

**PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS  
AND STATUS:  
A sociological study of professional occupations,  
status and trust**

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## **Abstract**

Occupation is the most important dimension behind social classes, closely connected with education and salary as well as status and prestige. The sociology of professions, since its classical period, has been related more or less closely to studies of class and status. This paper depicts some of these issues from the perspective of occupations and professions perceived as status groups.

The main objective of the research project presented in this paper is to study how a number of occupations are perceived concerning social status, requirements, conditions and rewards, and how these perceptions are distributed regarding positions (sex, age, education and class). Data are based on a national survey among the Swedish population 16–74 years of age as distributed in 2002. This paper examines in particular some results on the rank order of Swedish professional occupations compared with occupations in general and with American data.

The main results demonstrate once again a very strong and replicated status hierarchy of occupations – results remaining in different sex and age groups, and internationally comparable. Education and class correlate with higher and lower status estimation, respectively. Professional occupations are ascribed considerably higher status than other occupations, as expected. There is, however, a great span between physicians in the first place and librarians in the last. Specific properties of importance are that high salary was high, and long education was low, on the list of general important properties for status. There is a fairly low correspondence between status and trust in professionals and professional occupations.

**Keywords:** Perceptions, occupations, professions, status, trust

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## **Perceptions of occupations**

Perceptions of occupations constitute a considerable part of the socially constructed world around us. They contribute to producing and reproducing social structures such as classes, organisational hierarchies, and segregation in gender and ethnicity (Reiss 1961; Wegener 1992; Crompton 1998:56). Occupations comprise the most essential aspect in the definitions of class affiliation, and they are connected with certain positions in many different organisations. Perceptions of occupations and professions determine to a great extent our choices of education and life careers, and they can partly explain the reproduction of the segregation in the labour market. They also indicate expected and acceptable actions and allocation of sanctions and privileges, comparable to models, stereotypes and perceptions in other fields. They can determine the possibilities for successful daily or more infrequent cooperation between different occupations. In spite of extensive views of changes and flexibility in a post-modern world, perceptions of occupations seem to represent reproduction and stability of major importance for individuals as well as for societies.

Perceptions of occupations are defined in this research project as attributions and properties concerning demands for education and competence, physical, mental and social conditions and rewards, ascribed to groups with established and well-known occupational labels. One important objective for the research project on the whole is to construct and put forward these latent attributions and properties as indicators.

Perceptions consist partly of cognition, and research on the latter has long been an important area in psychology and social psychology. It involves concepts such as social perception, attribution, reference groups, claim levels, justice, and social background (Furåker et al. 1997; Deaux et al. 1993). Studies of perception show what we apprehend in the surroundings, and how it is determined partly by who we ourselves are and through which filters we thereby observe the surroundings (Festinger 1957). Attribution studies provide several principles for how we ascribe properties to other people in our surroundings, for example the tendency to explain our own actions by reference to external causes and explain others' actions by internal properties (Wood 1989). When one speaks of

other occupations' working conditions and salary levels, it is convenient to reason from one's own occupational group, or from a group which one knows well or strives to belong to. Occupational groups then often serve both to set norms and make comparisons (Thibaut & Kelly 1959; Sjöstrand 1968). A further common means of comparison is to proceed from generalised notions of occupations as a whole, or of how well off most people are. This merges into studies of claim levels which can explain why dissatisfaction or satisfaction does not always agree very closely with what can be regarded as objective conditions. The claims subjectivise the reference groups through a transformation, more or less consciously, of expectations taken from certain other groups to one's own levels (Blackburn & Mann 1979:167ff). Research on distributive and procedural justice concerns what is considered legitimate distribution of resources to, for instance, particular occupations.

That an occupation is perceived in different ways may reflect differences in access to information, which is a direct consequence of the degree of contact with the occupation in question. But it can also be connected with, or possibly be caused by, the class level on which one finds oneself. Thus a pilot study showed, for example, that people on a lower class level more frequently judged an occupation to be better than its holders themselves did, and conversely that people on a higher class level judged lower occupations to be worse than did those belonging to the occupational categories concerned (Furåker et al. 1997). In another study of SACO members, we asked about the population's trust in the fifteen occupational groups and their work. This trust proved to vary most with their education, class and union affiliation (Svensson 2002).

People's perceptions of occupations can be said to consist of two main components. The first is a knowledge component, which may vary extremely depending on one's experience and one's location in the social space. Nomenclatures and descriptions of positions can be used as a kind of objective comparative measure for this component. The second is an evaluation component, which depends on the knowledge component and is largely conveyed or determined by reference groups and claim levels. We almost always evaluate on the basis of some form of knowledge. The complexity of knowledge may vary greatly among people,

but has a rather weak connection with how we evaluate other occupations. We can value work very highly even though our knowledge about it is quite limited, or very low on the basis of quite complex knowledge.

Both knowledge and evaluations also depend on how occupational groups present themselves and are presented by other actors in society. Here a certain role is played by schoolteachers, educational aids, occupational guidance, and opportunities for practice, alongside presentations by representatives of certain occupations who take part in such activities. Mass media have acquired a strategic role in presenting occupations, thereby creating and recreating general perceptions of occupations – not least in TV series where occupational representatives are often consulted in order to design roles and their attributes. There it is often a matter of occupations with more professional claims, which gladly present themselves through self-interest so as to establish and maintain grounds for rewards, status, and other perceptions. Moreover, this is an important element – not seldom an explicit strategy – in such occupational groups' professional claims regarding education, ethical requirements, and other control of professionals' practice.

### **Legitimacy, trust and status**

Legitimacy, trust and status are three intertwined concepts closely connected with professional occupations and professional work. The societal position of professional occupations is partly determined by the legitimacy of the execution of work as a power relation between the professional executors and citizens and clients. To be efficient, the professional institutions and the individual professionals have to be trusted by the general public as well as by clients. Both legitimacy and trust may be assumed to depend heavily on the relation of the professional work to bodies of knowledge – more or less abstract – and the visibility of performances and results. Status or prestige, on the other hand, is more dependent on the general standing of an occupation compared to others in terms of education, alleged qualification demands, and rewards and privileges. Status has to be recognized by the environment, but otherwise this third concept is less relational than the

two former ones. Certain professional occupations such as medicine and law have also been labelled as status occupations.

The notion of **legitimacy** is of fundamental importance for the stability and authority of social organisations in general (Weber 1978, part III). The maintenance of legitimacy is regarded in major areas of social science as the most efficient way of reproducing social order and social cohesion. Legitimacy is defined as the process by which a social system is justified by its members, i.e. the rulers are given the power to rule by the ruled. There is unity between the rulers and the ruled members of the social system. The concept is mainly allied to political power and governing, and in relation to citizens. However, it is also applied to less political and economic transactions and exchanges as the use of knowledge and expertise by professionals.

Legitimacy is closely connected with the concepts of **trust**, confidence and social capital (Miztal 1996). Trust in others has been given several meanings – for instance an expectation of others' devotion, reliability and probity (Giddens 1990:33). At the systemic level, trust may involve an expectation that, as a citizen, one can have one's interests satisfied without needing to control the fact, and that those in power do not abuse their positions, all of which has most to do with legitimacy (Elliot 1997:41; Miztal 1996:245ff.). Social capital is then a systemic property based on norms for confidence, trust and networks between members in the system.

Trust in institutions is often based upon attributes that are ascribed to them by rumour or indirect sources, without personal experience from an interaction or exchange process at, for example, access points to abstract systems (Kramer & Tyler (eds.) 1996:18; Giddens 1990:83). Answers to questions about trust partly reflect the trust of the individual in these actors and the importance he or she attaches to them, and are partly a collective expression of the actors' status in society. Trust presupposes some knowledge of the actor as a basis for assumptions about its future function. At the same time, however, trust expresses one's lack of full knowledge about what can be expected – a lack that is, so to speak, compensated

for by trust (Elliot 1997:42). Trust in abstract systems and media comprises partly a dimension of competence, as regards the individual's perception and approval of expert knowledge, and partly a dimension of reliability as regards his or her confidence in the intentions and probity of the actors belonging to a system (ibid. p.7). Professional occupations and their corresponding social institutions are usually trusted by citizens – especially institutions frequently demanded by people, as in education, health and media.

In earlier studies of professions, trust was often regarded as what is demanded beyond the knowledge and expertise known from and warranted by diplomas, certificates and licenses. This had less to do with actual performance and more with appearances, manners and respectability related to paternalism, patriarchalism and proper class culture of gentlemen (Macdonald 1995:30; Freidson 2001:150). This kind of older social capital independent of the professional market is close to status and prestige. More modern market-independent means for status are professionally internal education and training as well as external licensing. Other means may be more dependent on the professional market, such as exclusiveness and high income (Macdonald 1995:11).

Much research on perception of occupations is related to research on **status** and prestige. Many status and prestige measures are generated from the evaluations by the general public of occupational standing, and they are supposed to reflect a classical sociological hypothesis that occupational status constitutes one of the most important aspects in social interaction (Ganzeboom & Treiman 1996:203). Prestige is defined as a social evaluation of individuals or collectives, and occupational prestige is here related to positions, separated from individuals, which by strong institutionalisation can be labelled status. Thus, according to some researchers, status identifies objective differences connected with qualification and rewards, while prestige refers to subjective emotional and cognitive evaluations and attitudes about an occupation (Wegener 1992:255). However, this distinction was not maintained in our survey and in this paper, according to other researchers as demonstrated below and more in coherence with the Weberian concept of status groups.



“Social status is a collective social judgement of relative superiority or inferiority, respectability or disdain, desirability or rejection. Status represents the subjective evaluation of members of society by other members of that society using contemporary values and beliefs.” (Rothman 1999:103)

Social evaluations are based on personal performance and individual properties. They are also based on structural positions such as occupation, class and family, or on social attributes such as gender, age and ethnicity. Occupation may be the most manifest source of social status and the most powerful consideration in urban and industrial societies. Occupational status is often called prestige, referring firstly to ascribed prestige hierarchies as parts of cultural traditions and transmitted during socialisation from early years, and secondly to achieved prestige more related to evaluations and comparisons of jobs and their various attributes and standards such as income and other desirable working-condition dimensions. These desirable criteria can be categorised as prerequisites, rewards and characteristics of the work. The most significant prerequisites in industrial societies are educational requirements: intelligence, formal education, duration and complexity of training. Scarcity on the labour market can give temporary fluctuating effects. Rewards such as income and privileges and fringe benefits of various kinds have symbolic values and can also be translated into desirable lifestyles. Characteristics of the work are composed by e.g. work tasks, social organisation of work, physical, mental and social working conditions, and the degree of routine, responsibility, autonomy and discretion.

Systematic studies of occupational status originated in the 1920s, and today we have a rich and comprehensive literature in the field, which confirms relatively stable hierarchies of status or prestige (Treiman 1977; Nakao & Treas 1990; 1994; Ganzeboom, Graaf & Treiman 1992; Ganzeboom & Treiman 1996; Hansen 2002). There is a high level of consensus on the placement of most occupations within nations. People tend, though, to inflate the social standing of their own occupation and others similar or close to it. Economic rewards also tend to be a more salient criterion for people at the lower end of the stratification system, while educational attainment is given more weight by those at the upper end of the ladder.

Repeated international studies in industrial societies have demonstrated a very high degree of stability. In one excellent example of the dominant perspective in international research on prestige, 55 countries were compared (Treiman 1977). The conclusion states the perceptions of occupational status or prestige to be roughly the same in all complex societies and over time. This is explained by the necessary consequences of the logic in division of labour. Prestige was there assumed to be “an indicator of those resources that are converted into privilege and exclusion in human interaction and distributive processes” (Ganzeboom, Graaf & Treiman 1992:8). Or perhaps, quoting Davis and Moore (1945), prestige is “the approval and respect members of society give to incumbents of occupations as rewards for their valuable services to society”. According to the reasoning from this structural functional perspective, a common hierarchy of occupational prestige is assumed to be independent of time, place, and individual preferences. From these findings, a scale of prestige adaptable to all industrial countries was constructed (Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale).

Professional occupations are of greatest interest in studies of occupational status, as they tend to be more dependent on status and prestige than non-professional or less professional occupations. A profession is not regarded primarily as an occupation with certain properties, but as a strategy to control an occupation in relation to the state, other occupations, and the market of potential clients. The control concerns a certain field of knowledge and knowledge development and certificates, the access to a section of the labour market possibly backed up by state-regulated licensing, and the discretion of the work performance and evaluation. Thus, stratification will be based not only on private property and physical capital, but also on credentials and the symbolic or immaterial capital related to these and to the acquired occupational positions (Collins 1979; Bourdieu 1979). There are great variations and conflicts in terms of status within any professional occupation determined by autonomy, organisational position, working tasks, and clients (Abbott 1988:117ff). This is usually not considered in status studies, when occupations are assessed as units from the outside by citizens and clients.

Status is of major importance to professionals for a number of reasons. Firstly, the relation between education and work has to be close in order to reproduce the social closure of the field; one approach is to enhance the symbolic value of the educational program e.g. in the name of a particular school, college or university department and its traditions. Secondly, the autonomy and discretion at work create distances from management and clients respectively, which have to be bridged by relations of trust; and trust and legitimacy are closely related to status and prestige. Thirdly, the discretion in the performance of the professional tasks at work creates great difficulties in evaluating the results of the work and the actual production, which instead is evaluated by entrusted and prestigious colleagues. Thus, a very interesting issue in this study is the degree of prestige of so-called professional occupations compared to other occupations. In that context, the discussion of the bases for status assessment may be further elaborated, and the “valuable services to society” could be interpreted as alleged and assumed, built on traditions and reputations in social constructions of the world including perceptions of occupations, apart from actual productive values.

### **Some survey data describing and explaining occupational status <sup>1</sup>**

One hundred occupations were selected to represent the classifications of occupations, according to the international occupational classification ISCO88 (ILO 1990). Each occupation had to be estimated according to the item: “For each job mentioned, please pick out the statement that best gives *your own personal opinion* of the *general standing* that such a job has” (Reiss 1961:19). The five-point scale was modified into nine grades by Nakao and Treas (1994), and the latter version was used in our case. The estimation was in our study, however, made one occupation at a time and not as a rating and ranking of all compared to

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<sup>1</sup> Technical specification of the study.

A survey was distributed by mail to a sample of the Swedish population age 16-74 in Febr. 2002. The response rate was 61 percent – especially low among citizens not born in Nordic countries, low income and low education. Data has been calibrated and weighed according to the non-response rates. The sample was stratified on age with a larger sample in age 16-24 years, and on selection of occupations in four strata to cover 100 occupations (20 equal for all respondents and 20 more specific for every fourth part of the sample).

all as in the interview set up by Nakao and Treas. Here are some results, referring to Appendix I.

The range of weighted means was from ambassador (M=8.32) at the top to dishwasher (M=1.66) at the bottom. Other occupations at the top were physician, judge, university professor, lawyer, aircraft pilot and chief executive, and at the bottom street vendor, cleaner, garbage collector, ticket collector, forestry labourer and supermarket cashier. Some particular occupations such as aircraft pilot, professional athlete and fireman, fashion model, airline hostess and cook, were given higher prestige than might be expected from the required credentials, but may be explained by their popular, fashionable and conspicuous character.

**Table 1: International Standard Classification of Occupations 1988, and mean and prestige score for Sweden in 2002.**

ISCO-88 fields	Swedish mean	Prestige score
1. Legislators, senior officials, managers	8.06	77
2. Professionals	6.41	66
3. Technicians and associate professionals	6.0	60
4. Clerks	3.27	28
5. Service, shop, market sales workers	4.34	41
6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	3.73	34
7. Craft and related trade workers	4.17	42
8. Plant and machine operators	3.66	33
9. Elementary occupations	2.34	19

The ISCO codes above describe fields of occupations according to educational requirements and tasks at work. Legislators (1) require no specific formal education. Professionals (2) correspond to academic degree or longer post-secondary education, technicians (3) to shorter post-secondary education, categories 4–8 to upper secondary education, and

category 9 to elementary education. Service work (5) and craft and trade (7) are estimated relatively high in prestige and deviate from the rank order of the fields. The prestige score is the mean for the scores labelling the first and highest level, and computed within fields according to Nakao and Treas (1994:8). There are great variations within the fields on the fourth and most detailed level, and especially so for professionals from professor and physician (89) down to social work professional (40).

The survey included 22 occupations which were defined as professions, from physician in the second position in the range order of the 100 occupations down to librarian in the 64<sup>th</sup> position. The mean of means of the estimated general standing for these professional occupations was 6.4 compared to 4.7 for all other occupations, which is a difference of 17 percent. According to standard deviations the estimations are a bit more unanimous concerning professional occupations compared to others. Among professional occupations, judges have the lowest standard deviation and priests the highest.

Women had a slightly higher mean for professional occupations than men. There was, however, no gender difference in the mean for other occupations, although there is a trend for women to give higher status estimations for high-status occupations and for men to give higher estimations for low-status occupations. Young people (16-24 years) have about the same estimations as adults (25- years) with a correlation (Pearson) as high as 0.97. But there are some interesting exceptions. Young people ascribe higher status to e.g. stockbroker, engineer, journalist, actor, and especially rock musician and photo model. On the contrary, lower status is ascribed by young people, compared to adults, to veterinarian, priest, airline hostess, pharmacist, nurse, midwife, builder, carpenter, librarian, postman, farmer and fisherman. That is, they ascribe lower status to some professional occupations as well as to some working-class occupations. On the whole, nonetheless, there is great coherence in the population on how the status of various occupations is perceived – a pattern once again repeated in this survey.

In regard to education, the estimation of status for high-status occupations tends to be higher among the longest educated (with more than three years of post-secondary education) and lower for low-status occupations. The opposite holds for the least educated: they estimate high-status occupations lower than do the longest educated, and low-status occupations higher. Herein lies a part of the recreating mechanisms of rank ordering, so that longer education gives support for both lower and higher status. By contrast, shorter education does not give support for lower status. This can also be seen from the mean values' minimum and maximum sizes, which are respectively lowest and highest among the longest educated, with a range equal to 7 as compared with 6.44 among the least educated. The longest educated can thus be said to perceive a stratified society more strongly, and perhaps also place greater importance on educational differences.

A similar pattern is visible in regard to one's own social class, according to where one places oneself. Those who report belonging to white-collar and higher civil servant or academic families ascribe higher status to high-status occupations, and lower status to low-status occupations. On the other hand, those who report belonging to worker or farmer families ascribe higher status to lower-status occupations. The same pattern occurs when we use the family one reports having grown up in.

The mean of means for the subjective estimation ("status the respective occupations ought to have") was 6.5 and 5.2 respectively, which is equal to 13 percent. The differences between the social status and the status occupations ought to have were particularly high for teachers, midwives and nurses. The correlation between the estimated general standing and the subjective estimation was 0.75 for professional occupations and 0.71 for other occupations – an indication that the social status which professional occupations in general are assumed to have, and the status they should have, are slightly more coherent compared to the perception of other occupations.

In the full sample of occupations, the correlation between means of ascribed status and actual income was 0.72, for formal education 0.64, and for percentage of women 0.18, which

thus indicates the two main causes of status: income and education. One way to measure the causes of status is to ask the respondents their opinion of what is supposed to determine the perceptions of occupational status. The number of items below gives indications of what people estimate as constituting status and prestige. Most of these indicators are frequently used for characterising professional occupations in particular.

**Table 2: Importance for the status of occupations (1-5), mean and standard deviation.**

Indicator	Mean	Std deviation
1. High salary	4.22	0.83
2. Good career potential	4.09	0.88
3. High skill	4.09	0.90
4. Responsible	4.07	0.88
5. Autonomous	4.05	0.92
6. Honesty and morality	4.03	1.13
7. Great influence	3.90	1.00
8. Value for society	3.68	1.14
9. Help to others	3.53	1.22
10. Long education	3.39	1.10
11. Great efforts at work	3.29	1.05
12. Long experience	3.28	1.11
13. Popular	3.02	1.27
14. Male-dominated	2.32	1.36

High salary is the outstanding explanation for status; career, skill, responsibility, autonomy and morality are in second place; and male domination is very low, the last of these given alternative aspects. Some of these variables demonstrate fairly high correlations, which have been used to search for more complex components by a factor analysis. High salary then goes together in a second component with great influence, long education, popularity, and male domination. We may call this component **career**, or work for the benefit of the individual. The first component is constituted by honesty and morality, value for society, help to other persons, long experience, great effort, responsibility and high skill – which may be called **professionalism** or work or occupation as a calling for the benefit of others, and based upon requirements not as much connected with formal education as with experience from the work itself. (These two components cover almost half of the variance 47%.) Among

those indicators in the first component, honesty and morality seem to be the most controversial according to the standard deviations.

Young people (16-24) attach significantly more importance than the rest of the sample (25-74) to autonomy, skill, salary and education. Women attach more importance than men to male domination, responsibility, honesty and morality, value for society, great effort and help to others, which is close to the component of professionalism.

Another way of studying the causes of occupational status is the use of objective indicators. Actual average income per month was 28,000 kronor for professionals, from 41,000 for physicians to about 20,000 for female-dominated professions such as teachers, midwives, nurses and librarians, and 22,000 kronor for other occupations (or 20,000 kronor when occupations belonging to field (1) above were excluded). The correlation between estimated general standing and actual income was 0.88 for professional occupations and 0.67 for other occupations, demonstrating the closer relation between income and status among professional occupations. Formal demands of education were 3.8 years for professionals and 2.2 years for other occupations. The percentage of women was 50 for professional occupations and 42 for other occupations. The correlation between the female percentage and estimated status, however, was a fairly high reversed one:  $-0.73$  for professional occupations compared to only  $-0.21$  for other occupations. This internal correlation for professional occupations is mainly explained by the domination of women in education, health and social work. Male domination thus seems to be underestimated by the general public in the responses to factors of importance for status, last in the table above.

## **An international comparison**

In Appendix I the prestige scores for Sweden in 2002 and for the US in 1989 are compared for 72 occupations, which have more obviously corresponding labels in these countries. Still, there are many differing conditions in systems and organisations explaining the differences in



scores more than actual prestige evaluations, which should be borne in mind, as well as the time lap between the two studies compared.

The correlation between the Swedish and the US scores was 0.86, which can be compared to one reported title correlation from the same culture between 1964 and 1989 as high as 0.97 (Nakao & Treas 1994:15). The Swedish sample uses a wider range of scores from 8 (dishwasher) to 89 (university professor and physician) than the US data indicate, which run from 17 (dishwasher) to 86 (physician). The Swedish mean of scores is 49.86 and the US mean 49.89. Thus, the two countries at different times and from different data still tend to be very close to each other in this sense. Of the 72 comparable occupations, 41 were scored higher in Sweden 2002 than in US 1989, which means a slight upgrading in that sense. But on the whole this comparison confirms the stability thesis and that there is strong reproduction of the perceptions of the status of occupations – a robust hierarchy (ibid. 2).

The mean is somewhat less for professional occupations (ISCO 2) in the US (65.35) compared to Sweden (68.05), and the reverse for non-professional occupations. Swedes tend to give higher assessment to legislators, managers and professionals, while Americans tend to give higher grades to non-professional commercial and personal services. Thus, there has been a general growth in status estimation for the higher educated, which could be expected from the growth of the field of professionals and technicians in what is often labelled the post-industrial and the knowledge society (Hansen 2001). The higher importance for education stated by young people might also confirm this trend. But again, Swedes are less unanimous on professionals (std. dev. 14.98) than Americans (9.35), which is a contradiction to the post-industrial thesis.

**Table 3: Prestige scores for professional occupations in Sweden 2002 and US 1989.**

Prof. occupation	Swedish score	US score	Diff.
Physician	89	86	3
University/college prof.	89	74	15
Judge	89	71	18
Lawyer	87	75	12
Civil engineer	81	69	11
Economist	76	63	13
Veterinarian	75	62	13
Dentist	74	72	2
Psychologist	71	69	2
Accountant	67	65	2
Journalist	66	60	6
Author	66	63	3
Military officer	65	-	-
Pharmacist	64	68	-4
Priest	64	71	-7
Sociologist	62	61	1
Midwife	56	42	14
High school teacher	55	66	-11
Nurse	52	66	-11
Primary school teacher	48	64	-16
Social worker	42	52	-10
Librarian	40	54	-14

University professors, judges, lawyers, and the university and law systems in general have high legitimacy in Sweden, which can explain the higher grades for those occupations. Swedish midwives are more autonomous and have longer education than their equivalents in the US. On the contrary, teachers in preschool (15), in primary school (16) and in high school (11) are given higher status in the US than in Sweden, corresponding to expectations from frequent criticism of schooling in general. The time difference of 13 years from 1989 may, of course, also be part of the explanation for these deviations between the two countries.

### Status and trust in professional occupations

In the selection of the 100 occupations, 20 belong to the ISCO code for professionals (Table I except military officer and nurse). Though the variation from professor to librarian is very

wide, the score for professional occupations in general is fairly high at 66. Except for physicians, the differences are mainly explained by the wider range in the Swedish data. The professionals in the middle of the ranking have fairly low differences, while the ends tend to be assessed inversely. The correlation between Swedish and US prestige scores for professionals was a bit lower than the general (0.73). In the 1980s there were frequent criticisms against professionalism from politicians and managers, which was followed by a return to professionalism parallel with retrenchments of the public welfare services in the 1990s. In spite of this turmoil the professionals are attributed high status, which also is demonstrated in survey assessments of trust in different occupations and institutions (Svensson 2002).

The explanation for the high estimation lies partly in the professionalism factor component, where skill but not education was loading high. In the ranking of dimensions of importance for status, long education was generally in the tenth rank after skill in the third. There seems to be no correspondence between status on the one hand and licences or state-regulated credentials on the other hand. Among the enumerated professional occupations, engineers, accountants and social workers have a kind of licence; physicians, veterinarians, dentists, psychologists, pharmacists and midwives have state-regulated credentials, and university professors, judges, priests and teachers have legally regulated employment restrictions.

There seems to be a fairly low correspondence between status and trust concerning professionals in our data (0.37). In other surveys, the trust in professionals among the general Swedish public has been recorded (Holmberg & Weibull 2001). Physicians and civil engineers are two occupations which have high status scores and are highly trusted. Lawyers, economists and psychologists are assessed high on status and simultaneously attributed low trust – in the case of economists and psychologists even distrusted in the year 1995. Hence, we have no strong confirmation of any close empirical relationship between status and trust in this fairly small sample of professional occupations.

**Table 4: A selection of professional occupations and the distribution of status and trust scores.**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Status score 2002</b>	<b>Trust score 1995</b>	<b>Trust score 2000</b>
Physician	89	76	76
Lawyer	87	13	27
Civil engineer	81	46	56
Economist	76	-3	18
Psychologist	71	-2	16
Priest	64	36	37
High school teacher	55	42	48
Social worker	42	4	22

## **Conclusion**

After a brief introduction to the concept of perception of occupations and the relationship between legitimacy, trust and status, the paper depicts some preliminary analyses of a survey of occupational status distributed to a sample (3,000) of the Swedish people, where 100 occupations were included for independent assessments on a nine-point scale according to techniques elaborated by Nakao and Treas (1994).

Earlier studies of occupational prestige have reported strong stability and robust hierarchies. The Swedish data do not demonstrate full equivalence to the international standard classification of occupations in nine classes. Service work (5) and craft and trade (7) are estimated relatively high in prestige and deviate from the rank order of the fields. And inversely, clerks (4) and farmers (6) are assessed lower than the service and market workers (5) and craft and trade workers (7).

The main results demonstrate once again a very strong and replicated status hierarchy of occupations – results remaining in different sex and age groups, and internationally comparable. Education and class correlate with higher and lower status estimation, respectively. Professional occupations are ascribed considerably higher status than other occupations, as expected. There is, however, a great span between physicians in the first place and librarians in the last.

In a factor analysis seeking explanations for prestige, the component called career was loaded by: high salary, great influence, long education, popularity and male domination. The component called professionalism was loaded by: honesty and morality, value for society, help to other persons, long experience, great effort, responsibility, and high skill.

The correlation between Swedish (2002) and American (1989) prestige score data was 0.86, and the means were very close to each other. Swedes tend, however, to use a wider range of scores levelling “top” occupations and lowering “bottom” occupations. Swedes tend to give higher assessment to legislators, managers and professionals, while Americans tend to give higher grades to non-professional commercial and personal services. On the contrary, teachers in preschool, in primary school and in high school are given higher status in the US than in Sweden.

Professionals are of certain interest as their positions and work can be assumed to demand more prestige than other occupations. The correlation between Swedish and US prestige scores for professionals was a bit lower than the general (0.73). Long education was low on the list of important dimensions for status. There is a fairly low correspondence between status and trust in professionals and professional occupations.

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**Appendix I. 100 occupations, mean and prestige scores (min. 0, max. 100) for Sweden in 2002 and 72 for US in 1989, and diff. Swedish and US scores**

<i>Ra nk</i>	<i>ISCO 88(CO M)</i>	<i>Occupations</i>	<i>Swedish mean</i>	<i>Swedish prestige score</i>	<i>US prestige score</i>	<i>Note US label</i>	<i>Diff.</i>
1	1110	Ambassador	8.32	92			
2	2221	Medical doctor	8.15	89	86	Physician	3
3	2422	Judge	8.14	89	71		18
4	2310	Professor	8.13	89	74	College prof.	15
5	2421	Lawyer	7.96	87	75		12
6	3143	Aircraft pilot	7.81	85	73		13
7	1210	Chief executive	7.79	85	70		15
8	2xxx	Scientist	7.61	83			
9	214x	Civil engineer	7.47	81	69	Engineer	11
10	1110	Director of ministry	7.42	80	76	Dept. head in state gov.	4
11	3475	Professional athlete	7.29	79	65		14
12	2419	Economist	7.11	76	63		13
13	2223	Veterinarian	7.03	75	62		13
14	2131	Computer consultant	6.98	75			
15	1229	Film producer	6.97	75			
16	2222	Dentist	6.94	74	72		2
17	3411	Stockbroker	6.88	74			
18	1110	Member of Parliament	6.84	73			
19	31xx	Technician	6.84	73	54		17
20	2445	Psychologist	6.67	71	69		2
21	3472	TV anchor man	6.64	71	62		9
22	1231	Tax office manager	6.55	69			
23	2411	Accountant	6.36	67	65		2
24	3471	Web designer	6.32	66			
25	2451	Journalist	6.30	66	60		6
26	1232	Personnel manager	6.28	66	54		16
27	2451	Author	6.26	66	63		3
28	0100	Military officer	6.23	65			
29	3122	Computer operator	6.20	65	50		15
30	2452	Art director	6.11	64			
31	2455	Actor	6.11	64	58		6
32	2460	Priest	6.08	64	71		-7
33	2224	Pharmacist	6.08	64	68		-4
34	3450	Police officer	6.08	63	61		2
35	3419	Bank clerk	6.01	63			
36	5161	Firefighter	5.99	62	53		9
37	2442	Sociologist	5.97	62	61		1



38	2112	Meteorologist	5.79	60			
39	5210	Fashion model	5.76	59			
40	5111	Airline hostess	5.53	57	47	Air stew.	10
41	2230	Midwife	5.50	56	42		14
42	3222	Environmental officer	5.45	56			
43	7313	Goldsmith	5.42	55	45		10
44	2320	Upper secondary school teacher	5.42	55	66	High school teacher	-11
45	5122	Cook	5.36	54	34		20
46	3226	Physiotherapist	5.33	54	61		-7
47	3473	Rock musician	5.30	54	32	Rock band member	22
48	323x	Nurse	5.14	52	66	Registered nurse	-14
49	2429	Tax enforcement officer	5.13	52			
50	2452	Artist	5.10	51	52		-1

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>ISCO 88(CO M)</i>	<i>Occupations</i>	<i>Swedish mean</i>	<i>Swedish prestige score</i>	<i>US prestige score</i>	<i>Note US label</i>	<i>Diff.</i>
51	2445	School welfare officer	4.94	49			
52	2331	Primary school teacher	4.83	48	64		-16
53	5113	Travel guide	4.77	47			
54	3229	Acupuncturist	4.71	46			
55	724x	Electrician	4.63	45	51		-6
56	3431	Trade-unionist	4.61	45	43		2
57	7129	Building worker	4.57	45			
58	5163	Prison guard	4.50	44	40		4
59	7124	Carpenter	4.49	43	43		0
60	5141	Barber	4.42	43	36		7
61	2446	Social work professional	4.39	42	52		-10
62	6112	Gardener	4.28	41	29		11
63	3473	Dancer	4.26	41	41		0
64	2432	Librarian	4.24	40	54		-14
65	3320	Preschool teacher	4.24	40	55		-15
66	8311	Locomotive engine driver	4.23	40			
67	5141	Cosmetician	4.08	39	36	Cosmetol.	3
68	8287	Car fitter	3.96	37			
69	7412	Baker	3.88	36	35		1
70	7231	Car repairer	3.87	36	40	Auto mech.	-4
71	612x	Farmer	3.86	36	53		-18

72	5131	Child minder	3.80	35	36		-1
73	7433	Tailor	3.80	35	42		-7
74	41xx	Office clerk	3.72	34	36		-2
75	812x	Metalworker	3.62	33			
76	4142	Postman	3.59	32	47	Mailman	-15
77	5169	Watchman	3.59	32	42	Guard	-10
78	513x	Assistant nurse	3.54	32	42	Nurse aid	-10
79	6141	Woodman	3.46	31			
80	8323	Bus driver	3.45	31	32		-1
81	7129	Road worker	3.44	30			
82	7129	Building worker/repairer	3.41	30			
83	8340	Seaman	3.35	29	34		-5
84	6153	Fisherman	3.35	29	34		-5
85	8332	Taxi driver	3.33	29	28		1
86	5133	Personal care worker	3.30	29	47	Personal aid	-18
87	5132	Care worker	3.18	27			
88	5220	Shop assistant	3.13	27	31	Salesman	-4
89	4212	Post office cashier	3.10	26	42		-16
90	5123	Waiter/waitress	2.94	24	27		-3
91	3460	Social work asst. prof.	2.93	24	47		-20
92	9141	Janitor	2.92	24	22		2
93	9330	Dock worker	2.85	23			
94	4211	Supermarket cashier	2.67	21	33		-12
95	9212	Forestry labourer	2.47	18			
96	9153	Ticket collector	2.29	16			
97	9161	Garbage collector	2.27	16	28		-12
98	9132	Cleaner	2.24	16	23	(Sw. female)	-7
99	9111	Street vendor	2.04	13	21	Pushcart v.	-8
10	9132	Dishwasher	1.66	8	17		-9
0							