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Are the terms “socio-economic status” and “class status” a warped form of reasoning for Max Weber?

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ABSTRACT A classic definition of social inequality comes from the sociologist Max Weber, who wrote that there are three fundamental types of inequality. The first is based in the marketplace and is “social class”. The second, and more important distinction, is based in estimations of honour that Weber called in German *Stand*, which traditionally is translated into English as “status group”. The third type of stratification is “party” where power is distributed. Weber emphasized that the two forms of stratification emerge out of two different parts of society: *Stand* with its emphasis on honour emerges out of the most fundamental part of society rooted in loyalties, the *Gemeinschaft*, whereas class emerges out of a sub-unit of the *Gemeinschaft*, rationally ordered markets and legal structures of the *Gesellschaft*. Party emerges out of both. In Weber’s estimation, two types of social stratification, class and *Stand*, although related, cannot be mixed because they are fundamentally different. The former is rooted in abstract emotion and the latter in rational calculation. To do so, he writes, is a “warped reasoning”. Despite Weber’s warnings, English-language terms used to measure social inequality, particularly “socio-economic status”, conflate the two qualities, presenting them as a single variable. However, when the two are separated, analysts get a much more nuanced view of the mechanisms for how different types of inequality persist, be they in the professions, residence, ethnicity, race or caste.

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Class status and socio-economic status as oxy-morons?

A basic translation problem. Sociology has long wrestled with ways to define, evaluate and measure social inequality. Indeed, the consequences of equality and inequality are implicit to the writing of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, de Tocqueville and other enlightenment writers who highlighted the self-evident fact that relations between the ruled and rulers are inherently unequal. They wrote that despite there being few observable differences between humans with respect to reasoning capacity, wisdom, strength, or other differences underlying the many ideological justifications for the unequal distribution of honour, power, wealth and life chances.

One of the most important (and widely cited) essays for describing such social inequality is Max Weber's essay "Class, Status, Party" as translated by Gerth and Mills (Weber, 1944, 1946, and German original Weber, 2001/1922: 248–272). In the essay, Weber emphasized that status groups (German: *Stand/Stände*) emerge from the most basic nature of society that is rooted in what Weber identifies as the "community" (*Gemeinschaft*). The *Gemeinschaft* for Weber is where honour, affection, scorn, privilege and morality are defined and apportioned by mechanisms unique to that particular community (that is, *Gemeinschaft*). And for Weber, this apportionment of honour is what is most elemental to understanding social stratification because it is where *value rationality* is found (see also Weber, 2015a/1922). Such *Gemeinschaft* values reflect an orientation to norms of honour that are expressed among other ways by acts of defence, acceptance and derogation (Lockwood, 1996: 527).

But what about social class, which Weber also writes about? In contrast to *Stand*, the inequalities of social classes (*Klassen*) for Weber emerge from rational marketplaces and bureaucracies where economic advantage is apportioned *without* reference to honour, affection, scorn, privilege or other pre-existing relationships. Weber defines this rational portion as "society" (*Gesellschaft*), which is the place where *instrumental rationality* is found. Thus while for Weber the *Gemeinschaft* defines value-embedded issues like citizenship, equality before the law, human rights, the extent of markets and trade laws, these values are then used to create the limits of the instrumentally rational *Gesellschaft*. Thus the *Gemeinschaft* always underpins the *Gesellschaft* for Weber, even in modern capitalist countries where market-based transactions can appear all-encompassing, particularly where instrumentally grounded meritocratic ideologies assert that life chances are distributed according to the blind market ethics of the typical *Gesellschaft*.

Unfortunately, because the English-speaking terms "community" and "society" are not distinct in the same way the German terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are, something is lost as a result in the translations by Gerth and Mills. What is more, because the sharpness of this distinction is lost, Weber's distinctions are also diminished. Such imprecise translation has been long noted (see, for example, Parsons, 1947: 9 no. 5; Wenger, 1980; Tribe, 2000: 209; Waters and Waters, 2010¹), and we think has resulted in English terms for social stratification that obscure Weber's sharp analytical distinctions between value-based and instrumentally-based rationality in particular. Among the most important terms that obscure this distinction is "socio-economic status", a combination that includes references to the marketplace (that is, economics, the "E" in SES), as well as honour (that is, socio and status, the "S" and "S" in SES). We think this results in what Weber calls a "warped reasoning" (Weber, 2015a/1922: 46), particularly in modern capitalist societies.

Lockwood seemed to sense such a conflation when he wrote:

In capitalist societies, the ownership and non-ownership of the means of production only gives right to economic power relations within a context of formally equal legal rights of private property and free contract: that is, those civil rights defining the 'economic' activity of citizens. That is why Weber concluded that status, no less than class, is an expression of the distribution of power within a community. (Lockwood, 1996: 527)

This article is about why we think this is the case, and in particular why we think reintroducing the three German words to English-language sociology will sharpen understanding of social stratification.

The point is that there are, between class, status, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, irreducible dimensions of inequality (see, for example, Beteille, 1996).

Traditional English-language translations of *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft* and *Stand*. There is in modern English-speaking sociology widespread understanding that inequality is not solely a phenomenon of income or wealth—though clearly there is a high correlation.² To remedy the tension between income, wealth and honour, English-speaking sociologists created categories for "inequality" that are typically assumed to be measurable by easily calculable monetary wealth or income. Such wealth and income is assumed to equate with cultural competency and culturally defined "success", emerging from market relations. Perhaps the most ambitious effort to do this is through the invention of "socio-economic status"³, a social/economic category that asserts that status is a function of income/wealth, occupation and education. In turn, the dependent variable "SES" is then evaluated for its intersection with variables like race, class, gender, age, sexuality, language status, immigration status, occupation, residence and a wide range of other categories that explain unequal distribution of money, resources and power. What all of this has in common is an implicit assumption that "inequality" as a dependent variable is a function of monetary income and wealth, that is, products of the *Gesellschaft* and not the *Gemeinschaft*.

Recently, Ridgeway (2014), in her ASA presidential address, asked sociologists to step back a bit and reconsider Max Weber's category "status group" as presented by Gerth and Mills (Weber, 1946). She claimed "status group" is an ignored remainder category in modern society with its more traditional measures of SES, and especially the more conventional race, class and gender categories.

In doing this, Ridgeway (2014) is writing in a pragmatic tradition that assumes that there is a evolutionary process that explains how and why systems of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity and so on will logically disappear in the context of a modern rationalized social order. That is, systems of social immobility and fixed social position will give way to systems of mobility. And of course such an approach has long been taken by American sociologists going back to at least Davis (1949). Ridgeway is also, as Wenger (1980: 159) described, writing in the tradition of a "lucid summarization of a cohesive and ubiquitous tendency", by reducing social stratification to linear models that focus on advantage and disadvantage, typically as measured by financial success, or its proxies.⁴ There is nothing wrong with this—still as Wenger notes, such a search for "ubiquitous tendency" is not the project Weber undertook.

But in bringing up this question about Weber's categories, Ridgeway raises for us the question, "What would Max say?" And we think Weber said that, because status groups (that is, *Stand* pl. *Stände*) emerge from the *Gemeinschaft*, they are fundamentally a different type of inequality than that which emerges from the "classes" of the *Gesellschaft*. We think that Weber would look at a term like "socio-economic status" and point out that, given the nature of class and *Stand*, to mix the terms as is commonly done in the modern English literature, reflects a mixing of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. This is the practice Weber called "a warped reasoning" (Weber, 2015a/1922: 46).

And indeed, mixing honour-based *Stände* from the *Gemeinschaft*, with class-based inequality that emerges from the *Gesellschaft* is for Weber warped. This is because for Weber inequality generated by the otherwise blind marketplace is still ultimately rooted in the "positive and negative honours" (that is, *Stände*-like categories) of race, ethnicity, immigration status, profession, caste and so on. It is also rooted in the blind marketplaces and courts of rational law that emerged from the *Gesellschaft*. And clearly, although related, *Stand* and class are not equivalents. Rather, as Bendix (1974: 189) wrote, "in Weber's view, groups are formed as readily from common ideas leading to common economic interests, as they are the other way around". For this reason, terms like socio-economic status and "class status" (see Ridgeway, 2014: 1) are for Weber oxy-morons.

The problem is that, when you assume that inequality is a function of socio-economic status, or even intersectionalities, *Stand* becomes simply one more independent variable explaining economic inequality. In such formulae, class and status groups (*Stände*) are each one of several independent variables explaining inequalities emerging from class, race or gender (see, for example, Ridgeway, 2014: 2). This is perhaps fine for linear thinking as modelled well by a regression equation that is with a dependent variable "Socio-economic Status", or "Income" (see Abbott, 1988). But this is not the type of reasoning Weber himself used. For Weber, inequality is rooted in abstract honour and privilege, not economics. And it is the inequality in abstract honour and privilege that has financial consequences. For Weber it is inequality in abstract honours and prestige of the *Gemeinschaft* that leads to economic inequality of the *Gesellschaft*, not the other way around.

So, defining *Gemeinschaft* and *Stand* in this fashion, Weber effectively describes social stratification as emerging from three (and only three) types of social stratification, that is, classes, *Stände* and parties. These three types of stratification emerge out of two (and only two) origins, that is, the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (see Fig. 1). And for Weber *Stände* with its roots in honour is the most basic type of inequality (Bourdieu, 1984: 3).

Figure 1 | Weber's "2+3 model of social stratification". The sentimental *Gemeinschaft* gives birth to *Stand*, and rationalized *Gesellschaft* to *Class*. Parties are a form of social stratification in which the ideology is rooted in the sentimental values of the *Gemeinschaft*, while the impersonal rational means of the *Gesellschaft* are used to seek power over the means of power. This is why powers are a coalition of *Stand* and *Class* formations. Note: As described in the text, the *Gesellschaft* arises out of the *Gemeinschaft*—they are not equals, or opposites.

The inequality of social classes for Weber are relevant, particularly in times of rapid social change (see below p. 5). But even in times of rapid social change, he writes, *Stände*-based stratification re-emerges as visible symbols again become important for defining privilege. This is why from Weber's perspective it is important to highlight stratification based in honour (that is, *Stand*) as the most basic type of inequality, not the inequality of social classes. To understand how Weber saw this, it is necessary to return to the original German.

German translation problem 1: *Gemeinschaft* and *Stand*. *Stand* (plural *Stände*), as Weber uses the word, is a medieval term that reflects the fact that stratification systems are ultimately rooted in the symbols of honour, and the traditional rights and responsibilities individuals have to groups and *vice versa* (see Poggi, 1988). Furthermore this meaning is in tension with the forces emerging from the anonymous market place in which traditional rights are not recognized.⁵

In English there are indeed linguistic cognates to the German *Stand*, that is, in the sense of a plaintiff who has "standing" in court, and the group carries a "standard" into battle. English speakers are also well aware of the symbols—the standards—of *Stand*-based stratification, be it uniforms, badges, coats of arms, licences and other forms of "symbolic capital" that signify *standing* in society, and commitment to particular moral standards. And, as described above by Weber's definition, *Stände* only emerge from the value-rational *Gemeinschaft*.

There are, although, some problems with traditional translations of *Stand* as "status group", which Weber scholars such as Bendix (1960: 85), Dahrendorff (1959: 7), Wenger (1980), Beteille (1996), Tribe (2000: 209–210), Swedberg (2005: 268–270), Wallerstein (2004: 97), Roth (1978: 300 n. 4), and others have noted. Furthermore, in Weber's formulation (as well as the German language), *Stand* itself is the umbrella term that explains how negative and positive privileges associated with loci of inequality like profession, class, race, legal status and gender work. To wit, Weber's two other categories, classes and parties, interact with the pre-existing *Stände* and take on saliency in specific contrast to the *Stände*, and then primarily in the context of capitalist markets (in the case of social class) and the modern bureaucratic state (in the case of political parties). So, for Weber, *Stände*, with their roots in the "house of honour" is most fundamental. Furthermore, Weber's point in the essay "Classes, *Stände* and Parties" is that *Stände* ideologies of honour and privilege are of both a positive or negative sort. This is in contrast to the materialism of Marx and Engels and the economic factors used in measures of socio-economic status.

Thus, we argue that the umbrella term *Stand/status* (plural *Stände*) should be re-introduced to the sociological lexicon, consistent with the three-form stratification system as described by Weber in *Economy and Society* (1922/1978) and in particular his essay "The Distribution of Power Within the *Gemeinschaft*: Classes, *Stände*, Parties" (see Weber, 2015a/1922: 41–58). This term of course makes the most sense in the context of *Gemeinschaft*, a term we think also needs to be reintroduced into English if Weber's understandings are to be understood.⁶

German translation problem 2: social class and *Gesellschaft*. *Stände* are from the house of honour for Weber, but social class, as Weber defines it, emerges only out of market activity and naked economic power generated when people meet competitively in anonymous marketplaces for purposes of exchange. The markets can be those of the rationalized labour, commodity or be capital markets (Weber, 2015a/1922: 42–43). Weber succinctly reduces such class situation to the "typical probability of

- (1) procuring the goods you need to exist socially;
- (2) belonging to a *Stand* position in society; and
- (3) acceptance of fate” (our translation of Weber, 1922/1956/1964: 223).

This definition is in contrast to the equally succinct definition of status (that is, *ständische Lage*) that is an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges and typically based on

- (a) manner of living your life, hence
- (b) training for the conventions via formal training and socialization, and
- (c) the prestige of ancestors and profession (Weber, 1922/1956/1964: 226; our translation).⁷

Implicitly, the routinized transactions in the market are made without reference to specific assessments of visible honour (that is, *Stand*), be they positive or negative (Weber, 2015a/1922: 48–49), which is why “mere economic acquisition ... still bears a stigma” within the *Stände* as “Money and entrepreneurial position are not in themselves status qualifications” (Weber, 2015a/1922: 37). And here of course is the central problem with using income, wealth, resource access and other financial means to calculate status or *Stand*: *Stand* for Weber is an “anti-financial” category of social inequality, even though it is often very costly to maintain the markers of *Stand*. This is why the ultra-wealthy businessman Donald Trump or heiress Paris Hilton has much lesser raw *standing* (*Stand*) among Blue Bloods, than did, say, an impoverished Mother Theresa of Calcutta who took vows of poverty. For that matter, impoverished Brahmins and impoverished European nobility receive the respect due their *Stand*, despite their lack of wealth (Parkin, 1982: 96).

But, significantly, Weber (2015a/1922: 41–42) defines the nature of social classes and *Stände* in relationship to each other. In other words, both *Stand* and class presuppose the existence of a community/*Gemeinschaft* rooted in shared understandings of both a consensual and coercive nature.⁸ Thus, for Weber, it is only in the context of a particular *Gemeinschaft* (Weber, 2015a/1922: 45) that values emerge and become important in the rationalized marketplace and modern bureaucratic government (that is, that of the *Gesellschaft*) where decisions are made “without scorn or partiality” (Weber, 2015c/1922: 157). Notably, Weber’s definition of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is slightly different from those of Ferdinand Tönnies with which English-speaking sociologists are perhaps most familiar (see Weber, 1922/1978: 4, 40–43, Tönnies, 1888/1958: 37–102, Waters, 2016). Still for the same reason, Tönnies’ translator did not translate *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as “community” and “society”, and we do not think they should be either. This becomes most relevant when the difference between the German gerunds that Weber introduced *Vergemeinschaftung* (roughly translated as “*Gemeinschaft*-ing”) and *Vergesellschaftung* (roughly translated as “*Vergesellschaft*-ing”) are contrasted with Tönnies’ definitions. And this is a big part of Weber’s effort to contrast his approach with that of Tönnies. By adding the gerunds, Weber is emphasizing that the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are always pushing and pulling against each other, and for this reason have “amorphous” boundaries, as Parsons (1947: 9) in particular emphasized in his translation of Weber.

By introducing the two gerunds, Weber explicitly stepped away from Tönnies dichotomy by introducing a sense of amorphous fluidity to the relationship between the two abstractions (see Waters and Waters, 2015: 33–34, 39). By doing this, Weber provides an explanation for how Class and *Stände* groups coexist, albeit in tension with each other. This co-existence is always

behind social change (see also Weber, 1922/1978: 303–304). However, unlike in Tönnies, there is never a resolution in favour of one or the other. The tension-filled co-existence of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is Weber’s main point. One of the main consequences in modern society is that *Stände* are most closely related to class groups rooted in sociality:

The “commercial class” is the farthest away [from the *Stand*]; nevertheless *Stände* are often created by such commercial classes, depending on their interests. Every “class with sociality requirements” which is a *Stand*, has a life-style which is well-regulated, and thereby poses economically speaking, irrational requirements for consumption. Through monopolistic appropriation, and by eliminating the free mandate over their own marketing, such *Stände* hinder the development of free markets. (Our translation of Weber, 1922/1956/1964: 226–227. See also Weber, 1922/1978: 307)^{9,10}

Thus, for Weber, the drive to seek honour underpins *Stand*-based privileges whether they start in the house of honour (*Stand*) or marketplace (class). Such a drive for honour is undertaken with both the scorn and partiality of the *Stand* behind it. This is why mixing class and *Stand* for Weber is “warped”. Indeed, in “Classes, *Stände*, Parties”, Weber emphasizes that classes, *Stand*/status groups, and political parties are relative categories that define each other. They are also the categories used to distribute power within a community that is a “*Gemeinschaft*”, as the whole title of Weber’s essay “The Distribution of the Power within the *Gemeinschaft*: Classes, *Stände*, Parties” indicates (see also Lichtbau, 2012).

Weber’s model: class, status/*Stand*, party, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*

Value rationality and instrumental rationality. So, Weber (2015a/1922: 56) emphasizes that class, *Stand* and party emerge out of their “homes” of the marketplace, honour and politics, respectively. But this is not all. Boundaries between the three types of social stratification emerge from the logic behind the distinction first between the *Gemeinschaft* rooted in a “value rationality”, and second the “instrumental rationality” of the *Gesellschaft*. The reason as to why this is the case emerges most sharply because of how Weber describes the amorphous interplay between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Weber, 2015a/1922: 48). After all, as Lichtbau (2012: 454) and Lichtbau (2000: 423) writes, unlike Tönnies, Weber consciously avoided the word *Gesellschaft*, pushing the word into the background.¹¹ Indeed, Lichtbau (2012: 454–455) notes that the use of *Gesellschaft* so prominently in the title *Economy and Society* (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*) was a posthumous choice made by Weber’s editors, not Weber.

Weber summarizes the three forms of stratification related to *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* in the following manner:

Stände emerge from specific assessments of honour that may be positive or negative. They emerge out of the “value rationality” embedded in the *Gemeinschaft*, where values are values for their own sake.

Classes are purely the product of rational factors. Such stratification emerges from the “instrumental rationality” of the anonymous marketplace and the bureaucratized legal system where advantage is sought in terms of objective interests. Thus, classes emerge only in an instrumentally rational *Gesellschaft*, which is defined and dependent on the legitimacy only a *Gemeinschaft* provides.

Parties emerge in the house of power where there is a struggle to control the levers of the legal order. This struggle occurs by

appealing to values of the *Gemeinschaft*, while using the amoral instrumental values of the *Gesellschaft* to actually seek power (Weber, 2015a/1922: 56).

Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft: from Tönnies to Weber. Weber explicitly borrows his basic terms for describing society from Tönnies (1888/1958) book *Community and Society* (*Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft*). Consistent with Tönnies, Weber develops the concept of sentimental *Gemeinschaft* in contrast to the calculating *Gesellschaft*.¹²

Weber in fact defines *Gemeinschaft* in the very first few lines of his essay “Classes, *Stände*, Parties” by emphasizing that the legal order and the *Gemeinschaft* are related:

Every legal order (state or non-state) directly affects the distribution of power, economic power and all other powers, within its respective *Gemeinschaft*. (Weber, 2015a/1922: 41)

It is out of the value-rational *Gemeinschaft* that a *Gesellschaft* with its class interests (but not Marx’s class consciousness!) emerges (Weber, 2015a/1922: 46). In doing this, Weber emphasizes that *Gesellschaft* action only emerges out of a pre-existing *Gemeinschaft*

“Classes” in our definition are not *Gemeinschaft* communities but represent only one possible (and a frequent one) basis for communal *Gemeinschaft* action. (Weber, 2015a/1922: 42)

For Weber transactions in the *Gesellschaft* are presumably those undertaken “*sine ira et studio*” (without scorn or partiality), meaning without reference to personal honour, and irrespective of former or future relationships (see Weber, 2015c/1922: 157). In this he is following closely on Tönnies who wrote that *Gesellschaft* is the epitome of rational-legal and rational-social relations that one enters via calculation “as if into alien territory” (Lichtbau, 2012: 457). *Gesellschaft* transaction are “cash and carry”, that is, the impersonal form of morality shared by people who trade simply to achieve the goodness of calculable profit. In international politics this is referred to with respect to “interests” of *realpolitik*.

But Weber does depart from Tönnies on a critical element. Consistent with the evolutionary theorists, Tönnies saw an older society marked by tradition, family loyalty, sentiment and so forth giving way to a modern “civilized” world dominated by contract, that is, a world that shifted from the abstract loyalties of *Stand* to the calculations of contract. Weber’s model in contrast emphasizes fluidity, permeability and amorphousness in which *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* coexist, albeit in tension between each other, as the visible pretensions of *Stand* struggle with the calculation in the market drive *Gesellschaft* (see Wenger, 1980: 359).

Classes and *Stände*. Thus Weber’s *Gemeinschaft* underpins *Gesellschaft*, and the two categories are neither opposites nor equivalents. Whatever the size, *Gemeinschaft* is underpinned by shared value rationality and a sense of belonging. And most specifically for Weber, there is not an evolutionary progression from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, as there was with Tönnies (Waters, 2016: in press).

Weber (2015a/1922: 41, 56) emphasizes that social class emerges from impersonal rational relations emerging from interests found in the labour, commodity and capital markets of the *Gesellschaft*.¹³ Weber himself provides two particularly provocative illustrations of how such purely economic class-based interests work. One is the example of the assembly line, where

workers have an interest in slowing down the work-speed. Workers do this without speaking to each other, because of the shared interest in achieving the slowest speed possible, without endangering the economic viability of the overall enterprise (Weber, 2015a/1922: 44–45). A second example is that of the contract killer who undertakes a job without respect to sentiment for the employer (or the victim). The killer and his employer do not know each other before “the job”, and will not recognize each other after the financial transaction is complete; despite a brief but intense working relationship, employer and killer have no attachment to each other (Weber, 1992/1978: 1377).

For Weber, the contrast between class and *Stand* is that *Stand* action is carried out with respect to shared recognition that perpetuates group identity and exclusivity. Such recognition is based on a characteristic that people in the *Stand* believe they share (Weber, 2015a/1922: 48–49). Such actions can and often do have financial consequences in the marketplace—as any victim of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, profession, school status or other negatively privileged *Stand* knows. This happens because *Stand*-based identity groups seek monopolies to particular professional duties, professions and markets (Weber, 2015a/1922: 52). In such contexts, *Stand*-based identities are both asserted with respect to their own group and ascribed to others defined as different. In other words, ideologically generated meanings justify and reify specific group-based advantages and ascribe disadvantage to the “other”. Such meanings have effects on inequality in terms of both economics and honour.

Weber also writes that class and *Stände* situations became more or less important at particular times. For example, class situations are most important during times of technological and economic transformation when the pretensions of “naked property” and new wealth emerge in their *nouveau* glory (Weber, 2015a/1922: 49). This is what happened in England in the nineteenth century when Dickens (1841) was writing about the capitalist Mr. Scrooge, when Veblen (1899/1915) wrote about conspicuous consumption and when Marx (1844/1978: 103) wrote about the enchanting power of money. However, Weber adds that such rapid change inevitably slows, leading to a reawakening of *Stand* conventions, as the new “leisure class”, or “bourgeois bohemians” create for themselves new *Stände* that become visible and admired, and privileges are protected (Weber, 2015a/1922: 53, 55–56; Brooks, 2001). Weber saw this most sharply in the new United States where even in his time, “the boss” was becoming less likely to socialize with his inferiors—as was already then the case in old Europe (Weber, 2015a/1922: 49).

To summarize the difference between class and *Stand*-based stratification as Weber (2015a/1922: 54) saw it:

Social classes are stratified according to their relations to production and acquisition of goods. In this respect, stratification is similar to what Marx wrote about. Most importantly, such stratification reflects the anonymous rationalized values of the marketplace and bureaucratic legal order, and ignores respect, honour or prestige (Weber, 2015a/1922: 53). These rationalized impersonal values become embedded in instrumentally rational bureaucratic structures as well.

Stände are stratified according to the “principles of their consumption of goods that are needed for living out the lifestyle of the *Stand*” and as a result reflect visible consumption patterns (Weber, 2015a/1922: 56). Inequality by *Stand* is in effect about the “means of consumption”, and *Stände* stratification reflects honour rooted in values. And for the positively privileged, such “signalling” requires money!

When class becomes *Stand*, and vice versa. The essay “Classes, *Stände*, Parties” was drafted by Weber in about 1913. Sometime

before his sudden death in 1920, Weber revisited the distinction in a brief outline “Status Groups (*Stände*) and Classes” that was posthumously published in *Economy and Society* in 1922. Both essays were very squarely within Weber’s larger project of developing an “interpretive sociology”. “Status Groups and Classes” is but an outline—but is also clearly an elaboration on his earlier essay “Classes, *Stände*, Parties”. The advantage of the latter essay/outline is that it adds detail about the mechanisms for how the positively privileged class systems tend to turn into *Stand* systems. Of the material in *Economy and Society*, this is the place where Weber most precisely describes the “amorphous” nature of the boundaries between class systems rooted in market situations and *Stand* systems rooted in systems of honour. Weber’s distinctions are summarized below.

As for Weber (1922/1956/1964: 223), *Stand*, however, is sustained by groups who share

- (a) manner of living your life;
- (b) training for the *Stand*-based conventions via formal training and socialization; and
- (c) the prestige of ancestors and professions (our translations).

This results in special social esteem that the *Stand* seeks to protect (not always successfully) by the establishment of monopolies on symbolic status conventions like uniforms, badges and so on. Class-based groups do not have this elaboration (see, for example, Giddens, 1971: 164–167).

Weber of course makes a careful distinction between class and stand, noting that:

The situation of the *Stand* is based on a specific, as well as kind of class situation. But nevertheless a class situation is never by itself defined by the position of the *Stand* alone. For example, the possession of capital and the merchants’ position are not by themselves a qualification for a *Stand*. Nevertheless, they may open the door to a qualification for a *Stand*, just like the lack of assets does not necessarily lead to disqualification for a *Stand*, even though it may. On the other hand the position of a *Stand* by itself can determine a class situation, or at least influence it, without being identical. The class situation of an officer, a civil servant (*Beamte*), a student, which are defined by their assets can be hugely different without changing or modifying their position within the *Stand*. This holds true, because the lifestyle created through upbringing will continue to adhere to all important values of the *Stand*. (Weber, 1922/1956/1964: 227 our translation. See also Weber, 1922/1978: 306)

And most notably that common style of life is not sustained solely using the cash of the marketplace.

Like oil and water: classes and *Gesellschaft*; *Stände* and *Gemeinschaft*. A *Stand* will always react with “a pungent sharpness against the claims and implications that pure money demands” (Weber, 2015a/1922: 54), and especially any appearance that *standing* is purchased in the open competitive market, rather than acquired as a point of honour. Thus even in modern markets, military medals can be purchased but not legitimately worn by anyone except the recipient (or an actor!). University degrees, which may be qualifications for labour markets, also cannot be purchased on the open market—display of the wrong diploma implies fraud! Within any *Stand*, an ideology and belief system emerge that asserts that *Stand*-status emerges out of honour and achievement, not economic power. Indeed, within a *Stand*, naked economic power often bears a stigma—because

market transactions are putatively undertaken without respect to the visible honour that is “identity”. This happens even as the logic of the *Gesellschaft* and its class-based system of stratification seek to commodify and rationalize all that it touches, irrespective of pesky value judgments rooted in honour.

This is why for Weber class interests and *Stand* interests repel each other, even as *Stände* simultaneously are attracted to the economic advantages that underpin financial advantage. And again, this is also why with Weber’s formulation terms like “Socio-economic Status”, “class status” and “middle class culture” are contradictions (oxy-morons if you will), resulting in what Weber called warped sort of reasoning. For Weber, status and class contrast each other even as they mix—but they mix only as oil and water do, staying separate and even repelling each other. Separating honour from market position, as Weber does in defining *Stand* and class, in fact leads to fundamentally different understandings of inequality than that are typically found in modern English-language sociology. This is true in particular with respect to the consequences of privilege and subordination.¹⁴

Positive and negative *Stand*-based privileges: domination and subordination

The German word *Stand* includes assumptions of medieval feudalism, in which social rank is determined by birth, educational qualification and assignment. However, most importantly *Stand* is defined relative to other *Stände* and their relative honour, rights, privileges and responsibilities. *Stände* are even self-creating and therefore self-protecting (Wenger, 1980: 365). Thus, negatively privileged serfs were defined by the advantages of the positively privileged aristocracy, and *vice versa*.

In European feudalism, the most obvious *Stand* categories were inherited ranks, especially those of nobility, clergy and commoner. But arrayed within and outside such obvious *Stände* were occupational *Stände* such as peasants, soldiers, clergy, traders, bakers, tinkers and so on. Within the clergy were church *Stände*, including priests, nuns, bishops and so forth up to the Pope. Ranks of noble *Stände* include types of knights, peers, bishops, dukes, kings and the emperor. But as Weber (2015a/1922: 55) notes, the most extreme *Stand* system of inequality was found in the vertical social gradations of India’s caste system, with its strict segregation on the basis of *standing*, with the Brahmins at the top. And for all this, there was still a relationship to wealth, even though the Brahmin, Weber (2015a/1922: 55) wrote, feigns “a relatively high degree of indifference to pecuniary income ...”.

Stände systems blatantly seek guarantees of exclusivity through the enforcement of norms, deference and monopoly via the legal order. This was the case in India and feudal Europe where elaborate legal codes were established to protect the prerogatives of the dominant *Stände*, and fix the places of the subordinated. For that matter, this was also the case in the racial caste systems of the United States and South Africa where there was Jim Crow and apartheid laws, respectively, that fixed *Stand* position. What these systems share in common were legalistic reasoning rooted in ideologies that protected privileged *Stände* from the impurities of unnecessary contact with unclean subordinates, even when interaction was necessary and intimate. In such cases, the greatest care is taken by the *Stände* to guarantee endogamy (Weber, 2015a/1922: 50).

In sum, Weber’s description of *Stände* summarizes the enduring mechanisms of inequality, ritual exclusivity and “structures of segregation” (Waters and Waters, 2015: 5) that exist between human groups. Such structures explain how issues of honour, privilege and pariah-hood persist even in the context of *Gesellschaft*-based ideologies about blind meritocracy and competence. Application of Weber’s ideas explains why the

concept of *Stand* is so useful for understanding inequalities rooted in race, ethnicity, gender, geography and other forms of visible identity, separate from the purely economic issues described by social class. For Weber, *Stände* are where the ideologies of domination and subordination exist.

Subordination, domination and the anthropological thoroughbred. Social and economic inequality between *Stände* are self-evident to Weber (2015a/1922: 51). The question for Weber though is what ideologies sustain the stratification system? Weber uses the terms “positively privileged” and “negatively privileged” to describe how relative senses of honour and dignity emerge and interact. This generalization by Weber may seem odd to the modern ear—but a close reading of what he writes makes clear how the interaction between castes, racial groups, professions, fraternities, clubs and many types of *Stände* works. This is because to sustain a *Stand*, a legitimated ideology explaining the past, the *status quo* and a future must be created. These include origin stories, stereotypes and traditions.

Positively privileged groups justify their own power, advantage and privilege ideologically. For the positively privileged there is a belief, a *habitus*; this advantage relies on their immediate earthly being, or what the Ancient Greeks viewed as their own self-evident “beauty and excellence”. Their kingdom is “of this world”. But they recognize that they themselves are not well-suited for physical labour, and there are often assumptions among such positively privileged groups that the youth are ever softer and lazier than the honoured ancestors (Weber, 2015a/1922: 51–52).

In such cases, the positively privileged point to their providential mission to guide and nurture the negatively privileged *Stände* who are (fortunately!) well-suited culturally and physically to the menial tasks children of privilege are too lazy to do. An example of how such stereotypes were used to further policy goals is that of Texas farmers in the 1940s who sought cheap *Bracero* labour from Mexico. They sent lobbyists to Washington DC who pointed out that the positively privileged whites of Texas were unsuited for farm labour because they were “lazy and draggy-like”, whereas the negatively privileged blacks “exhibited too much independence”. Fortunately, the growers convinced themselves (and Congress) that cheap Mexican labourers were uniquely well-suited to the task demanded, and legislation was quickly passed to initiate the *Bracero* programme! (see Rivoli, 2005: 31).

At the same time, negatively privileged groups (and Weber cites European Jews as an example) also nourish a clandestine belief that they too have a “providential mission”, albeit one which is hidden. Their legends and mythologies express beliefs that they have been chosen by God, despite obvious discrimination and disadvantage. Therefore the idea arises among the negatively privileged that as Jesus said “the last will be the first and the first will be the last” in the afterlife, and perhaps that a messiah will arrive in this life who will unveil the hidden honour of the pariah *Stand* (see Weber, 2015a/1922: 51; and Matthew 20:16 NIV).

In the context of oppression, negatively privileged groups create a *habitus*, which includes stereotypes about this providential mission, and explanations for why and how their true honour was stolen by a cruel and deceitful dominant *Stand* against whom their own disadvantage is measured. Negatively privileged *Stände* are also typically well aware that the broader society’s prosperity is dependent on their labour and skill. Weber emphasizes that such groups are often deeply religious and develop a strong sense of identity to sustain collective honour in the context of discrimination. The *Br’er Rabbit* stories of the American slave cabins from before the US Civil War, in which an oppressed

creature outwits a showier and flashier “master” is an example of how such stereotypes are cultivated and sustained by an oppressed group. Much of the rich music, the “sorrow songs” that came out of these slave cabins reflects this as well (see DuBois, 1903: Chapter XIV).

It is in this context that Weber (2015a/1922: 52) writes that to sustain segregation and the *status quo*, “[T]he *Stand* itself creates ‘purebreds’ [or stereotypes] in the anthropological sense”, that are the basis for membership (and exclusion). Selection may be focussed by educational attainment, physical/racial characteristics, identity papers, credentials, clan membership, accent, dietary habits, dress or any number of other arbitrary distinctions that become defined as “common sense” signals of *Stand*-based competence. In such a context, Weber writes that political affiliations and class situations can become a basis for *Stand* eligibility, particularly in the modern world (Weber, 2015a/1922: 51–52; Weber, 1922/1978: 305–307). Both positively and negatively privileged *Stände* do this, and most importantly all *Stände*, particularly those of a ethnic character, seek to prevent their children from engaging in exogamous relationships.

Below, five examples of how *Stände* work in the modern world, that is, for professions, residence, ethnicity, race and caste, are presented. By highlighting this, we show how flexible Weber’s concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Stand* are for describing the ideologies of social inequality. Following this, there are brief discussions of first gender and its relationship to *Stand*, a subject Weber himself never really effectively addressed, and lastly a description of the examples Weber himself developed.

Professions. Professions are an obvious example of Weber’s *Stände*, and his descriptions are rooted in the nature of feudal guild systems. Feudal guilds were self-governing associations that regulated entry into a particular trade, set prices and most importantly excluded entry to those unqualified by virtue of birth, education, religion, clan membership or other shared characteristic. The occupational *Stände* that emerged focussed on the protection of “occupational interests” that protected privilege (see Bendix, 1974: 154). Today, much of this is embedded in ideologies of credentialing, which assumes that formal education, oaths and official certification signal competence, skill and utility in the marketplace (see, for example, Collins, 1975 and 1979; Waters, 2012: 111–132).

Professions, as with all *Stände*, may or may not be organized hierarchically, although they frequently are. For the modern reader, this is apparent in the two major *Stände* found inside hospitals’ doctors and nurses (there are also administrators and patients who are part of the hospital-based *Stand*-system, but in this short example we will stick to doctors and nurses), the former which maintains a status as a self-regulating “profession”, whereas the hierarchically subordinated nurses must be content with the status of “semi-profession”, or even a “vocation”. Nevertheless, both though seek to protect this position within the hierarchical order in a manner that reflects the German word “*Einverständnissgemeinschaft*”, that is, a relationship between *Stände* that is both coercive and consensual (see note 8 above). How do they do this?

By any objective standard, their capacity to deal with the routine injuries and illnesses are quite similar—and both doctors and nurses are quite capable of making competent diagnoses, and prescribing treatment. But of course only doctors legitimately do this, a right that is protected by the legal order. And despite competencies that are similar in an objective fashion, the lower ranked *Stand* (that is, nurses) are paid less and are assumed to be less competent, whereas the higher ranked *Stand* (that is, doctors) are paid better and assumed to have special competencies—even if they do not. The ideologies of the two

professions reflect these hierarchical relationships, with the doctors needing to explain why they naturally have more rights (and money) than nurses, and the subordinated nurses needing to explain why they receive less money, have fewer rights, but also have hidden honour. Weber's description of *Stand* is actually quite effective for describing the nature of this dialectical relationship. Thus, the emphasis is typically on the "quality" of training received (or endured) as a young cadet in the profession, be it in medical school (doctors) or nursing school and on-the-job training (nurses).

As for the legitimating ideology itself, doctors focus on their glorious past: grades in college, biochemistry courses, rigour of the medical schooling training and the solemnity of the Hippocratic Oath. For nurses, the emphasis is on day-to-day contact with patients, on-the-job competencies and the obvious fact that the work of the hospital is dependent on their constant presence and not that of doctors who are often absent and only make periodic rounds.

To maintain exclusivity, doctors and nurses cultivate different symbols, routines and rituals. Among these are different uniforms, badges and vocabulary that sustain stereotypes about relative competence—doctors are assumed (by doctors anyway) to be cerebral, wise and skilled, whereas nurses are assumed to be practical but perhaps a bit impulsive and certainly not as cerebral. Dominant doctors assume this relationship to be natural and a function of the rigorous training doctors undertake to gain entry into an ancient profession, even as some doctors become alcoholics and drug addicts as they age. And indeed when such things do happen, care is taken that the fellow doctor is protected from the broader legal system and dealt with internally by the *Stand*.

As for nurses, they might see doctors as impetuous prima donnas, careless and unaware of the very human needs of the patients. Nurses are often well aware of the doctors' infirmities. They also see doctors as overpaid—and nurses secretly hope that one day their true honour will finally be recognized, and they will get a big raise. Such are the stereotypes of hospital-based anthropological purebreds that persist as beliefs about relative competence and incompetence.

Now, the case of doctors and nurses is a convenient way to think about this distinction because professional lines are so carefully drawn, particularly in the relatively confined world of a hospital. But hierarchically organized *Stände* are found in every modern workplace, including in the university where we work. University-based *Stände* groupings include at a minimum Administration, Faculty, Staff and Students, and great care is taken to insure that there is no unnecessary mixing. Thus administrators are housed in separate buildings, and use separate bathrooms. Students meanwhile have exclusive access to dormitory-based dining commons from which faculty are excluded. Faculty dining clubs are similarly exclusive, except for the students present as subordinated wait staff. Administrators have private parking places, and are unlikely to eat in front of either group. As Goffman (1956) describes, sustaining exclusivity of the established hierarchical order and avoiding embarrassment that mixing implies are important for maintaining the hierarchy. Indeed, in the world of the modern university, there are even explicit rules about exogamous sexual relationships between faculty and undergraduate students that are enforced both via the legal order in the United States, as well as through normative feelings of disgust by faculty and students alike.

Such principles of professional exclusivity apply to bakers, soldiers, barbers, lawyers, teachers, taxi drivers, truck drivers, that is, any professional *Stand* that seeks to include and exclude on the basis of rituals designed to preserve their style of life. All have in

common a status that is defined using rules of inclusion and exclusion mediated by rituals of training and certification, so that the structures of "us" and "them" become visible. And of course where there is a state, as Weber points out, *Stände* seek to influence the legal order via lobbyists, influence peddling and other means (legal and illegal) that protect professional monopolies and reserve access to the labour market to a particular *Stand*.

Residence. For Weber, inhabitants of a particular area are also often *Stände*, particularly in pre-modern agrarian communities where ownership of land rights and/or livestock was a source of livelihood. In such contexts, exclusivity via norms regarding dress, language use, professional activities and so on emerged. Land use rights in particular focussed strong traditions of who is "us" and "them". In such context, the *Stand*-based idea emerges that "we are people of this place" and by extension everyone else is not. Such relationships are often defined by kinship terms, and used to justify the arrangement of endogamous marriages. Dress and other distinctions, with distinctive jackets, kilts, hats, badges and other symbolic signifiers emerge to highlight residential distinctions. In modern times, this might include the wearing of the sports jersey from a favourite team, or in the case of Texans, a cowboy hat and boots.

In such contexts, elders seek to marry their descendants with each other, a condition Weber putatively claims was particularly strong in Switzerland, where only families belonging to the same tax class even danced together (Weber, 2015a/1922: 49).¹⁵ But it is also important in modern American universities where residential "Greek" institutions monitor romantic relationships of fraternity and sorority brothers and sisters, whether or not dancing is involved.

Notably residence-based, *Stand*-like pressures are very visible to those exercising them—there is a deep awareness of who belongs and who does not, irrespective of "class" position. In turn, this is reflected in norms about endogamy and exogamy, which have the effect of maintaining rights to the land, grazing rights, guild membership and other claims to economic privilege based on residency. These in turn can become "ethnic in character", and in turn become associated with a particular profession (like cowboys in Texas!).

Ethnicity. The nature of ethnicity and race fits particularly well into Weber's typology of *Stände*, and he develops the point at several places in *Economy and Society* (see, for example, Weber, 1922/1978: 302–307, 385–398, 926–940; Weber, 2015a/1922: 50–53). As Weber notes, ethnic *Stände* become particularly important as the market-based *Gesellschaft* system expands, meaning "ethnicity" is associated with the spread of a modernity where market-based competition erodes (but does not eliminate) traditional rights in occupational-based caste, clan membership, regional identity and feudal ranks. It is in the context of the expanding *Gesellschaft* (Weber, 2015a/1922: 50), with its demand for mobile mass labour, and the context of the emerging nation-state that ethnicity emerges with its emphasis on beliefs about blood relationships and *Stand*-based ancestry (see, for example, Anderson, 1982/1991: 37–46). In this context, beliefs about blood relationship are particularly important components of "anthropological purebreds", as groups legitimate their location in labour markets by associating particular skills, citizenship, competencies (and incompetencies), personal characteristics and hierarchical rank with particular professions. For Weber, this new category is "ethnicity".

As in all *Stand* situations, such forms of ethnic identity emerge relative to a neighbouring *Stände* as, after all, *Stand* relationships are always relative. Distinctive claims about assignment and

assertion emerge in the social context of the group (Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 19–20). For example, it was in this fashion that people arriving from the many German States and Russia and North America in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries became “German” relative to the neighbouring Russian or English speakers (Waters, 1995a). This happened despite the availability of other salient identities such as Hanoverian, Hessian, Prussian, Bavarian or Swabian. For that matter, very similar analyses have been done of the ethnicization/racialization of societies in places as diverse as colonial Malaya and the United States where Italian ethnicity emerged (see, for example, Hirschmann, 1986; Cornell and Hartmann, 2007: 77–79). What these examples have in common is a context of European migration and a need to establish an identity relative to a pre-existing dominant majority.

Race. Weber considered “race” to be an extreme form of an ethnic *Stand*, in which inherited but arbitrarily selected visible characteristics are perceived as a common trait and a basis for repulsion. Or as Weber writes:

Persons who are externally different are simply despised irrespective of what they accomplish or what they are, or they are venerated superstitiously if they are too powerful in the long run. In this case antipathy is the primary and normal reaction. (Weber, 1992/1978: 385)

These sections of Weber’s writing explain the persistence of racial categories in places like the United States, South Africa, Malaysia and other countries where, despite decades of efforts by the legal order to ban discrimination in the labour, commodity and capital markets, such discrimination persists. In the United States, Weber writes, this is the origin of racist ideologies that metastasize after the destruction of the caste-based slave labour system at the end of the Civil War, re-emerging as the beliefs, *habitus*, norms and laws that protected exclusivity and advantage for the dominant white *Stand*. Context-dependent definitions of skin colour and hierarchy persisted in this context despite legal changes.¹⁶ In British Malaya, a similar process developed further, even after the British departed (Hirschmann, 1986).

In this context, US American whites and blacks developed persistent cultures rooted in the positive and negative privileges emerging from the racial caste system. The ideologies that emerged among the whites explained the historical origins of the *status quo* by defining the privileges of race—the result being self-fulfilling prophecies describing how privilege of the present are a natural outgrowth of the heroism of the past.

At the same time, negatively privileged blacks developed a strong culture highlighting the fact that American institutions from southern plantations to the modern military are dependent on the skills and labour of subordinated blacks. Explanations emerged for how one day redemption from pariah-hood might be achieved through the arrival of a charismatic messiah figure and protections or the rationalized legal order of the *Gesellschaft* (Weber, 2015a/1922: 51–52). Indeed, it is in such contexts that messiah-like figures like Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr emerged from the *Gemeinschaft*, as well as demands for the legal protection by the federal government of civil rights, especially voting rights. Such changes in the legal order, however, only tangentially affected the underlying routines and *habitus* of avoidance, exclusion and inclusion within the *Gemeinschaft* from which the racial *Stände* emerged. This is perhaps why social segregation is so persistent today, despite the emergence of messianic figures like Martin Luther King, Jr and decades of legal-rational change in the rational institutions of the *Gesellschaft*.

Caste as Stände. *Stand*, as Weber writes, reached its greatest extent in India where it underpins a caste system in which ethnicity, residence, race and profession became tied together (Weber, 2015a/1922: 50–51, 55; Weber, 2015c/1922: 191; Heesterma, 1984). Social and legal structures underpinning durable *Stand*-based division of labour is mediated, Weber writes, by rituals focussed on purity. The system in India was (and is) an extreme case, as Weber notes. However, many other systems of inequality emerging from *Gemeinschaft* around the world have characteristics of caste with its emphasis on exclusivity and segregation, and the association of ethnic/racial groups with particular types of work (Weber, 2015c/1922: 191).

The United States and South Africa had particularly strong race-based caste systems in which racial groups were assigned specific tasks by law within the division of labour. Other *Stand*-based caste systems are found around the world and include the Romany and Jews of Europe, and Hutu/Tutsi/Twa divides in Rwanda, Burundi and other nearby countries (see Waters, 1995b). In each caste system there were traditionally despised occupations, contrasted with ennobled occupations that in the modern world are considered “ethnic”. Merchant minorities such as the Chinese of Southeast Asia, the Indians of East Africa and the Lebanese of West Africa were also thought of in such caste-based contexts.

The *Stände* of gender. It is perhaps convenient to assume with Wallerstein (2004: 24, 97) that Weber’s “status group” is another word for modern “identities”, and to an extent Wallerstein is correct. Certainly this applies to ethnic groups, language communities, and sexual minorities. Gender as a socially constructed category is found in every known society and has implications everywhere for inequality, particularly in the context of patriarchy. Gender categories are also a product of every *Gemeinschaft* that attaches value to male and female identities in the context of *Stand* and/or class. In this sense, gender is not well described by Weber’s typology—gender is a conceptually distinct form of social stratification.

Nevertheless, gender is also a basic qualification for many *Stände*. Monks, sororities, fraternities, militaries, cabarets, dance troupes, sports teams, age-cohorts, employers and so on all use gender explicitly as the primary basis for inclusion and exclusion. Many other groups use gendered identities as a marker of exclusivity as well. Like race, gender uses characteristics that have a biological origin to impute stereotypes, competencies and characteristics framed in the terms of “anthropological purebreds”.

But again, gender does not always fit neatly into Weber’s definitions of inequality, in the same way as professional groups, ethnic groups, caste and racial groups do. Relations between male and female can be intimate and also unequal. After all, “exogamy” is a defining characteristic of ethnic *Stand* for Weber. And within most gender-based *Stand* groups, preserving exogamy between male and female does not always make much sense!

The classes and *Stände* of Weber’s essay: the propertyless, propertied, slaves, first families of Virginia (FFV), feuds, Knickerbockers, Beamte, nobility, Jews, clerks and bosses. Before finishing this section of our article though, what did Weber himself have to say about *Stände* in his essay? What examples from his day were relevant? Here, we will highlight a number of the different types of *Stände* Weber used as examples.

Weber’s first distinction is to use “the propertyless” and “propertied” (Weber, 2015a/1922: 44a). He writes that people without assets are always at a disadvantage in the *Gesellschaft* because they “own” only their own labour, and as a result are

inherently negatively privileged relative to the propertied of the *Gesellschaft* (Weber, 2015a/1922: 44–45).

Weber uses as an example the propertyless who come under the control of the cattle breeders, such as slaves or serfs. In such context, he writes, the honour of the *Stand* apportioned by the *Gemeinschaft* becomes the most important source of distinction for the distribution of life chances (Giddens, 1971: 164). Few situations matched the abject poverty of serfdom and slavery in the modern world, except maybe prisons where prisoners lack property altogether. Thus, from Weber's viewpoint, it would perhaps be not surprising then that modern prisoners seek refuge in the honour-based distinctions of *Stand* that are available via gangs willing to fight each other over issues of "respect". Now, of course, Weber does not write of prisons. Instead he refers more broadly to slaves and the poor (see Weber, 2015a/1922: 44). But Weber's point is that, in such contexts, propertyless slaves and the poor create "negatively privileged" identities in which strong markers of *Stand* emerge to establish and protect boundaries and the exclusive rights to the otherwise despised activities that inhere to them. The distribution of tasks in the Hindu caste system is, for Weber, a good example of this.

As for positive privilege, Weber develops an odd illustration from European duelling practices that illustrates *Stand* privilege well. Only gentlemen of the same *Stand*, Weber writes, were eligible to sustain their honour by giving "satisfaction" by issuing (and accepting) challenges to duels (Weber, 2015a/1922: 50). Thus, it was unthinkable for a noble to issue a duel challenge to peasant, or *vice versa*.

Weber saw a similar phenomenon of aristocratic *Stände* emerging in the newer United States and makes his point about *Stand*-based stratification by highlighting the emergence of such institutions in the new country. Weber points to American examples of how positively privileged *Stände* even emerge out of the structures of the *Gesellschaft*. Weber uses American groups such as the FFV, and the Knickerbockers of New York, to describe how positively privileged aristocracies emerged among people whose actual ancestry were as low status traders (that is, commercial classes, see Weber, 1922/1978: 304). Such groups are the "construction" of putatively "ancient" origin rooted in the legitimacy of being "first". Such stories Weber writes are why so many Americans claimed descent from Pocohontas of Virginia, and the Pilgrim Fathers in New England rather than presumably New England merchants and southern cotton dealers. In this context, the FFV and Knickerbockers had emerged as a self-aware *Stand*-like elite at the time Weber wrote in the 1910s (Weber, 2015a/1922: 50). In developing these examples, Weber emphasizes that, even though the accumulation of money occurred in the anonymous (and despised) marketplace of the past, the desire for exclusivity and honour meant that a privileged new *Stand* emerged in which financial activity was viewed as beneath their level, in the same fashion Weber noted for the Indian Brahmins.

But perhaps Weber's most personal (and opaque) example of *Stände* is found in his comparison between bosses in the United States and Germany, and their relationship with clerks (Weber, 2015a/1922: 49). In Germany Weber observes, the boss and the clerk are clearly subordinated in both the office and outside the office. Bosses never fraternize with their clerk. In contrast in the new United States, although the same subordination and deference existed between the boss and clerk in the office, they might even play billiards together as equals after work. This situation, Weber claimed, was impossible in the older and more rigidly stratified *Stand*-based stratification system in Germany where habits of deference extended to all spheres. He also implied that such American informality was likely to dissipate as the privileged *Stände* emerged.

Parties, power and *Stände*

The third element of stratification in Weber's essay "Classes, *Stände*, Parties", and the one he develops least, is that of political parties.¹⁷ Weber emphasizes that the home of parties is power, that is, parties seek control of the monopoly over the use of coercive force in a given territory, that is, government (Weber, 2015a/1922: 56–57).

For Weber, it is in political parties that economically grounded classes of the *Gesellschaft* form alliances with honour-based *Stände* of the *Gemeinschaft*. It is here that the work of resolving the inequality of the capitalist economy, with the contradiction of equality before the law is struggled over (see Beteille, 1996: 518–519). According to Weber, classes and *Stände* form coalitions to seek power over the government as parties (Weber, 2015a/1922: 56). Thus, you get odd fellows within political parties. For example, in the United States today, the modern Republican Party is in large part an alliance between the class interests of capitalists (for example, the instrumental-rationalists of *Wall Street*) and the interests of *Stand*-based groups (for example, value-rationalist evangelical Christians, and gun owners), whose interests come directly from the value-rational *Gemeinschaft*. The shared interest is in seeking power, and this single focus results in dissonant positions in parties. Thus in the modern American Republican party platform, this means that businessmen oppose abortion and support gun rights, and Christian pastors supports price for big agriculture and equate gun rights with freedom. Such a political coalition makes no objective sense in terms of either the value-rational or instrumental-rational world from which they first arise, but it does make sense in what is the soul-sapping exercise of power, which despite its dangers "by its very nature gives pleasurable feelings of prestige" to those who achieve it (Weber, 2015a/1922: 137c).

Thus, for Weber, the alliances created by those seeking power via parties are rooted in the value rationality of both the *Gemeinschaft* (that is, *Stände*) interests and class interests. Power itself, Weber writes, is sought using the instrumental rationality of *Gesellschaft*. Parties thus seek ideals from the clubby legitimacy of a *Gemeinschaft* whose putative goals are rooted in the language of morality, at the same time making cold calculating decisions about campaigning and governing in an amoral *Gesellschaft* where power matters most. Thus you get boisterous clubby conventions appealing to abstract moral values, at the same time as the hardnosed amoral backroom dealing that is the "calling" of politicians takes place (see, for example, Weber, 2015a/1922: 56–57; Weber, 2015c/1922). The tension between the means and the goals are often incompatible—but as Weber writes, in a political party where the goal is winning and wielding power, this is beside the point.

Conclusion: *Stände* are inequality

In highlighting *Stände* and *Gemeinschaft* in his sociology, Weber identified basic analytic categories that stretch across cultural, national and other conventional boundaries. *Stand* is an analytical term that encompasses categories such as race, gender, sexuality, language use, professions, immigration status and many others. Notably in Weber's usage, it does not include "class" which only emerges from the market. Thus, for Weber, intersectionality as such primarily occurs in the context of the *Gemeinschaft* where such *Stände* rooted in honour find their "home", and secondarily in the class structure of the *Gesellschaft*. The utility of Weber's category *Stand* is that it highlights a dialectical tension between *Stände* with their competing claims, especially as it relates to the relative nature of positive and negative privilege. This is why Weber's categories can be used to

assess inequalities as diverse as that between doctors and nurses, nobles and peasants, Malaysian ethnic groups, US university campus based- “Greek” organizations and the persistence of racial discrimination. Not only that, Weber’s model explains how and why such categories emerge from the most basic unit of society, that is the value-rational *Gemeinschaft*, while not neglecting the fact that modern market relations with its *Gesellschaft*-based instrumental rationalism dominate ideologies.

Thus if honour, with its roots in the value-laden *Gemeinschaft*, is assumed to be the root of inequality, greater understanding is had of the enduring structures of inequality. As Weber points out, such values persist even in putatively *Gesellschaft*-based places where calculation is highlighted, like modern courts of law and the modern marketplace; both law and the market ideally operate *sine ira et studio* (without scorn or partiality). That they have not worked *sine ira et studio* is a testimony to the endurance of the value rationality of the *Gemeinschaft* and its *Stände*—and points to the limitations of using the *Gesellschaft*-based incentives of law and market to counteract what are actually products of the *Gemeinschaft*.

The limitations of “competence” as a dependent variable. Such a conclusion thus also points to the functional folly of assuming that because someone is successful (or not) it reflects some type of abstract type of untethered “competence” (see Ridgeway, 2014). “Competence” ultimately only reflects value rationality emerging from the *Gemeinschaft* that has the power to define the honourability of transactions within the labour market, commodity market or capital market. These definitions in turn define “success” in a rationalized world that equates competence with financial success, electoral success or other calculable form. “Success” defined by such values means that promotions, financial reward and privilege are likely to flow towards the *Stände* that grasp the values that a particular *Gemeinschaft* defines as honourable and competent. And the opposite of course is also likely, as negative privileges such as demotion, discrimination, financial penalty, poverty and prison sentences flow towards the *Stände* that the powerful define as dishonourable and incompetent.

Weber’s two-part and three-part description of social stratification. There has been much ink spilled about whether Weber’s model of social stratification is a two-part model like Tönnies (that is, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*), or a three-part model based on Classes *Stände*, Parties. We suppose that it could also be argued that it is a one-part model, since for Weber the *Gemeinschaft* with its *Stände* is the most fundamental unit of society. But this is beside the point.

But the answer of course is that Weber’s model is a two-point model at its base, but it gives birth to three forms of social stratification: classes, *Stände* and parties in their own particular ways. But most importantly Weber’s system is amorphous, and not trending towards particular conclusion. Weber’s focus is on the tensions between the 2+3 structures. And this for Weber is the tension out of which society emerges and changes.

Conclusion: the Stanford Medical School and the wisdom of the shoeshine man. In her *American Sociological Review* article (2014), Stanford University Professor Cecilia Ridgeway illustrated the importance of status (that is, *Stand*) by relating an encounter with a shoeshine man at the San Francisco Airport who wanted his daughter to go to medical school at Stanford University and become a doctor. The good news is that both the shoeshine man at the San Francisco airport and Professor Ridgeway agree that Medical School at Stanford University is the ultimate expression in cultural competence—in other words, they both are acutely

aware of status-based values of the United States, that is, the values of their own American *Gemeinschaft*. The bad news (for Stanford anyway) is that this value rationality is not universal; there are billions of people and many *Stände* who are ambivalent about Stanford University because it is outside their *Gemeinschaft*. It is unlikely that, for example, a shoeshine man in Dar Es Salaam, Bangkok or Chengdu would make the same comment to Professor Ridgeway, have a similar goal for their child or even be able to talk to Professor Ridgeway in a shared language.

Ultimately Weber’s insight is that human society is still rooted first and foremost in evaluations of *relative* honour, however they are defined, within a particular *Gemeinschaft*, with its assumptions about a shared past, present and future. Individuals manoeuvre within such pre-existing systems of stratification. Indeed it is within such structures that humans “make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past ...” (Marx, 1978: 595). And that past is one rooted in a world in which mixing the value rationality of *Stände* and the instrumental-rationality of the marketplace are separate endeavours that do not fit together well in a regression equation or in terms like “Socio-economic status”. In fact, to borrow again from Weber, failing to distinguish the two is indeed a “a warped reasoning”.

Notes

- 1 For example, Wenger (1980) wrote an entire essay “The Transmutation of Weber’s *Stand* in American Sociology and its Sociological Roots”. Tribe (2000) citing Wenger (1980) calls it a “clumsy term”, which today might verge dangerously on “grievance community”, and which in English excludes occupational groups and professions, a part of *Stände* elemental to Weber’s discussion. Baecker (2006) wrote about the difficulty translating *Gewalt* (coercive force) in Weber.
- 2 See Ridgeway (2014) for a review.
- 3 The term “socioeconomic status” began to appear in the literature in the 1930s and 1940s. However, judging from Google Ngrams, the term became common between the 1960s and 1980s as socio-economic status, or the abbreviated “SES”.
- 4 It is not just American sociology that has changed. Since Weber’s time, German sociology has come to see stratification in terms of “*Schichten*” (geological layers) favoured by Dahrendorf (1959: 4–9), and more recently the amorphous “cultural milieu” which follow in the tradition of Durkheim. In our view, a cultural milieu is disarmingly like Weber’s *Stand*, albeit *sans* Weber’s emphasis on dialectical tensions, or positive and negative privilege. Dahrendorf (1959: 7) also wrote that the interpretation of *Stand* as status is “one of the exigencies of translation—and of their creativity”, and asserted that in English “by the very fact of misleading they can create terms that acquire a life of their own”.
- 5 For discussions about the difficulties associated with translating *Stand* into English, see, for example, Waters and Waters (2015: 37–38), Tribe (2000: 209–210), Wenger (1980), Roth (1992), Graber (1981). Tribe (2000: 209–210) points out that the word “*Stand*” passed out of English in the eighteenth century, while it persisted in German where it continued to reflect groups such as professional groups which were self-governing corporations, for example, guilds and estates. Indeed, this word continues to be common even today when describing the responsibilities and privileges of civil servants (*Beamten*), and the *Mittelstand* which occupies a central role in the German economy.
- 6 This is not to say that for Weber classes and *Stände* cannot become intertwined. Clearly they do. Indeed, the two phenomenon feed on the tensions between the two (see particularly Weber’s essay “Status Groups and Classes”; Weber, 1922/1978: 302–307; Weber, 1922/1956/1964: 223–227).
- 7 Some writers have suggested the introduction of “estate” as a translation for *Stand*. This has not caught on, in part we think because in modern English it is primarily associated with modern property law and inheritance, and not inherited social status (see Wenger, 1980: 369–370; Dahrendorf, 1959: 7).
- 8 *Einverständnisgemeinschaft* is a word that Weber uses to describe the relationship between a patrimonial ruler, and those who are ruled. The word implies a shared sense of community that is reliant on both the coercive power (*Gewalt*) of the rulers (*Herrscher*), but is also based in norms of consensual conduct shared by ruler and ruled alike (see Max Weber *Gesamtausgabe, Abteilung I, Band 22-4*, p. 241).
- 9 See Weber’s (1922/1978: 305) specific definition of *soziale Klasse* for his definition of this phenomenon. Notably this is different than his definition of “*Klassen*”.

10 Just preceding this thought is Weber’s cryptic remark that

While commercial classes grow out of the market oriented economy, the [modern] *Stände* primarily emerge and exist on the grounds of organizations that either have monopolistic patterns and habits associated with economic organizations, or are feudal associations or organizations which satisfy the patrimonial needs of the *Stände*.

A society [*Gesellschaft*] is called a “Stand-based” if the social stratification is primarily defined by *Stände*, and society [*Gesellschaft*] is called a “class-based” if the social stratification is primarily defined by class. (our translation; Weber, 1922/1956/1964: 326)

This part of *Economy and Society* is an undeveloped outline. But what Weber seems to be working towards is a theory of modernity which explains how *Stand*-based stratification persists and even flourishes in the context of property, despite the push towards rationalization emerging from the forces of the *Gesellschaft*. In this particular passage he does use the word “*Gesellschaft*” in a manner slightly different than his earlier writings—in this context he is using the term to refer to an all encompassing “society”. This in turn is related to how Weber describes the relationships between the three types of “classes”, that is, *soziale Klassen*, commercial classes and property classes. *Stände*, he writes, are most likely to be created by property classes (see also Weber, 1922/1978: 306–307). Investigation of this particularly cryptic point is important. However doing so goes beyond the central point of this article which is about the incompatibility of the two concepts in English-language sociology. Teasing apart how different types of classes Weber highlights become *Stände* is an important point, but perhaps best left to a future paper. We thank an anonymous referee for bringing this passage to our attention.

11 A content analysis by Benjamin Elbers revealed that Weber used *Gemeinschaft* three times as often in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Economy and Society). Thus there is irony in the title: *Gemeinschaft* is left out, even though it is used in the text almost three times more than *Gesellschaft*. A total of 474,977 words in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* were analysed. Note that for “*Gemeinschaft*”, all the words that contain this text were matched, such as: *Gemeinschaftshandeln*, *Vergemeinschaftung*, *Tischgemeinschaft*, *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* and so on.

Term	Occurrences	Percentage of total
Gesellschaft	381	0.0802
Bürokrat	547	0.1152
Handeln	871	0.1834
Gemeinschaft	1066	0.2244
Charisma	737	0.1552
Disziplin	151	0.0318
Rational	1528	0.3217
Wirtschaft	1332	0.2804
Herrschaft	987	0.2078

12 For a discussion of this, see bond (2012), Lichtbau (2000: 426–428) and Lichtbau (2012: 458–462). Lichtbau also attaches Weber’s use of these terms to both Tönnies, and to a lesser extent to Simmel. Though as Lichtbau (2012: 458) notes, “Weber’s own conceptual schema is a great deal more complex and differentiated than the dualism offered by Tönnies, so that the core concepts related to this dualism cannot be directly related to each other”.

13 That is, the employer/employee relationship in the labour market, the creditor/debtor relationship in the credit market and the buyer/seller relationship in the commodity market.

14 Weber’s emphasis on *Stand* stratification is in large part a reaction to Marx’s simplistic two-class description of society in which there is primarily an “oppressor and oppressed”, and Marx’s assertions that classes share a consciousness which emerges out of shared material interests. Consciousness for Weber (if there is such a thing) is located in the *Stand*, and not the class. This is why Weber separates the two phenomenon. Class is a product of the marketplace, while *Stand* reflects the consciousness of belonging, honour and loyalty.

15 Editors of “The Collected Works of Max Weber” have been unable to verify which particular situation in Switzerland Weber was referring to. See Weber (2001: 260 fn).

16 Weber asserts that actual sexual abhorrence by whites of blacks began only after the abolition of slavery, and emerged in a fashion that would guarantee “the monopolization of social power and honour” for the dominant whites. Before the end of slavery, Weber points out, sexual relations between the white masters and their slave women was quite common, and not necessarily “abhorrent” to the whites, but normative (Weber, 1922/1978: 385). Abhorrence of such forcible sexual relations was felt by the subordinated and enslaved African-Americans.

17 Weber discusses extensively the nature of parties in his essays “Politics as Vocation” and “Bureaucracy”, among other places in his writings (see Weber, 2015b, c/1922). See also Parkin’s (1982: 104–108) discussion of how Weber defines parties, and Giddens’ (1971: 167) discussion of the relationship between status groups/*Stand*, and parties.

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

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