

Social Status and Newspaper Readership¹

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In this article, the authors explore the social bases of cultural consumption by examining the association between newspaper readership and social status. They report a strong and systematic association between status and newspaper readership which is consistent with the expected link between status in the classical Weberian sense, on the one hand, and cultural level and lifestyle, on the other. This association persists in a multinomial logistic regression model in which the authors take into account, among other things, educational attainment which serves as a proxy for the respondent's information-processing capacity. The social status of respondent's father and best friend also have significant and substantial effects on newspaper preference. Finally, the authors report results that indicate that the effects of status on newspaper readership are generally more important than those of class.

IN SEARCH OF THE SOCIAL BASES OF CULTURAL CONSUMPTION

In trying to understand the social bases of taste, cultural consumption, and lifestyles more generally, many sociologists have drawn inspiration from the work of Bourdieu. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) advances two main claims. The first claim is that there is a direct correspondence

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or “homology” between social class and culture. That is, the pattern of cultural consumption in a society is an expression of its class structure. Secondly, Bourdieu argues that cultural consumption is an instrument of class competition and conflict. Elite taste and lifestyle are exploited by the dominant class in the reproduction of class inequalities.

Clearly the second claim is stronger than the first, but even the first claim has been severely criticized. The marked class differences in taste that Bourdieu asserts are often not borne out by his own survey data (Lieberson 1992, pp. 6–7). Furthermore, some scholars, drawing chiefly on research into musical taste and consumption, have argued that in contemporary societies the idea of a class-culture homology has become quite outmoded. Rather, a group of “cultural omnivores,” found in more advantaged class positions, should be distinguished in contrast to usually less advantaged cultural “univores” (e.g., Peterson and Simkus 1992; Bryson 1997; van Rees et al. 1999; Sintas and Álvarez 2002; Coulangeon 2003). Omnivores consume not just “high” culture but a wide range of genres, thus giving rise to a far more complex relation between social structure and cultural consumption than Bourdieu would envisage.

Finally, and partly reflecting more general currents of thought in sociology, some authors would argue that in contemporary societies cultural consumption no longer has any systematic relationship to social class or indeed to any other aspect of social structure. Instead, cultural and other forms of consumption are said to have become radically “individualized,” reflecting individuals’ free choice as they construct their personal lifestyles and identities (e.g., Bauman 1988; Beck 1992; Lash and Urry 1994). These claims are provocative, and they have been subject to strong criticism on various empirical grounds (cf. Warde 1997; Warde and Martens 2000; Tomlinson 2003).

The upshot is that we have a variety of theories purporting to explain how consumption is, or is not, related to the social structure, but none can claim a clear ascendancy. How, then, in the face of these divergent views may we best proceed? We would argue that these theoretical and empirical difficulties are largely due to a conceptual confusion over how relevant aspects of social structure should be understood.

Social Status versus Social Class

We would recognize that taste, cultural consumption, and lifestyle have to some degree their own internal dynamics (Lieberson 2000). But we also think that it is possible to reach a better understanding of their social bases than has so far been achieved. To do so, a conceptual reorientation is necessary. Specifically, we need to reinstate Max Weber’s (Weber [1922] 1968) distinction between class and *status*.

By a status order we understand a structure of relations expressing perceived and typically accepted social superiority, equality, or inferiority of a quite generalized kind that is linked not to the qualities of particular individuals but rather to social positions that they hold or to certain of their ascribed attributes (e.g., “birth” or ethnicity). A class structure, in contrast, we would see as being grounded specifically, and quite objectively, in the social relations of economic life—that is, in the social relations of labor markets and production units. While typically generating differential, and often extreme, advantage and disadvantage, a class structure does not necessarily take on the consistently hierarchical form that is inherent to a status order (Dahrendorf 1959, pp. 74–77; Giddens 1973, p. 106).

Weber’s distinction between class and status is always taught in introductory sociology courses, but it is just as commonly forgotten in research. Thus, on all sides of the debate reviewed above, scholars argue whether *class* still structures cultural consumption with little reference to status. And even if attention is given to the status order, it tends to be seen as “isomorphic” with the class structure and as merely providing the latter with symbolic legitimation (e.g., Bourdieu 1984).²

This is unfortunate because while social class is of course known to have many important consequences for individuals’ life chances—say, for economic security and prospects (Goldthorpe and McKnight 2006), for educational attainment (Jonsson and Erikson 1996), and for health, morbidity, and mortality (Bartley et al. 1996)—it is *status* that one would expect to be more directly related to cultural consumption. In other words, we believe that difficulties and disagreements over the social bases of cultural consumption might be at least to some degree overcome if more serious attention were given to the class-status distinction.³

Historians and sociologists have documented a long-term decline of

² In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984, p. xii) does of course start out from “an endeavour to rethink Max Weber’s opposition between class and *Stand*.” For Bourdieu class and status are not to be understood as different forms of social stratification that can be linked, as Weber puts it, “in the most varied ways.” Rather, status has to be seen as the symbolic aspect or dimension of the class structure, which is not itself reducible to economic relations alone. Earlier, in the American literature, the Weberian distinction was elided through attempts at defining social class essentially in terms of status. For example, Lipset and Bendix (1959, p. 275) understand social classes as “strata of society composed of individuals who accept each other as status equals,” and Shils (1975, p. 249) defines classes as “aggregate[s] of persons, within a society, possessing approximately the same status.”

³ It should be noted that while scholars in social stratification and cultural sociology have neglected the Weberian class-status distinction, those in economic sociology have fruitfully employed the concept of status in their research (see, e.g., Podolny 1993, 2005; Benjamin and Podolny 1999; Phillips and Zuckerman 2001).

deference. Individuals treated by others as social inferiors would appear to have become increasingly less ready to accept such derogation or at all events to acknowledge it through words or actions—such as the use of honorifics, curtsying, cap touching, and so on (cf. Runciman 1997, especially pp. 153–58). And at the same time it seems likely that the actual expression of social superiority, again in either words or actions, has itself become less acceptable. However, the fact that the expression of a status order is now less apparent in everyday life than it was, say, a hundred years ago, does not mean that such an order no longer exists. It may still do so, even if in some less well-defined, less normatively sanctioned, and generally more covert form. Indeed, most people probably do believe that what we have called a status order does, in some way or other, persist in contemporary societies. Much popular awareness of “class” as revealed in responses in survey interviews could be better regarded, from a sociological point of view, as awareness of status—as, for example, when “class consciousness” is used not in anything approaching the Marxist sense but rather to refer simply to snobbery.

Social Status in Contemporary British Society

In an earlier paper (Chan and Goldthorpe 2004), we investigated status relations in present-day Britain, following the approach pioneered by Laumann (1966, 1973). Our approach starts from the occupational structure of close friendship. If occupations are among the most salient social positions to which status attaches and if close friendship can be taken to imply relations of social equality, then by analyzing the propensity for friendships to be formed between members of different occupational groupings a structure of social *inequality* may be inferred. Through a multidimensional scaling exercise applied to national survey data on patterns of close friendship among men and women allocated to 31 occupational categories, we identify a first dimension that, we argue, can be plausibly seen as reflecting a status hierarchy that still persists in British society, despite the evident decline in displays of deference and in the readiness of individuals openly to assert their social superiority. The ranking of the categories according to their scores on this first dimension is shown in table 1.

Three features of this presumed status order are noteworthy. First, it reveals clear continuities with that depicted for the later 19th and earlier 20th centuries in historical and earlier sociological research (Runciman 1997; McKibbin 1998). Most important, status appears to be still rather systematically associated with the degree of “manuality” of work; or, somewhat more specifically, one might say that occupations that require working with symbols and/or people tend to confer higher status than those

that require working directly with material things, while those that require working with both people and things—such as many occupations in the now expanding services sector—have typically an intermediate ranking. Further, within the nonmanual range, professional occupations tend to be placed higher than managerial occupations. Indeed, some managerial occupations, such as managers and proprietors in services or plant, depot, and site managers, are found at the bottom end of the nonmanual range, ranking, in fact, below many clerical and secretarial occupations.

This ordering of occupations is in fact broadly in line with that which emerges from other comparable research in Britain and elsewhere (e.g., Laumann 1966; Pappi 1973; Coxon and Jones 1978; Stewart et al. 1980). However, in one important respect our results are distinctive. Not only the first but also the second and, to some degree, the third dimensions of our multidimensional scaling exercise are interpretable. Specifically, the second dimension is highly correlated with the degree of occupational sex segregation ($r = -.92$), while the third dimension would appear to pick up various occupational *situations* (Morris and Murphy 1959). To the extent, then, that these two further dimensions capture the effects of workplace environments on the *opportunities* for friendship formation, the first dimension, being thus “purged” of such influence, should more closely reflect friendship *choice* as influenced by social status (Chan and Goldthorpe 2004, pp. 387–89).

The second point to note is that although the status order we identify correlates sensibly with both income and education, the correlations are rather modest, and there are some occupational categories whose status appears incongruent with their income or education (see also Abbott 1981). For example, plant, depot, and site managers, buyers and sales representatives, and skilled and related manual workers in both construction and metal trades all have clearly higher levels of income and educational attainment than a number of other categories that rank above them in the status order (see table 2). Moreover, when estimated status score is regressed on both income and education, the coefficient of income turns out to be nonsignificant (Chan and Goldthorpe 2004, p. 392). What is then indicated is that status, understood in an essentially Weberian sense as involving relations of social superiority, equality, and inferiority, is likely to be distinct empirically as well as conceptually from “socioeconomic” status as represented by scales that in some way synthesize information on income and education (e.g., Duncan 1961; Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996).

Third, although there is a clear status gradient across social classes, that is, as represented by the Goldthorpe class schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992, chap. 2; Goldthorpe 2007, chap. 14), there is a good deal of overlap in status *between* classes, and at the same time the spread of

TABLE 1
THE 31 OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES RANKED IN DESCENDING ORDER OF STATUS SCORE AND REPRESENTATIVE OCCUPATIONS WITHIN EACH GROUP

Rank	Title	Code	Representative Occupations ^a
1	Higher professionals	HP	Chartered accountants, clergy, medical practitioners, solicitors
2	Associate professionals in business	APB	Journalists, investment analysts, insurance brokers, designers
3	Specialist managers	SM	Company treasurers, financial managers, computer systems managers, personnel managers
4	Teachers and other professionals in education	TPE	College lecturers, education officers and inspectors, school teachers
5	General managers and administrators	GMA	Bank and building society managers, general managers in industry, national and local government officers
6	Associate professionals in industry	API	Computer analysts and programmers, quantity surveyors, vocational and industrial trainers
7	Scientists, engineers, and technologists	SET	Civil and structural engineers, clinical biochemists, industrial chemists, planning engineers, software engineers
8	Filing and record clerks	FRC	Conveyancing clerks, computer clerks, library assistants
9	Managers and officials, NEC	OMO	Security managers, cleaning managers
10	Administrative officers and assistants	AOA	Clerical officers in national and local government
11	Numerical clerks and cashiers	NCC	Accounts assistants, bank clerks
12	Associate professionals in health and welfare	APH	Community workers, nurses, occupational therapists, youth workers
13	Secretaries and receptionists	SEC	Personal assistants, receptionists, secretaries, word processor operators
14	Other clerical workers	OCW	General assistants, commercial and clerical assistants
15	Buyers and sales representatives	BSR	Buyers and purchasing officers, technical sales representatives, wholesale representatives
16	Child care workers	CCW	Educational assistants, nursery nurses

17	....	Managers and proprietors in services	MPS	Catering managers, hoteliers, publicans, shopkeepers and managers
18	....	Plant, depot, and site managers	PDM	Clerks of works, farm managers, maintenance managers, transport managers, works managers
19	....	Sales workers	SW	Cash desk and checkout operators, sales and shop assistants, window dressers
20	....	Health workers	HW	Ambulance staff, dental nurses, nursing auxiliaries
21	....	Personal service workers	PSW	Caretakers and housekeepers, hairdressers and beauticians, travel attendants, undertakers
22	....	Protective service personnel	PSP	Fire service and police officers, security guards
23	....	Routine workers in services	RWS	Car park attendants, cleaners, counter hands, couriers and messengers, hotel porters, postal workers
24	....	Catering workers	CW	Bar staff, chefs, cooks, waiters and waitresses
25	....	Store and dispatch clerks	SDC	Dispatch and production control clerks, storekeepers
26	....	Skilled and related manual workers, NEC	SMO	Gardeners and groundsmen, printers, textile workers, woodworkers
27	....	Transport operatives	TO	Bus and coach drivers, lorry and van drivers, taxi drivers
28	....	Skilled and related manual workers in construction and maintenance	SMC	Bricklayers, electricians, painters and decorators, plasterers, roofers, telephone repairmen
29	....	Skilled and related manual workers in metal trades	SMM	Fitters, setters, setter-operators, sheet metal workers, turners, welders
30	....	Plant and machine operatives	PMO	Assemblers, canners, fillers and packers, food processors, moulders and extruders, routine inspectors and testers
31	....	General laborers	GL	Agricultural workers, factory laborers, goods porters, refuse collectors

^a That is, occupations that account for relatively large numbers of individuals within each category and at the same time give some idea of its range.

TABLE 2
 MEDIAN ANNUAL INCOME (in Pounds Sterling) AND PERCENTAGE OF
 RESPONDENTS WITH A-LEVELS IN THE 31 STATUS GROUPS

Code	Rank	Income (Pounds per Annum)	% with A-levels
HP	1	21,054	93.3
APB	2	16,256	82.7
SM	3	24,018	81.1
TPE	4	20,880	99.2
GMA	5	21,010	74.9
API	6	18,416	86.6
SET	7	22,603	93.9
FRC	8	12,113	65.8
OMO	9	20,073	79.8
AOA	10	12,597	55.9
NCC	11	11,173	50.3
APH	12	13,888	86.4
SEC	13	8,821	46.0
OCW	14	10,338	57.3
BSR	15	16,835	70.5
CCW	16	6,793	58.1
MPS	17	11,129	55.7
PDM	18	20,240	62.2
SW	19	5,977	39.5
HW	20	7,962	39.1
PSW	21	7,541	44.8
PSP	22	17,805	59.0
RWS	23	5,898	25.5
CW	24	6,681	41.1
SDC	25	11,115	38.6
SMO	26	10,600	36.5
TO	27	12,850	37.2
SMC	28	14,115	52.6
SMM	29	15,999	57.7
PMO	30	11,651	32.5
GL	31	10,010	31.7

status *within* classes is in some cases quite considerable (see Chan and Goldthorpe 2004, figs. 6, 7). That is to say, in contemporary British society at least, the mapping of status onto class is by no means so close as to make the distinction empirically redundant.⁴

⁴ The results reported in the foregoing paragraphs appear very robust to alternative analyses of the basic data: for example, to working with a smaller number of occupational categories, to using Goodman's RC(M) models rather than multidimensional scaling, and to treating men and women separately.

Research Questions and Analytical Strategy

In the present article we have two goals. First, we wish to explore the social bases of cultural consumption by examining the association between status and newspaper readership in contemporary British society. Second, through such an exercise, we seek further to investigate the validity of the putative status order that we have proposed and, in turn, the analytical value of the Weberian class-status distinction.

Our investigation starts from the following consideration. The criteria of status have varied widely over time and place (Peterson 1997). In many societies, family and lineage have been of major importance, together, say, with codes of behavior or organizational affiliations (e.g., membership in schools, clubs, etc.). However, in modern societies—except perhaps among some “elite” groupings—the family backgrounds of individuals are not always readily known, etiquettes can rather easily be learned, and most associational memberships are open to anyone who can meet the cost. Consequently, sociologists have come to regard *lifestyle*, and especially its *cultural level*, as being of steadily increasing significance for status (e.g., Shils 1975; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985).⁵

Cultural taste and consumption serve as effective means of the symbolic communication of status as an order distinct from that of “mere” economic advantage. Individuals may seek to display status quite deliberately through their cultural activities, as, for example, by making sure that they are seen at the opera or ballet. But, more often, the symbolic communication of status through cultural consumption occurs in less direct ways. For example, music, theater, television—and likewise newspapers—provide good material for the kinds of conversation which, while largely mundane and noninstrumental, act as a lubricant in day-to-day social life: that is, in helping individuals make and maintain social relationships (DiMaggio 1987, pp. 442–43). However, as individuals regale each other with sensational celebrity gossip that they read in the tabloids or relate sober news reports that are carried in the broadsheets, they are also, whether intentionally or not, signaling to others who they are, and how they should be treated. Just as material possessions or privileges may serve as “status symbols” (Goffman 1951), so everyday talk relating to cultural consumption also expresses status.⁶ Indeed, we would concur with

⁵ Status groups based on family and lineage could of course also be characterized by distinctive lifestyles; but in this case lifestyle might be regarded as being more an epiphenomenon than a determinant of status.

⁶ In the British context, newspapers also signal political views and inclination. Thus, readers of the *Guardian* or the *Mirror* are often taken to be supporters of the Labour Party, while readers of the *Daily Telegraph* or the *Daily Mail* are often taken to be supporters of the Conservative Party.

DiMaggio (1987, p. 443) that in metropolitan societies where much social interaction takes place outside the home, “subjects of conversation supplant objects of display as bases of social evaluation.”⁷

Given these theoretical considerations, then if the occupationally based status ranking shown in table 1 does have validity, we would expect that the positions that individuals hold within it will be associated with their cultural tastes and activities, at least in those respects where some degree of cultural stratification exists: that is, where there is fairly general recognition of tastes as being “highbrow,” “middlebrow,” and “lowbrow”—as is the case with newspapers. At the same time, though, it is obviously desirable to try to test as directly as possible the underlying hypothesis that differences in cultural participation do, in some way or other, *express* status.

In this connection, it is relevant to note Ganzeboom’s (1982) observation that what we may call the “status hypothesis” in regard to cultural consumption has in fact been challenged by a rival hypothesis. This claims that differences in such consumption evident among social groups in fact derive from more basic psychological processes than those involved in the differentiation of status: that is, from individual differences in *information-processing capacity*. The greater an individual’s capacity in this regard, it is argued, the more complex must be the informational stimuli of any form of cultural participation in which he or she engages if pleasure and fulfillment are to follow from it.⁸ Thus, an apparent tendency for those individuals deemed to be of higher social status to prefer higher cultural forms may result simply from the greater information-processing capacity that, on average, they possess—as might be indexed, at least in present-day societies, by the level of their educational attainment.

In the light of this “information-processing hypothesis,” our attempts to relate the status order to levels of cultural consumption could then lead to negative results not only if we find no association at all of the kind we would expect—that is, between newspaper readership and status—but further if we do find such an association which, however, turns out

⁷ See Laumann and House (1970) for a study of social status and the display of living room objects. In a study of the display of arts at home, Halle (1993, p. 198) argues that “the link between involvement in high culture and access to dominant class circles . . . is undemonstrated.”

⁸ Versions of this argument are to be found in the work of students of “empirical aesthetics,” mainly psychologists (e.g., Moles 1971; Berlyne 1974), and also economists (e.g., Becker 1996).

to be spurious in that it disappears once educational attainment, taken as a proxy for information-processing capacity, is controlled.⁹

It should, however, be further noted that although the status hypothesis and the information-processing hypothesis can thus usefully be set in competition with each other, they are *not* mutually exclusive; both status and education could well turn out to be significant predictors in a regression model of some aspect of cultural choice. If this were to prove the case, a determined skeptic in regard to the status hypothesis might then still wonder if the apparent status effects were not simply reflecting some residual information-processing capacity of individuals that was not captured by their educational level. To try to address this problem, we bring into our analyses information on individuals' "significant others" and consider also the effects of *their* status. The reasoning here is that the status of, say, an individual's parent or close friend is unlikely to be *just* a proxy for his or her own information-processing capacity; and further that if the status of significant others does prove consequential for individuals' cultural consumption in the form of newspaper readership, then this will not only add support for the status hypothesis but may also help to throw light on the actual processes through which status effects are exerted.

Individuals' position in the status order constitute a part of their social identity. Thus, to signal status is to lay claim to group membership: to whom one has affiliations, and from whom is one different.¹⁰ The question then arises of what follows for the patterns of cultural consumption of those individuals who are likely to have multiple and heterogeneous group affiliations—such as the socially mobile. One view as regards the upwardly mobile, for example, is that they are likely to be insecure about their newly acquired status, and will therefore be even more concerned than those who are intergenerationally stable in high-status positions to shun lowbrow culture and embrace highbrow forms—they will be "more royalist than the king." We may call this the "status-anxiety hypothesis."¹¹

⁹ We recognize that the interpretation of any association between education and newspaper readership is likely to be contentious. Indeed, an anonymous reviewer suggests that college graduates might constitute a status group (cf. Collins 1979). It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the relative merit of the various interpretations of the education effects. We simply note that by controlling for education and *not* interpreting its effects in terms of status, we are setting a more stringent test for the "status hypothesis."

¹⁰ Douglas and Isherwood (1979, p. 12) make a similar claim in relation to material goods: "Goods are neutral, their uses are social; they can be used as fences or bridges."

¹¹ A similar thesis on "middle-status conformity" has been advanced and empirically tested by Phillips and Zuckerman (2001). Although their argument relates to firms rather than individuals and to status ranking (i.e., middle status vs. high or low status) rather than mobility, the underlying logic is very similar. Specifically, Phillips and

However, an opposing view is that the upwardly mobile—and the same point could in fact be made in regard to the downwardly mobile also—will retain cultural tastes and practices formed in their earlier lives as well as acquiring new ones from their current milieux. As a result, they are likely to be culturally eclectic—omnivores in fact—and skilled in switching between different cultural modes according to the context and the people with whom they are interacting (Erickson 1996).¹² An analogous argument could clearly be made in relation to individuals who have, say, close friends, or even a spouse, of different status. As DiMaggio (1987, p. 445) quips, “an upper-working-class father with a white-collar wife must know about sports and rock music at work, discuss politics and natural foods with his wife’s friends, and instill an admiration of Brahms and Picasso in his daughter or son.” Such arguments embody what might be called the “culture-switching hypothesis” as an alternative to the status-anxiety hypothesis. It has, though, to be recognized that the idea of culture switching is problematic in regard to forms of cultural consumption where it is known that individuals typically consume just one genre—as is the case with newspaper readership (see below); and it is then of interest to see whether in such cases individuals may show other ways of responding to the cross-pressures of having significant others of different social status to their own.

The fact that in this article we restrict ourselves to considering just one kind of cultural participation—that of newspaper readership—may seem unduly limiting. But at least at the current stage of our research, three advantages follow.

1. Newspapers are quite cheap, so questions of the costs of participation, which might otherwise complicate the analysis, scarcely arise.
2. Newspaper readership is an instance of cultural participation in regard to which the information-processing hypothesis might be

Zuckerman (2001) conjecture that middle-ranking firms in a particular market aspire to be accepted by their clients and other “audiences” as members of a restricted in-group, but are insecure about their position. To prove their bona fide status as “contenders,” middle-ranking firms are careful to avoid low status though lucrative branches of business. In contrast, high-status firms, feeling secure of their position in the status order, and low-status firms, having no realistic chance of being accepted, are for different reasons more likely to venture into low-status but profitable business.

¹² Indeed, one plausible account attributes the emergence of cultural omnivores in contemporary societies to the very high level of upward social mobility in the middle part of the 20th century (van Eijck 1999). This argument has two corollaries. First, cultural omnivorousness is mainly a cohort, rather than a life-cycle, phenomenon. Secondly, as much of upward social mobility in the past century was driven by change in the occupational structure (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992), there will be less upward mobility in the future as the pace of structural change slows down, and consequently, the number of cultural omnivores will decline.

thought especially favored. Reading a newspaper is a more straightforward form of information processing than various other cultural activities, and at the same time, choice of newspaper could scarcely count as a very effective kind of status-oriented “conspicuous consumption” (Veblen [1899] 1994), on account both of the relatively low price of even the most expensive newspapers and of the fact that reading is as likely to take place in the privacy of the home as in public. Consequently, evidence of a connection between newspaper readership and status, independent of information-processing capacity, would, for our present purposes, be of particular significance.

3. Most people read only one (daily) newspaper, at least on a regular basis. This means that we can here avoid complications that arise with forms of cultural participation, such as, say, listening to music, where there is a wide variety of genres, and an individual may have a range of preferences. As we noted above, such instances have of late given rise to debates over whether the distinction of greatest relevance in regard to status is that between those participating in “high” as opposed to “low” (or popular) culture or that between cultural omnivores and univores. Our strategy is to enter into this contested terrain in the light of the results that the present article affords (for preliminary results, see Chan and Goldthorpe [2005]).

The rest of the article is structured as follows. In the next section we provide a brief description of the data we use. Then we examine the bivariate association between status and newspaper readership, before moving on to multivariate analyses with the aim of evaluating the status hypothesis against the information-processing hypothesis. We next consider the effects of father’s status and best friend’s status on respondent’s newspaper choice. This allows us to test the status-anxiety and culture-switching hypotheses. Finally, we consider the joint effects of class and status, and thus take up issues crucial to the Weberian conception of social stratification.

DATA

Our data on newspaper readership come from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). In wave 2 of the BHPS, carried out in 1992, respondents were asked “Do you normally read a daily newspaper?” and those who answered positively were then asked to name up to two newspapers that they read. The analyses that follow are based on the first newspaper mentioned. Of respondents ages 20 to 64 ($N=6,832$), to whom we restrict our attention, only 16% mentioned two newspapers. We allocate newspapers to one or other of four categories, as follows.

1. Broadsheets: *Financial Times*, *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Telegraph*, *Times*.
2. Middlebrow tabloids: *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Morning Star*, *Today*.
3. Redtop tabloids: *Mirror*, *Daily Star*, *Sun*.
4. Regional, local, and others.

In our analyses, our dependent variable is then made up of readership of newspapers in one or other of these four categories, together with a fifth category, that of “nonreader.” For purposes of interpretation, we treat the first three newspaper categories, but not the fourth, as representing different levels of cultural taste, running from “high” to “low.”¹³

It may be added here that in wave 7 of the BHPS, carried out in 1997, the question on newspaper readership was repeated.¹⁴ Of respondents interviewed in both 1992 and 1997 ($N = 5,355$), 66% fell into the same one of the five readership categories distinguished above. Moreover, most changes that occurred were between readership of broadsheets, middlebrow tabloids, or redtop tabloids, on the one hand, and readership of regional or local newspapers or nonreadership, on the other. Individuals changing between the first three “ordered” categories of readership amounted in fact to only 6% of the total sample in 1997. Newspaper readership may thus be taken as reflecting cultural preferences of a relatively high degree of stability.

¹³ Of those respondents in our sample who reported reading two newspapers, 72% were either reading two newspapers of the same category, or were reading one paper from the three ordered categories and one regional and local newspaper. The threefold distinction between broadsheets, middlebrow tabloids, and redtop tabloids is also expressed as that between “qualities,” “midmarkets,” and “populars,” and this latter phraseology has of late become more apt, as most “qualities” in Britain have in fact adopted a tabloid or *Berliner* format. The distinction, we might add, is also well recognized by scholars (e.g., Seymour-Ure 1996, pp. 26–29), journalists and news executives (e.g., Horrie 1998), and advertisers (e.g., Newspaper Marketing Agency 2005). We do not claim that the same tripartite distinction can be found in all countries. But it should be noted that there has always been cross-national diffusion and imitation in newspaper strategies and editorial styles. For example, the *Daily Mirror*, once the most influential and best-selling British redtop tabloid, quite deliberately modeled itself on the New York tabloids, the *Daily News* and the *Daily Graphic*, in the 1930s (Horrie 1998, pp. 49–55). More recently, cross-national similarities have been institutionalized by multinational media corporations. For example, Murdoch’s News Corporation owns the *Sun* in the United Kingdom as well as the *New York Post*. Both titles are “popular” tabloids. Similarly, Gannett Co., Inc., publishes *USA Today* and many regional newspapers in the United States that come close to our middlebrow newspapers, and is also the second-largest regional newspaper publisher in the United Kingdom.

¹⁴ Questions on newspaper readership were, in fact, included in waves 1, 2, 6, and 7 of the BHPS. We have chosen to analyze data from wave 2 because we wish to include in our analyses the status score of the respondent’s father (which is available in wave 1), and that of the respondent’s best friend (wave 2).

RESULTS

We begin in table 3 by presenting some descriptive statistics.¹⁵ These do in fact indicate an association between newspaper readership and the status order represented in table 1 on lines that would broadly support the validity of the latter. As can be seen, reading broadsheets, taken as representing highbrow cultural taste, is generally more frequent among individuals in higher-ranking than in lower-ranking occupational categories, while the reverse is the case with reading redtop tabloids, taken as representing lowbrow taste. Those categories in which readership of middlebrow tabloids is most frequent then tend to fall in the intermediate levels of the status order. Little association is, however, apparent between status and either reading regional or local newspapers or being a nonreader.

In figure 1 we graph readership by status score of our three “ordered” categories of newspaper. These are scatterplots of the status score of the occupational categories (cf. the last column of table 3) by the percentage of respondents belonging to the three readership categories (second to fourth columns of table 3). We also add a nonparametric regression line to each plot (Cleveland 1979). In the case of broadsheets, a curvilinear relationship is apparent, with the level of readership rising especially sharply among members of the seven highest ranking status groups, which we identify as comprising unequivocally nonmanual professional and managerial occupations (Chan and Goldthorpe 2004, p. 389).¹⁶ In some contrast, the readership of redtop tabloids declines as status increases in a more or less linear fashion. And with middlebrow tabloids, an “inverted-

¹⁵ According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, the 1990 circulation figures of newspapers falling into our three categories of broadsheets (BS), middlebrow tabloids (MBT), and redtop tabloids (RTT) add up to 2.331 million, 3.859 million, and 7.771 million, respectively (cf. Butler and Butler 2000, p. 538). The ratios of circulation volume are therefore 1.7 for MBT vs. BS and 3.3 for RTT vs. BS. Bearing in mind that circulation is not the same as readership, these ratios are consistent with the relevant ratios of readership shares as reported in the bottom of table 3 (1.3 for MBT vs. BS and 2.6 for RTT vs. BS).

¹⁶ We note that the obvious outlier of this graph is OMO, which is by some way the smallest of our occupational categories in this analysis (cf. table 3). Furthermore, 12.8% of the respondents in this occupational category did not give a valid response to the questions on newspaper readership, which is by far the highest level of missing data across the 31 occupational categories (cf. table 3). We would conjecture that OMO, as a residual category of managerial occupations to which inadequately described occupations tend to be coded, probably contains a relatively high proportion of “reluctant” respondents. Consequently, a relatively high level of random noise could be expected in this category.

TABLE 3
 NEWSPAPER READERSHIP WITHIN STATUS GROUPS RANKED BY DESCENDING STATUS
 SCORES (Row Percentages)

	BS ^a	MBT	RTT	RLO	NR	N ^b	%missing ^c	Status Score
HP	41.2	7.3	5.1	13.6	32.8	177	3.3	.5643
APB	33.5	14.4	13.2	7.8	31.1	167	3.5	.5337
SM	35.3	17.2	2.5	7.4	37.7	122	4.7	.5107
TPE	35.9	12.4	2.7	12.0	37.1	259	1.1	.5017
GMA	31.0	17.8	11.6	11.6	27.9	129	0.8	.4114
API	18.4	16.1	13.8	14.3	37.3	217	3.1	.3116
SET	23.6	15.0	10.2	8.7	42.5	127	1.6	.3115
FRC	11.6	19.6	35.7	12.5	20.5	112	0.0	.2559
OMO	40.2	12.2	7.3	11.0	29.3	82	12.8	.2355
AOA	11.4	25.2	17.9	12.2	33.3	123	0.0	.2274
NCC	10.3	22.4	22.7	9.4	35.1	339	0.9	.2238
APH	14.1	18.4	18.0	12.9	36.7	256	1.5	.2228
SEC	14.4	21.1	22.2	11.4	30.9	298	0.7	.1539
OCW	8.3	20.6	19.4	14.4	37.2	180	0.6	.1443
BSR	11.3	25.8	16.9	17.7	28.2	124	1.6	.1193
CCW	7.0	17.5	27.4	10.5	37.8	143	0.0	.1097
MPS	12.0	24.7	26.8	10.9	25.7	284	4.7	-.0453
PDM	13.1	22.3	18.5	8.5	37.7	130	4.4	-.0625
SW	4.1	13.0	37.2	14.4	31.2	368	2.1	-.1151
HW	3.6	13.0	34.8	12.3	36.2	138	1.4	-.2121
PSW	5.9	17.8	39.3	10.4	26.7	135	3.6	-.2261
PSP	10.5	22.8	29.8	8.8	28.1	114	5.0	-.2288
RWS	2.6	9.1	45.4	10.5	32.6	430	1.4	-.2974
CW	5.3	10.5	39.5	11.8	32.9	152	3.2	-.3261
SDC	4.1	12.9	45.9	8.8	28.2	170	2.9	-.3353
SMO	2.7	11.3	37.0	13.1	35.8	335	2.6	-.4072
TO	3.1	7.9	50.0	12.3	26.8	228	4.6	-.4114
SMC	5.0	14.2	43.3	8.3	29.2	240	4.0	-.5014
SMM	2.8	15.6	44.7	7.8	29.1	282	4.4	-.5121
PMO	1.1	10.0	48.6	10.7	29.5	430	2.9	-.5589
GL	2.5	5.0	49.7	10.6	32.3	161	3.0	-.5979
Overall ...	11.6	15.3	29.6	11.2	32.2	6,452	2.6	

^a BS = broadsheet; MBT = middlebrow tabloid; RTT = redtop tabloid; RLO = regional, local, and others; NR = nonreader.

^b Number of respondents replying to questions on newspaper readership.

^c Percentage of respondents with missing values on newspaper readership.

U” curve shows up, although readership tends not to reach levels as low toward the top of the status order as toward the bottom.¹⁷

¹⁷ The scatterplots for regional, local, and others and for nonreaders show much less systematic patterns. These plots are available from the authors on request.

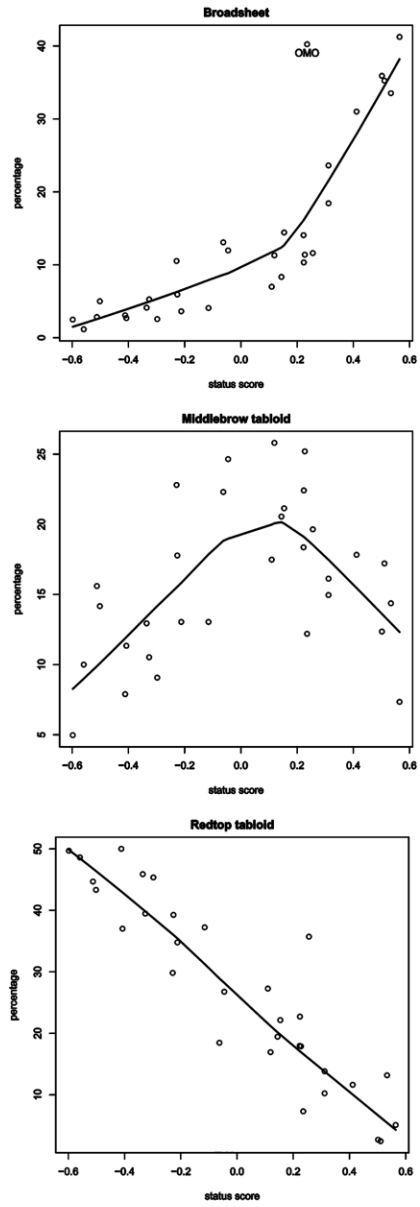


FIG. 1.—Percentage of respondents reading broadsheets, middlebrow tabloids, and redtop tabloids by score of status groups.

Multivariate Analysis

To take matters further, however, we need to move on to multivariate analysis. In particular, we need to see how far the association between status and readership may be accounted for by individuals' educational attainment—serving as a proxy for their information-processing capacity.

In table 4 we report some descriptive statistics of the covariates used in our analyses. Two points are to be noted. First, about 9% of our respondents lived in Scotland. Although all the newspapers named above are available and are read throughout the United Kingdom, Scotland has its own broadsheets (e.g., the *Herald*, the *Scotsman*) and tabloids. The Scottish papers are, however, not individually identified in the BHPS data set. Their readers are grouped with those who read other regional newspapers under our category of regional, local, and others. We include a dummy variable for (living in) Scotland to take this into account.¹⁸

Second, the mean status score of the respondents (−.058) is, as expected, higher than that of the respondent's father (−.242) but lower than that of the respondent's best friend (−.040). The former difference reflects the overall upgrading of the occupational structure over time, while the latter is consistent with Laumann's (1966) "prestige hypothesis," which suggests that, in addition to a tendency for homophily, people tend to name as friends individuals who have somewhat higher status than themselves.¹⁹

In table 5 we report results from multinomial logistic regression analyses in which our five readership categories form the dependent variable, with broadsheet readership as reference.²⁰ Status is measured by the status scores of the categories to which our respondents are allocated, and education is treated as a categorical variable, using a sixfold classification of "highest qualification achieved" which ranges from "no qualifications"

¹⁸ We have repeated our analysis without the Scottish respondents. The results thus obtained are very similar to those reported here. Details are available from the authors on request.

¹⁹ We attribute status scores to the respondent's father and best friend according to their occupations, using the same scores as those originally estimated for the respondents. We are thus assuming that the status order is relatively stable over time. A comparison of our status ranking with that produced by Stewart et al. (1973) would indicate that this assumption is well grounded. The two status scales correlate at $r = .85$ for men and $r = .84$ for women. Details are available from the authors on request.

²⁰ The multinomial model can be represented as follows:

$$\log\left(\frac{P_k}{P_{BS}}\right) = \mathbf{x}'\boldsymbol{\beta}, \quad k = \text{MBT, RTT, RLO, NR},$$

where P_{BS} is the probability that a respondent reads a broadsheet, P_k is the probability that a respondent belongs to the readership category k , \mathbf{x} is a vector of covariates, and $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ is the vector of parameters to be estimated.

Newspaper Readership

TABLE 4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF COVARIATES

	<i>N</i>	%
Male (reference category)	3,237	47.4
Female	3,595	52.6
England and Wales (reference category)	6,198	90.7
Scotland	634	9.3
No qualifications (reference category)	1,722	26.1
CSE, etc. ^a	720	10.9
O-levels	1,439	21.8
A-levels	726	11.0
Postsecondary qualifications ^b	1,353	20.5
Degree	640	9.7
Class I—higher salariat (reference category) ^c	791	11.9
Class II—lower salariat	1,310	19.8
Class IIIa—routine nonmanual employees, higher grade	1,015	15.3
Class IIIb—routine nonmanual employees, lower grade	508	7.7
Class IV—small employers and self-employed workers	583	8.8
Class V—technicians, supervisors of manual workers	467	7.1
Class VI—skilled manual workers	543	8.2
Class VII—nonskilled manual workers	1,407	21.2

	Valid <i>N</i>	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Age	6,832	40.100	12.192	20	64
Log (income)	6,613	8.686	1.682	-2.3026	12.5689
Respondent's status ...	6,625	-.058	.356	-.5979	.5643
Status squared	6,625	.130	.110	.0021	.3575
Father's status	5,906	-.242	.357	-.5979	.5643
Friend's status	5,566	-.040	.368	-.5979	.5643

^a Clerical or commercial qualification, recognized trade apprenticeship or youth training certificate.
^b Teaching, nursing, or other postsecondary qualification, including City and Guilds certificate, HNC, HND, BEC/TEC, BTEC higher certificate or diploma, university diploma.
^c For further details of the class schema, see Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) and Goldthorpe (2007, chap. 14).

through to “degree level and higher” (see table 4). Also, as control variables, we include age (in years), sex (with men as reference), (log) annual individual income, and living in Scotland (England and Wales as reference).

As can be seen, four models are fitted. In the first, only status score is included, in addition to the control variables, while in the second we also include a status-squared term, in view of the curvilinear relationship shown in figure 1 between status and broadsheet readership. In the third model only education is included. And then in the fourth model, status and education are included together. (See table 6 for further models.)

To begin, it may be noted that our control variables do have some significant association with newspaper readership. The significant coef-

TABLE 5
MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF NEWSPAPER READERSHIP

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Middlebrow tabloid vs. broadsheet:				
Constant .....	.177 (.596)	.324 (.601)	1.706** (.537)	1.239* (.529)
Female .....	.529** (.096)	.417** (.100)	.234* (.093)	.269** (.100)
Age .....	.001 (.005)	.001 (.005)	-.011* (.005)	-.010* (.005)
Log income .....	.007 (.059)	.022 (.060)	.044 (.052)	.082 (.049)
Scotland .....	.402 (.321)	.426 (.324)	.609 (.318)	.702* (.323)
Status	-2.337** (.168)	-2.298** (.174)		-1.346** (.192)
Status squared		-2.124** (.523)		-1.158* (.546)
CSE			-.319 (.277)	-.255 (.279)
O-levels			-.827** (.215)	-.593** (.225)
A-levels			-1.484** (.239)	-1.182** (.253)
Postsecondary			-1.662** (.211)	-1.213** (.228)
Degree			-3.685** (.273)	-2.939** (.295)
Redtop tabloid vs. broadsheet:				
Constant	2.264** (.572)	2.390** (.568)	6.164** (.492)	4.657** (.484)
Female .....	.541** (.096)	.465** (.099)	-.241** (.090)	.160 (.099)
Age	-.021** (.005)	-.021** (.005)	-.053** (.005)	-.048** (.005)
Log income	-.094 (.056)	-.087 (.056)	-.055 (.046)	.005 (.042)
Scotland	2.024** (.265)	2.042** (.269)	2.336** (.264)	2.473** (.270)
Status	-4.360** (.167)	-4.455** (.176)		-2.807** (.195)
Status squared		-1.572** (.513)		-.347 (.543)
CSE			-1.034** (.262)	-.852** (.264)
O-levels			-2.251** (.205)	-1.740** (.216)
A-levels			-3.384**	-2.697**

TABLE 5 (Continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
			(.228)	(.243)
Postsecondary			-3.481**	-2.576**
			(.205)	(.222)
Degree			-6.175**	-4.702**
			(.291)	(.317)
Regional, local, and others vs. broadsheet:				
Constant .....	.883	.901	3.336**	2.436**
	(.596)	(.593)	(.531)	(.521)
Female .....	.471**	.450**	.134	.289**
	(.105)	(.108)	(.098)	(.107)
Age	-.007	-.006	-.028**	-.025**
	(.005)	(.005)	(.006)	(.006)
Log income	-.092	-.089	-.054	-.012
	(.058)	(.058)	(.049)	(.045)
Scotland	2.391**	2.402**	2.557**	2.678**
	(.269)	(.272)	(.267)	(.272)
Status	-2.719**	-2.617**		-1.593**
	(.191)	(.188)		(.207)
Status squared		-.468		.246
		(.566)		(.590)
CSE			-.903**	-.822**
			(.287)	(.289)
O-levels			-1.651**	-1.333**
			(.224)	(.233)
A-levels			-2.313**	-1.892**
			(.252)	(.264)
Postsecondary			-2.212**	-1.670**
			(.220)	(.234)
Degree			-3.819**	-2.960**
			(.266)	(.293)
Nonreader vs. broadsheet:				
Constant	3.292**	3.217**	5.765**	4.735**
	(.557)	(.551)	(.483)	(.463)
Female .....	.633**	.665**	.303**	.520**
	(.092)	(.094)	(.085)	(.091)
Age	-.043**	-.043**	-.064**	-.061**
	(.004)	(.004)	(.005)	(.005)
Log income	-.070	-.072	-.037	.003
	(.055)	(.055)	(.046)	(.041)
Scotland .....	.894**	.900**	1.006**	1.125**
	(.262)	(.263)	(.261)	(.261)
Status	-2.680**	-2.526**		-1.621**
	(.162)	(.156)		(.173)
Status squared .....		.421		.873
		(.460)		(.483)
CSE			-.848**	-.689**

TABLE 5 (Continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
			(.263)	(.265)
O-levels			-1.813**	-1.428**
			(.207)	(.216)
A-levels			-2.314**	-1.868**
			(.224)	(.238)
Postsecondary			-2.299**	-1.694**
			(.200)	(.215)
Degree			-3.407**	-2.531**
			(.220)	(.244)
N	6,452	6,452	6,594	6,439
Log likelihood	-8,896.98	-8,868.61	-8,926.47	-8,570.21

NOTE.—Robust SEs in parentheses.

* $P < .05$.

** $P < .01$.

ficients for sex, being generally positive, indicate that women are more likely than men to fall into other readership categories than that of broadsheet reader, while those for age, being generally negative, indicate that older persons are more likely than younger ones to read broadsheets than to fall into other categories. The coefficients for income are, as anticipated, not significant. Scots appear less likely than others to read broadsheets, but, as explained above, this is probably an artifact resulting from the omission of the Scottish broadsheets in the response categories.

It is, however, the effects of status and education that are of major interest to us. In this regard, it may be noted, first of all, that the results from models 1 and 2 confirm the association between status and newspaper readership that was evident from table 3 and figure 1. Under these models, and with broadsheet readership as the reference category, the coefficients for status are significantly negative: that is, respondents of high social status tend to read broadsheets rather than to fall into other readership categories. At the same time, the results from model 3 further show that educational attainment, which could be taken to indicate individuals' information-processing capacity, also has a quite systematic effect on newspaper preference. The higher the level of qualification an individual has obtained, the more likely he or she is to be a broadsheet reader rather than a middlebrow or redtop tabloid reader or indeed a reader of a regional or local newspaper or a nonreader.

Finally, though, when we come to model 4, in which status and education are included together, we find that while the effects of education remain important, if somewhat less systematic than under model 3, the

effects of status also persist.²¹ Although the status-squared term is now reduced in most cases to insignificance by the conventional standard of 5%, the linear effect of status is still clearly present across all panels, even though, as would be expected, the relevant coefficients are generally lower than under models 1 or 2. In other words, while the information-processing hypothesis of cultural consumption can claim support from these results, so too can the status hypothesis; the former does not supplant the latter.

Moreover, as well as remaining significant, the estimated effect of status is quite large. For example, we may take, as an illustrative hypothetical case, an English woman who is 40 years old, has a university degree, and earns the sample mean income. From table 7, it can then be seen that if this woman were a higher professional (status score = .5643), her predicted probability, under model 4, of being a broadsheet reader would be .50, while if she were a manager and proprietor in services (status score = -.0453), it would fall to .30. This is notable in view of the fact that claimed social differences in taste have in some cases turned out to be empirically barely detectable.²²

We can also use predicted probabilities under our model in order to bring out some more general implications of the results so far reported. In figures 2 and 3, where we restrict our attention to our three ordered categories of newspaper, we graph the probabilities, under model 4, of their readership by individuals' status score within each of our six educational categories (cf. Fox 2002). It can be seen that, for men and women alike, the probability of reading a broadsheet increases with status in each of these categories, and especially so among university graduates. The probability of reading a middlebrow tabloid also tends for the most part to increase with status, although this effect diminishes as educational level rises and disappears altogether among graduates. But then, in direct contrast with the pattern for broadsheet readership, the probability of reading

²¹ In particular, it may be noted that the coefficients for A-levels and postsecondary qualifications are not very clearly differentiated, with those for the former, which comprise largely academic qualifications, being sometimes larger than those for the latter, which comprise largely vocational qualifications. This would suggest that not only level but also type and field of educational attainment is important.

²² Lieberson (1992, pp. 6–7), for example, points out that while Bourdieu takes preferences for Renoir as opposed to Kandinsky as epitomizing class differences in taste, one finds that in Bourdieu's (1984) own survey, preferences in fact varied little. Thus, 46% of working-class respondents named Renoir as one of their three favorite painters—and so too did 51% of the middle class and 48% of the upper class. And while no working-class respondent favored Kandinsky, still only 2% of middle-class and 4% of upper-class respondents did so.

TABLE 6
 FURTHER MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF NEWSPAPER READERSHIP

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Middlebrow tabloid vs. broadsheet:				
Status	-1.151** (.194)	-1.128** (.205)	-1.051** (.217)	-.852* (.331)
Father's status	-.521** (.155)		-.446** (.164)	-.439** (.165)
Friend's status		-.761** (.178)	-.707** (.188)	-.708** (.190)
Class II .....				.432* (.175)
Class IIIa .....				.346 (.238)
Class IIIb .....				.776* (.378)
Class IV .....				.420 (.313)
Class V .....				.770 (.415)
Class VI .....				.862 (.480)
Class VII .....				.134 (.389)
Redtop tabloid vs. broadsheet:				
Status	-2.488** (.195)	-2.295** (.206)	-2.095** (.221)	-1.243** (.332)
Father's status	-1.655** (.162)		-1.560** (.174)	-1.519** (.175)
Friend's status		-1.413** (.179)	-1.347** (.189)	-1.333** (.191)
Class II .....				.772** (.217)
Class IIIa .....				.774** (.268)
Class IIIb				1.447** (.389)
Class IV .....				.657* (.335)
Class V				1.419** (.423)
Class VI				1.750** (.479)
Class VII				1.389** (.394)
Regional, local, and others vs. broadsheet:				
Status	-1.470** (.219)	-1.251** (.230)	-1.117** (.247)	-.716 (.370)

TABLE 6 (Continued)

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Father's status	-.912** (.178)		-.782** (.188)	-.748** (.188)
Friend's status		-.996** (.205)	-1.030** (.214)	-1.017** (.215)
Class II .....				.572** (.201)
Class IIIa .....				.281 (.267)
Class IIIb				1.091** (.395)
Class IV .....				.125 (.359)
Class V .....				.421 (.459)
Class VI				1.080* (.511)
Class VII .....				.840* (.405)
Nonreader vs. broadsheet:				
Status	-1.566** (.183)	-1.452** (.196)	-1.345** (.207)	-.921** (.307)
Father's status	-.783** (.139)		-.682** (.149)	-.661** (.148)
Friend's status		-.857** (.167)	-.833** (.175)	-.824** (.176)
Class II .....				.140 (.152)
Class IIIa				-.016 (.212)
Class IIIb .....				.418 (.358)
Class IV .....				.005 (.281)
Class V .....				.448 (.393)
Class VI .....				.766 (.450)
Class VII .....				.534 (.354)
<i>N</i>	5,676	5,465	4,857	4,856
Log likelihood	-7,526.03	-7,262.99	-6,411.47	-6,371.60

NOTE.—Robust SEs in parentheses. Covariates included in the model but not reported in this table: age, sex, income, Scotland, educational attainment.

* $P < .05$.

** $P < .01$.

TABLE 7
 EXAMPLES OF PREDICTED PROBABILITIES OF NEWSPAPER READERSHIP

Model	Sex	Education	OCCUPATION			PREDICTED PROBABILITIES					
			Respondent	Father	Friend	BS	MBT	RTT	RLO	NR	
4	F	Degree	HP			.504	.053	.016	.059	.368
				MPS			.302	.105	.058	.087	.449
5	F	Degree	HP	HP		.608	.068	.009	.046	.269
				HP	MPS		.491	.075	.021	.065	.349
				HP	GL		.381	.078	.040	.083	.418
6	F	Degree	HP		HP	.569	.068	.017	.058	.288
				HP		MPS	.435	.083	.030	.081	.371
				HP		GL	.319	.093	.048	.103	.437
7	F	Degree	HP	HP	HP	.639	.065	.008	.048	.240
				HP	MPS	HP	.538	.072	.018	.065	.306
				HP	GL	HP	.441	.076	.035	.083	.365
				HP	HP	MPS	.512	.081	.015	.072	.319
				HP	HP	GL	.395	.092	.025	.099	.390
4	M	No qualifications	MPS			.025	.128	.459	.106	.282
				GL			.008	.053	.573	.083	.282
5	M	No qualifications	GL	HP		.025	.129	.379	.110	.357
				GL	MPS		.012	.088	.518	.095	.286
6	M	No qualifications	GL	GL		.006	.058	.639	.078	.218
				GL		HP	.020	.105	.469	.090	.316
				GL		MPS	.010	.083	.556	.083	.267
7	M	No qualifications	GL		GL	.005	.066	.631	.075	.223
				GL	HP	GL	.016	.130	.414	.108	.332
				GL	MPS	GL	.008	.088	.553	.090	.260
				GL	GL	GL	.004	.058	.672	.071	.194
				GL	GL	MPS	.008	.075	.607	.077	.233
			GL	GL	HP	.016	.096	.529	.081	.278	

NOTE.—BS = broadsheet; MBT = middlebrow tabloid; RTT = redtop tabloid; RLO = regional, local, and others; NR = nonreader. HP = higher professionals; MPS = managers and proprietors in services; GL = general laborers. Other covariates fixed as follows: age = 40, log(income) = 8.686, country = England.

a redtop tabloid decreases with status in each educational category, and especially so at lower educational levels.²³

²³ Two cautionary notes are necessary here. First, figures 2 and 3 are based on model 4, where we fit a single model for all respondents and obtain for each contrast one estimate of the standard error of our status score. But since there are relatively few highly educated respondents occupying low-status occupations, the confidence intervals toward the left end of the bottom two graphs, representing respondents with postsecondary qualifications or university degree, will be relatively large. For a similar reason, the confidence intervals toward the right end of the top two graphs, representing respondents with no or CSE qualifications, will also be relatively large. Thus, although all graphs in figures 2 and 3 show qualitatively the same pattern, it is the middle graphs, representing respondents with intermediate levels of qualifications (O-levels and A-levels) that are most robust. Secondly, the magnitude of the rise (or fall) of the lines of figures 2 and 3 varies quite considerably across panels. At first sight, this seems to suggest an interaction effect between educational qualification and social status. But, in fact, model 4 contains no interaction term. The apparent interaction effect is due to the logit link function of multinomial logit models which relates the linear predictor to the predicted probabilities in a nonlinear fashion.

The Influence of Significant Others

The results so far reported give support to both the information-processing hypothesis and the status hypothesis. To try to confirm that status does indeed influence newspaper choice, rather than simply picking up differences in information-processing capacity not captured by educational level, and also to gain a better idea of the social processes underlying status effects, we now examine the influence of individuals' significant others: specifically, we consider the effects of the status of respondent's father and respondent's best friend.²⁴ In table 6 we present results from three further models in continuation of the series of table 5 (and also from a fourth model including social class that we will discuss subsequently). These models contain all the control variables previously referred to. But since the control variables are of secondary interest here, and also because their estimates are very similar to those shown in table 5, we no longer report them.²⁵ Model 5 is model 4 of table 5 but with the status-squared term dropped and with the addition of respondent's father's status. Model 6 then includes best friend's status instead of father's status, and model 7 includes both father's and best friend's status.²⁶

²⁴ Respondent's status score and father's status score correlate at $r = .30$, while the correlation between respondent's and best friend's status scores is unsurprisingly higher at $r = .48$. Father's status and best friend's status are themselves correlated at $r = .25$.

²⁵ Full details are available from the authors on request.

²⁶ As explained above, the status scores are estimated through a multidimensional scaling (MDSCAL) exercise in which respondent's and best friend's occupations are used as raw data. A colleague raises the point that by including best friend's status score in our multinomial logit model, we might have introduced a degree of circularity into our analyses. This is a germane question, and is parallel to a criticism made against Blau and Duncan's status attainment model. In Blau and Duncan's case, the criticism is that education is used as a component in the construction of their socioeconomic index. But then education is also included as an explanatory variable in subsequent regression analysis of status attainment. In other words, educational attainment is said to have appeared on both the left-hand side and the right-hand side of their regression equation. We believe that this point has less force in our case because our left-hand side variable, newspaper readership, is obtained in a way that is independent of any data on friendship choice or occupation. Respondents were simply asked what newspaper they read. At the same time, we believe that, with some modification, one of Blau and Duncan's (Blau and Duncan 1967, pp. 124–28) replies to their critics also applies in our favor. That is, although the status scores are estimated through an *aggregate* MDSCAL analysis of occupations, in our multinomial logit model these scores are entered at the *individual* level. Because not all respondents in an occupational category have their best friend in the same category, the correlation between the status score of the respondent and that of best friend is, as we report in n. 24, only modest ($r = .30$). Across our occupational categories, the proportions of respondents with a close friend in the same category as themselves range from a high of 35.2% in the case of teachers and other professionals in education to a low of 6.1% in the case of general managers and administrators.

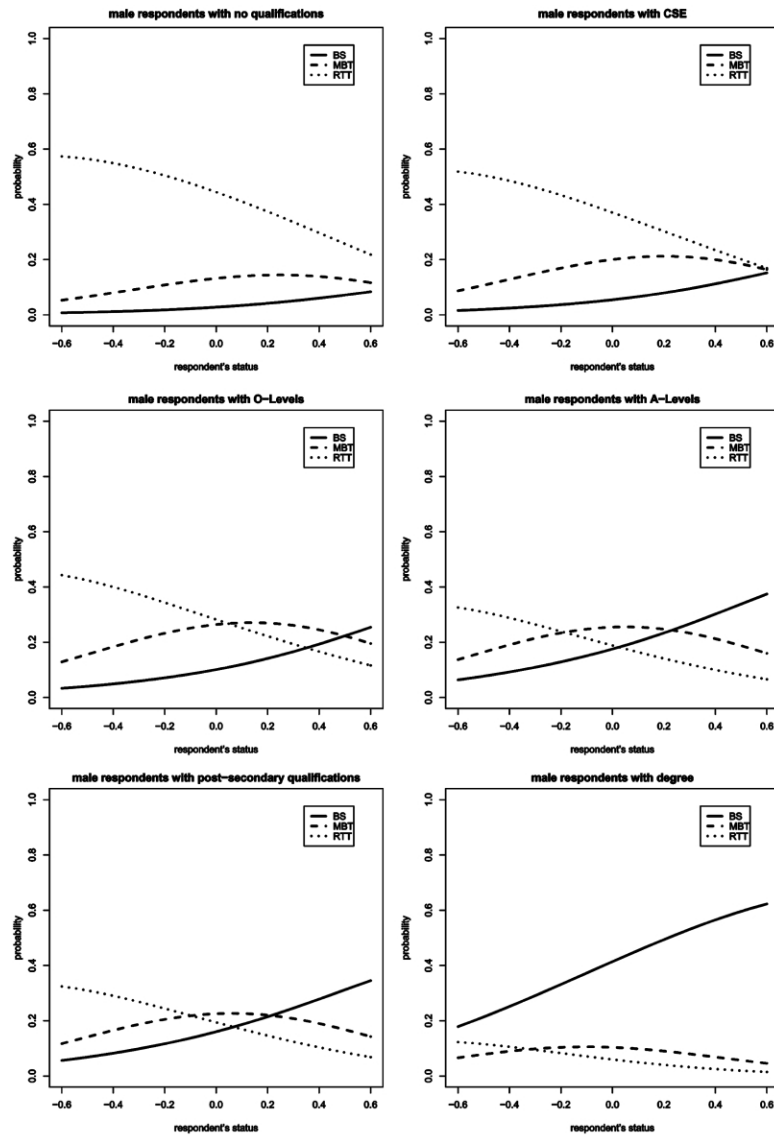


FIG. 2.—Predicted probabilities of reading broadsheets, middlebrow tabloids, and redtop tabloids by social status and education (men).

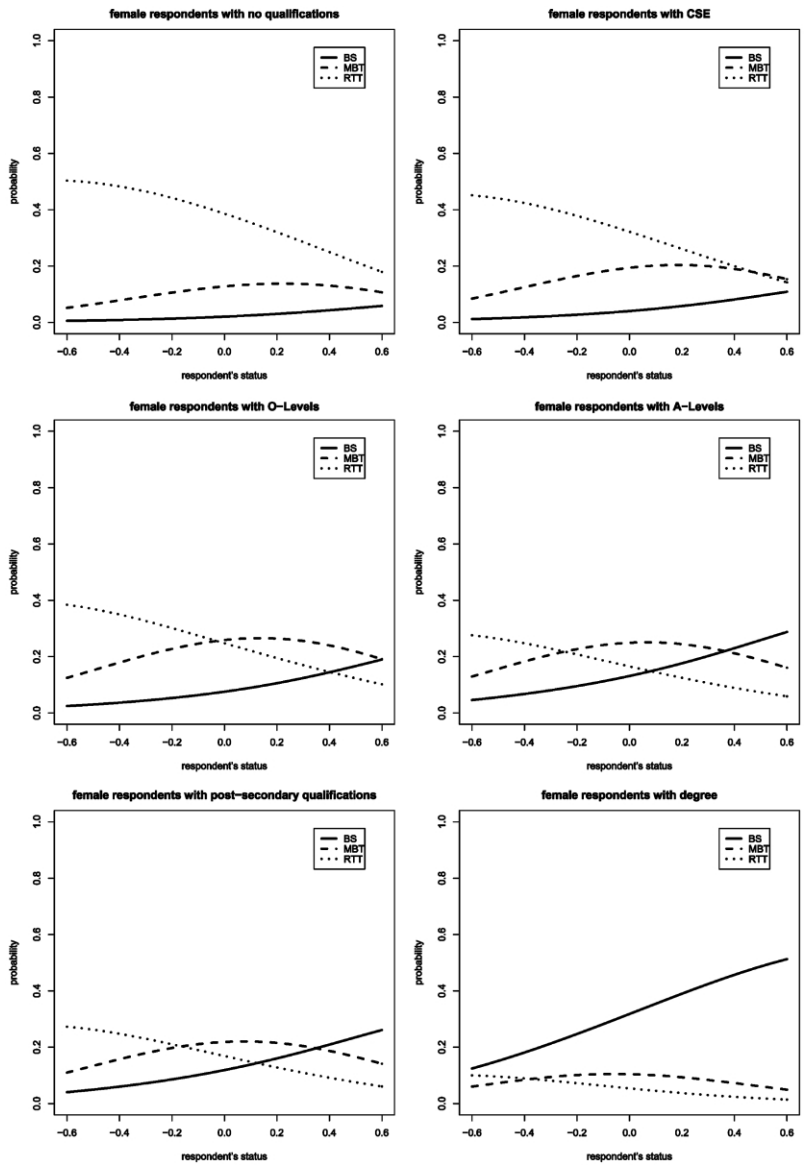


FIG. 3.—Predicted probabilities of reading broadsheets, middlebrow tabloids, and redtop tabloids by social status and education (women).

As can be seen from model 5, father's status has a significant and large effect on newspaper readership. If, for example, we return to our hypothetical English woman, we may recall that, under model 4, she had a probability of .50 of being a broadsheet reader if she works as a higher professional (cf. table 7). From table 7 we can now further see that, under model 5, this probability varies quite considerably depending on the status of her father—ranging in fact from .38, if her father were a general laborer, to .61 if he, too, were a higher professional. This pattern is inconsistent with the status-anxiety hypothesis that we earlier noted, which would imply that more broadsheet readers should be found among the upwardly mobile than among those intergenerationally stable at high status levels.

Table 7 also shows that most of the compensating variation in relation to father's status has to do with nonreadership. The probabilities for reading middlebrow tabloids, redtop tabloids, or regional and local papers do not vary much by father's status. But while our hypothetical higher professional woman has a predicted probability of .27 of being a nonreader if her father is also a higher professional, this probability rises by almost 15 percentage points to .42 if her father is a general laborer. This result then suggests an interesting variant on what we previously labeled as the culture-switching hypothesis: namely, that an alternative to culture switching in the context of interpersonal cross-pressuring, such as may result from social mobility, is simply to withdraw from a problematic form of cultural activity altogether (cf. Lenski 1956).

Model 6 of table 6 then shows that best friend's status likewise has a significant effect on newspaper readership, and one of comparable magnitude to that of father's status, as is illustrated in table 7. Under model 6 our hypothetical higher professional woman has a probability of .57 of being a broadsheet reader if her best friend is also a higher professional, but if her best friend is a general laborer, this probability drops to .32. And here, too, most of the compensating variation has to do with non-readership, the probability of which correspondingly rises from .29 to .44. In other words, our previous suggestion that a situation of likely cross-pressuring in a cultural choice tends to lead to withdrawal is corroborated.

Moreover, a largely analogous pattern of results to the foregoing is found among low-status individuals. To demonstrate this, we also report in table 7 the predicted probabilities of newspaper readership of a 40-year-old English man who has no qualifications and earns the sample mean income. Under model 4, the probability of this man being a redtop reader is .57 if he works as a general laborer, which falls to .46 if he works as a manager and proprietor in services. Further, we see that under models 5 and 6, the probability of this man, as a general laborer, reading a redtop varies quite considerably according to the status of his father or best friend as either a higher professional or a general laborer—from .38 to .64 and from

.47 to .63, respectively. And, once again, most of the compensating variation occurs in the nonreader category. Thus, a general laborer whose father or best friend is a higher professional is far more likely to be a nonreader than a broadsheet reader.

Finally we may also note that when, in model 7 of table 6, all three status terms are included, their effects on newspaper preference all remain significant and substantial. We report the magnitude of these effects in table 7.

The Joint Influence of Class and Status

Having demonstrated that there is a strong and systematic association between social status and newspaper readership, we now turn to a question that is of key relevance for our Weberian perspective on social stratification. How far does the picture change if we also bring class into the analysis? In our earlier work, we have shown that while status and class are clearly correlated in contemporary British society—a status gradient runs, as it were, across the class structure—status stratification within classes may still be quite extensive. Using the Goldthorpe class schema (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Goldthorpe 2007, chap. 14), we find such stratification to be most marked within class II, the lower salariat, class IV, that of small employers and the self-employed, class V, technicians and supervisors of manual workers, and class VII, semi- and unskilled manual workers.

To investigate the joint influence of status and class on newspaper readership, we first add a set of dummy variables for the classes of the Goldthorpe schema (in the version shown in table 4 above) to our regression model, with class I, the higher salariat, as the reference category. As can then be seen by reverting to model 8 of table 6 above, even when class is thus included in the model, the effect of respondent's status remains significant for all readership contrasts, even though its magnitude is, as might be expected, somewhat reduced. Significant class effects are also shown up, but these are less systematic. They are clearest when broadsheet and redtop tabloid readership are contrasted. With status controlled, members of classes II, IIIa, and IV are still significantly differentiated from members of class I in their propensity to read redtops rather than broadsheets, and this difference then becomes much stronger with members of classes IIIb, V, VI, and VII—giving what might be thought of as a distinctive working-class or “blue-collar” effect. However, for the contrasts between the readership of broadsheets and middlebrow tabloids and of broadsheets and regional or local papers, class effects are only

occasionally significant, and for the broadsheet/nonreader contrast they are scarcely significant at all.²⁷

Since, as noted above, classes vary in the degree of their internal status stratification, we next divide our sample by class and then, for each class separately, fit a multinomial logit model of newspaper readership with respondent's status score as the explanatory variable of interest, while controlling for age, sex, income, region, and educational attainment. The results are reported in table 8.

Given that status stratification was previously found to be most marked within classes II, IV, V, and VII, we might expect that it would be in these same classes that the association between status and newspaper readership would show up most clearly. However, as can be seen from table 8, some significant status effects do in fact occur within all classes except class VI, that of skilled manual workers, in which status homogeneity is in fact especially high (Chan and Goldthorpe 2004, figs. 6, 7) and class V where the status parameters for the broadsheet/redtop contrast and the broadsheet/nonreader contrast fall just short of significance at the 5% level ($P = .08$ and $P = .09$, respectively). Furthermore, status effects within classes show some fairly clear patterning that might be summarized as follows. Within classes I and II, higher status individuals are significantly more likely to read broadsheets than either redtop or middlebrow tabloids. Within classes IIIa, IV, VII, and, perhaps, V, they are more likely to read broadsheets than redtops. And within classes IIIb and IV, they are more likely to read middlebrow than redtop tabloids.

To illustrate the magnitude of these status effects, we report in table 9 selected instances of the predicted probabilities of newspaper readership under our class-specific models. Notable points are the following. First, status is more strongly linked with broadsheet readership in class I than in class II. In class I, the group of relatively low-status plant, depot, and site managers (in large establishments) have a probability of being broadsheet readers that is only a little more than half that of the higher professionals, with most of the compensating variation being found in non-readership (cf. the withdrawal effect mentioned above). Second, the tendency in classes IIIb and IV for the main status marker to be the choice of middlebrow over redtop tabloids is in fact quite pronounced. In class IIIb the higher status group of child care workers are clearly more likely to opt for middlebrow rather than redtop tabloids as compared to the lower status sales workers, and in class IV a similar contrast occurs as

²⁷ As a result of missing data on the covariates, models 1–8 in tables 5 and 6 have different N 's. We have repeated our analysis on the basis of the same set of cases ($N = 4,856$) and obtained very similar results. Details are available from the authors on request.

TABLE 8
THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SOCIAL STATUS AND NEWSPAPER READERSHIP WITHIN SOCIAL CLASS

	Class I	Class II	Class IIIa	Class IIIb	Class IV	Class V	Class VI	Class VII
MBT vs. BS	-1.603*	1.962**	-1.724	2.377	-.637	-1.293	6.242	-2.764
	(.692)	(.473)	(1.162)	(2.062)	(.737)	(1.119)	(4.127)	(1.586)
RTT vs. BS	-1.964*	-2.393**	-2.324*	-.321	-2.484**	-1.856	4.250	-4.149**
	(.835)	(.487)	(1.146)	(1.983)	(.752)	(1.071)	(3.957)	(1.434)
RLO vs. BS	-1.095	-1.023	-2.371*	-.388	-1.727*	-2.042	7.446	-4.312*
	(.810)	(.550)	(1.153)	(2.074)	(.829)	(1.366)	(4.198)	(1.527)
NR vs. BS	-1.763**	-.585	-2.550*	.011	-2.073**	-2.125	5.107	-4.272**
	(.582)	(.444)	(1.100)	(1.957)	(.734)	(1.259)	(3.956)	(1.432)
MBT vs. RTT ^a ...	.361	.431	.599	2.698*	1.847**	.563	1.992	1.385
	(.843)	(.409)	(.741)	(1.182)	(.567)	(.795)	(2.053)	(.927)
N	762	1,281	1,006	499	548	452	524	1,366
Log likelihood	-971.88	-1,799.70	-1,378.91	-663.86	-760.60	-568.01	-615.20	-1,603.57

NOTE.—Robust SEs in parentheses.

^a The contrast between MBT and RTT is taken from a different parametrization of the same model which uses RTT as the reference category of the dependent variable. Changing the reference category does not alter the log likelihood of the model or the predicted probabilities implied by the model. Full details are available from the authors on request; covariates included in the model but not reported in this table are age, sex, income, Scotland, educational attainment.

* $P < .05$.

** $P < .01$.

TABLE 9
 EXAMPLES OF PREDICTED PROBABILITIES OF NEWSPAPER READERSHIP ESTIMATED
 WITHIN EACH SOCIAL CLASS

Class	Sex	Educational Attainment	Respondent's Occupation	Status Score	PREDICTED PROBABILITIES					
					BS	MBT	RTT	RLO	NR	
I	M	Degree	HP	.5643	.543	.058	.017	.047	.336
				PDM	-.0625	.291	.084	.031	.050	.544
II	M	Degree	APH	.2228	.419	.083	.062	.099	.336
				MPS	-.0453	.349	.117	.099	.108	.327
				PDM	-.0625	.344	.119	.101	.109	.326
IIIa	...	F	O-levels	FRC	.2559	.106	.296	.164	.089	.344
				AOA	.2274	.100	.294	.166	.090	.350
				NCC	.2238	.099	.294	.166	.090	.351
				SEC	.1539	.086	.288	.169	.093	.364
				SDC	-.3353	.030	.235	.185	.104	.445
IIIb	...	F	O-levels	CCW	.1097	.059	.369	.242	.088	.242
				SW	-.1151	.067	.248	.298	.110	.276
IV	M	CSE	MPS	-.0453	.049	.195	.281	.118	.356
				PDM	-.0625	.048	.191	.285	.118	.358
				SMC	-.5014	.021	.110	.370	.110	.389
V	M	None	PSW	-.2261	.010	.144	.548	.042	.257
				SMC	-.5014	.006	.123	.550	.044	.277
				PMO	-.5589	.005	.120	.550	.044	.281
VII	...	M	None	RWS	-.2974	.012	.051	.564	.094	.279
				PMO	-.5589	.004	.036	.570	.099	.291
				GL	-.5979	.004	.034	.570	.010	.293

NOTE.—HP=higher professionals; PDM=plant, depot, and site managers; APH=associate professionals in health; MPS=managers and proprietors in services; FRC=filing and record clerks; AOA=administrative officers and assistants; NCC=numerical clerks and cashiers; SEC=secretaries and receptionists; SDC=store and dispatch clerks; CCW=child care workers; SW=sales workers; SMC=skilled and related manual workers in construction and maintenance; PMO=plant and machine operatives; PSW=personal service workers; RWS=routine workers in services; GL=general laborers. Other covariates fixed as follows: age=40; country=England; log(income)=8.686.

between the two (owner-) manager groups represented and the group of (self-employed) skilled manual workers in construction. Third, in classes V and VII, status effects, even where statistically significant, tend to be less strong than in other classes. In particular, the—dominant—probability of reading redtops would appear to be rather little influenced by status. Taking this result together with the absence of any significant status effects in class VI again leads to the conclusion that within the blue-collar world newspaper choice must be reckoned as a less salient symbol of status than elsewhere.

Finally it is of interest to reverse the perspective of our last analysis and to consider the effects of class on newspaper readership within broad ranges of our status order. We have done this using a model analogous to that which gave the results of table 8 but with class now being the

explanatory variable of interest and with the analysis being undertaken separately for the four main status bands that we distinguished in terms of the degree of “manuality” of the occupations covered or, more specifically, of the extent to which they involved working with symbols, people, or material entities. These are (cf. table 1 above) the bands formed by categories 1–7, 8–18, 19–25, and 26–31. The results we achieve are in fact largely negative, and we do not report them here.²⁸ So far as contrasts involving our three ordered categories of newspaper are concerned, class effects significant at the conventional 5% level show up only within the second band of categories 8–18, and then only in the case of the broadsheet/redtop contrast. Within this band, members of classes II, IIIa, and IIIb are more likely to read redtops than broadsheets than are members of class I.²⁹

The results reported in this section do then fit rather well within our Weberian perspective. If newspaper readership represents a form of cultural consumption that serves as a symbolic expression of status, though one involving no great economic cost, we would expect that the strong and systematic association that exists between status and newspaper readership should not be seriously disturbed when class is brought into the analysis, and this is indeed what we do find. At the same time, because newspapers are inexpensive, there is no reason why class itself should have such an association with readership, once status is controlled, and again this proves to be largely the case, although with the qualification that newspaper choice seems somewhat less important as a status marker within the working-class or blue-collar world than within more advantaged class contexts.³⁰

²⁸ They are available from the authors on request.

²⁹ A possible explanation of this finding is that class I, in including only managers and administrators employed in large enterprises, picks up certain status effects that are not captured by the occupational categories of our status ranking. In the status range in question, six out of the eleven categories covered comprise managers and administrators.

³⁰ We realize that our demonstration that status is of greater importance than class in the stratification of newspaper readership is of course specific to the measures of class and status that we use. It would thus be possible for a critic to argue that with a different approach to conceptualizing and measuring class, stronger class effects could be shown up. However, we would doubt if this could be achieved with any other extant class schema that recognizes, and seeks to maintain, the conceptual distinction between class and status—such as, say, that proposed from a Marxist standpoint by Wright. For as Wright (1997, p. 37) recognizes, although his and the Goldthorpe schema have clearly differing theoretical origins, “as a practical set of operational categories, the [Wright] class structure matrix . . . does not dramatically differ from the class typology used by Goldthorpe.” In addition, we would wish to stress that in analyzing life chances and life choices in various other social domains, using the same measures of class and status as in the present article, we find many instances where class clearly

CONCLUSIONS

We start in this article from the argument that in seeking to advance current debates concerning the social bases of cultural taste and consumption and, in particular, the relationship between such consumption and social stratification, advantage would be gained by returning to Max Weber's insistence on class and status as two qualitatively different forms of social stratification. Since, in modern societies, lifestyle has become the main vehicle for the expression of status, and cultural consumption is an important element of lifestyle, cultural consumption, we suggest, will in general be more closely associated with status than with class. In the body of the article we go on to pursue two related but more specific aims: to explore the social bases of one particular form of cultural consumption in contemporary British society, that is, newspaper readership, and in particular its connection to the status order as conceptualized and measured on essentially Weberian lines; and then in turn to use this exercise as a means of further testing the validity of our attempt at empirically capturing the status order.

The results that we report are highly consistent with our basic expectation of a close relationship between cultural stratification and the status order. The probability of individuals reading "highbrow" broadsheets rises with status, and at an increasing rate; the probability of their reading "lowbrow" redtop tabloids falls with status in a more or less linear fashion; and the probability of their reading "middlebrow" tabloids first increases with status and then decreases. We have considered the possibility that these findings are no more than the surface reflection of a deeper relationship that exists between individuals' information-processing capacity and their consequent preference for more or less demanding kinds of reading matter. Taking educational level as a proxy for information-processing capacity, we find that, while education does indeed influence newspaper readership and on lines that would be predicted under the information-processing hypothesis, controlling for education does not remove the effects of status. These remain strong and systematic. In other words, the association between status and newspaper readership persists within different levels of education.

Moreover, at the same time as this result lends support to the "status

dominates status—e.g., as regards risks of long-term or recurrent unemployment, earnings prospects, and left-right political orientations and party choice (see Chan and Goldthorpe 2006). In the case of the "microclasses" approach currently being developed by Grusky and his associates (Grusky and Sørensen 1998; Grusky and Weeden 2001; Weeden and Grusky 2005), it remains to be seen in exactly what ways the specific occupational groupings that are distinguished will be treated as capturing relative advantage and disadvantage or social hierarchy as opposed to merely "vertical" differentiation (cf. Goldthorpe 2007, chap. 15).

hypothesis” regarding cultural consumption, it is also of particular significance for the validity of our representation of the status order of present-day British society. Information processing can be reckoned as more directly involved in newspaper reading than in many other forms of cultural consumption, while choice of newspaper is not the most obvious vehicle of conspicuous consumption and status display. Thus, if clear status effects are revealed in the case of newspaper readership, independently of the effects of education, this could be taken a rather strong indication not just that status matters but further that status is being measured in a reasonably adequate way.

We have also been able to demonstrate that the cultural level of individuals’ newspaper readership is associated with the status of their “significant others”—that is, fathers and best friends—as well as with their own status. This again supports the status hypothesis, and at the same time our results allow us to say something in at least a preliminary way about the actual mechanisms that may be involved. In the case of individuals whose own status is discrepant with that of their significant others, we find no support for the status-anxiety hypothesis that would envisage such potentially cross-pressured individuals having an especially marked concern with higher-level consumption—that is, in our case, the readership of broadsheets or at least middlebrow tabloids. However, we do find consistent evidence of such individuals displaying what we have called “withdrawal”—that is, being simply nonreaders. It is a question of evident interest whether in other, more diversified forms of cultural consumption a similar effect is to be found or whether omnivorousness and cultural switching are more typical responses.

Finally, we have examined how far the pattern of association established between status and newspaper readership is affected if individuals’ class position is also included in the analysis. We find that while the strength of status effects are somewhat reduced, their general pattern is little affected, while class effects themselves show up to only a limited extent. Further, status effects can be shown in most cases to persist within classes and on a fairly well-defined pattern, while class effects are largely absent within the four main divisions of our status scale. These results do then serve to underline our initial position regarding the importance of the Weberian distinction between class and status as qualitatively different forms of stratification in contemporary societies. A clear indication is at all events given that in discussion of the relationship between cultural consumption and social stratification, it is on status, in the Weberian sense, rather than on class that attention should primarily focus. Analyses that lack this focus or analyses that either reject the class/status distinction (such as those of Bourdieu and his followers) or that in effect blur it (such as those based on the concept of “socioeconomic” status) will thus tend,

we believe, to lack analytical sharpness and may produce misleading results. In our current research we are seeking further to test and develop this line of argument by, on the one hand, examining the interplay between status and cultural consumption on a wider canvas—taking in, for example, the domains of music, theater, dance, and cinema, and the visual arts—and also by considering both life chances and life choices of a kind where, still following our Weberian program, we would expect class rather than status to be the dominant influence (Chan and Goldthorpe 2006).

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