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Class, Status and Consumption Pattern: Evidence From Urban China

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Abstract
This study used the1988-2009 household survey data of S. city. It mainly does research on the impact that class and status have on consumption pattern. It was found that what influence consumption expenditure is status, but not class; the eating habits of different classes are relatively stable, so what influences the outer consumption is status but not class. Both class and status have significant impact on culture consumption. Hence, class and status have different explanation effect on consumption pattern, but the degree of class structuration has close relationship with consumption pattern. When it is high, not only the consumption culture of different classes is different, but also is the consumption culture of the group of different status. In the development of social economy, with the consumption culture individualized the impact that status has on consumption pattern decreases.

Key words: Class; Status; Consumption pattern

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1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

1.1 The Distinction Between the Class and Status
At earlier times Weber did research on the distinctions between the concepts of class and status. He thought that class is determined by "the state of market", while status is ranked according to people's social reputation and life styles. These two concepts are related concerning experience variable, but the natures of them are totally different. They are two independent perspectives, so they should have different explanation effects. From Weber's analysis, what influence people's life style and consumption is mainly status but not class. Besides, Weber also found the influence that social change has on the relationships of class and status. Weber (1978) held that when social changes happen, class takes the dominant position; when the society is stable, the importance of status group stands out. The social mobility and social change will reduce the distance of status groups. Later on the researches were done based on Thorstein B. Veblen and Pierre Bourdieu's works, and Weber's view above was almost neglected (DiMaggio, 1994). With the development of industrialization, consumption activities become more individualized, and some scholars bring forward that the concepts of class and status that Weber mentioned should be made a distinction (Grusky, 1994). Neoweberlist, Goldthrope holds as usual that class still has explanation effect in modern society, but when studying different social phenomenon, we should make a distinction between class and status. What influence the risk of unemployment of people, work prospect, and political activities is mainly class, while what influence culture consumption pattern is variable status (Chan & Goldthrope, 2007).

1.2 Reproduction Theory
The basic logic of Pierre Bourdieu's reproduction theory is that one's class influences its habitus, and its habitus defines its consumption practice, and inverse consumption pattern produced the class boundaries (Bourdieu, 1984). So although he agrees with Weber's view about the distinction between class and status, he still holds that these two are not independent from each other, and status is just the symbolic reflection of class. From

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Grusky's (1994) view, Bourdieu's view means that the social members of the same class must share the same inclination, preference, and the members of the same class and status group members overlap.

In order to resolve the long lasting antinomy of the social science: subjectivism and objectivism, Bourdieu introduced the concept of habitus, which is that habitus originates from social system, and embodies in human itself. So on the one hand, habitus is the result of socialization of different classes, on the other hand, habitus can reproduce the social construction. From this, he analyzed the relationship of social class and consuming practice. He thought that life style is the systematical production of habitus, and class and status space and life style space coordinates. In Bourdieu's theory, as the existence of habitus, class and status are overlapped and undividable. Furthermore, what influences the culture consumption most is culture capital, and what influences material consumption most is financial capital.

According to the analysis above, let's assume the following hypothesizes:

Hypothesis 1: status hypothesis

According to Weber's view, what influences people's consumption pattern is status but not class, so the impact of a family's social status on consumption pattern is more significant than that of class. However, in the process of social changes, the explanation effect of status goes down.

Hypothesis 2: structural homology hypothesis

Bourdieu thought class structure, status structure and consumption space have conformity, so class and status have the same explanation effect on consumption pattern. Structural homology means the high level of class structuration.

2. VARIABLES AND MODELS

2.1 The Data-Set

This study uses the 22 phases of the urban household survey data collected by the National Bureau of Statistics of China over the period 1988-2009 in the city of S. Households who are selected by sampling with probability proportionate to size(PPS) in the surveys are required to keep records of their income and expenditure. Hence, this data-set contains detailed information about the categories of expenditure and the head of household's individual characteristics for urban households. The total sample size within the period of 22 years was 6203 households.

2.2 Variables

2.2.1 Dependent Variables

Dependent variables are the total consumption outgoing, eating habits that elaborates consumption taste and culture of this class, eating outside costs, appearance consumption, and culture consumption expenditure (Tomlinson & Warde, 1993).

2.2.2 Independent Variables: Family Social Status

At present, the measurement of one's social status is the measurement of one's profession prestige. Family social status is the combination of family economic capital, human human capital and social capital, and a lot of researchers think the profession, education degree and income of the couples should be included. According to the researches of Hanson, Jimerson and some other researchers, firstly rank professions and education degree (Jimerson & Egeland, 2000; Hanson & Chen, 2007). More specifically, the education degree can be divided into 8 ranks, which start with the not attending school to postgraduate, and evaluate them from 1 to 8. As for professions, the unemployed, workers, commercial service staff, clients, professional technicians, and supervisors are according 6 ranks and evaluate from 1 to 6. In the samples, there are 5831 couples, which takes 94% of the samples, and for the rest 6% of the sample, we use their own education degree and profession as their consorts'. Then we calculate the average number of the education degree rank of the couple, the profession rank of the couple and family income, and transform Z value to T value. For the result of this, the minimize of the positive fraction is 12.77, and the maximum of it is 96.26.

2.3 The Analytical Strategy

On the basis of the multiple regression analysis models above, we add the family social status variable to check Weber's proposition. Chan and Goldthorpe suggest that on the condition that the social status and income, and educational modulus are not so high, we can add more models at the same time to analyze (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Goldthorpe, 2007).

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Firstly, we did multicollinearity test for all models that we have added family social status. The variance inflation factor (VIF) of family income and household education are both fewer than 2.7, and the VIF of class and status are under 6, so there is no serious multicollinearity problems. Comparing to the model that social status variable is not added, the most of following models don't change the significance of income and education degree.

The result of model 1 shows that the household consumption of 1988-1993 presents the character of popularity, and class and status don't have significant impact on consumption expenditure. The result of model 2 and model 3 show what influences consumption expenditure most is status variable but not class. After add status variable to model 3, income and education have significant impact on consumption expenditure. From the influence factor of consumption expenditure, status has higher explanation effect.

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Table 1
The Multiple Regression Model of Consumption Expenditure

	Model 1 1988-1993	Model 2 1994-2001	Model 3 2002-2009
Sex	-0.014	0.015	0.051***
Age	-0.004**	-0.001	-0.000
Family size	-0.041***	-0.083***	-0.050***
Income logarithmic	0.724***	0.611***	0.596***
Years of schooling	0.004	0.005	0.014***
Unit (state-owned=1)	-0.080*	-0.050**	0.004
Industry (monopoly=1)	0.065**	0.037*	0.003
Professionals[a]	0.044	0.004	-0.040
Clients	0.002	0.021	-0.028
Manual workers	0.006	0.024	-0.025
The self-employed	.	-0.029	0.022
Other classes	0.128	0.045	0.041
Hukou (1=native populaton)			0.084***
Status	0.002	0.004**	0.003**
Constant	2.290***	3.581***	3.512***
Observations	600	1500	4103
Adjusted R^2	0.701	0.574	0.556

Note: Base categories (omitted variable in regression analyses) are the managers. For all models, year is controled as the dummy variable. * p< 0.1, ** p< 0.05, *** p< 0.01 (two-tailed tests).

Table 2 is multiple regression results of consumption expenditure which reflects the differences four life style and class taste. From the influence of eating outside, 1988-1993 class and status don't have significant influence on eating outside consumption expenditure, which shows that eating outside consumption expenditure of this period presents the character of popularity. The difference of different classes in 1994-2001 is obvious. Status has significant influence on eating outside consumption expenditure, which shows "structural homology", and also means the formation of "class structuration" as Giddens mentioned. The explanation effect of class goes down from 2002-2009, and status doesn't have any influence on eating outside consumption. From eating habits, the difference of classes still exist. In the first two periods, the structural homology stands out, and class has significant influence on poultry and eggs food consumption. Comparing to the first period, the higher the social status of a family is, the lower the poultry food consumption is. Since 2002, status doesn't have any influence on poultry food consumption. As for appearance consumption, status always has significant influence on it, but the influence effect reduces. From 1994 to 2001, both class and status have impact on appearance consumption. From the influence on the culture consumption, 1988-1993 neither class nor status has influence on culture consumption. In the later two periods, both class and status have influence on culture consumption, and the difference between classes keeps going further, and the explanation effect of status reduces.

Table 2
The Multiple Regression Model of Non-Durable Goods Consumption

Depended variable	Independent variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
		1988-1993	1994-2001	2002-2009
Eating outside consumption expenditure	Sex (female=1)(female=1)	-0.209	-0.049	0.219***
	Age	-0.072	0.067***	0.059***
	$Age^2/100$	0.059	-0.081***	-0.067***
	Family size	0.425***	0.139***	0.342***
	The per capita income logarithmic	1.394***	0.813***	1.308***
	Years of schooling	0.057	0.017	0.076***
	Unit (state-owned=1)	-0.244	0.004	-0.106
	Industry (monopoly=1)	0.064	-0.105*	0.164***
	Professionals[a]	0.033	0.385***	0.216
	Clients	0.089	0.538***	0.233*
	Manual workers	0.190	0.528***	0.136
	The self-employed	.	0.005	0.020
	Other classes	0.301	0.856***	0.313
	Household (1=household population)			0.420***
	Status	0.005	0.012*	-0.001
	Constant	-5.730**	-3.253***	-9.020***
	Adjusted R^2	0.256	0.182	0.273

To be continued

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Continued

Depended variable	Independent variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
		1988-1993	1994-2001	2002-2009
	Sex (Female=1)	-0.124	0.077***	0.004
	Age	-0.033	-0.016	0.005
	$Age^2/100$	0.047	0.020	-0.001
	Family size	0.149***	0.163***	0.240***
	The per capita income logarithmic	0.088	0.186***	0.213***
	Years of schooling	-0.009	0.005	0.003
	Unit (state-owned=1)	-0.117	0.030	0.036
	Industry (monopoly=1)	0.088	0.061**	-0.002
Poultry and eggs food consumption expenditure	Professionals[a]	0.114	-0.032	-0.131**
	Clients	0.252**	-0.077*	-0.128**
	Manual workers	0.343***	-0.008	-0.108*
	The self-employed	.	0.041	-0.022
	Other classes	0.675**	0.025	-0.015
	Household (1=household population)			0.110***
	Status	0.011*	-0.007***	-0.003
	Constant	6.797***	6.610***	5.659***
	Adjusted R^2	0.200	0.170	0.301

	Sex (Female=1)	0.033	-0.021	0.117***
	Year	0.055	-0.014	0.038***
	$Age^2/100$	-0.076*	0.006	-0.057***
	Family population	0.148***	0.210***	0.252***
	The per capita income logarithmic	0.969***	0.889***	0.877***
	Education year	0.019	0.008	0.019**
	Unit (state-owned=1)	0.425***	-0.048	-0.059*
	Field (monopoly=1)	0.019	0.023	0.035
Appearance consumption	Professionals[a]	-0.071	-0.200***	0.033
	Clients	0.133	-0.065	0.094
	Manual workers	0.197	-0.136	0.026
	The self-employed	.	-0.133	-0.070
	Other classes	0.054	-0.178	0.132
	Household (1=household population)			0.137***
	Status	0.016**	0.013***	0.007**
	The constant term	-4.214***	-1.342**	-2.443***
	Adjusted R^2	0.423	0.344	0.361
	Sex (Female=1)	-0.147	-0.133	0.000
	Year	0.039	0.179***	0.120***
	$Age^2/100$	-0.066	-0.196***	-0.147***
	Family population	0.335***	0.050	0.283***
	The per capita income logarithmic	1.801***	0.631***	0.651***
	Education year	0.083*	0.078**	0.110***
	Unit (state-owned=1)	-0.576**	0.417***	-0.270***
	Field (monopoly=1)	-0.086	-0.487***	0.017
Culture consumption	Professionals[a]	-0.030	-0.160	0.468**
	Clients	-0.205	-0.238	0.329*
	Manual workers	0.492	-0.066	0.376*
	The self-employed	.	-1.397**	0.151
	Other classes	-1.774***	0.668	0.934***
	Household (1=household population)			0.353***
	Status	0.023	0.050***	0.017**
	The constant term	-14.510***	-9.719***	-8.296***
	Adjusted R^2	0.162	0.157	0.117

Note: Base categories (omitted variable in regression analyses) are the managers. For all models, year is controled as the dummy variable. * p< 0.1, ** p< 0.05, *** p< 0.01 (two-tailed tests).

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CONCLUSION

From all the results above, what influence consumption expenditure is status but not class. The eating habits of a class group are relatively stable. Class has more explanation effect on eating outside consumption and poultry food consumption than status. What influences appearance consumption most is status but not class? Both class and status have significant impact on culture consumption. This is different from Chan and Goldthorpe's research. The coordination of class structure, status structure and consuming space structure that Bourdieu refers mainly reflects in 1994-2001. So structure homology and class structuralization are closely related. From Weber's view, when social changes happen, class takes the dominant position; when the society is stable, the importance of status group stands out. The result of statistical analysis shows that in the process of China social transformation, the influence effect that status has on consumption pattern is reducing. With the development social economy, consumption activities become more individualized, and the difference between classes and status groups will weaken. This almost coordinates with Weber's hypothesis. In 2002-2009, when the culture consumption was added to status variable, the difference between classes only reflects on managers and professional technicians. When it was added into status variable, there were differences between the managers, technicians, clients and manual workers. This means that status and class as two variables of different natures, when one variable is neglected, the reliability of the result will be influenced.

Therefore, class and status have different explanation effect on consumption patterns. But they are closely related with class structuration. Status and class as two variables of different natures, when one of them is neglected, the reliability of the result will be influenced. What influence consumption expenditure most is status but not class. The eating habits of a class group are relatively stable. Class has more explanation effect on eating outside consumption and poultry food consumption than status. What influences appearance consumption most is status but not class. Both class and status have significant impact on culture consumption. In 1994-2001, class structure, status structure and consuming space structure coordinate. So structure homology and class structuration are closely related. When the level of class structuration is high, not only the consumption culture of different classes is different, but also is the consumption culture of the group of different status. In the development of social economy, with the consumption culture individualized the impact that status has on consumption pattern decreases.

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