

CLASS AWARENESS IN ICELAND

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ABSTRACT

In this paper new survey data are used to study class awareness in Iceland. Responses to two subjective class questions are analyzed to test a synthesis of Weber's theory of class and reference group theory. The findings, and secondary data, reveal that Icelanders are well aware of class and class division. A great majority recognizes and understands class terms, and is willing to assign themselves to a class. Consistent with Weber, Icelanders have a fairly clear perception of their class position, evidenced by a strong relationship between subjective class and economic class, and class indicators. In accordance with reference group theory, a significant 'middle class' tendency is revealed at all levels of the class structure. Hence, materialist factors are attenuated by reference groups. Icelanders also have more of a 'middle class' view of their class position and see it, on average, as higher than people in most other countries. Lastly, Weberian class analysis is proposed as the best available framework within to study class awareness in late modernity.