

Social Status in Norway

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Abstract

We estimate a status order for contemporary Norway using register data on married and cohabiting couples. By applying multidimensional scaling to contingency tables which cross-classify the occupation of spouses and cohabiting partners, we are able to extract a dimension which could reasonably be interpreted as reflecting social status in the classical Weberian sense. The general contour of the Norwegian status order and that of the UK are remarkably similar, as is the way in which social status relates to education, income and social class in the two countries. But social status is more equitably distributed in Norway than in the UK. Finally, as a demonstration of the empirical relevance of the class–status distinction, we show that these two dimensions of social stratification underpin different kinds of social attitudes in Norway.

1 Introduction: class and status

From a Weberian standpoint (Weber, 1968), class and status are related but distinct dimensions of social stratification. By social class, we refer to inequality that arises from the social relations of economic life or, more specifically, from relations in labour markets and production units (Goldthorpe, 2007, chap.5). In contrast, social status refers to a set of hierarchical relations that express perceived, and to some degree accepted, social superiority, equality and inferiority among individuals, which reflect not their personal qualities, but rather the degree of ‘social honour’ attaching to certain of their

positional or perhaps purely ascribed attributes, such as ‘birth’ or ethnicity (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2004).

It follows that social status, in the classical Weberian sense, is expressed primarily through pattern of intimate associations. Weber speaks of ‘commensality’ and ‘connubium’: who eats with whom, who sleeps with whom. The idea is that individuals’ close friend, spouse or partner are likely to be someone they would consider as their social equal. Further, social status is also expressed through lifestyles that are seen as appropriate to different status levels.

Because of the subjective nature of social status, status affiliations are more likely than class affiliations to be ‘real’ in the sense of being recognised by and meaningful to the social actors involved. In contrast, as Weber put it, ‘*“Klassen” sind keine Gemeinschaften*’. In other words, classes exist insofar as ‘a number of people have in common a specific causal component of their life-chances’ (Weber, 1968, vol.2, p.927). Thus, for instance, manual workers face significantly higher unemployment risks than professional employees, regardless of whether manual workers or professionals see themselves as members of different social classes.

While the class–status distinction was commonplace in Sociology (see e.g. Mills, 1951; Marshall, 1963; Lockwood, 1958), this distinction is now largely overlooked in both empirical research and theoretical discussion. Indeed, variables indexing education, income, social class or ‘socioeconomic status’ are often treated as though they are interchangeable measures of inequality.¹ In short, the Weberian view has been supplanted by various one-dimensional views of social stratification (see Birkelund, 2006; Chan and Goldthorpe, 2004, pp.383–384 for details).

However, there is evidence that the class–status distinction has continuing relevance for understanding social stratification in contemporary societies. Based on a study of the occupational structure of close friendship, Chan and Goldthorpe (2004) show that it is still possible to identify a status order in the UK. And in a further set of papers, they show that class and status have differing explanatory power in different domains of social life. Thus, whilst it is social status rather than social class which predicts patterns of cultural consumption (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2005, 2007b,c,d), the opposite is true for economic interests, prospects and security (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007a). Also, class and status underpin different kinds of social attitudes: social class predicts ‘left–right’ attitudes, while social status

¹It should also be noted that social status in the Weberian sense is conceptually and, as we will show below, empirically different from ‘socioeconomic status’. Duncan’s socioeconomic index is a weighted sum of central tendencies of the income and educational attainment of incumbents of various occupations (Duncan, 1961).

predicts ‘libertarian–authoritarian’ attitudes (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007a).

Do these findings hold true for other countries? In this paper, we ask whether a status order can be identified in contemporary Norway and, if so, whether the Norwegian status order is broadly similar to that of the UK. Treiman (1977) has shown that there is a high degree of cross-national similarity in occupational prestige scales. Could we say the same about social status in the classical Weberian sense?

1.1 The Norwegian context

Norway is an interesting test case for our purpose because of several reasons. First, levels of economic inequality is relatively compressed in Norway (Kalleberg and Colbjørnsen, 1990; Barth and Zweimueller, 1994; Moene and Wallerstein, 1997; Bratberg *et al.*, 2007). Despite the rise in economic inequality in the Nordic countries in the 1980s and 1990s, income distribution remains more equitable in Norway than in most other countries (Atkinson *et al.*, 1995; Esping-Andersen, 2000).

As regards intergenerational social mobility, class origin of Norwegians certainly affects their life chances. But when compared to other western countries, Norway seems to have higher relative mobility rates (Ringdal, 1994; Mastekaasa, 2004; Hjellbrekke and Korsnes, 2004). Earnings mobility is also significantly higher in the Nordic countries than in the UK or the US (Raaum *et al.*, 2007).

However, the trend of social fluidity in Norway is rather unclear. Ringdal (2004) and Breen (2004) argue that there is a trend towards greater social fluidity since the early 1970s. In contrast, Mastekaasa (2010) argues that the association between parents’ earnings and children’s earnings has increased slightly for those born between 1950 and 1969. Wiborg and Nordli-Hansen (2009) show that low parental income has persistent and increasingly strong associations with a range of social disadvantages, such as youth unemployment, dropping out from school and being on social assistance. Also, the association between family economic resources and educational attainment might have strengthened for the more recent cohorts (Hansen, 2008; Birkelund and Mastekaasa, 2010).

Surveys of social attitudes consistently show that Norwegians are rather egalitarian in their outlook. Support for redistribution is very strong. As noted above, economic inequality has increased in recent years. But opinion polls show that two thirds of Norwegians regard the reduction of economic inequality as an important policy objective (Barstad *et al.*, 2004).

Indeed, Norwegian egalitarianism might have historical roots. Premodern Norway was a sparsely populated country of mostly independent fishermen

and farmers. For about 400 years Norway was a protectorate under Danish rule. Then it was in a political union with Sweden between 1814 and 1905. Norwegian nobility, introduced by the Danes, was abolished in 1821. The early demise of the Norwegian aristocracy seemed to have influenced attitudes and social interaction pattern in the nineteenth century, as can be seen from the following account in the New York Times. The correspondent, having travelled on the arctic boat, wrote that Norway ‘has never been subject to feudal institutions, and [its] inhabitants . . . are curiously ignorant of the meaning of “social status”; where servants shake hands with their masters and masters bow to their servants’. The traveller then recounted a conversation with an English gentleman who ‘complained of the extreme familiarity of “these people”, the steward having shaken hands with him when he entered the saloon in the morning. [The Englishman] was very indignant when I suggested the steward regarding the passengers as his guests and himself as their *equal* or thereabout’ (The New York Times, 20th July 1884, p.10, emphasis added).

By referring to social equality and its implications for social interaction, including everyday minutiae such as handshakes, this New York Times article, aptly titled ‘The Social Status in Norway’, captures the Weberian notion of social status very well. If generalisable, it would suggest that Norway did not have a tradition of status stratification, at least not one as well developed as that found in nineteenth century Britain. This in turn would have implications for the status order in contemporary Norway.

However, there is ground to doubt the representativeness of this anecdote. The eminent Norwegian historian Sverre Steen referred to an agrarian society (*bondesamfunnet*) and an emerging ‘money’ society (*pengesamfunnet*) in nineteenth century Norway (see also Colbjørnsen *et al.*, 1987; Myhre, 2008). The social hierarchy of the agrarian society went from large holders, through small holders, to the large mass of farm workers who did not own land. As regards the ‘money’ society, Steen (1957, pp.241, 257–259) maintained that the nobility was at the top, followed by public officials (*embetsmenn*), and then wealthy industrialists and owners of large properties (*godseiere*). Further down the social hierarchy were lower level bureaucrats (*funksjonærer*), small traders (*høkere*), captains of boats (*skippere*) and craftsmen, and then the mass of workers and servants. Steen (1957, p.254) also suggested that this social hierarchy underpinned much of social interaction, manner of speech, fashion and marriage pattern. In its broad outline, Steen’s account of Norway was not fundamentally different from that of nineteenth or early twentieth century Britain (Runciman, 1997; McKibbin, 2000).

In any case, whilst there might be disagreement about social status in Norway in the past, we can quite unambiguously determine its present form

with contemporary register data. Specifically, we are interested in the following questions. Are status distinctions less marked in a society with relatively compressed economic inequalities and a population favouring egalitarian values? Alternatively, it is possible that where ‘objective’ economic differences are small, individuals try to distinguish themselves through ‘subjective’, non-economic means, resulting in even more pronounced status distinction. With these questions in mind, we now turn to the data and analysis.

2 Data and method

We report two sets of empirical analysis below. First, in Section 3, we use register data to estimate a social status scale for Norway. Secondly, in Section 4, we analyse data from the European Social Survey in order to demonstrate the empirical relevance of the class–status distinction.

Our first set of analysis is guided by the following considerations. First, marriage and cohabiting partnership, as intimate personal relationships, should to some degree be shaped by the status order. By studying the structure of social equality, a hierarchy of social *inequality* can be inferred. Secondly, along with sociologists who otherwise hold very divergent views (e.g. Blau and Duncan, 1967; Treiman, 1977; Grusky and Sørensen, 1998), we regard occupation as one of the most salient characteristics to which status attaches. Given these two considerations, we shall follow the approach pioneered by Laumann (1966, 1973) and study the occupational structure of spouse/partner choice.

2.1 Register data

We use register data collected by Statistics Norway. Specifically, we have extracted relevant occupational information of all married couples born between 1955 and 1985 who got married in 2002, 2003 or 2004 ($N = 64,109$). We call this sub-population our ‘marriage data’. However, since cohabitation is very common in Norway, our marriage data refers to a rather selected group. So we have supplemented it with a second sub-population that is also drawn from the population register: all cohabiting couples from the same birth cohorts who had a child in 2002, 2003 or 2004 ($N = 45,078$). We call this our ‘cohabitation data’.

2.2 The occupational categories

At its most detailed level, the occupational information that is available to us are the 390 4-digit unit groups of the International Standard Classification of Occupations, or ISCO–88.² However, despite the large N of our data sets, this is still too detailed a classification scheme for us to work with. To collapse the ISCO–88 categories into a smaller number of occupational categories, we start with the 3-digit minor occupational groups (MOGs). In deciding which MOGs to combine, our main considerations are as follows. First, we respect the one-digit major group boundaries, i.e. MOGs from different major occupational groups are kept separated. Secondly, so far as possible, we maintain difference by industry. For example, Associate professionals in health (APH) are distinguished from Associate professionals in engineering (APE). Similarly, Skilled and related manual workers in construction (SMC) are distinguished from Skilled and related manual workers in metal trade (SMM). Thirdly, we avoid having occupational categories that are very small in size. The smallest occupational category that we distinguished is Legal professionals, which accounts for 0.31% of the respondents. Table 1 shows the 34 occupational categories that we use, along with their constituent MOGs, plus a residual category of ‘No occupational information’. The following analyses are based on these 35 categories.

2.3 Methods

Based on the 35-fold classification of Table 1, we form contingency tables cross-classifying men’s occupation with that of their spouse (or partner). We then symmetrise these tables and analyse them with multidimensional scaling (MDS), which proceeds as follows.³ First, we calculate the ‘outflow rates’ of the contingency tables, i.e. the percentage distribution of spouse/partner’s occupation across our occupational categories for each category of the respondent. We then compute the index of dissimilarity for each pair of outflow rates. This gives us a measure of the between-category dissimilarity, δ . We then use the half-matrix of δ s as input to MDS analyses. That is, we seek to

²To give more details, the main Norwegian occupational classification is based on ISCO–88. However, the public sector and the maritime sector of Norway have their own occupational classification scheme, as do residents of Oslo. Thus, we have to map these two special occupational schemes back onto ISCO–88 before carrying out our analysis.

³Men and women might use different criteria in mate selection. But it would appear that symmetrisation does not matter so far as the status order is concerned. For example, for the pooled marriage/cohabitation data, the correlation of the putative status scales extracted from the ‘men by women table’, ‘women by men table’ and ‘symmetrised table’ are all above $r = 0.94$. Details are available from the authors on request.

Table 1: Occupational categories used in the analysis and their constituent 3-digit minor occupational groups.

Code	Descriptive title	minor group code	%
PSM	Public sector managers & administrators	111, 112, 114, 241	1.78
GMA	General managers & administrators	121, 122, 123	3.13
MSF	Managers of small firms	131	1.21
SEN	Scientists & engineers	211, 212, 213, 214, 221	2.62
MED	Medical & health professionals	222	0.71
SPN	Specialist nurses	223	3.56
TPE	Teachers & other professionals in education	231, 232, 234	2.24
APB	Associate professionals in business	251	0.77
LP	Legal professionals	252	0.31
OP	Other professionals	253, 254, 255, 256	0.82
APE	Associate professionals in engineering	311, 312, 313, 314, 315	3.13
APH	Associate professionals in health	321, 322, 323	0.77
APT	Associate professionals in teaching	331, 332, 334	2.28
APO	Associate professionals, nec.	346, 347, 348	0.60
BSR	Buyers & sales representatives	341, 342	3.81
APA	Associate professionals in administration	343, 344	0.92
PAF	Police officers & armed force personnels	345, 011	0.69
API	Associate professionals in journalism and information	349	0.53
SEC	Secretaries & clerks	411, 412, 414	3.30
STC	Stock & transport clerks	413	1.41
CSC	Customer service clerks	421, 422	0.78
PSW	Personal service workers	511, 514, 521	0.79
CW	Catering workers	512	1.51
HCW	Health care workers	513	5.25
PSP	Protective service workers	516	0.92
SW	Sales workers	522	6.62
FAF	Farmers, agricultural & fishery workers	611, 612, 613, 621, 631, 641	0.61
SMC	Skilled & related manual workers in construction	711, 712, 713, 714, 724	4.09
SMM	Skilled & related manual workers in metal trade	721, 722, 723	2.24
CRW	Craft workers	731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745	1.15
PMO	Plant & machine operatives	811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 821, 822, 825, 826, 827, 828	3.62
TO	Transport operatives	831, 832, 833, 834	2.67
RWS	Routine workers in services	912, 913, 914, 915, 916	2.90
GL	General labourers	921, 931, 932, 933	0.82
NOI	No occupational information	000	31.44

represent our 35 occupational categories as points in a Euclidean space, such that the distance between category A and category B in this space, d_{AB} , best approximates the observed dissimilarity between them, δ_{AB} .

Note that our MDS results are based on the profile of spouse (or partner) choice across the whole occupational classification. Two occupational categories that are found near each other in the multidimensional space does *not* necessarily mean that members of these two groups are likely to marry (or cohabit with) each other. Rather, it suggests that they have a tendency to choose (or avoid) spouse or partner from the same set of occupations.

3 The social status scale

Figure 1 shows that, irrespective of whether we use marriage data, cohabitation data or pooled marriage-cohabitation data, a two-dimensional MDS solution achieves a stress value of under 0.07, indicating a rather good fit.

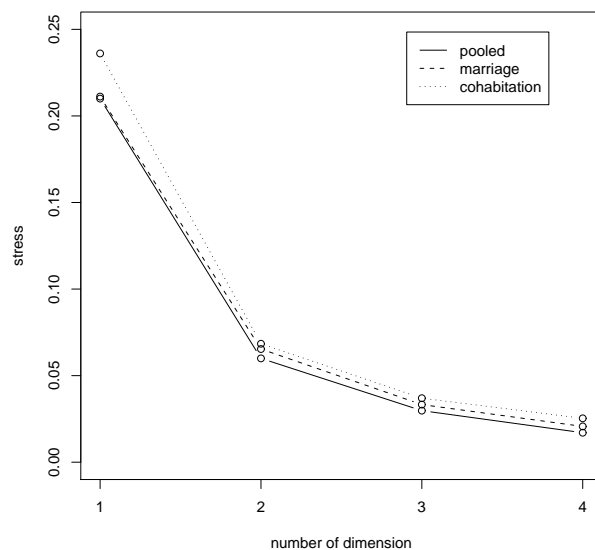


Figure 1: Stress value of multidimensional scaling applied to marriage, cohabitation and pooled data, contingency table symmetrised in all cases

If people regard marriage, but not cohabitation, as a life-long commitment, then the criteria for spouse-choice might well be different from those for partner-choice. In particular, status consideration might be weaker in

our cohabitation data. Do our two data-sets give similar results? To answer this question, we have carried out separate MDS analysis on our marriage and cohabitation data, and compared the corresponding dimensions. The left panel of Figure 2 shows that the first dimension extracted from the two data sets correlate very highly, with $r = 0.96$. The same is true for the second dimension, with $r = 0.97$ (see the right panel of Figure 2). Given these findings, and to avoid repetition, the results reported below are all based on pooled marriage–cohabitation data.

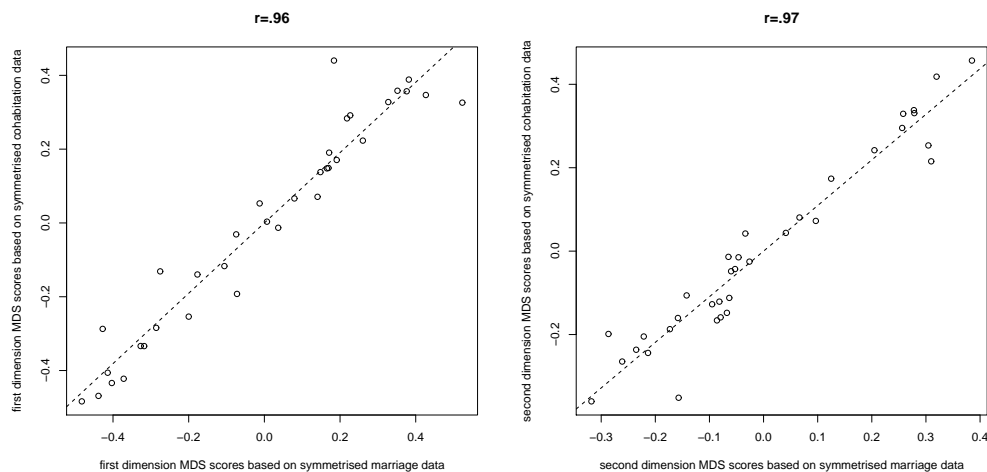


Figure 2: First and second dimension MDS scores estimated from symmetrised marriage data plotted against those based on cohabitation data.

3.1 Details of the status hierarchy

Figure 3 plots the MDS solution of our pooled data. Starting with the first dimension, which is plotted horizontally, we find nonmanual occupations to the right of the graph, manual occupations to the left, and various personal service and secretarial occupations in the middle (see also Table 2). This suggests that the non-manual/manual divide is still important in spouse/partner choice in Norway. Furthermore, within the non-manual range, professionals tend to rank above managerial occupations.⁴ Only three of the top eleven occupational groups are managerial occupations, namely Public sector manages

⁴In our MDS exercise nonmanual occupational categories turn out to have more negative values on the first dimension, while manual occupational categories have more positive values. To aid interpretation, we have reversed the first dimensional scores reported in this paper by multiplying them with -1 . This is not a problem as ‘the interpretation . . . put upon any MDS solution must be invariant under reflection, translation, and rotation’

and administrators (PSM, rank 3), Associate professionals in administration (APA, rank 10) and General managers and administrators (GMA, rank 11). In fact, some managerial occupations, such as Managers of small firms (MSF, rank 18) have rather middling status, ranking below Secretaries and clerks (SEC, rank 15).

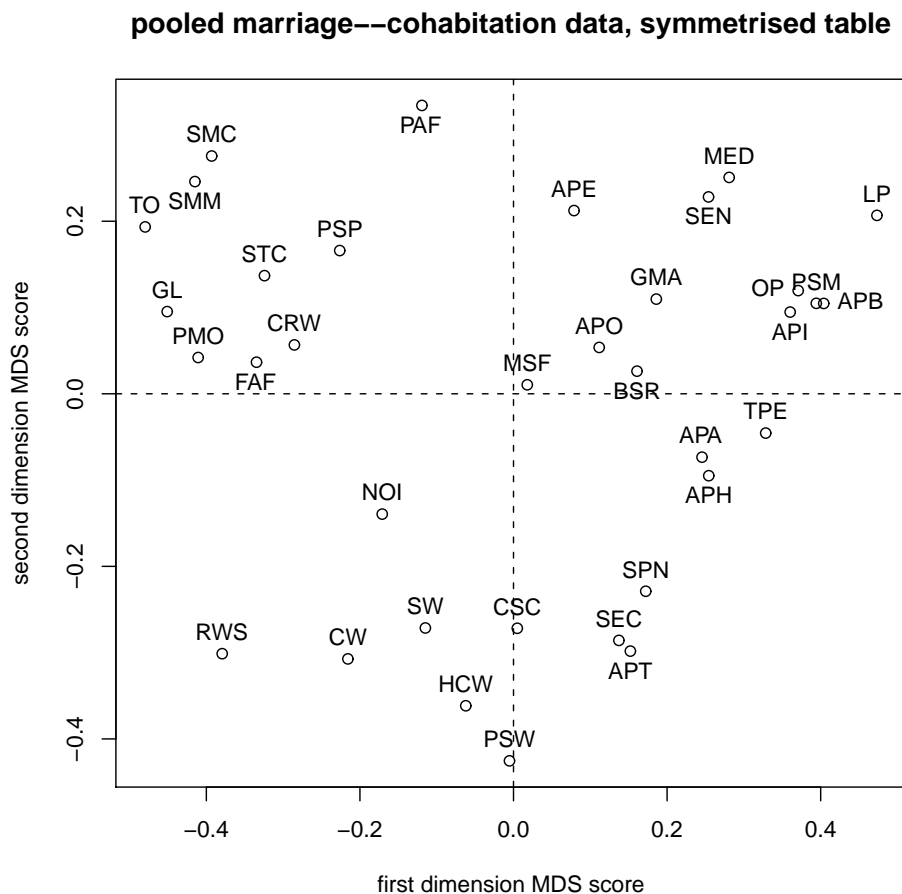


Figure 3: Multidimensional scaling solution of symmetrised table derived from pooled marriage/cohabitation data

At the other end of the status scale are various manual occupations. In ascending status score, we find Transport operatives (TO), General labourers (GL), Skilled and related manual workers in metal trade (SMM), Plant and
(Bartholomew *et al.*, 2002, p.56). That is, the sign of MDS scores has no interpretation. It is their absolute magnitude which matters. Deciding ‘which way’s up’ is, of course, a question which turns on subject matter consideration.

machine operatives (PMO), Skilled and related manual workers in construction (SMC) and Routine workers in service (RWS). Clerical occupations in ‘manual settings’, Stock and transport clerk (STC) also have relatively low ranking (28th).

Overall, the occupational ranking of Norway is notable on two counts. First, it echoes the account of Steen (1957) regarding the status order which prevailed in the nineteenth century. Secondly, it is remarkably similar to that reported by Chan and Goldthorpe (2004) for contemporary UK. We take this as *prima facie* evidence that a status order, in the classical Weberian sense, can be found in contemporary Norway.

Turning to the second dimension of our MDS solution, which is plotted vertically in Figure 3, we see that the following occupations are found at or near the top of the graph: Police officers and armed force personnel (PAF), Skilled and related manual workers in construction (SMC), Medical and health professionals (MED), Skilled and manual workers in metal trade (SMM), Scientists and engineers (SEN), Associate professionals in engineering (APE), Legal professionals (LP), Transport operatives (TO), and Protective service workers (PSP). These are mostly male-dominated occupations.⁵ At the bottom end of the second dimension, in ascending order, we find Personal service workers (PSW), Health and care workers (HCW), Catering workers (CW), Routine workers in service (RWS), Associate professionals in teaching (APT), Secretaries and clerks (SEC), Sales workers (SW) and Customer service clerks (CSC). These are all female-dominated occupations. This pattern would then suggest that the second dimension of our MDS solution might capture sex segregation of the labour market. This impression is confirmed when we plot the percentage of female found in the 35 categories against their second dimension score. The absolute magnitude of the correlation thus obtained is very high, with $r = -0.84$ (see Figure 4).

⁵Partial exceptions here are Medical and health professionals (MED) and Legal professionals (LP). However, it should be noted that although many young women are entering medicine and law in recent years, these professions are still largely male-dominated occupations. For example, in 2009 58% of the members of the Young Doctors Association (*Yngre legers forening*) are female, as compared to 37% of General Practitioners (*Almennlegeforeningen*) and 30.5% of Consultant doctors (*Norsk Overlegeforening*). The latter two categories of doctors are of course older. See <http://www.legeforeningen.no/id/154466.0>. As for lawyers, in 2008 only 28% of them were women.

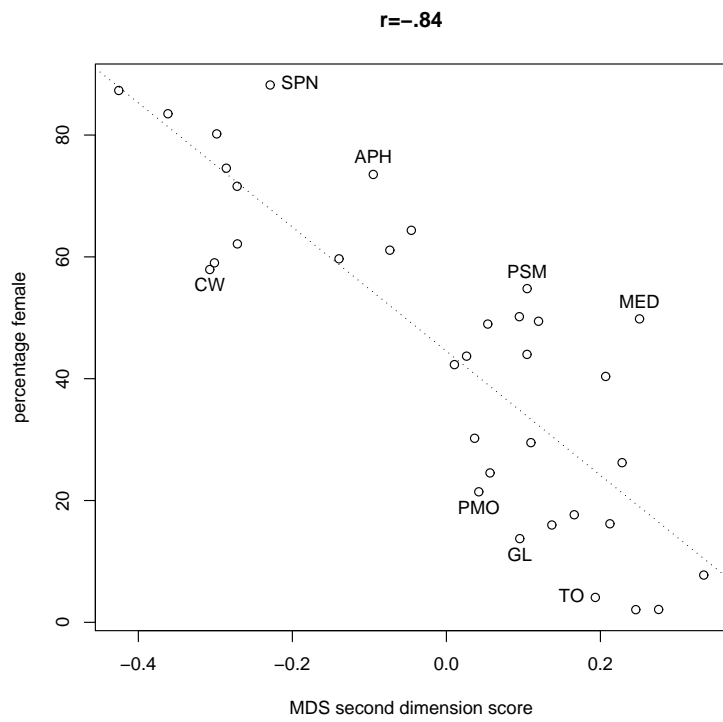


Figure 4: Second dimension scores plotted against percentage female in each occupation.

Table 2: The 35 occupational categories ranked by status score

rank, code & short title		estimated scores		%	% with degree		% above		
		first	second		female	male	female	male	female
1	LP	Legal professionals	0.47326	0.20679	40.37	99.23	98.48	89.0	95.8
2	APB	Associate professionals in business	0.40399	0.10470	43.99	78.98	74.38	85.7	93.5
3	PSM	Public sector managers & administrators	0.39428	0.10484	54.79	83.24	88.52	70.3	92.6
4	OP	Other professionals	0.37074	0.11962	49.43	76.94	80.14	77.3	87.5
5	API	Associate professionals in journalism & information	0.36026	0.09471	50.18	72.35	85.45	77.7	86.0
6	TPE	Teachers & other professionals in education	0.32844	-0.04554	64.36	93.42	96.63	60.6	85.6
7	MED	Medical & health professionals	0.28085	0.25079	49.82	87.79	90.11	83.2	83.4
8	APH	Associate professionals in health	0.25424	-0.09493	73.53	79.95	89.42	47.8	81.1
9	SEN	Scientists & engineers	0.25394	0.22816	26.21	71.16	81.44	83.0	93.5
10	APA	Associate professionals in administration	0.24551	-0.07345	61.10	76.82	62.98	65.8	87.7
11	GMA	General managers & administrators	0.18594	0.10974	29.50	48.92	59.73	86.5	93.6
12	SPN	Specialist nurses	0.17219	-0.22884	88.22	87.11	93.05	54.3	79.5
13	BSR	Buyers & sales representatives	0.16083	0.02621	43.70	46.12	45.69	72.3	85.6
14	APT	Associate professionals in teaching	0.15216	-0.29823	80.19	71.61	89.53	42.8	74.1
15	SEC	Secretaries & clerks	0.13724	-0.28581	74.56	31.70	26.40	36.1	68.3
16	APO	Associate professionals, nec.	0.11159	0.05373	48.97	42.79	44.74	55.0	70.6
17	APE	Associate professionals in engineering	0.07879	0.21235	16.18	51.45	68.17	82.2	91.7

18 MSF	Managers of small firms	0.01792	0.01041	42.31	36.70	63.53	68.7	85.5
19 CSC	Customer service clerks	0.00491	-0.27175	71.59	24.41	22.68	30.5	56.6
20 PSW	Personal service workers	-0.00527	-0.42543	87.32	11.73	6.33	51.6	48.2
21 HCW	Health care workers	-0.06212	-0.36157	83.50	32.06	18.24	29.4	40.9
22 SW	Sales workers	-0.11480	-0.27140	62.13	14.79	13.50	38.1	34.4
23 PAF	Police officers & armed force personnel	-0.11924	0.33420	7.76	68.87	69.02	87.9	90.3
24 NOI	No occupational information	-0.17093	-0.13943	59.68	27.04	25.72	33.5	27.6
25 CW	Catering workers	-0.21565	-0.30726	57.92	7.94	10.46	21.7	39.4
26 PSP	Protective service workers	-0.22628	0.16601	17.66	13.18	17.31	41.0	63.0
27 CRW	Craft workers	-0.28533	0.05666	24.53	7.14	17.54	37.6	70.9
28 STC	Stock & transport clerks	-0.32430	0.13692	15.98	8.08	15.78	34.5	72.6
29 FAF	Farmers, agricultural & fishery workers	-0.33468	0.03662	30.22	11.96	19.18	31.6	29.9
30 RWS	Routine workers in services	-0.37932	-0.30120	59.02	8.33	5.98	23.0	23.8
31 SMC	Skilled & related manual workers in construction	-0.39303	0.27560	2.11	3.38	13.11	52.3	59.0
32 PMO	Plant & machine operatives	-0.41066	0.04206	21.43	4.85	6.01	46.8	59.9
33 SMM	Skilled & related manual workers in metal trade	-0.41485	0.24596	2.08	2.27	7.07	45.6	82.8
34 GL	General labourers	-0.45099	0.09528	13.74	6.00	5.08	33.0	45.8
35 TO	Transport operatives	-0.47965	0.19340	4.09	4.26	11.01	46.1	55.1
Total				50.00	29.64	38.02		

3.2 Association with education, income and SEI

We have argued that the first dimension of our MDS solution could reasonably be interpreted as capturing the status order in contemporary Norway. We now consider whether this putative status hierarchy simply reflects arguably more basic factors, such as income and education. We would, of course, expect social status to be associated with income and education to some degree. A certain level of income is required to sustain the lifestyle characteristic of a certain level in the status hierarchy, and the preferences that shape the form and content of lifestyles are likely to be influenced by education. But if these associations prove to be very high, then the question would arise of whether the status ranking is just a epiphenomenon of difference in income and education.

The sixth and seventh columns of Table 2 show the proportion of male and female university graduates within each occupational group. There is clearly an educational gradient in social status: the proportion of graduates generally declines as one goes down the status hierarchy: from over 99% of male Legal professionals (LP) to only 4% of male Transport operatives (TO). But this gradient is far from smooth. For example, 51% of male Associated professionals in engineering (APE) have university degrees, but at rank 17, their status is lower than male Secretaries and Clerks (SEC, rank 15), of whom only 32% are university graduates. This impression is confirmed by the unevenness of the surfaces in Figure 5 in which we plot, for men and women separately, the distribution of respondents across five levels of education within each of the 35 status groups.⁶

Generally speaking, occupations that are disproportionately low on the status hierarchy, given the educational attainment of their incumbents, are associate professionals or managerial occupations in personal services or manual milieux, e.g. Associate professionals in engineering (APE), Managers of small firms (MSF), and Police officers and armed force personnel (PAF). Many of these occupations require considerable levels of skills and training. But it would seem that their association with the personal service or manual milieux have ‘dragged’ them down the status hierarchy. This observation is consistent with the finding that the manual/non-manual divide remains salient in determining social status. It might be useful to have a one-number summary of the overall association between social status and education: using Kendall’s tau, we see that for men the association is rather modest with

⁶The five levels of educational attainment that we distinguish are 1 ‘Lower secondary education’, 2 ‘Upper secondary first year’, 3 ‘Completed upper secondary’, 4 ‘Undergraduate degree (BA)’, 5 ‘Master degree or above’.

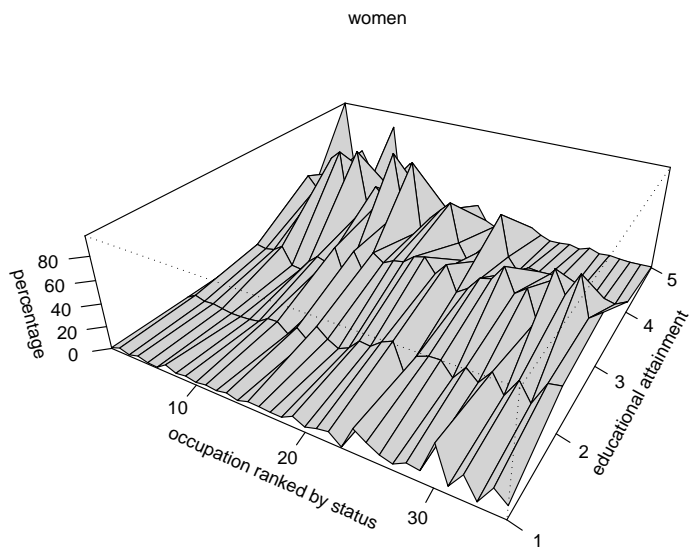
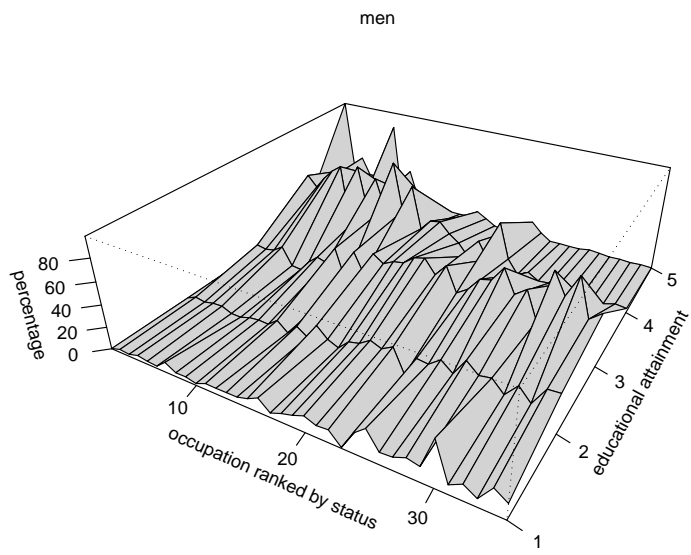


Figure 5: Distribution of educational attainment within status group for men and women

$\tau_a = 0.33$, while for women, it is slightly stronger at $\tau_a = 0.41$.⁷

The association between income and status is also quite modest. In the last two columns of Table 2 we report, again for men and women separately, the percentage of individuals within each occupational group who earn more than the median income of the pooled data-set. Here, again, examples of status–income incongruence abound. For example, 88% of male Police officers and armed force personnel (PAF), but only 54% of male Specialist nurses (SPN), earn above median income. However, the former ranks considerably lower than the latter: 23rd as compared with 12th. Likewise, Skilled and related manual workers in construction (SMC) are quite well paid: 52% of male workers and 59% of female workers in this group earned above the median income. But their social status is disproportionately low at rank 31. To give a full picture of the association between income and status, we show in Figure 6 the distribution of respondents over ten income deciles within each of the 35 occupational groups. The unevenness of the plots in Figure 6 are again striking. As a summary measure, we have computed the Pearson’s correlation between status and log-income, which also turns out to be very modest, with $r = 0.19$ for men and $r = 0.31$ for women.

We then regress the estimated status score of the 34 occupational groups on income (measured as proportion within each occupational group earning above median income) and education (proportion with tertiary education).⁸ As can be seen from Table 3, for both men and women, once education is controlled for, the parameter for income is not significant at all. Since for Duncan’s SEI, income and education are both statistically significant predictors of comparable magnitude, our result shows that social status in the classical Weberian sense is empirically as well as conceptually different from ‘socioeconomic status’.

Table 3: Regression of estimated status score on income and education for men and women

	men		women	
	$\hat{\beta}$	<i>s.e.</i>	$\hat{\beta}$	<i>s.e.</i>
intercept	−0.370**	0.065	−0.364**	0.106
income	0.001	0.002	0.000	0.002
education	0.008**	0.001	0.007**	0.001
R^2	0.82		0.75	

⁷The category NOI is omitted in the calculation of τ .

⁸The category of NOI is again dropped from this regression.

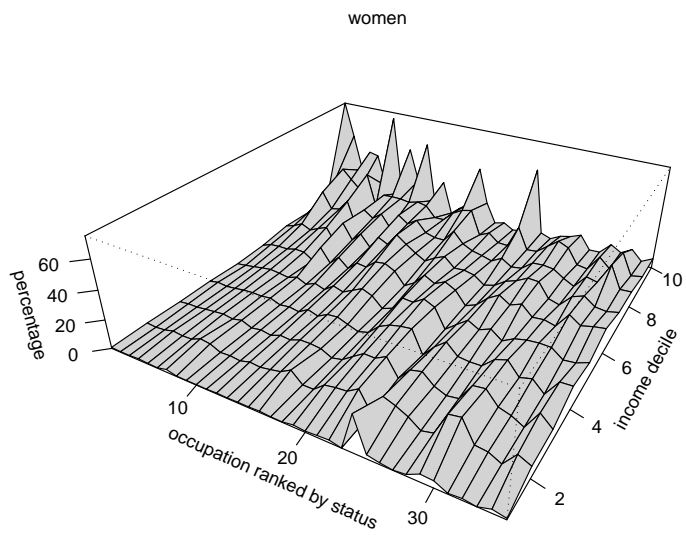
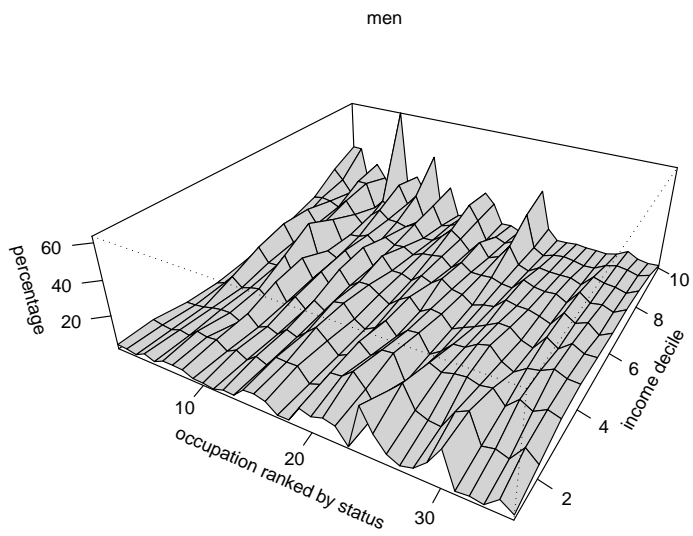


Figure 6: Distribution of income within status group for men and women

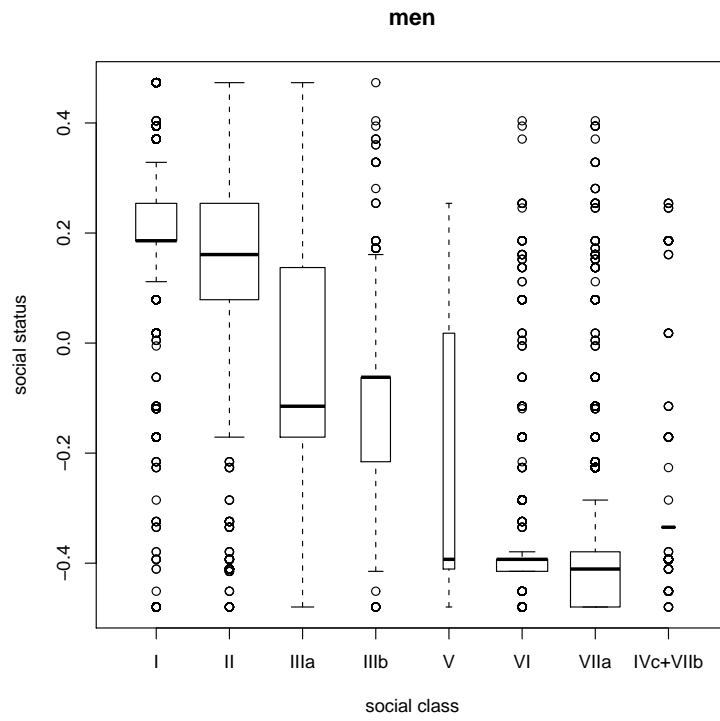
3.3 Status and class

We now turn to the central question within the Weberian perspective of social stratification: how do class and status map onto each other. The two most commonly used class schemes are those of John Goldthorpe (1997) and Erik Olin Wright (1997). We shall use a modified version of the Goldthorpe class scheme in this paper (see Table 4). But it should be noted that although the two schemes 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’ (Wright, 1997, p.37).

Also, although both social class and social status are occupation-based constructs, different kinds of occupational information are used in rather distinct ways in their construction. Social classes are determined by ‘expert judgment’ according to the employment conditions of occupations. Under the Goldthorpe class scheme, the employment status of individuals (i.e. whether someone is an employer, a self-employed individual or an employee), and among employees, whether someone is employed on a ‘labour’ contract as opposed to a ‘service’ contract, are key criteria (Goldthorpe, 2007, chap.5). By comparison, social status is determined jointly by the occupation of individuals *and* the occupation of their partner/spouse through an empirical scaling exercise.

In practice, the Norwegian register data does not contain any social class variable, and we have to recode our occupational information into the Goldthorpe class scheme. This proves somewhat difficult for some cases as there is insufficient information on employment status. Consequently, we could not reliably assign 22.5% of our male respondents and 28.9% of our female respondents to a social class category. Although not all of these missing cases are self-employed, the upshots are: (1) that we do not have class IVab (i.e. small proprietors or self-employed individuals in non-agricultural sector) in our modified Goldthorpe class scheme, and (2) farmers (IVc) are combined with farm workers (VIIb) as one class.

Figure 7 shows, again for men and women separately, the distribution of status within and between social classes. It can be seen that, indeed, in terms of the median and interquartile range, there is a status gradient across social class. The salariat (classes I and II) generally have higher status than routine non-manual workers (classes IIIa and IIIb), who in turn have higher status than manual workers (classes VI and VIIa especially). However, what is also clear from Figure 7 is that the spread of status within social class is quite large, especially for classes II, IIIa and V. Thus, there is considerable overlap of social status between classes, and there are individuals whose



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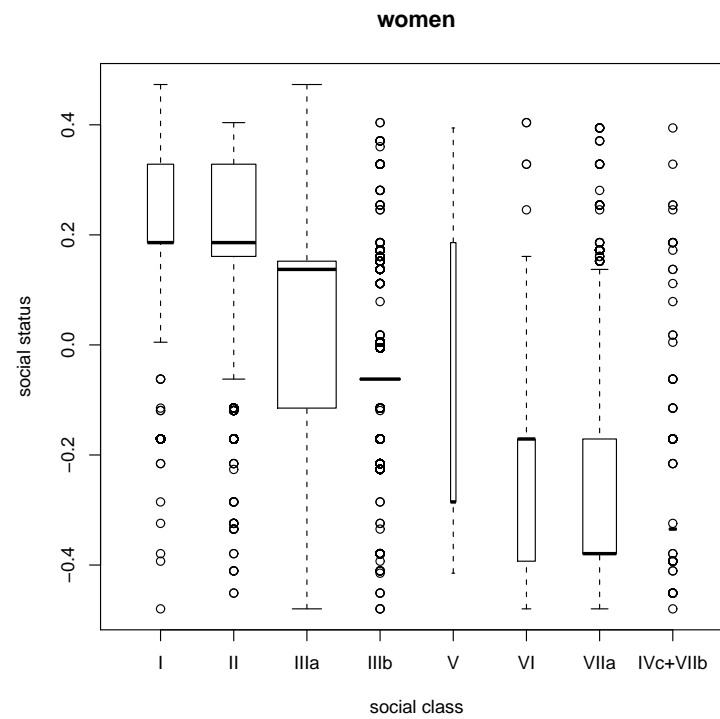


Figure 7: The distribution of status within and between class

Table 4: The modified Goldthorpe class scheme

I	Higher level salariat
II	Lower level salariat
IIIa	Routine non-manual occupations, higher grade
IIIb	Routine non-manual occupations, lower grade
V	Foreman and manual supervisors
VI	Skilled manual workers
VIIa	Semiskilled or unskilled workers (non-agricultural)
IVc+VIIIb	Small employers, self-employed (agricultural) and Semiskilled or unskilled workers (agricultural)

class position and status position are not commensurate with each other. In turn, this implies that in future research separate measures of class and status can be entered into a multivariate model without leading to serious multicollinearity problem.

3.4 Distribution of social status

So far, our results for Norway are remarkably similar to those reported for the UK (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2004). In both countries, a key dimension of the occupational structure of intimate associations (marriage/cohabiting partnership in the case of Norway, friendship for the UK) echoes historians' account of the status order that prevailed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and thus can reasonably be interpreted as reflecting social status in the classical Weberian sense. The ordering of occupations in the status hierarchy are very similar in the two countries, with non-manual occupations ranking above manual occupations, and within the non-manual range, professional occupations rank higher than managerial occupations. Furthermore, the way in which social status relates to education, income and SES, and the manner in which class and status map onto each other are also very similar in the two countries. Of course, we cannot draw any conclusion about cross-national similarity in social status on the basis of two cases. Further analysis of comparable data from many more countries is certainly needed (Chan, 2010).

In one respect, though, there is a noticeable and substantively interesting difference in social status between the two countries. Table 5 reports the distribution of social status for Norwegian men and women and for the UK. Using gini coefficient as a measure of distributional inequality, it can be seen that social status is much more equitably distributed in Norway. Indeed,

Table 5: Distribution of social status in Norway and the UK

	Norway		UK
	men	women	
gini coefficient	0.235	0.212	0.358
p90/p10	4.05	2.94	12.80
p90/p50	1.38	1.10	1.99
p50/p10	2.94	2.68	6.44

the gini coefficient of social status is more than 10 percentage points lower in Norway than in the UK. The various percentile ratios of Table 5 also point to the same conclusion.⁹ Thus, the p90/p10 ratio for the UK is over 12, while those for Norway is about 4 or smaller. Further, since the UK–Norway difference seem to be larger for p50/p10 ratio than for the p90/p50 ratio, it is at the bottom half of the status hierarchy that we see greater status inequality in the UK. We note in Section 1.1 that economic difference is relatively compressed in Norway, and that Norwegians generally favour egalitarian values. It would appear that these egalitarian traits are found in the distribution of social status too.

4 Class, status and social attitudes

Having estimated a social status scale for contemporary Norway, we plan to take our research further by exploring the empirical relevance of the class–status distinction in future papers. But as a preliminary demonstration of the explanatory potential of this distinction, we shall examine in this section how class and status might be related to different kinds of social attitudes. Our argument is that as social class ‘turns on divergent interests arising out of inequalities in economic conditions and lifechances. But in regard to [non-economic] libertarian–authoritarian issues, it is status, not class, that is major stratifying force. Adherence to libertarian values ... tends to be a feature of a high-status lifestyle and general Weltanschauung’ (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007a, p.528).

We use pooled data from the Norwegian part of the European Social Survey (ESS) of 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2008. Of the handful of attitudinal questions that are included in all four rounds of the ESS, two items are especially relevant for our present purpose. The first item states that ‘government

⁹In computing these percentile ratios, we have added to all status scores a constant such that the lowest status score is zero for each country. Such linear transformation does not affect the MDS result (see note 4), but it would affect the percentile ratios.

should take measures to reduce differences in income levels’, while the second item states that ‘gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish’. The response categories for both items range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).¹⁰ As the first item is about economic inequality and redistribution, and the second item is about tolerance and lifestyle choice, following Chan and Goldthorpe (2007a), our expectation is that it is social class, rather than social status, which predicts the response to the first item, while the opposite is true for the second item.

It is preferable to use not just a single item, but a battery of related items to measure social attitudes. As regards libertarian–authoritarian attitudes, the following six questions on immigration are available from the four waves of ESS.

- a To what extent do you think Norway should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most Norwegians to come and live here?
- b How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most Norwegians?
- c How about poorer people from outside Europe?
- d Would you say it is generally bad or good for Norway’s economy that people come to live here from other countries?
- e And would you say that Norway cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?
- f Is Norway made a worse of better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?

The answer categories to questions a to c are (1) allow many to come and live here, (2) allow some, (3) allow a few, and (4) allow none; while those for questions d to f are a 11-point scale ranging from 0 which stands for ‘bad for the economy’ (or ‘cultural life undermined’ or ‘worse place to live’ respectively) to 10 which stands for ‘good for the economy’ (or ‘cultural life enriched’ or ‘better place to live’, as appropriate). To develop a scale of attitude on immigration, we reverse the coding of the answer categories for questions a to c, and then add up the scores of all six questions. The resulting scale has a mean of 19.85 and a standard deviation of 6.68, and its Cronbach’s alpha is .80. Respondents with higher values on this scale

¹⁰We have reversed the coding of the response categories to make the interpretation of regression results easier.

Table 6: OLS regressions of attitudes on redistribution, homosexuality, immigration and ‘left–right’ placement

	redistribution		homosexuality		immigration		left–right	
	$\hat{\beta}$	<i>s.e.</i>	$\hat{\beta}$	<i>s.e.</i>	$\hat{\beta}$	<i>s.e.</i>	$\hat{\beta}$	<i>s.e.</i>
age	.011*	(.004)	−.004	(.004)	.133**	(.028)	.008	(.009)
age (squared)	−.004	(.009)	−.011	(.008)	−.312**	(.059)	−.002	(.019)
female	.266**	(.031)	.246**	(.028)	−.007	(.199)	.391**	(.065)
upper secondary	−.071	(.049)	−.008	(.045)	.693*	(.316)	−.053	(.102)
post-secondary	−.152*	(.067)	.068	(.062)	1.114*	(.431)	−.130	(.140)
tertiary	−.177**	(.056)	.174**	(.051)	3.664**	(.359)	.210	(.116)
household income	−.095**	(.015)	−.005	(.014)	−.068	(.099)	−.233**	(.032)
class II	.066	(.045)	.018	(.041)	−.251	(.288)	.002	(.093)
class III	.152**	(.052)	−.049	(.048)	−.245	(.336)	.166	(.109)
class IV	.211*	(.101)	.047	(.093)	−.392	(.650)	.392	(.210)
class V	.221**	(.085)	−.079	(.078)	−.436	(.544)	.172	(.177)
class VI	.302**	(.081)	−.026	(.075)	−.242	(.520)	.517**	(.170)
class VII	.320**	(.066)	−.065	(.061)	.129	(.424)	.496**	(.138)
status	.021	(.102)	.272**	(.094)	4.120**	(.650)	.638**	(.212)
constant	3.283**	(.083)	3.950**	(.077)	22.224**	(.535)	4.160**	(.174)
<i>N</i>	4861		4859		4782		4788	
<i>R</i> ²	.070		.073		.136		.035	

Note: The regressions also control for survey year (not shown); * denotes $p < .05$, ** denotes $p < .01$.

hold more positive views about immigration.¹¹ As with item two above (on homosexuality), we expect views on immigration are structured primarily by social status rather than by social class.

Unfortunately, the ESS does not contain other attitudinal questions that bear on economic inequality and economic interests. For this practical reason, we are constrained in our examination of left–right attitudes. However, there is an ESS question which directly asks respondents to place themselves on a ‘left–right’ scale, ranging from 0 (right) to 10 (left).¹² We shall examine which social stratification variables predict response to this question.

¹¹If we were to form two separate scales using questions a to c and questions d to f respectively, their alpha values would be 0.81 and 0.86 respectively. The regression results would be substantively similar to those reported in the third column of Table 6. Details available from the authors on request.

¹²Again, we have reversed the coding to ease the interpretation of regression results.

We restrict our analysis to respondents aged 20 to 66, and carry out separate OLS regressions using the items on redistribution and homosexuality, the scale on immigration, and the ‘left–right’ placement item as dependent variables.¹³ As regards the independent variables, we note that age is centred at age 20; the reference category for education is ‘lower secondary or less’; our household income is ‘Z-score’ measure (i.e. household income are standardised by subtracting from it the mean income of the relevant year, and then divide by the relevant standard deviation); the reference category for Goldthorpe class schema that we use is the higher salariat (class I).

A preliminary point to note about Table 6 is that R^2 is highest in the third regression. This is to be expected as using an attitudinal scale developed from a battery of related items, rather than a single item, as the dependent variable should have reduced measurement errors.

Coming to the regression results, in the first column of Table 6, a positive parameter denotes stronger support for redistribution. Thus, older Norwegians tend to be more egalitarian, as are women and respondents with less education or income. Further, compared to the higher salariat, respondents from class III through class VII are also more egalitarian. For our present purpose, the key result of this column is that once social class and other variables are controlled for, social status is not statistically significant.¹⁴

Turning to the second column of Table 6, where a positive parameter denotes a more liberal attitude, or greater tolerance, regarding homosexuality, we see that women are more tolerant than men, as are respondents with tertiary education as compared to those with lower secondary education. But in contrast to the pattern in the first column, income is not a significant parameter, and it is social status rather than social class which is the significant predictor, with higher social status being associated with more liberal attitudes.¹⁵

In the third column, a positive parameter denotes a more favourable attitudes towards immigration. As can be seen, older respondents, better educated respondents and those of higher social status tend to be more supportive of immigration. And as with attitudes regarding homosexuality, once

¹³Regarding the two items on redistribution and homosexuality, we have also carried ordinal logistic regression as well as binary logistic regressions with various cutoffs. The substantive results are very similar to those reported in the first two columns of Table 6.

¹⁴If social class is dropped from the model, then the parameter for social status would become positive and significant, i.e. higher status respondents are less egalitarian. Details are available from the authors on request.

¹⁵If social status is dropped from the model, then income would still remain non-significant, but the parameters for classes III, V, VI and VII would become negative and significant. That is, respondents from less advantaged social classes are less tolerant than respondents from class I. Details are available from the authors on request.

social status is controlled for, there is no net association with income or social class.¹⁶

The results from columns one to three all quite clearly support the view that class and status underpin different kinds of social attitudes. But the results from column four are more ambiguous. Here, a positive parameter denotes a tendency to place yourself further to the left on the ‘left–right’ scale. It can be seen that there is no net association with age or education. But other things being equal, women place themselves to the ‘left’ of men, as do individuals with lower household income when compared to those with higher income. However, the parameters for classes VI and VII *and* that for social status are statistically significant: controlling for status (and other variables), working class respondents are more likely to place themselves to the ‘left’ of higher salariat; likewise, controlling for class (and other variables), higher status respondents are more likely to place themselves on the ‘left’.

However, we do not think this result weakens our argument. Rather, we believe that when people talk about being on the ‘left’ or ‘right’ in everyday speech, they have in mind not just matters of material concern, such as economic inequality, taxation or public services, but also ‘postmaterialist’ issues, such as identity and autonomy (Inglehart, 1989). It would be difficult to use a single ‘left–right’ item to disentangle the ‘two lefts’ in respondents’ mind (Weakliem, 1991).¹⁷ This explains why there is ambiguity in the results in column four. As we have seen in column one, when respondents are asked a specific and direct question about economic interests and redistribution, it is class, *not* status, which predicts their response.

Overall, whilst ‘class politics’ is still clearly relevant in Norway, it is overlaid by ‘status politics’. Far from the case where class politics is being replaced by status politics, we believe the two coexist in rather complex and historically contingent manner.

5 Summary

In this paper, we analyse the occupational structure of marriage and cohabiting partnership in Norway. Using multidimensional scaling, we show that a key dimension which underlies both spouse choice and partner choice could reasonably be interpreted as reflecting social status in the classical Weberian sense. This status order is empirically as well as conceptually different from

¹⁶If status is dropped from the model, the parameters for classes II through VII would be negative and significant, but income would remain non-significant.

¹⁷Further, note that while class remain a significant predictor if status is dropped from the model. Status is *not* a significant predictor when class is omitted.

‘socioeconomic status’. Further, although social status maps onto the class structure in sensible ways, they are not the same thing. There are many individuals whose class position and status position are not commensurate with each other.

In many ways, the status hierarchy of Norway is remarkably similar to that of the UK. However, the distribution of status is more egalitarian in Norway than in the UK. In other words, social distance as implied by the status order is smaller in social democratic Norway. One might say that egalitarian values in economic matters have spilled over to other domains of social life. When income inequality is relatively small, it might be easier for intimate associations to be formed between individuals at different status levels. Alternatively, one could argue that it is the relatively small status difference which partly underpins public support for economic redistribution.

We plan to take our research further in two ways. First, we wish to show that the Weberian class–status distinction is not only theoretically cogent, but also empirically relevant. We have already shown in the previous section that class and status underpin different kinds of social attitudes. In a future paper, we shall explore the social stratification of cultural consumption in Norway. Our expectation is that cultural consumption, as an aspect of lifestyle, is stratified primarily on the basis of social status rather than of social class.

Secondly, one can hardly draw any definitive conclusion about cross-national similarity and variation in social status on the basis of two cases (the UK and Norway). Some further comparative results involving Chile, France, Hungary, the Netherlands and the US are reported in Chan (2010). But we hope to study further national cases in future work.

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