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Social Status and Newspaper Readership

Tak Wing Chan

and

John H Goldthorpe

*Department of Sociology
University of Oxford*

*Littlegate House, St Ebbes
Oxford OX1 1PT, UK*

www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/swp.html

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Tak Wing Chan
Department of Sociology
University of Oxford

John H Goldthorpe
Nuffield College
University of Oxford

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Abstract

In this paper, we seek to further validate the status order identified in Chan and Goldthorpe (2002) by examining the association between newspaper readership and social status. Drawing on data from the British Household Panel Survey, we distinguish three ordered categories of newspapers: broadsheets, middlebrow tabloids and redtop tabloids, plus a residual category of regional and local newspapers. We 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 we 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.

1 Introduction

In recent research in the field of social stratification status has been a neglected topic—in contrast, say, to that of class. To make a start on remedying this situation, we have sought in a previous paper (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2002) to investigate status relations in present-day Britain, following the approach pioneered by Laumann (1966; 1973). This 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 analysing the propensity for friendships to be formed as between members of different occupational categories—through, say, the use of multidimensional scaling techniques—a structure of presumed social *inequality* may be inferred.¹

In the light of the findings we have reported, we argue that a status order can still be identified in British society, despite an evident decline in displays of deference and in the readiness of individuals openly to assert their social superiority. This order, we would claim, reveals clear continuities with that depicted for the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries in historical and earlier sociological research. Most importantly, status appears to be still rather systematically associated with the degree of ‘manuality’ of work, even though there are now more individuals than previously in occupations with both manual and nonmanual components, and especially in the growing services sector of the economy.

The status order that we propose on the basis of our analyses is set out in Table 1 in the form of a ranking of 25 occupational categories according to their status scores as derived from a multidimensional scaling exercise. In

¹The occupational structure of friendship can also be modelled using other analytical techniques, such as Goodman’s association models (cf. Chan and Goldthorpe, 2002).

our previous paper, we also report analyses to show that while status, as represented by this ranking, is correlated with both income and education, the correlations are only modest. Status as we would understand it—that is, in an essentially Weberian sense as involving relations of social superiority, equality and inferiority—appears to be distinct, empirically as well as conceptually, from ‘socio-economic’ status as represented by scales that in some way synthesise information on income and education (e.g. Duncan, 1961; Ganzeboom and Treiman, 1996).

Table 1: The 25 occupational categories ranked in descending order of status score, their relative size, and representative occupations within each category.

Title	Code	Representative occupations ^a	%
Higher professionals	HP	chartered accountants, clergy, medical practitioners, probation officers, solicitors	2.76
Specialist managers	SM	company treasurers, financial managers, computer systems managers, personnel managers	1.93
Teachers and other professionals in education	TPE	college lecturers, education officers and inspectors, school teachers	3.95
Associate professionals in industry and business	API	computer analysts and programmers, graphic designers, investment analysts, quantity surveyors	5.99
Scientists, engineers and technologists	SET	civil and structural engineers, clinical biochemists, industrial chemists, planning engineers, software engineers	1.95
General managers and administrators	GMA	bank and building society managers, general managers in industry, national and local government officers	3.38
Associate professionals in health and welfare	APH	community workers, nurses, occupational therapists, youth workers	3.92
Administrative officers and assistants	AOA	accounts assistants, clerical officers in national and local government, library assistants, record clerks	8.71
Secretaries and receptionists	SEC	personal assistants, receptionists, secretaries, word processor operators	4.53
Buyers and sales representatives	BSR	buyers and purchasing officers, technical sales representatives, wholesale representatives	1.90

Plant, depot and site managers	PDM	clerks of works, farm managers, maintenance managers, transport managers, works managers	2.05
Routine clerical workers	RCW	commercial and clerical assistants, despatchers, filing clerks stock- and storekeepers	5.37
Managers and proprietors in services	MPS	catering managers, hoteliers, publicans, shopkeepers and managers	4.50
Health and care assistants	HCA	dental nurses, educational assistants, nursery nurses, nursing auxiliaries	4.27
Sales workers	SW	cash desk and check-out operators, sales and shop assistants, window dressers	5.68
Protective service personnel	PSP	fire service and police officers, security guards	1.81
Personal service workers	PSW	caretakers and housekeepers, hairdressers and beauticians, travel attendants, undertakers	2.11
Routine workers in services	RWS	car park attendants, cleaners, counter-hands, couriers and messengers, hotel porters, postal workers	6.58
Catering workers	CW	bar staff, chefs, cooks, waiters and waitresses	2.37
Skilled and related manual workers n.e.c.	SMO	gardeners and groundsmen, printers, textile workers, woodworkers	5.19
Transport operatives	TO	bus and coach drivers, lorry and van drivers, taxi drivers	3.61
Skilled and related manual workers in construction and maintenance	SMC	bricklayers, electricians, painters and decorators, plasterers, roofers, telephone repairmen	4.53
Skilled and related manual workers in metal trades	SMM	fitters, setters, setter-operators, sheet metal workers, turners, welders	4.45
Plant and machine operatives	PMO	assemblers, canners, fillers and packers, food processors, moulders and extruders, routine inspectors and testers	6.69
General labourers	GL	agricultural workers, factory labourers goods porters, refuse collectors	1.75

^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.

The present paper is the first of two in which our main aim is to investigate further the validity of the status order that we have suggested. In this regard, our strategy 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 behaviour or organisational affiliations (e.g. membership of 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 learnt, and most organisational 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, 1987).² Cultural tastes and activities serve as effective means of the symbolic communication of status as an order distinct from that of ‘mere’ economic advantage, and even in contexts where much social interaction is relatively superficial.

We broadly accept this line of argument, and we would therefore believe that if the occupationally-based status ranking shown in Table 1 does have validity, then the positions that individuals hold within it should be associated with their cultural tastes and activities, at least in those respects where some degree of cultural stratification exists: for example, where there is fairly general recognition of tastes as ‘high-brow’, ‘middle-brow’ and ‘low-brow’. At the same time, though, it is obviously desirable to test as far as possible the underlying hypothesis that differences in cultural participation do, in some way or other, *express* status.

²Status groups based on family and lineage could of course also be characterised by distinctive lifestyles; but in this case lifestyle might be regarded as being more an epiphenomenon than a determinant of status.

There is one main alternative hypothesis that can be identified (cf. Ganzeboom, 1982). This claims that observed differences in cultural participation among social groups derive in fact from more basic psychological processes: 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 fulfilment are to follow from it.³ Thus, a 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, say, by their educational attainment.

In the light of this alternative hypothesis, our attempts to relate the status order that we have proposed to levels of cultural participation could therefore be seen as producing negative results in two different ways: first, if we find no association at all of the kind we would expect—i.e. between status and cultural preferences; but, second, if we do find such an association which, however, turns out to be spurious in that it disappears once educational attainment, taken as indicating information-processing capacity, is controlled.

In this paper we restrict ourselves to considering just one kind of cultural participation: that of newspaper readership. This may seem unduly limited but at least three advantages follow.

- (i) Newspapers are quite cheap, so questions of the costs of participation, which might otherwise complicate the analysis, scarcely arise.

³This hypothesis is obviously of a more psychological than sociological derivation. Versions of it are to be found in the work of students of 'empirical aesthetics' (e.g. Moles, 1971; Berlyne, 1974) and also of economists (e.g. Becker, 1996)

- (ii) Newspaper readership is an instance of cultural participation in regard to which the information-processing hypothesis might be thought especially favoured. 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’, 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.
- (iii) 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. 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’ (see e.g. Peterson and Simkus, 1992; Peterson, 1997; Bryson, 1997; van Rees, Vermunt and Verboord, 1999; Sintas and Garcia Álvarez, 2002; Coulangeon, 2003). We will delay our entry into this contested terrain until the sequel to the present paper, and in the light of the results it affords.

2 Data

Our data on newspaper readership come from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), which was in fact also the source of the data on friendship used in our earlier paper. 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 aged 20 to 64 ($N=6,832$), to whom we restrict our attention, only 16 per cent 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 ‘non-reader’. 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’.

It may be added here that in wave 7 of the BHPS, carried in 1997, the question on newspaper readership was repeated.⁴ Of respondents interviewed in both this and the 1992 wave ($N=5,355$), 66 per cent fell into the same

⁴Questions on newspaper readership were, in fact, included in waves 1, 2, 6 and 7 of the BHPS. We have chosen to analyse 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).

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 non-readership, on the other. Individuals changing between the first three ‘ordered’ categories of readership amounted in fact to only 6 per cent of the total sample in 1997. Newspaper readership may thus be taken as reflecting cultural preferences of a relatively high degree of stability.

3 Results

We begin in Table 2 by presenting some descriptive statistics.⁵ 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 high-brow 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 low-brow 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 non-reader.

In Figure 1 we graph readership by status score of our three ‘ordered’

⁵According 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 v BS and 3.3 for RTT v 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 2 (1.3 for MBT v BS and 2.6 for RTT v BS).

Table 2: Newspaper readership within occupational categories ranked in descending status scores (row percentages).

	BS ^a	MBT	RTT	RLO	NR	<i>N</i>	status score
HP	41.2	7.3	5.1	13.6	32.8	177	1.9702
SM	35.3	17.2	2.5	7.4	37.7	122	1.8583
TPE	35.9	12.4	2.7	12.0	37.1	259	1.8144
API	25.0	15.4	13.5	11.5	34.6	384	1.4694
SET	23.6	15.0	10.2	8.7	42.5	127	1.3310
GMA	34.6	15.6	10.0	11.4	28.4	211	1.2651
APH	14.1	18.4	18.0	12.9	36.7	256	0.9702
AOA	10.8	22.5	24.2	10.6	31.9	574	0.9325
SEC	14.4	21.1	22.2	11.4	30.9	298	0.6923
BSR	11.3	25.8	16.9	17.7	28.2	124	0.6520
PDM	13.1	22.3	18.5	8.5	37.7	130	0.1178
RCW	6.3	16.9	32.3	11.7	32.9	350	0.0198
MPS	12.0	24.7	26.8	10.9	25.7	284	-0.1022
HCA	5.3	15.3	31.0	11.4	37.0	281	-0.1065
SW	4.1	13.0	37.2	14.4	31.3	368	-0.3130
PSP	10.5	22.8	29.8	8.8	28.1	114	-0.6958
PSW	5.9	17.8	39.3	10.4	26.7	135	-0.7462
RWS	2.6	9.1	45.4	10.5	32.6	430	-0.9666
CW	5.3	10.5	39.5	11.8	32.9	152	-1.0339
SMO	2.7	11.3	37.0	13.1	35.8	335	-1.1760
TO	3.1	7.9	50.0	12.3	26.8	228	-1.3427
SMC	4.5	12.8	44.8	8.3	29.7	290	-1.4899
SMM	2.8	15.6	44.7	7.8	29.1	282	-1.5496
PMO	1.2	10.0	48.6	10.7	29.5	430	-1.6782
GL	2.7	4.5	48.7	11.7	32.4	111	-1.8924
overall	11.6	15.3	29.7	11.2	32.2	6452	

^aBS: Broadsheet, MBT: Middlebrow Tabloid, RTT: Red-Top Tabloid, RLO: Regional, Local and Others, NR: Non-reader.

categories of newspaper. These are scatterplots of the status score of the occupational categories (cf. the last column of Table 2) by the percentage of respondents belonging to the three readership categories (second to fourth column of Table 2). We also add a non-parametric 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 six highest ranking status categories, which we have previously identified as comprising unequivocally nonmanual professional and managerial occupations (Chan and Goldthorpe, 2002, p.000). 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-U’ curve shows up, although readership tends not to reach as low levels towards the top of the status order as towards the bottom.⁶

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

In Table 3 we report some descriptive statistics of the covariates used in our analyses. Two points are notable here. First, about 9 per cent of our respondents lived in Scotland. Although all the newspapers named above are available and are read throughout the UK, Scotland has its own broadsheets (*Herald*, *Scotsman*) and tabloids. The Scottish papers are, however, not individually identified in the BHPS. Their readers are grouped with those who read genuinely local newspapers under our category of Regional, local and others. We include a dummy variable for (living in) Scotland to take

⁶The scatterplots for Regional, local and others, and for Non-readers show much less systematic patterns. These plots are available from the authors on request.

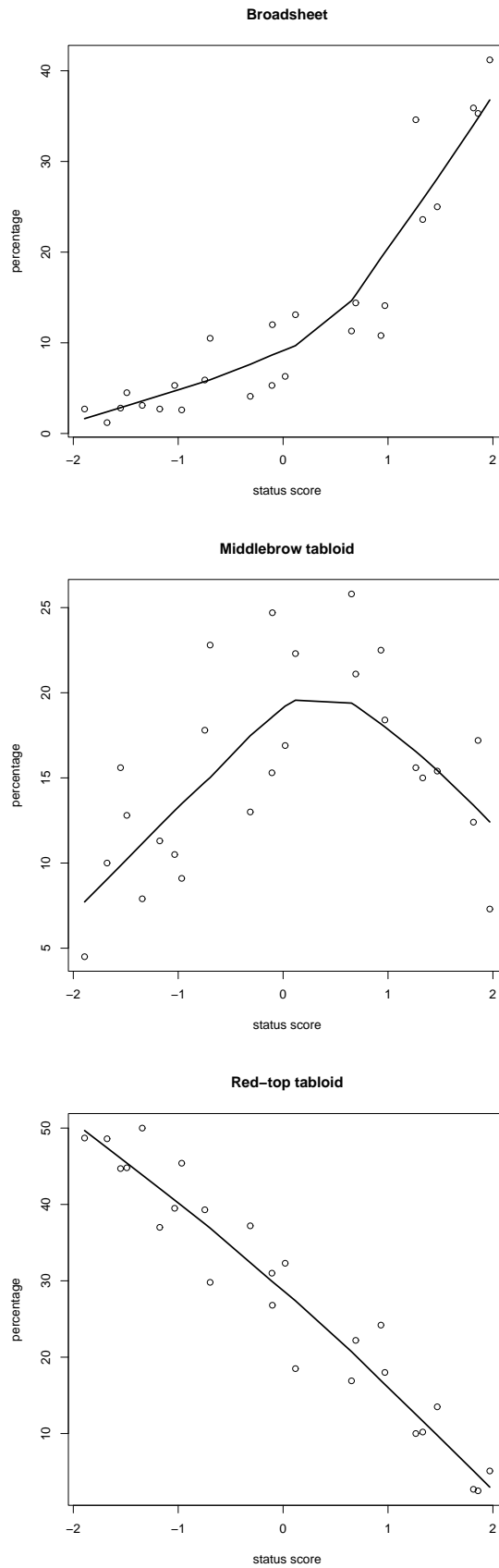


Figure 1: Percentage of respondents reading broadsheets, middlebrow tabloids and redtop tabloids by the status score of occupational categories.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of covariates.

	<i>N</i>	%
male (ref.cat.)	3237	47.4
female	3595	52.6
England & Wales (ref.cat.)	6198	90.7
Scotland	634	9.3
no qualifications (ref.cat.)	1722	26.1
CSE, etc. ^a	720	10.9
O-levels	1439	21.8
A-levels	726	11.0
post-secondary qualifications ^b	1353	20.5
degree	640	9.7

	valid <i>N</i>	mean	s.d.	min	max
age	6832	40.100	12.192	20	64
log(income)	6613	8.686	1.682	-2.3026	12.5689
respondent's status	6625	-0.049	1.171	-1.8924	1.9702
status-squared	6625	1.374	1.130	0.0004	3.8817
father's status	5906	-0.645	1.182	-1.8924	1.9702
friend's status	5566	0.004	1.224	-1.8924	1.9702

^a Clerical or commercial qualification, CSE, recognised trade apprenticeship or youth training certificate.

^b Teaching, nursing or other post-secondary qualification, including City and Guilds certificate, HNC, HND, BEC/TEC, BTEC higher certificate or diploma, university diploma.

this into account.

Secondly, the mean status score of the respondents (-0.049) is, as expected, higher than that of the respondent’s father (-0.645) but lower than that of the respondent’s best friend (0.004). 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 the tendency for homophily, people tend to name associates of higher social status as their close associates.

In Table 4 we report results from multinomial logistic regression analyses in which our five readership categories form the dependent variable, with broadsheet readership as reference.⁷ 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’ through to ‘degree-level and higher’ (see Table 3). 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.⁸ In the first, only status score is included, in addition to the control variables, while in the second we also

⁷The multinomial model can be represented as follows:

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

where P_{BS} is the probability that a respondent reads 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.

⁸Because the BHPS is a household survey, our sample contains individuals coming from the same household. Consequently, our sample would have less variation than one obtained from a survey of individuals. To check if this has biased the estimated standard errors downward to a substantial degree and therefore led us towards rejecting too many null hypotheses, we have repeated our analyses on two samples of individuals, containing respectively at most one male respondent and at most one female respondent from each BHPS household. The results from these analyses do not differ from those reported here. Details are available from the authors on request.

Table 4: Multinomial logistic regression of newspaper readership.

	(model 1)		(model 2)		(model 3)		(model 4)	
MBT v BS								
constant	0.234	(0.448)	0.394	(0.453)	1.706**	(0.459)	1.294**	(0.475)
female	0.494**	(0.107)	0.367**	(0.110)	0.234*	(0.108)	0.252*	(0.114)
age	0.001	(0.004)	0.002	(0.004)	-0.011*	(0.005)	-0.010*	(0.005)
log-income	0.013	(0.042)	0.031	(0.042)	0.044	(0.040)	0.082*	(0.040)
Scotland	0.408	(0.284)	0.446	(0.285)	0.609*	(0.282)	0.706*	(0.291)
status	-0.713**	(0.051)	-0.634**	(0.057)			-0.377**	(0.062)
status-squared			-0.233**	(0.050)			-0.096†	(0.052)
CSE					-0.319	(0.285)	-0.262	(0.288)
O-levels					-0.827**	(0.218)	-0.608**	(0.224)
A-levels					-1.484**	(0.237)	-1.192**	(0.246)
post-secondary					-1.662**	(0.208)	-1.218**	(0.220)
degree					-3.685**	(0.257)	-2.944**	(0.276)
RTT v BS								
constant	2.425**	(0.400)	2.586**	(0.400)	6.164**	(0.411)	4.816**	(0.428)
female	0.456**	(0.101)	0.356**	(0.104)	-0.241*	(0.102)	0.100	(0.110)
age	-0.021**	(0.004)	-0.021**	(0.004)	-0.053**	(0.004)	-0.049**	(0.005)
log-income	-0.086*	(0.037)	-0.076*	(0.037)	-0.055	(0.035)	0.007	(0.035)
Scotland	2.028**	(0.241)	2.059**	(0.243)	2.336**	(0.240)	2.476**	(0.251)
status	-1.308**	(0.050)	-1.288**	(0.055)			-0.829**	(0.060)
status-squared			-0.191**	(0.048)			-0.028	(0.052)
CSE					-1.034**	(0.269)	-0.873**	(0.274)
O-levels					-2.251**	(0.208)	-1.774**	(0.215)
A-levels					-3.384**	(0.228)	-2.729**	(0.238)
post-secondary					-3.481**	(0.201)	-2.611**	(0.213)
degree					-6.175**	(0.274)	-4.737**	(0.297)
RLO v BS								
constant	0.953**	(0.443)	0.972**	(0.444)	3.336**	(0.450)	2.488**	(0.471)
female	0.425**	(0.116)	0.401**	(0.120)	0.134	(0.115)	0.274*	(0.123)
age	-0.006	(0.005)	-0.006	(0.005)	-0.028**	(0.005)	-0.025**	(0.005)
log-income	-0.086*	(0.041)	-0.081*	(0.040)	-0.054	(0.038)	-0.012	(0.038)
Scotland	2.397**	(0.245)	2.415**	(0.246)	2.557**	(0.242)	2.677**	(0.252)
status	-0.826**	(0.055)	-0.770**	(0.059)			-0.485**	(0.065)
status-squared			-0.060	(0.053)			0.051	(0.056)
CSE					-0.903**	(0.295)	-0.832**	(0.300)
O-levels					-1.651**	(0.226)	-1.347**	(0.233)
A-levels					-2.313**	(0.249)	-1.905**	(0.260)
post-secondary					-2.212**	(0.214)	-1.692**	(0.229)
degree					-3.819**	(0.251)	-2.999**	(0.277)
NR v BS								
constant	3.373**	(0.391)	3.301**	(0.389)	5.765**	(0.398)	4.815**	(0.411)
female	0.586**	(0.096)	0.615**	(0.098)	0.303**	(0.096)	0.498**	(0.101)
age	-0.043**	(0.004)	-0.043**	(0.004)	-0.064**	(0.004)	-0.061**	(0.004)
log-income	-0.065†	(0.037)	-0.066†	(0.037)	-0.037	(0.034)	0.002	(0.034)
Scotland	0.897**	(0.245)	0.907**	(0.246)	1.006**	(0.240)	1.122**	(0.250)
status	-0.808**	(0.047)	-0.758**	(0.052)			-0.500**	(0.057)
status-squared			0.023	(0.044)			0.108*	(0.046)
CSE					-0.848**	(0.272)	-0.701*	(0.276)
O-levels					-1.813**	(0.209)	-1.449**	(0.215)
A-levels					-2.314**	(0.222)	-1.891**	(0.232)
post-secondary					-2.299**	(0.197)	-1.730**	(0.209)
degree					-3.407**	(0.209)	-2.589**	(0.231)
<i>N</i>	6452		6452		6594		6439	
log-likelihood	-8910.89		-8876.00		-8926.47		-8576.44	

Note: Standard errors in parenthesis; † $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

include a status-squared term, in view of the curvilinear relationship shown up 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.

To begin with, it may be noted that our control variables do have some significant effects. The significant coefficients 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 cannot be so straightforwardly interpreted but, as anticipated, they are in fact less often significant, and especially under Models 3 and 4 when education is brought into the analysis. Scots are less likely than others to read broadsheets. But, as explained above, this is probably an artefact due to the omission of the Scottish broadsheets in the answer 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 2 and Figure 1—i.e. under these models, and with broadsheet readership as the reference category, the coefficients for status are significantly negative. Respondents of high social status tend to read broadsheets rather than to fall into other readership categories.

At the same time, though, the results from Model 3 also show that educational attainment, too, 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 non-reader. In other words, there is clear support here for the idea that information-processing capacity matters.

Finally, though—and for us of chief importance—the results from Model 4 further reveal that the inclusion of education does not remove the effect of status. Although the status-squared term is reduced to insignificance by the conventional standard of 5%,⁹ the linear effect of status is still clearly present across all panels, even though, as one might expect, the relevant coefficients are generally lower than under Models 1 or 2.¹⁰

Moreover, as well as remaining significant, the estimated effect of status is quite large. For example, we may, take, as an illustrative hypothetical case, that of an English woman who is forty years old, has a university degree and earns the sample mean income. From the first panel of Table 6 (see page 22 below) it can then be seen that if this woman were a Higher professional (status score = 1.9702), her predicted probability, under Model 4, of being a broadsheet reader would be .49, while if she were a Manager and proprietor in services (status score = -0.1022), it would fall to .31. Difference of such magnitude is quite notable, in view of the fact that social differences in taste are sometimes barely detectable. Lieberson (1992, pp.6–7), for example, points out that in Bourdieu's (1984) seminal book on taste, 46 per cent of the working class are reported to have named Renoir as one of their three favourite painters, compared to 51 per cent of the middle class and 48 per cent of the upper class.

We can in fact also use predicted probabilities of this kind in order to

⁹The status-squared term is significant at the 10% level for the MBT v BS contrast. The main exception here is the contrast between NR and BS.

¹⁰It may also be noted that under Model 4 the effects of education become slightly less systematic than under Model 3 in that the coefficients for A-levels and post-secondary qualifications are not very clearly differentiated, with the former, which comprises largely academic qualifications, being sometimes larger than the latter, which comprise largely vocational qualifications.

bring out some more general implications of the results so far reported. In Figures 2 and 3, where we again restrict our attention to our three ordered categories of newspaper, we graph (cf. Fox, 2002) the probabilities, under Model 4, of their readership by individuals' status score within each of our six educational categories. 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 a redtop tabloid decreases with status in each educational category, and especially so at the lower educational levels.¹¹

Finally here we are able, by drawing further on the BHPS data-set, to extend our analyses in two ways. The data-set includes information on the occupation of respondent's father and of respondent's best friend—the latter being the information that we previously used in constructing our putative status order. We can then, by applying the status scores assigned to the occupational categories of Table 1, bring into our present analyses the status of our respondents' fathers and of their best friends as well as their own.¹²

¹¹A cautionary note is necessary here. 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 for the standard error of our status score. But since there are relatively few highly educated respondents occupying low status occupations, the confidence intervals towards the left end of the bottom two graphs, representing respondents with postsecondary qualifications or university degree, should be relatively large. For an analogous reason, the confidence intervals towards the right end of the top two graphs, representing respondents with no or CSE qualifications, would 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.

¹²Respondent's status score and father's status score correlate at $r = 0.30$, while the correlation between respondent's and best friend's status scores is unsurprisingly higher

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

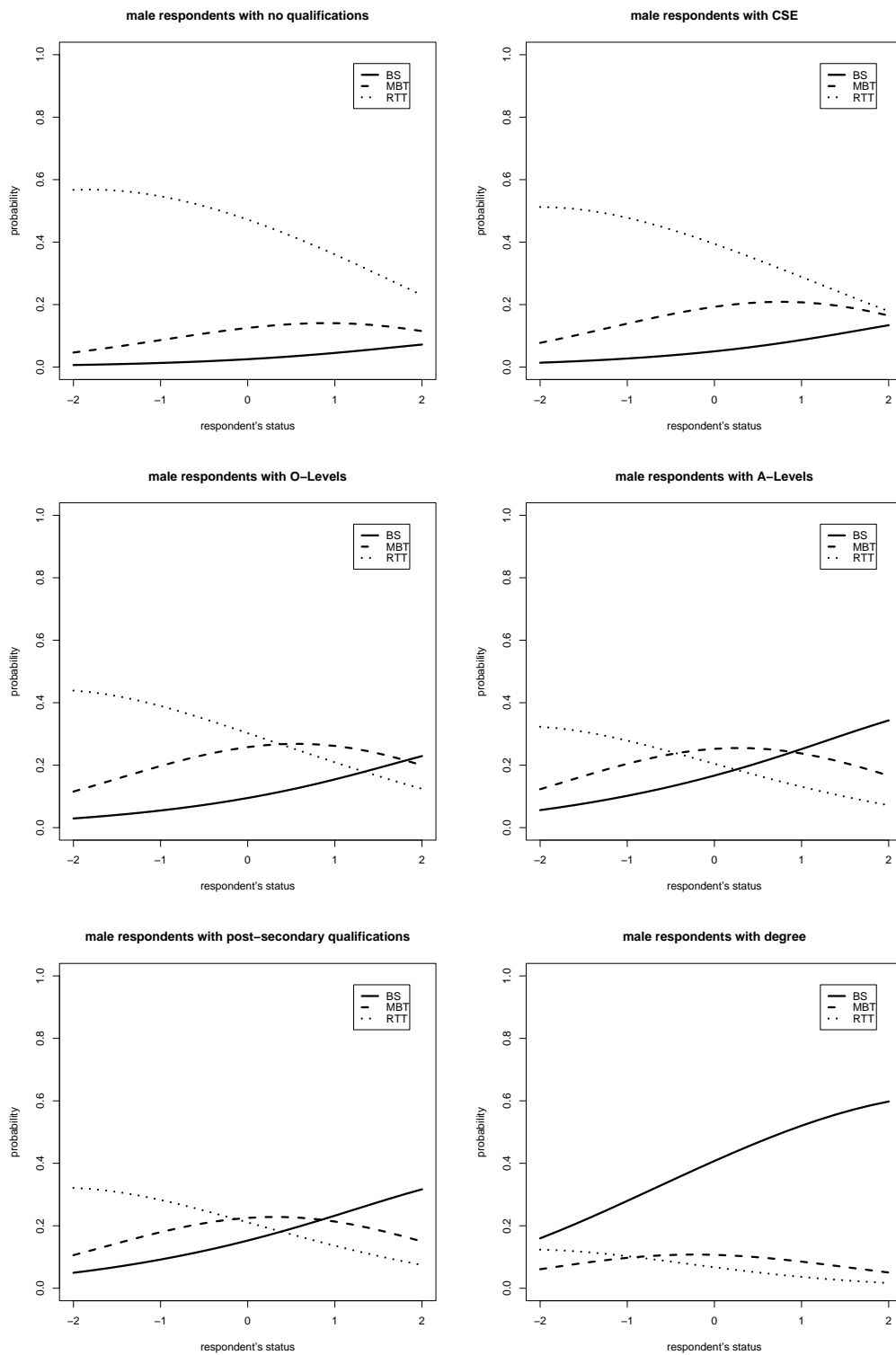
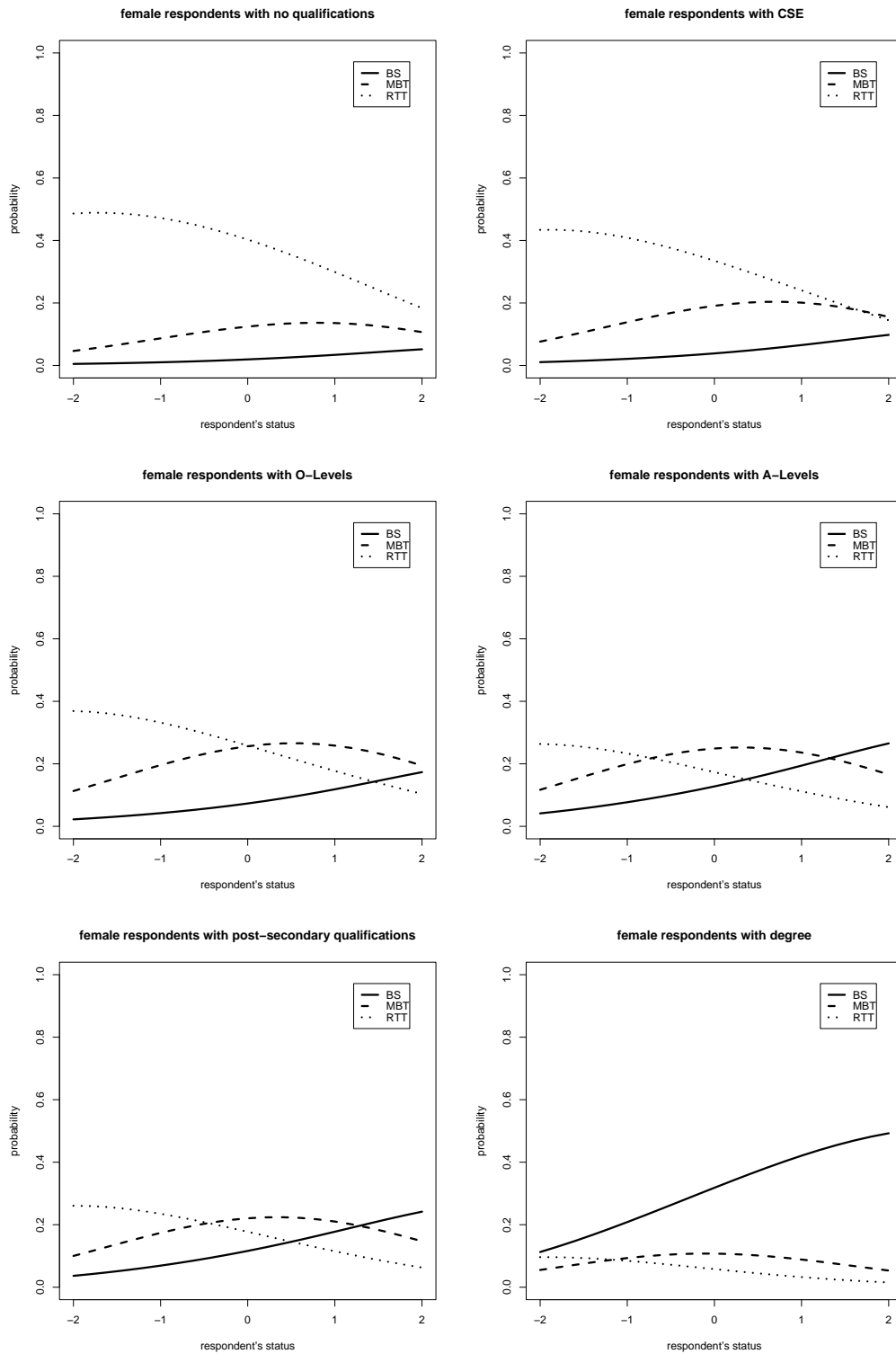


Figure 3: Predicted probabilities of reading broadsheets, middlebrow tabloids and redtop tabloids by social status and education (women).



In so far as status is a factor influencing individuals' newspaper preferences, one would expect the status of 'significant others' in their more immediate social networks to play a part. Such interpersonal effects could come about through quite various, even contrasting, processes: for example, through 'status emulation'—i.e. individuals seeking to 'keep up' with close associates of higher status; or through what might be called 'status assimilation'—i.e. individuals trying to *avoid* what might appear to be conspicuous consumption among close associates of lower status. However, such questions of process are for later examination: here, our prior concern is whether there is in fact evidence of considerations of status relations of *any* kind being involved in newspaper readership, as distinct from the effects of individuals' own personal characteristics.

In Table 5 we give results from three further models in continuation of the series of Table 4. These models contain all the control variables previously discussed. But since the control variables are of secondary interest here, and also because their estimates are very similar to those shown in Table 4, we no longer report them.¹³ Model 5 is Model 4 of Table 4 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.¹⁴

at $r = 0.48$. Father's status and best friend's status are themselves correlated at $r = 0.25$.

¹³Full details are available from the authors on request.

¹⁴As explained above, our 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 socio-economic 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.

Table 5: Further multinomial logistic regression models of newspaper readership.

	(model 5)	(model 6)	(model 7)
MBS v BS			
status	-0.333** (0.059)	-0.322** (0.062)	-0.295** (0.066)
father's status	-0.173** (0.046)		-0.151** (0.049)
friend's status		-0.219** (0.052)	-0.207** (0.055)
RTT v BS			
status	-0.716** (0.059)	-0.659** (0.061)	-0.587** (0.066)
father's status	-0.504** (0.048)		-0.480** (0.052)
friend's status		-0.422** (0.051)	-0.405** (0.055)
RLO v BS			
status	-0.425** (0.064)	-0.349** (0.068)	-0.295** (0.072)
father's status	-0.287** (0.051)		-0.255** (0.055)
friend's status		-0.302** (0.057)	-0.319** (0.060)
NR v BS			
status	-0.451** (0.055)	-0.407** (0.058)	-0.368** (0.061)
father's status	-0.247** (0.041)		-0.218** (0.044)
friend's status		-0.250** (0.048)	-0.249** (0.051)
<i>N</i>	5676	5465	4857
log-likelihood	-7536.38	-7272.72	-6420.59

Note: Standard errors in parenthesis; † $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; covariates included in the model but not reported in this table: age, sex, income, Scotland, educational attainment.

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 .49 of being a broadsheet reader if she works as a Higher professional (cf. first panel of Table 6). From the second panel of Table 6 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 .37, if her father were a General labourer, to .60 if he were a Higher professional. The second panel

Respondents were simply asked what newspaper they read. At the same time, we believe that, with some modification, one of Blau and Duncan's (1967, pp.124–128) replies to their critics also applies to our favour. 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 footnote 12, only rather modest ($r = .30$). Details on the occupational distribution of best friends are available from the authors on request.

of Table 6 also shows that most of the compensating variation has to do with non-readership. That is, as we go down the three rows of this panel, the probabilities for reading middlebrow tabloids, redtop tabloids, or regional and local papers do not vary very much by father's status. But while our hypothetical Higher professional woman has a predicted probability of .27 of being a non-reader if her father is also a Higher professional, this probability rises by almost 16 percentage point to .43 if her father is a General labourer.

Model 6 of Table 5 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 the third panel of Table 6. Under Model 6 our hypothetical Higher professional woman has a probability of .56 of being a broadsheet reader if her best friend is also a Higher professional, but if her best friend is a General Labourer, this probability drops to .32. And here, too, most of the compensating variation has to do with non-readership. The intriguing suggestion thus is that insofar as high status individuals are subject to some degree of 'cross-pressure' as a result of the discrepant status of significant others, status assimilation is a less likely response than withdrawal from the problematic activity.

A similar pattern of status discrepancy with significant others leading to withdrawal rather than, in this case, status emulation is also apparent among low status individuals. To demonstrate this, we report in Table 7 the predicted probabilities of newspaper readership of a forty year old English man who has no qualification 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 labourer, while falling to .48 if he works as a Manager and proprietor in services. Further, though we see that, under Models 5 and 6, the probability of this man reading redtops varies quite considerably, according

Table 6: Examples of predicted probabilities of newspaper readership.

Model	respondent's occupation	father's occupation	friend's occupation	predicted probabilities				
				BS	MBT	RTT	RLO	NR
4	HP			0.491	0.054	0.016	0.061	0.378
	MPS			0.307	0.108	0.061	0.086	0.439
5	HP	HP		0.604	0.067	0.010	0.047	0.272
	HP	MPS		0.477	0.076	0.022	0.067	0.358
	HP	GL		0.366	0.080	0.042	0.085	0.427
6	HP		HP	0.560	0.069	0.017	0.059	0.295
	HP		MPS	0.426	0.083	0.031	0.083	0.376
	HP		GL	0.316	0.091	0.049	0.106	0.437
7	HP	HP	HP	0.632	0.066	0.009	0.048	0.245
	HP	MPS	HP	0.521	0.074	0.020	0.068	0.317
	HP	GL	HP	0.420	0.078	0.037	0.086	0.378
	HP	HP	MPS	0.503	0.080	0.016	0.074	0.326
	HP	HP	GL	0.389	0.090	0.026	0.102	0.394

Note: Other covariates fixed as follows: age=40, sex=Female, Scotland=N, log(income)=8.686, education=Degree.

to the status of his father (from .39 to .65) or that of his best friend (from .48 to .64). But here again most of the compensating variation has to do with being a non-reader. Thus, a General labourer whose father (or best friend) is a Higher professional is much more likely a non-reader than a broadsheet reader.

When in Model 7 of Table 5, all three status terms are included, we find that their effects on newspaper preference remain significant and substantial. We report the substantive magnitude of these effects in two ways. First, we show, in the bottom panel of Tables 6 and 7, selected examples of the predicted probability of newspaper readership under Model 7 of our hypothetical English woman and man.

Secondly, in Figure 4, we graph the probability surface of broadsheet readership as a function of respondent's, father's and best friend's status. In the three figures of the lefthand column, respondent's and father's status vary over the entire range of our status scale, while best friend's status is fixed at the three levels of Higher professionals, Managers and proprietors in

Table 7: Further examples of predicted probabilities of newspaper readership.

Model	respondent's	father's	friend's	predicted probabilities				
	occupation	occupation	occupation	BS	MBT	RTT	RLO	NR
4	MPS			0.024	0.122	0.482	0.100	0.272
	GL			0.007	0.050	0.568	0.085	0.289
5	GL	HP		0.024	0.123	0.394	0.108	0.351
	GL	MPS		0.012	0.084	0.533	0.093	0.278
	GL	GL		0.006	0.057	0.648	0.077	0.213
6	GL		HP	0.020	0.104	0.476	0.087	0.313
	GL		MPS	0.010	0.082	0.567	0.081	0.261
	GL		GL	0.005	0.064	0.640	0.073	0.217
7	GL	HP	GL	0.016	0.125	0.428	0.104	0.326
	GL	MPS	GL	0.008	0.084	0.569	0.087	0.251
	GL	GL	GL	0.004	0.056	0.682	0.070	0.188
	GL	GL	MPS	0.008	0.073	0.620	0.074	0.226
	GL	GL	HP	0.015	0.095	0.540	0.077	0.272

Note: Other covariates fixed as follows: age=40, sex=Male, Scotland=N, log(income)=8.686, education=None.

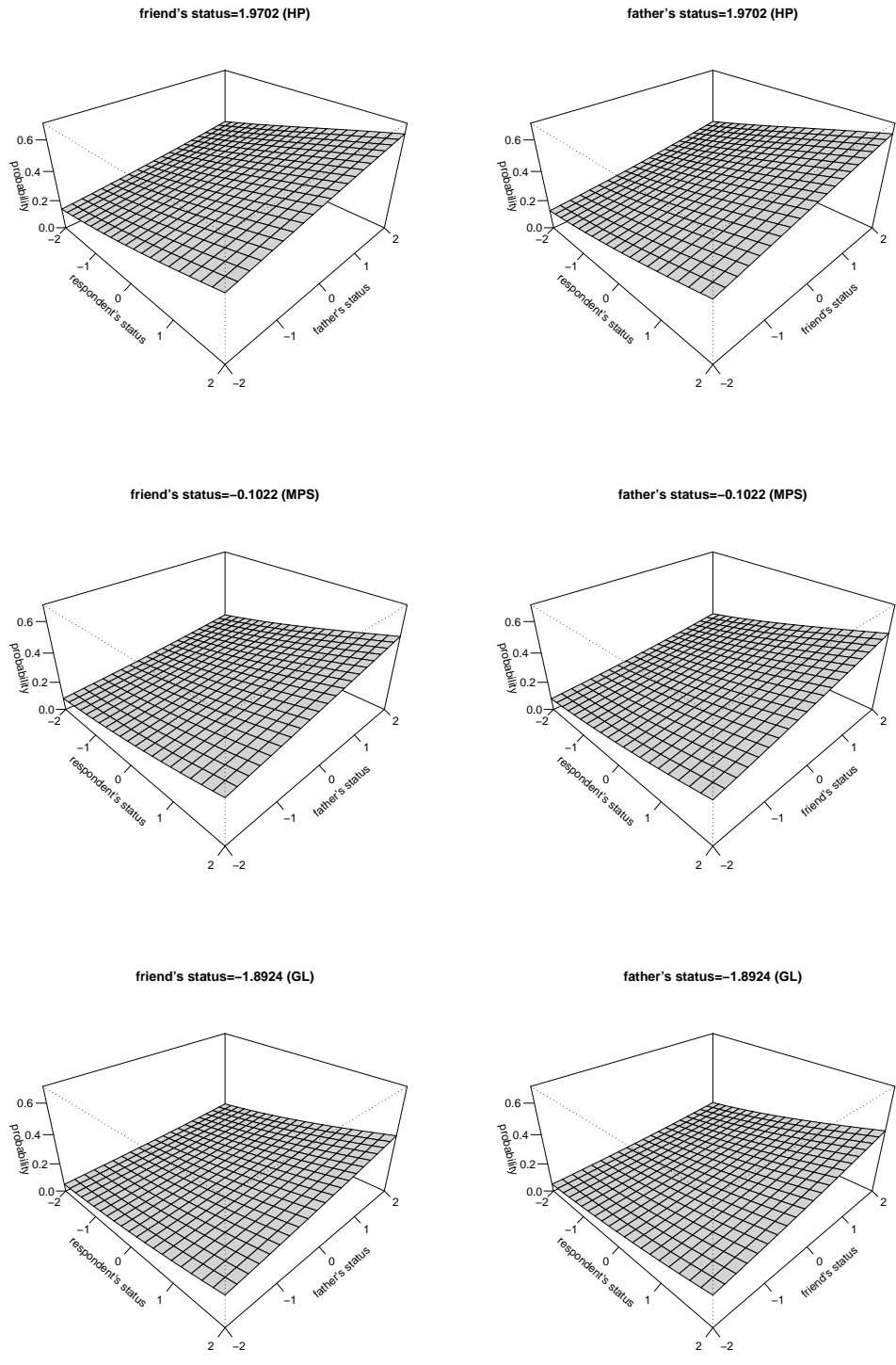
services, and General labourers respectively. The roles of father's status and best friend's status are swapped in the three figures of the righthand column.

Starting from the three graphs on the left, we see that the probability surface slopes rather steeply upwards from left to right and from bottom to top, reflecting the rather substantial effects of respondent's status and father's status. As one goes down this column, the probability surface shifts downward, reflecting the effect of friend's status. An analogous pattern is observed for the three graphs on the right.

4 Discussion

In the foregoing, our main aim has been to test further the validity of our representation of the status order of modern British society by examining the connection between status, as we have conceptualised and measured it, and one particular form of cultural participation, newspaper readership, which offers certain strategic advantages.

Figure 4: Probability surface of broadsheet readership by respondent's, father's and best friend's status.



Note: Other covariates fixed as follows: age=40, sex=Female, Scotland=N, log(income)=8.686, education=Degree.

If lifestyle, and especially its cultural level, is today the chief way in which status is expressed and recognised, then rather clear expectations arise regarding the status of individuals and the type of newspaper that they read. Through empirical analyses based on our putative status order, we have been able to show that these expectations are in fact largely met. The probability of individuals reading 'high-brow' broadsheets rises with status and at an increasing rate; the probability of their reading 'low-brow' redtop tabloids falls with status in a more or less linear fashion, while the probability of their reading 'middle-brow' tabloids increases up to the middle ranges of the status order and then declines.

We have, moreover, considered the possibility that these findings are, as it were, no more than the surface reflection of a more basic relationship that exists between individuals' educational level, taken as an indicator of their information-processing capacity, and their consequent preferences for more or less demanding kinds of reading matter. We find that although education does indeed influence newspaper readership and on lines that would be predicted under the information-processing hypothesis, status still has its own, often quite substantial, effect independently of that of education. That is to say, the association demonstrated between status and newspaper readership persists within all levels of education.

We believe that in the present context this result is of particular significance in that information-processing can be reckoned as at least more immediately involved in reading newspapers than in many other forms of cultural participation, while, at the same time, choice of newspaper is not the most obvious vehicle for conspicuous consumption or other means of displaying status. One might then expect that in the case, for example, of music or of the visual arts where the possibilities are greater, on the one hand, for

expressive as well as cognitive appreciation and, on the other, for specifically status-oriented activity, the importance of status relative to education would show up yet more strongly.

Finally, we have also been able to demonstrate that not only does individuals' own status have an effect on the cultural level of their newspaper readership but so too does the status of their fathers and best friends. On the basis of the data we have presently available to us, we are limited in what we can say about the precise mechanisms through which this presumably interpersonal influence is exerted: various possibilities exist, whether of status emulation or assimilation, that call for further inquiry. However, in the case of individuals whose own status is notably discrepant with that of their significant others, we have further found evidence that is suggestive of a 'withdrawal effect'. In addition to seeking emulation (i.e. going 'upmarket' in their newspaper readership where their own status is lower) or assimilation (i.e. going 'downmarket' where their own status is higher), status discrepant individuals reveal a tendency to be non-readers. It will then be of evident interest to see whether a similar effect is also apparent in regard to other forms of cultural participation where, perhaps, withdrawal would be culturally more costly and where also a greater diversity of genres is available.

We can then conclude that the empirical results we have reported do help confirm the validity of the status order that we have sought to establish for present-day British society and that, in so doing, they also provide some more detailed account of the association that exists between status and the cultural level of individuals' life-styles, even if in only one quite limited respect. Our next objective will be to extend our research to examine the interplay between status and forms of cultural participation that are of a greater complexity.

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