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Gulbrandsen, Trygve

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# Elite Integration – An Empirical Study

*Trygve Gulbrandsen*\*

**Abstract:** »*Elitenintegration – Eine empirische Studie*«. Elite integration has been a central topic within research on elites. In this paper, theoretical ideas about factors behind elite cohesion are discussed and empirically tested. The analyses presented in the paper show that ideological integration is strongest in elite groups where the share of members with upper/upper middle class origin is highest. This finding is valid whether the elite groups are located to the left or to the right in the political landscape. Various explanations of the finding are discussed.

**Keywords:** elites, elite integration, elite backgrounds, social class.

## Introduction

Within elite research and theory, much attention has been devoted to the question of elite integration or cohesion (e.g., Mills 1959; Dye 1976; Putnam 1976; Hoffmann-Lange 1985; Kim and Patterson 1988; Higley et al. 1991; Kadushin 1995; Bürklin and Rebenstorf 1997; Gulbrandsen 2005). Many scholars have argued that the establishment of a viable democracy depends in some important measure on the cohesiveness and unity exhibited by the leading elite groups in society. For instance, Keller (1963) has stated that as societies become more differentiated a considerable cohesion and consensus is needed on the top. Similarly, Putnam (1976) has supported the idea that elite integration fosters political stability and effectiveness. Higley and Burton (2006) have argued that the presence of consensually united elites is a basic condition for the emergence of a liberal democracy. Other scholars have focussed upon elite cohesion as a prerequisite for a particular elite group's collective power (for instance Useem 1984; Mizruchi 1992).

Given its political significance, what then are the characteristics of elite integration? Putnam (1976) identified six "integrative factors" or "dimensions of integration": social homogeneity, common recruitment patterns, personal interaction, value consensus, group solidarity and institutional context, of which, according to Putnam, value consensus is perhaps the most central. Higley and Moore (1981) suggested that the principal dimensions of elite integration in national and sector-specific elites are a consensus on values and personal inter-

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\* Address all communications to: Trygve Gulbrandsen, Institute for Social Research, Munthes gt. 31, 0260 Oslo, Norway; e-mail: trygve.gulbrandsen@samfunnsforskning.no. The author wishes to thank Johannes Bergh for constructive comments on an earlier version of this article.

action. Kim and Patterson (1988) maintained that an elite group is integrated if its members share common social origins, educational and career experiences and recruitment paths. They also added that an elite group could be integrated by sharing basic values.

The purpose of this paper is to examine empirically the relative significance of various factors fostering elite integration in different elite groups. It focuses on two questions: to what extent does shared class background influence the extent of ideological consensus within an elite group: and are common educational experiences more important than class background as a mechanism promoting elite unity? In contrast to earlier studies of this type, I also include in the analysis issues and variables that have been highlighted as important in organizational demography (Lawrence 1996; 1997). I will for instance discuss whether same age and tenure among the members of an elite group influence the degree of consensus within the group.

First, the proper unit of analysis has to be identified. Internationally there are many studies focussing upon individual elites and how their ideological and political attitudes are influenced by class background, education, career experiences, gender, and sector affiliation. But these studies are not necessarily focusing on elite integration. Elite integration is a property of a group. Accordingly, both the dependent and the independent variables have to be constructed and related statistically on the group level. To my knowledge, very few studies have previously conducted an empirical study comparing the level of integration in different elite groups on this level.

Second, it is necessary to specify the relations between the dimensions of elite integration more precisely. In the previous literature the dimensions are frequently treated both as causes and effects. For instance, shared social origin is sometimes presented as a manifestation of elite integration, whereas at other times it is treated more like a factor or mechanism that promotes elite integration. This probably reflects the fact that various dimensions of elite integration in reality are closely inter-related with each other. For instance, elite interaction may stimulate value consensus. At the same time value consensus may pave the way for more interaction between elite persons and groups. Nevertheless, for analytic purposes it is necessary to distinguish between those dimensions that are manifestations of elite integration, and those dimensions that are more properly seen as fostering integration.

Two more points need to be highlighted. The paper focuses, first, on ideological consensus as the main manifestation of elite integration. It then examines empirically to what extent variations in elite consensus are related to a set of factors that are treated as possible causes of these variations. Among the factors considered are similarities of social background and education within the individual elite groups, as well as the extent of shared experiences within the particular elite sector, as measured by similarity of age and tenure. Data are taken from the Norwegian Leadership Study 2000 and the sample comprises

holders of top formal positions in twelve main areas of the Norwegian society and represent 49 different elite sectors or groups.

## Theory and Hypotheses

### Social Origin

Elite integration in the form of ideological consensus can come about because the members of a particular elite group have shared common socialization experiences. Such common experiences may be created in childhood as a result of growing up in families belonging to *the same social class*. These shared experiences can create social homogeneity that furthers elite integration – even if the members of the elite groups have never met before. There are countless studies of elite social backgrounds that have demonstrated a high degree of homogeneity in the elites' social origin (e.g., Hoffmann-Lange 1992; Bürklin and Rebenstorf et al. 1997; Hartmann 2000; Christiansen, Møller and Togeby 2002; Gulbrandsen et al. 2002; Mastekaasa 2004). We also know that economic, political and social elites are to a large extent recruited from upper class or upper middle class families (Putnam 1976). Even if homogeneity of class origin is not in itself a sufficient manifestation of elite unity, it may nonetheless foster political or ideological unity. It is natural to assume that the adult political outlook would bear the marks of a person's social origins, but as already noted by Putnam (1976, 22), studies from several countries have demonstrated that parent's occupation or education have little consistent relationship to current political opinions or behaviour: "The implication would seem to be that a leader's views are influenced less by the social circumstance of his youth than by adult roles and affiliations." This conclusion was corroborated in a study of Norwegian economic, political and social elites. It showed that the class background of the individual elite persons explains very little of the variation in elite ideological attitudes (Gulbrandsen and Engelstad 2005). Far more important was the elite person's institutional and sector affiliation.

Nonetheless, it is possible that, within a particular institution, social homogeneity concerning class origin can stimulate mutual accommodation of ideological opinions among the persons occupying the formal leadership positions. In line with this idea, I expect that an elite group, whose members are drawn predominantly from a narrow range of social classes, will be more cohesive than one whose members have highly diverse social origins.

*Hypothesis 1A: The more similar the class background of members of an elite group, the more homogeneous they are concerning ideological opinions.*

Social classes are, however, broad categories exhibiting considerable social diversity. This diversity may undermine the development of similar orienta-

tions and outlooks. The upper and perhaps also the upper middle classes may be an exception, however, because these classes are smaller and their members often live in the same geographical areas (Ljunggren 2010). As a result, members of such small and concentrated classes may know each other personally or be related to each other. Such circumstances, in turn, can facilitate mutual accommodation and integration. Moreover, according to some scholars, persons raised in upper and upper middle class families acquire a distinct culture or ethos, which fosters confidence in matters of behaviour and taste (Bourdieu 1984). The naturalness that follows from this confidence can facilitate mutual adjustment and promote cohesion among members in an elite group.

*Hypothesis 1B: The more upper/upper middle class background is prevalent among members of an elite group, the less diverse the elite group is concerning ideological opinions.*

### Educational Background

Elite persons are also exposed to common socialization experiences by attending *the same educational institutions*. This can ensure similar training, foster the same professional outlook, and facilitate personal contacts and friendships. Schools influence students by what is taught and by what is learned. While young people are studying to become economists, lawyers, engineers and priests, they are moulded by the curricula, by subjects they are taught, by values communicated to them by teachers, and by interactions with their fellow students. Gradually they adopt the values, the world-views and ideologies that are common to all those aspects of educational environment.

Several institutions of higher education are also preparing their students for entry into particular professions. A vital part of this preparation is socialisation to professional values and codes of conduct. When the students graduate and enter their profession, they are, therefore, already familiar with these values and norms. I believe that all these socializing processes pave the way for the integration of those who end up as leaders in particular sectors or institutions.

*Hypothesis 2: The degree of ideological integration or similarity in an elite group varies positively with the percentage of the members of the group having the same educational background.*

### The Significance of Age Groups

Personal interaction and group cohesion within organizations may be particularly prevalent among persons belonging to the same age group. Anthropological studies have demonstrated that members of several developing societies are organized into age groups that operate as independent collective actors (Eisenstadt 1956; Kurimoto and Simonse 1998). In advanced societies, age groups are

less salient, but as Riley (1986) notes, even in modern Western societies similarity of age may stimulate similar attitudes and create a basis for community, especially within the educational system and within certain careers.

The presence of age groups varies with the type of career system. In the literature it is common to distinguish between *closed and open career systems* (Sørensen 1986). In closed career systems, the positions are closed in the sense that the incumbents cannot be arbitrarily dismissed. Vacancies occur only when incumbents choose to change position or leave the organization. Those persons who control the access to the positions can decide who will fill the vacancies, but not when a particular position becomes vacant. Closed career systems are, according to Sørensen (1986), typical of bureaucracies and “internal labour markets” where individual jobs are connected to each other on a job ladder. New entrants are usually recruited at the bottom of a career ladder, frequently directly from the educational institutions, and are then gradually promoted up the ladder when vacancies occur at the next level. As will be demonstrated below, several elite groups in our study operate in such closed career systems.

In open career systems, the positions or jobs are open for any candidate who meets particular qualification requirements. The jobs in such systems are not connected to each other in career ladders, and recruitment is often “lateral”. Thus while in closed career systems the employees on the same level tend to be of same age, in open career systems such similarity is rare. One reason for this is that the entrants in closed systems are recruited directly from the respective educational institutions. Another reason is that in closed career systems it takes similar length of time for all the employees before they are promoted to the next level (if they are promoted at all). The implication of this dynamics is that those persons who end up being promoted to the top leader positions in closed systems tend to belong to the same age group.

In line with Riley (1986), I expect that such age group similarity fosters similar ideas and ideological leanings. Members of the age groups follow each other through their respective careers and life courses and often become well-acquainted or even friends. As a result, they contact each other and interact frequently. Against this background, I expect that members of elite groups who are similar in age will manifest more ideological cohesion than members of elite groups who belong to different age groups.

*Hypothesis 3: The more similar members of an elite group are in age, the less diverse their ideological leanings and opinions.*

### Tenure in Organizations

Cohesion is also generated by leaders' shared experiences resulting from working within and rising through the ranks in the same institution, organization or sector, independent of their age when first entering the institution. Firstly, as

new recruits entering the institution, they are objects of similar attempts to form them into “good citizens”. They are moulded to certain standards of work, norms, work habits and even basic views characteristic of the organization, which was repeated every time they rose to a new level within the organization. Such organizational socialization promotes integration of professional attitudes, and probably also fosters similar ideological orientations, independently of the extent of interaction between the various leaders in the respective institutions or organizations. Secondly, elite integration is also enhanced by the networks of personal communication, trust and friendship between the ascending leaders as they gradually climb the organisational hierarchies. The greater the interaction between leaders, the more they would comprehend each other’s attitudes, and the greater the likelihood they would be ready to coordinate activities.

The effect of these processes of organizational socialization and mutual influence is probably stronger among the long-term members of an elite group, institution and/or organization. The Leadership Study does not contain information about the time spent in the present institution/organization, but it does ask leaders how many years they have held their leadership positions. It is probable that the impact of the described processes on the elites’ ideological attitudes is strengthened the longer their tenure as leaders. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is suggested:

*Hypothesis 4: The longer on average that members of an elite group have held their positions as top leaders, the more similarity the members of the group exhibit concerning their ideological orientation.*

## Data and Method

The sample of top leaders in the Leadership Study was constructed on the basis of a so-called “position” method, i.e. we included those persons who occupy the most important leadership positions in twelve areas of Norwegian society: (1) the church, (2) the State administration, (3) culture, (4) mass media, (5) private business, (6) cooperative enterprises, (7) public business enterprises, (8) organizations, (9) universities and research institutes, (10) police and the judicial system, (11) military services, and (12) politics.<sup>1</sup>

Within each of these sectors we selected various categories of organizations. In some of the areas, the main institutions or organizations are organized as hierarchies. In these areas we selected the highest positions within the organizational hierarchy. Within the Church, for instance, we selected all bishops

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<sup>1</sup> In the political sector, members of the *Storting* (the Norwegian Parliament), leaders of the political parties as well as members of the Cabinet and their political secretaries were selected.

and then all rectors, but also included leaders of the Church council. Similarly, in the military services we included top leaders on the three highest levels of command, treating each level of leaders as a separate elite group. In other areas, especially those without a similar organizational unity, we chose top leaders of the main organizations. For instance, in the area of culture, we included top leaders of the main national museums, theatres and orchestras, the members of the Arts Council of Norway, as well as leaders of the main artist organizations. Altogether, we interviewed top leaders from 49 subgroups or sectors (cf. Appendix 1 for a list of the groups). Personal interviews were held with 1,710 top leaders, which represent 87 per cent of those approached for interview. In the statistical analyses reported below, the 49 elite groups are the units of analysis.

As indicator of the leaders' ideological orientation, we used a "public/private" index including questions measuring the extent to which the individual leaders endorse some main properties of the welfare state model. We asked the leaders whether they agreed with the following four statements: (1) "It is more important to extend public services than to reduce taxes"; (2) "In Norway one should put stronger emphasis upon privatisation and a smaller public sector"; (3) "The state influence on private business should be reduced"; (4) "In Norway we have gone far enough in the reduction of income inequalities". The index is based on the group mean of the evaluations of the four statements and ranges from 1 to 4, with 4 indicating full support for the public sector and policies for levelling incomes, while 1 indicates that the leaders favour a smaller public sector, more privatisation and a curtailing of the state power over private business. The reliability of index is high (Cronbach's alpha 0.83).

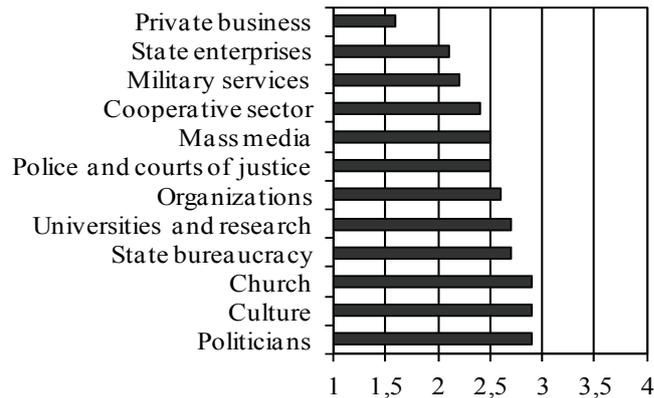
Figure 1, which presents the mean score of each of the twelve elite sectors on the public-private index, shows that most of the sectors cluster around the midpoint value (2.5) on the index. Top leaders within private business distinguish themselves by being much in favour of private solutions, reduced taxes, and a termination of measures aimed at reduction of income inequalities. On the other side, we see that the top leaders within the culture sector and the Church are much more in favour of the welfare state. These findings indicate that the basic functions, purposes and values of the various institutions influence the ideological orientation of the top leaders within these institutions.

I have also computed the mean score and standard deviation on the public-private index for all 49 subgroups. The standard deviation on the public-private index of each group, indicating *degree of diversity of ideological opinion* within the group, is used as the dependent variable in the statistical analyses.

*Class* of origin is constructed on the basis of information about the father's occupation, or mother's occupation where there is no information about the father. The class index has ten categories, with the value 1 indicating that the

father (or mother) of the elite in question was a leader of a business enterprise, and the value 10 showing that the parent was an unskilled worker.<sup>2</sup> I have treated the variable as continuous, and for each elite group I have computed the mean score and the standard deviation on this class variable. The standard deviation on the class variable indicates the degree of diversity (or similarity) within the group as to class background.

Figure 1: Norwegian Elite Sectors/Groups Located Along the Private-Public Index



To measure the extent to which members of the various elite groups have a *similar education*, I have calculated within each group the percentage of leaders with the same type and level of education.<sup>3</sup> The standard deviation of age within each subgroup measures to what extent these elite groups are also homogeneous with respect to *age*. In the analyses I have also included the elite

<sup>2</sup> See Gulbrandsen et al. (2002) for a more detailed description of this index. The coding categories were the following:

- (i) Managers of private companies
- (ii) University lecturers, professors, professionals (“akademikere” in Norwegian)
- (iii) Civil engineers and managers/leaders in public sector
- (iv) Middle-level employees on the in private companies
- (v) Middle-level employees in the public sector
- (vi) Shopkeepers and managers of small businesses
- (vii) Lower salaried staff
- (viii) Farmers, fishermen and similar
- (ix) Skilled workers
- (x) Non-skilled workers

<sup>3</sup> The index for education is rather detailed and was constructed by Statistics Norway. It takes into account the level and the kind of education (e.g. field of studies). Group homogeneity with respect to education implies that the members of an elite group have achieved both a similar level of education and followed a similar track.

groups' mean score on the age variable. The average *tenure* within each elite group measures the average length of incumbency of the top leaders. A statistical description of the dependent and independent variables is given in Table 1, while Table 2 shows the bivariate correlations between the variables.

In order to test the hypotheses formulated in the preceding section I have carried out a multivariate analysis (OLS-regression) relating the degree of similarity of ideological attitudes within the elite groups (measured by the standard deviation on the left-right index) to the explanatory variables (cf. Table 3). I have omitted the variable "tenure" since Table 2 shows that this variable is not significantly related to ideological diversity/cohesion. As the number of members varies between the individual elite groups, a weighting procedure was applied in connection with the statistical analyses (both the correlation analyses and the multivariate analyses) were conducted.

## Findings

Table 1 shows that the mean standard deviation on the public private index (the measure of ideological diversity) is 0.67. Closer inspection of the data demonstrates that the degree of similarity of ideological attitudes is strongest within the elite group of generals and admirals (0.18) and among owners of large private companies who are also CEOs (0.28) or chairmen of the board (0.39) of their company. The degree of similarity regarding ideological opinions is also relatively high among leaders of the Church Council (0.38) and among bishops (0.40). The dispersion on the private-public index is widest, as expected, among leaders of political parties and the members of parliament. The degree of similarity as to ideological attitudes is otherwise smallest among chief editors (0.89) and leading journalists in mass media (0.88), and among top leaders in the Research Council of Norway (0.89).

Table 1: Summary Statistics on Elite Characteristics

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Ideology, mean	2.5	1.4	3.4
Ideology, std. dev.	0.7	0.2	1.1
Class, mean	4.9	1.9	7.1
Class, std. dev.	2.7	0.7	3.5
Perc. with same education	24	5	100
Age, mean	52	43	60
Age, std. dev.	6.8	2.8	12.2
Tenure, std. dev.	5.5	1.0	10.9

Source: Norwegian Leadership Study 2000.

The mean class background within the elite groups is 4.9, which means that most of the elite groups have a high average class background. As follows from the operational definition of class, the owners of large of private companies who are also CEOs are located on the top of the class ladder (1.9). The mean class position is also high among the Supreme Court judges (2.7), top leaders of large private law firms (3.3), and bishops (3.5). The mean class level is low among chairmen of the board of large cooperatives (7.1), leaders of the political parties (7.1), brigadiers/flag commanders (6.4), and rectors of universities and university colleges (6.3). This finding corroborates Putnam's law of increasing disproportion (1976: 33-37) stating that the share of individuals with a higher class background increases with the level in the political hierarchy, i.e. that ministers have a higher class background than leading parliamentarians, backbenchers, party activists, etc., in descending order.

It is noticeable that elites at the top of those sectors which are characterized by closed career systems (see more about this below) tend to be recruited from higher social class backgrounds than elites on the next-lower hierarchical levels. For instance, while the Supreme Court judges are recruited from the upper echelons of the class structure, the presiding judges of superior courts have a mean class rank which is clearly lower (5.3). Similarly, bishops rank higher (3.5) than rectors (5.2), and generals/admirals higher (4.5) than major generals/rear-admirals (5.3). These patterns seem to indicate that, to a large extent, originating from the upper or upper middle classes is an advantage for acquiring a top leadership position within the judicial system, the Church and the military services.

The mean standard deviation on the class variable is 2.7. The degree of similarity concerning class background is strongest among generals and admirals (0.71), owner-managers (1.05), Supreme Court judges (1.63), bishops (1.84), and ambassadors (1.88). As we just saw, most of these groups are also characterized by a high mean rank on the class ladder. The degree of similarity is smallest among top leaders in sports organizations (3.49), members of the National Arts Council (3.31), CEOs in the state enterprises (3.24), and CEOs in the mass media (3.23)

On average, 24 per cent of various elite group members have the same education. Similar education is prevalent, not surprisingly, within the Church, within the military services and within the police and the courts of justice.

The age distribution is least dispersed among generals and admirals (2.82) and major generals and rear admirals (2.80), and among leaders of the Church Council (3.05), ambassadors (3.57), and chief justices of county courts (4.33). The standard deviation for age is highest among chairs of the board of state enterprises (12.18), top leaders of non-profit organizations (11.41), mayors in the largest municipalities (9.95), members of parliament (9.36), chairs of the board of large cooperatives (8.79), top leaders of private law firms (7.96),

leaders of private culture enterprises (7.92), and editors in the mass media (7.86).

Mean tenure within the groups is 6.7 years, but is particularly high in the following elite groups: the business owners who also are chairs of the board of their companies (13 years), leaders of the Church Council (12), chairs of the board of private companies (11), leading senior journalists (11), and members of the National Arts Council (11). Low mean tenure is prevalent among the top leaders in the military services (1, 3 and 3 respectively in the three groups of higher military officers), among vice-presidents in state enterprises (2.5), and among ambassadors (3).

Earlier in this paper, I distinguished between closed and open career systems. Is it possible to identify these career systems in the sectors or institutions to which the various elite groups belong? If I use a low standard deviation of the age variable within an elite group as an indicator of a closed career system, the Church, the military services and the Foreign Ministry all seem to have closed career systems, which fits with common knowledge about these three institutions. The much higher standard deviation among non-profit organizations indicates that within this sector the career system is quite open. If we subtract mean tenure from mean age within each elite group, we get another indicator of an open career system – the mean age at which the top leader obtained his position. Using this indicator, mass media and the culture sector also appear to have open career systems. In both of these sectors young and talented persons have a good chance to obtain top positions, bypassing older, but not necessarily less qualified candidates.

The correlation matrix in Table 2 demonstrates that the degree of ideological integration (or diversity) within the elite groups is statistically related both to (1) the mean score on the class level variable, (2) the percentage of the members in the elite groups having the same education, and to (3) the degree of age diversity. Firstly, these bivariate correlations indicate that the more members of an elite group are recruited from the upper classes, the less ideologically diverse and more ideologically integrated they are. Secondly, the more leaders in an elite group have the same educational background, the less diverse their ideological attitudes. Thirdly, the more members of a group are of a similar age, the more the group is ideologically integrated. Since the mean and the standard deviation of the public-private (ideology) index are based upon the answers to the same questions, as expected, these two variables correlate strongly.

The degree of ideological diversity is not, however, significantly related to the degree of diversity in class background, which implies that hypothesis 1A is not supported. Similarly, neither mean of age nor mean length of incumbency are related to the degree of ideological integration.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix (Pearson's r) for the Elite Variables Included in the Analyses (weighted)

	Ideology standard dev.	Ideology mean	Class, mean	Class standard dev.	Percentage with same education	Age standard dev.	Mean of age	Tenure standard dev.
Ideology standard dev.	1.00							
Ideology mean	0.52***	1.00						
Class, mean	0.21***	0.38***	1.00					
Class standard dev.	0.18	-0.0004	0.44***	1.00				
Percentage with same Education	-0.32*	-0.009	-0.15	-0.21***	1.00			
Age standard dev.	0.28*	0.05	0.11	-0.03	-0.49***	1.00		
Mean of age	-0.17	0.008	-0.19	-0.25	0.47***	-0.40***	1.00	
Tenure standard dev.	0.17	0.02	-0.15	-0.02	-0.20	0.37**	0.30*	1.00

Source: Norwegian Leadership Study 2000.

Previous studies have shown that elite persons' ideological opinions are only negligibly influenced by their social origin (Gulbrandsen and Engelstad 2005). In contrast, in Table 2 we can see that on the elite group level, mean class level of the group members is significantly related to the groups' mean location along the private-public index. The more members of an elite group are recruited from lower classes, the more the group is located to the left in the ideological landscape. In addition, as Table 2 shows, the extent to which members have a similar educational background is strongly and negatively correlated with the variable measuring the age distribution within the elite groups (Pearson's  $r$  is -0.48). This finding implies that in elite groups where the members have the same type of education they are also similar of age. This relationship may indicate that organizations which recruit predominantly from one type of education have a closed career system. Such a system entails that each new cohort of graduates entering the organization will have about the same age, resulting in same-age cohorts also on the higher hierarchical levels of the organization.

Table 3: Degree of Ideological Cohesion/Dispersion Among Elite Groups.  
OLS regression. Non-standardized Estimates.  
Standard Error in Parentheses. Weighted.

	<i>Estimates</i>
Intercept	0.172 (0.2437)
Class std. dev.	-0.026 (0.065)
Class mean	0.079** (0.023)
Share of leaders with same education	-0.172 (0.129)
Age std. dev.	0.013 (0.014)
Age mean	0.003 (0.006)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.25
N	49

Source: Norwegian Leadership Study 2000.

Table 3 shows the results of a multivariate analysis including the following independent variables: (i) class diversity, (ii) the elite group members' mean score on the class variable, (iii) the share of group members with same education, (iv) age diversity and (v) mean age of the group members. The analysis shows that when controlling for the other variables, only one of the independent variables is significantly related to ideological integration (measured by the standard deviation on the private-public index), namely the mean score of the elite group members on the class variable. Age diversity and similarity of education is no longer statistically related to ideological diversity/cohesion. Ac-

cordingly, in the analysis presented in Table 3 there is no support for the hypotheses 1A, 2, 3 and 4.

In order to control for the elite groups' location along the ideological left-right continuum, I have also carried out a separate analysis including the elite groups' mean score on the ideology variable. The result of this analysis is not reported here. In this model, the mean score on the class variable still is significantly related to ideological integration (on 5 per cent level), albeit the statistical relationship is weak.

## Discussion

Elite cohesion has been a central topic within research on elites. In this paper I have set out to test theoretical assumptions about factors that promote integration within elite groups. I have attempted to test these ideas through an empirical strategy concentrating upon elite groups as units of analysis and using variables aggregated from individual level data on elites. This implies that the variables are treated as properties of the elite groups. Such empirical strategy is not without problems. For example, the N in the statistical analyses is very small making it difficult to obtain robust significant results.

Overall, only one of the hypotheses – Hypothesis 1B – is corroborated by the analyses. As expected, an upper class/upper middle class origin among the members seems to foster ideological similarity or cohesion to a larger extent than a lower class background. This finding is valid independently of where an elite group is located on the ideological right and left continuum. For instance, bishops are to a large extent recruited from the upper and upper middle class, but it is worth noting that their views are located to the left of the ideological spectrum.

How can we explain these findings? I suggest that cohesion is caused by socialization within the main organizations and formal institutions within each elite sector. The fact that the ideological leanings of individual leaders are primarily explained by their sector affiliation indicates that these leaders have been socialized to adopt the basic values and orientations of “their” institution or organization.

In each elite sector there are various institutions and organizations that were originally created in order to pursue specific goals or to perform particular social functions. To secure the performance of these functions, complex systems of interrelated norms proscribing or prescribing certain action have been established or have evolved. To accomplish the purposes of the individual institutions and organizations, their leaders have been given authority by specific principals – for instance voters, members, business owners. When exercising this authority, the leaders are both answerable to the principals and bound to follow the basic institutional norms. To shoulder these responsibilities, the

new leaders have to internalize the basic goals and values of their institution or organization.

In several sectors, the necessary socialization of candidates for top leadership positions is accomplished through formally designed career systems. Previous research on private firms has shown that the main purpose of career systems, particular closed career systems, is to select leaders who can work smoothly together (Gulbrandsen 1999). By letting candidates for leadership positions work their way up through the ranks of the organization, the employers can continually monitor their behaviour. In this way, the employers can ensure that those who finally reach to the top have accepted the organization's philosophy and the appropriate norms of interaction. Similarly, Kanter (1977) has shown that homogeneity in a top leader group is an intended outcome, and that top positions frequently are surrounded by uncertainty. In her own words: "Bureaucracies are social inventions that supposedly reduce the uncertain to the predictable and routine. Yet much uncertainty remains – many situations in which individual people rather than impersonal procedures must be trusted" (Kanter 1977: 48). She argues that this uncertainty causes top managers to emphasize trust, loyalty and mutual understanding based on shared values when recruiting their top aides. This strong emphasis upon trust is socially exclusive. The top leaders develop tight inner circles, excluding strangers, and they keep control in the hands of socially homogeneous peers (Kanter 1977, 49).

Socialization to a set of shared values is also important within the public sector, particularly in the military services and in public administration. Incumbents of top positions in the public sector are required to be politically neutral and loyal to the political leadership. Democracy entrusts these public institutions with the control of significant power resources, but at the same time makes them accountable to democratically legitimised politicians. Typically, both the military services and important parts of the public administration therefore are characterized by more or less closed career systems.

It is possible that leaders who have grown up in upper or upper middle class families have acquired qualities that make them particularly suited to go through the socialization process in the respective elite organizations. Their upbringing, for example, may instil a career ambition, which may give them a strong motivation to adopt the world view and the behavioural style necessary to climb the ladders of the particular organization. Or, they may develop a capacity for social learning that facilitates the adoption of manners and opinions essential for a career in the specific institution. Accordingly, leaders' willingness and aptitude to become socialized to the standards, beliefs and models of their respective institutions may bring them to the top of the institution. The overall effect of these processes is that leaders develop similar ideological orientations.

An alternative explanation is that similar upbringing in the upper or upper middle classes encourages mutual ideological adaptation. It has also been claimed that having a similar upper class origin involves similar social experiences and a shared cultural capital, and that such elites often also have mutual acquaintances. These connections help ease communication, foster mutual understanding, and encourage professional collaboration between the members of a particular elite group. In other words, ideological cohesion is promoted through interpersonal processes of mutual adjustment facilitated by a similar upbringing.

A third and final explanation for the recruitment of individuals from upper class backgrounds to top positions may finally lie in additional qualities that elite selectorates consider as necessary for these positions that are not acquired through socialization within the respective institutions but are results of the upbringing in the upper/upper middle class. For instance, selectorates may search for candidates with high levels of self-confidence, the ability to appear publicly, or an unassuming way of relating to other people. They may also look for a particular cultural repertoire or for evidence of the candidate's belonging to an influential network. Such class-biased selection has been detected by Hartman (2000) in a study of recruitment of top leaders in private businesses in Germany. As a result of class bias, leaders within a particular elite institution become similar to each other in their social origin, orientations and behaviour.

## Conclusion

The analyses presented show that (ideological) cohesion is strongest in those elite groups where the mean of members with upper/upper middle class background is highest. There are several possible explanations of this finding. Persons from the upper/upper middle classes can have qualities that superiors consider significant for holding top leader positions; they may be more psychologically and socially prepared to pass through socialization processes necessary for admittance to elite groups; and they can acquire class based social skills and connections that facilitate mutual communication and accommodation. Probably all these factors are relevant in explaining the findings.

## Appendix 1: List of Elite Sectors and Groups

### (I) *The church*

1. Bishops, 2. Rectors, 3. Leaders of the Church council

### (II) *The State administration*

4. Permanent secretaries in the ministries, 5. General directors in the ministries, 6. Chiefs of State Services, 7. Regional commissioners and ombudsmen, 8. Ambassadors

- (III) *Culture*  
9. Top leaders of cultural institutions, 10. Members of the National Arts Council, 11. Leaders of artist organizations, 12. Leaders of private culture enterprises
- (IV) *Mass media*  
13. Chief editors, 14. CEOs in mass media, 15. Editors, 16. Leading senior journalists
- (V) *Private business*  
17. Chairmen of the board in private companies, 18. Chief Executive Officers/Managing directors, 19. Main owner and chairman of the board, 20. Main owner and CEO, 21. Vice-presidents in private companies
- (VI) *Cooperative enterprises*  
22. Chairmen of the board in large cooperatives, 23. CEOs in cooperatives
- (VII) *State enterprises*  
24. Chairmen of the board in state enterprises, 25. CEO in state enterprises, 26. Vice presidents in state enterprises
- (VIII) *Organizations*  
27. Top leaders in employer associations, 28. Labour union leaders, 29. Top leaders of industry associations, 30. Top leaders of non-profit organizations, 31. Top leaders of national sports federations
- (IX) *Universities and research institutes*  
32. Rectors of universities and university colleges, 33. Deans at the universities, 34. Leaders of large research institutes, 35. Top leaders in the Research Council of Norway, 36. Top leaders within other parts of the research system
- (X) *Police and the judicial system*  
37. Chiefs of police, 38. Supreme Court judges, 39. Presiding judges of superior courts, 40. Chief justices of county courts and stipendiary magistrate's courts, 41. Top leaders of the prosecuting authorities, 42. Top leaders of large, private law firms
- (XI) *Military services*  
43. Generals/admirals, 44. Major generals/rear-admirals, 45. Brigadiers/Flag commanders
- (XII) *Politicians*  
46. Members of Parliament, 47. Parliamentary secretaries, 48. Leaders of the political parties, 49. Mayors in the largest municipalities

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