know what one does (National Fire Service, M, 44).

There are also inborn competences that can be used and developed in the occupational life. As one of my Interviewees noted, an accurate choice of career can result not only in work-related success but general personal growth.

I think that everyone should have occupation that would develop their in-born characteristics, well, this makes a person complete (popular culture, W, 46).

In some interviews concept of calling appeared – especially in relation to Interviewees own occupational choice.

... because service is a calling (National Fire Service, M, 51).

... habilitation... I don't want to use wrong word, this imposed, or grounded and confirmed, in some way the calling to be an academic teacher (higher education, M, 56).

2.3.4. Fame and Popularity

Some of my Interviewees connected prestige with being famous. This factor is linked with non-functional prestige, in its external form. Pluralistic ignorance syndrome was visible in what my Interviewees said – there were convinced that famous and popular persons are respected by the majority of the society but did not respect them themselves (Katz, Allport 1931).

Fame, this is prestige. They strive to be on TV. (elderly care, M, 58).

Important reason for such attitude toward prestige resulting from fame and popularity was (supposed) lack of substantive basis. This statement was made both for individuals and whole occupational groups.

... politics is something connected with superstructure, but you can't deal with superstructure if you don't deal with... if one doesn't see that basis (higher education, W, 61).

We all know that popularity of an actor isn't always, and even that is quite rarely, equal to his abilities, cause we have a lot famous and not so talented and the opposite way (popular culture, M, 30).

2.3.5. Economic Status

Second factor connected with non-functional prestige (like fame, visible mostly in the external dimension) was wage and economic position connected with work. As with fame and popularity, Interviewees were critical of the fact that this factor is generally considered important for occupational prestige. They underlined, that personally they do not see income as reason to respect someone, they felt however that the situation is opposite for the others. Therefore again a pluralistic ignorance syndrome occurred (Katz, Allport 1931).

Well, from my experience I know, that mostly is about money, unfortunately (elderly care, W, 35)

What is interesting, is that one of the Interviewees thought that prestige may be sometimes a 'redress' for low wage in high prestige occupation.

Certainly one can have a prestigious occupation and have problems to make ends meet, but in that situation a person has compensation, this superstructure. But it is in the Polish society, not for me personally, you see? (popular culture, W, 36).

Conclusion

Research confirmed ambiguity and complexity of concept of prestige. Quantitative research shown that initial associations of members of high prestige occupational group with this term are linked with respect and reverence. As most important factors influencing occupational prestige were identified: meaning of work for the society, its quality and occupational group (which proves the 'automatic' connotation between prestige and occupational group) as well as personality.

Qualitative research enabled me to elaborate definition of prestige based on three binary oppositions: internal-external, collective-individual and functional/non-functional. First of those oppositions concerns satisfaction and the way a person is treated in their environment. Second relates to difference between prestige gained individually and resulting from being member of an occupational group (and is collective responsibility). Third opposition can be considered crucial and concerns the difference between prestige resulting from functional meaning of work for the society and prestige of other basis. As most important factors influencing prestige my Interviewees named quality of work, personality and high qualifications (connected

with functional prestige) as well as fame and income (connected with nonfunctional prestige).

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