Class, Status and Lifestyle in PRC

This presentation aims at showing how social stratification in the People's Republic of China can be explained through a Weberian framework of Class and Status stratification.

Economic inequality has been the focus of much research on Chinese social stratification. Schemes based on income, employment status and nature of workplace have been used to analyze Chinese society in terms of Class stratification, even though the term used may not be ‘Class’.

However, there is a less explored side of Chinese social inequality. That is a hierarchy of Status which exists in terms of symbolic inequality as an order in which social esteem is distributed. This Status order exists in parallel to the economic stratification, although they are related in many aspects, and is reflected in social relationships such as friendship and marriage.

Using data from nationwide surveys, this research derives an occupational status measure from patterns of association between Chinese working adults. The same data is then used to demonstrate how aspects of lifestyle such as consumption and political participation relate differently to Class and Status stratification in China.