Class Structure and Income Inequality in Contemporary Bangladesh: A Comparative Observation with China

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Abstract: *This article is the analysis of a comparative study between Bangladesh and China; here China provides a good reference system for our understanding of the social structure and income inequality in Bangladesh. To describe the class structure of contemporary Bangladesh and China by constructing the EGP class scheme under neo-Weberian theoretical point of view, 2005 Labor Force Survey data (LFS2005) of Bangladesh and 2005 General Social Survey data (CGSS2005) of China are respectively used in this article. On that basis, the article focuses on the decisive influence of class location on individual income. The study finds that class location not only directly influences individual's source of income and the average income level of class groups but also structurally adjusts effects of individual characteristics (Such as gender, age, education) on the income within class groups.*

Since the independence in 1971, the economic and social developments of Bangladesh have made significant progress. At the same time, the structure of society as a whole has undergone tremendous changes; income inequality, a widening wealth gap and other issues are also emerged. In this situation what is the contemporary form of social structure for the characterization of class structure in Bangladesh? How is its socio-economic inequality for the characterization of income? What is the relation between class structure and income inequality? In this article, an attempt will take to answer these questions. Domestic academics paid little attention on the class structure and socio-economic inequality; related empirical researches based on large-scale survey data are also rare. Using the 2005 national labor force survey data conducted by Bangladesh National Bureau of Statistics and referring to analytical tools of neo-Weberian class classification frame and the paradigm of mainstream stratification research, this article expands the discussion of above issues.

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There are two reasons for choosing China as our reference: at first we can say that China and Bangladesh are all developing countries, both of them have zillions of population and high population density, stay at similar stage of social development and undergo huge social transformation. Secondly, since 1980s the two countries have begun to implement a market-oriented economic development strategy. Based on the logic of industrialization and freedom economic development, the evolution of social structure of the two countries may have some similarity. In short, for us, analysis of Chinese society who provides a more ideal state of reference which is the attempt to better understanding of social structure and inequality for Bangladesh. In this article to analyze the China part, Chinese General Social Survey of 2006 data has been used which is jointly conducted by Department of Sociology and Population, Renmin University of China and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Ministry of Social Sciences. The survey is a sample survey, conducted annually, nationwide sample of objects covering the vast majority of provinces, cities and rural individuals, the annual number of samples of about 10,000.

In Bangladesh, income inequality is a major problem. In economics, human capital theory provides an explanation for this, that is, human capital has market returns, it is the inequality of human capital that constitutes a direct source of income gap, and the most important manifestation of human capitals are education and work experience. Unlike emphasis on influence of the individual characteristics on income inequality in human capital theory, in sociology, especially in social stratification research, institutional and structural factors (such as regional, urban and rural areas, industry, occupation, etc.) are more favored by sociologists of all ages (Wang Tianfu and Cui Xiao Xiong, 2010, pp 5). They believe that institutional and structural factors in determining individual's income are more important and logically prior than individual characteristics.

Class is present as a structural position in society, based on specific criteria, the entire members of society can be divided into different class groups. Class location has a fundamental constraint on individual's material interests and life chances (Abdullah A, 1989). In this regard Olin Wright said, "Income is fundamentally determined by location within the structure of class relations rather than a cluster of individual

traits. The word 'determined' in this argument means two things. First, it means that location within class relations defines how individuals obtain a stream of income. Second, it means that one's location within the class structure determines the ways in which a variety of individual characteristics influence how much income one gets." (Olin Wright, 1979, PP.57) Wright's classic argument on the relationship between class position and income inequality constitutes the basis of our study; we benefit much from this argument.

1. CONSTRUCTION OF EGP CLASS SCHEMA: THEORY AND OPERATION

The class studies in sociology have a long history. Marx and Weber is respectively the founder of two schools' of class research. Unlike emphasis on the unique determinant of the ownership of means of production in Marxist tradition, Weberian tradition emphasizes life chance. In Weber, members of a class share the same life chances which are determined according to one's resources brought into the market (Max Weber, 1022, ed by Gunther Roth, 1968,pp 927-928) unlike emphasis on exploitation and antagonism of class relation in Marx. In Weber's view, class, status and political parties are all expression forms of the social power division. All of the two traditions have new versions in the contemporary era, Olin Wright and John Goldthorpe, respectively, as the neo-Marxist and neo-Weberian leader. Although some of the points in the two schools have emerged in the blend of trend, but between the two fundamental differences remain. In this article, we tend to adopt neo-Weberian class framework (EGP schema) to describe class structure of the two countries, because we just want a static picture of the two countries' social structure and relationship between the various classes rather than emphasizing the relationship of exploitation between the classes or conflict of interest.

EGP Schema is built by Goldthorpe which has a very wide range of applications as a class classification system in research of social stratification and mobility, its good empirical validity (including criterion-related validity and construct validity) has been continuously confirmed, this is the main reason of our choosing of the EGP schema to explain the social structure of Bangladesh and China. Goldthorpe used two key indicators to build EGP schema, they are occupation and employment status. At first he used employment status to divide

members of society into three groups: employers, self-employed and employees. Groups of employees constitute a majority of the population of socio-economic activities; the class location of employee group is further divided into three categories according to the employment relationship between employees and employers (Goldthorpe, 2007, pp 106-110). The three types of employment relationships are the service relationship, labor contract, and mixed relations. The employees stay in the first service relationship constitutes the upper service class. They have generous salary, steady work and more occupational promotion, main occupational groups of this class are managers and professionals; employees staying in labor contract relationship constitute the lower manual labor class, their wages are relatively lower, usually they don't have job security and advancement, main occupational groups are technical and non-technical workers, peasants and so on; employees stay in mixed relationship constitute the middle class, in the economic returns, job security and promotion opportunity, they all stay at the middle level, main occupational groups are lower supervisor, non-manual employees. It is noted that, Goldthorpe divide employers into the service class, because proportion of this group is so small that it can't constitute an independent class, (Goldthorpe Llewellyn, 1980/1987) they have much similarity with the managers and professionals.

According to Goldthorpe's two indicators-employment status, occupation and a certain operation programming, we respectively build an EGP class scheme for Bangladesh and China. Here it is noted that, the research samples of this article are socio-economic active population whose age are 15 years and above. Six EGP class categories and their respective proportion are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The proportion of two countries' class category (%)

	Bangladesh	China
Service class (Managerial/professional)	4.7	8.1
Self-employed	20.0	10.3
Routine non-manual (Clerical worker)	2.1	5.1
Routine non-manual (Sales/service worker)	9.0	11.0
Manual workers	12.5	20.4
Peasants	51.6	45.0
Total	100.0	100.0
N	60127	9456

Service class (Managerial/professional): Mainly including the employers, managers in the state administrative organs, enterprises and institutions; professionals and technicians. In Bangladesh, the percentage of this class is relatively low, only 4.7%, while China has a huge bureaucracy, and highly educated managers and professionals in larger quantities, so China has a higher proportion of service class (8.1%).

Self-employed: Mainly neither those who are neither employed nor employing others, the proportion of self-employed in Bangladesh is much higher than the class group of Chinese society (20.0% vs. 10.3%).

Routine non-manual (Clerical worker) class: those who are not in management positions, who do not work in professional and technical positions, but working in non-physical location, the so-called "low-level white-collar workers." The proportion of this class group is not high in both Bangladesh and China; they are all below 5%.

Routine non-Manual (Sales/service worker) class: This class is consisting of people who employed in low skilled jobs, laborers of small and medium shops, service workers, or low paid operators. In Bangladesh and China, the ratio of this category is around 10%.

Manual workers : Mainly the industrial workers engaged in manual form. They are the working class of Bangladesh; their work is mainly physical in nature. In Bangladesh, the proportion of this class is 12.5%, while in China is 20.4%.

Peasants: Those engaged in agricultural production or production-related manual works are peasant, the two countries have a large peasant class, both the proportion is 45% or more.

On the whole, there is respectively a huge amount of peasant class in the class structure of the two countries, this situation reflect social structure characteristics as the developing countries. The main differences between the two countries are: at first, proportion of self-employment in Bangladesh is much higher than in China; Second, China's service class and working class are much higher than those of Bangladesh. It can be said that the proportion of Chinese officials, the highly educated, high-level personnel is higher than Bangladesh. In addition, the higher

proportion of manual workers also shows that China's industrialization phase is ahead of Bangladesh, Bangladesh stays in the low-level industrialization stage.

2. AVERAGE INCOME OF SIX CLASSES: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

After using LFS2005 and CGSS2005 data respectively to build an EGP class schema for Bangladesh and China, we turn our analysis to the relationship between class location and income. We believe that the class location influences individual's income in two ways or paths: firstly, the class location determines the way that individual access to sources of income and thus determines the average level of income of different class groups; secondly, class location structurally adjusts effects of individual characteristics (such as gender, age, education) on income within the groups. In this part, we focus on the mean income of six classes.

It is noted that the monthly income of the members of Chinese society are obtained after conversion based on 2005 values of the exchange rate 1Taka = 0.125RMB.Table 2 shows that at Bangladesh, the monthly income of service class (employers, managers and professionals) is the highest, the non-manual clerical worker's income is almost same. Sales/service personnel, manual workers, and self-employed income is very close around 2300-2900Taka; peasant's income is distinctively lower than other classes. The situation of Bangladesh and China is almost same , major differences are only two: the first, there is a big income gap between service class and routine non-manual clerical workers in China; the second, China's self-employee's income is higher than sales and service staff and manual workers, which is the opposite of Bangladesh. A lot of China's self-employed and small business owners find huge opportunity to make wealth in the market economy (Lin Thunghong, 2010).

Further, we sort out overall members of society by monthly income and divide them into five grades, in order to observe the distribution of each class in the five equal grades. Table 3 shows that in Bangladesh, 80.9% (21.6%+59.3%) of the service class members are distributed in the highest and the second highest income grades; 70.8% of routine non-manual clerical workers are distributed in the highest two grades;

Table 2: The average monthly income of each class (unit : Taka)

	Bangladesh	China
Service class (Managerial/professional)	5649.93	10038.82
Self-employed	2347.57	7635.51
Routine non-manual (Clerical worker)	5177.36	8374.09
Routine non-manual (Sales/service worker)	2899.62	7068.35
Manual worker	2681.93	6471.61
Peasant	1084.18	2906.22
Total	1960.98	5201.76

the percentage of members of sales/service personnel, manual workers and the self-employed in five grades are more or less the same, there is no obvious aggregation. For farmers, only 11.8% (9.5% +2.3%) are in the highest grade, most of them are in the lowest, second lowest and middle grade. Chinese data shows the common trends like Bangladesh, but the extent of the gap between rich and poor are more extreme. In China, the service class and routine non-manual clerical workers are in the two highest grades; the vast majority of peasants stay in the two lowest grades (77.4%).

Table 3: Monthly income of each class group among quintile share (%)

	Lowest 20%	Lower 20%	Middle 20%	Higher 20%	Highest 20%	Total
Service class	7.2 (3.3)	7.5 (4.4)	4.3 (9.7)	21.6 (36.8)	59.3 (45.8)	100.0
Self-employed	21.1 (3.7)	23.8 (18.6)	18.2 (26.4)	21.7 (30.8)	15.2 (20.4)	100.0
Routine non-manual (Clerical worker)	7.2 (3.8)	7.4 (5.6)	14.6 (13.4)	18.7 (39.1)	52.1 (38.1)	100.0
Routine non-manual (Sales/service worker)	22.7 (7.1)	21.7 (12.8)	13.3 (21.7)	20.2 (37.4)	22.2 (20.9)	100.0
Manual workers	16.4 (8.8)	20.1 (10.9)	23.9 (21.6)	26.4 (39.0)	13.3 (19.7)	100.0
Peasants	26.4 (42.1)	33.5 (35.3)	28.5 (12.4)	9.5 (8.1)	2.3 (2.1)	100.0

Note : Chinese data is in parenthesis

Table 2 and table 3 show only the simple descriptive relations between class and income, it tells us that the income gaps between class groups are significantly large. Further, through analysis of variance, we can see how the class location influences the dependent variable income. Table 4 shows result of analysis of variance of income, for Bangladesh, the class variable explains 28% of the individual's income variation; in China, this proportion is 21%. From these two numbers, we can see that class variable explains more than 1/5 variation of individual's income in both the two countries.

Table 4: Analysis of variance of the income by class

	Partial SS	Df	R^2
Class(Bangladesh)	$2.32*10^{10}$	5	0.28
Class(China)	$7.14*10^{10}$	5	0.21

3. DECISIVE INFLUENCE OF CLASS ON INCOME

3.1 Direct Effect of Class on Income

The following analysis is the detailed effect of class variables on the income; we first constructed two regression models that monthly income is as the dependent variable. In the baseline model, the independent variables are gender, age, education, religion, work unit and region. On that basis, we further add class variable to the baseline model. from this analytical model, we can investigate the effect of class on income after controlling the other variables. Results show that in the baseline model, all variables explained 42.2% out of the dependent variable variation (R^2 = 0.422), and after joining the class variable, the analysis model's explanatory power increase to 50.1%, that is to join the class variable, the model explanatory power increased by nearly 8 percent, which is enough to show the class variable's explanatory power for differences in income. After controlling the other variables, the other classes' monthly income are all lower than the reference term service class. From the regression coefficient we can see that, the sort of class income is consistent with the result of the income means that presented before.

On the other hand, effects of other independent variables on income are as follows: Male's income is significantly higher than female; income becomes higher in accordance with age. The longer years of education,

the higher the income; compared with individuals work in the personal establishment, individuals work in Government and Private formal sector get higher income, but income of individuals in personal household are significantly lower. In regard of area, Chittagong is the reference term, individuals in Dhaka and Sylhet get higher income than Chittagong, but in Khulna, Rajshahi and Barisal are the levels significantly lower than Chittagong.

Table 5: Monthly income as the dependent variable in the regression analysis

	Baseline Model	Analysis Model
Male[a]	799.1***	940.5***
Age	19.63***	18.00***
Edu	148.6***	114.7***
Islam[b]	166.2***	147.9***
Work unit[c]		
Government	2146.7***	1848.7***
Private formal Sector	567.9***	415.4***
Personal Household	-93.23***	47.43
Region[d]		
Dhaka	63.98*	49.59*
Khulna	-258.5***	-277.7***
Rajshahi	-377.6***	-385.7***
Barisal	-169.0***	-109.5**
Sylhet	293.2***	365.7***
Class[e]		
Self-employed		-968.6***
Clerical worker		-327.1***
Sales/service worker		-813.1***
Manual worker		-702.2***
Peasants		-1132.5***
_cons	363.4***	1260.7***
N	21403	21333
adj. R-sq	0.422	0.501

Note: 1. Significant level:* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$
2. Reference: a=Female; b=Not Islam; c=Personal Establishment; d=Chittagong; e=Service class

3.2 The Indirect Effect Mechanism of Class on Income

We have mentioned before that another path that class influence income is that class variable structurally adjust or change the effect of individual characteristic on income. We separately observe the effect of individual characteristics on dependent variable in each class group, in order to analyze the role of class played in the background. We are mostly interested in different effect of sex, age, and education on income in different class groups. Table 6 presents the results of the data about Bangladesh.

First to have a look at the gender variable, among all class groups, this variable is statistically significant and male's income is higher than female, but male-female income gap in each class is different. And this gap is the largest to sales/service workers that are around 1092.8Taka, in service class male-female income gap is 518.5Taka that is the lowest, in peasants class male-female difference is comparatively few. In summary, it can be said that gender gaps in income are different in the six class groups.

Secondly, we observe the different effects of age on income in six class groups. Age is not only an indicator of physiological, but also the indicator of working age and experiences. In service class and clerical workers, age variable have the most return on revenue; individuals' monthly average income of these two class will respectively increase 44.39 Taka and 42.8 Taka when the age increase one year. In sales/service workers and manual workers, the return of a year is average about 30 Taka; the self-employed and farmers get the lowest return on revenue of age, that are 3 Taka, which indicates that the income of these two classes don't increase with age. Service class and non-manual clerical workers' age are rewarding, this may be because they are highly educated and work in the government agencies and private formal companies, being increased with age, the added values of their human capital are to increase substantially thus able to obtain more income.

Thirdly, education is the most important indicator of human capital. Data shows that in the service class and non-manual clerical workers, the returns of income on education is the highest, years of education for each additional year, revenue increased by 217 Taka and 205Taka; In self-employment classes, sales/attendant class and manual workers, returns of

education are almost the same; in peasant class, education has the lowest rate of return on income, just as 37.5 Taka.

In short, we can see obvious different effects of individual characteristic such as gender, age and education on income between six class groups. Class variable change or adjust the effect of individual characteristics on income. This is the second path or mechanism that class influence income, which presents in an indirect way.

Table 6: Sub-class study of factors affecting income (Bangladesh)

	Service class	Self-employed	Clerical worker	Sales/service worker	Manual worker	Peasants
Male[a]	518.5***	914.4***	886.8***	1092.8***	849.4***	600.8***
Age	44.39***	3.489	42.80***	33.79***	31.98***	3.271***
Edu	217.5***	132.2***	205.4***	170.3***	116.3***	37.53***
Islam[b]	-301.2*	-38.36	136.7	278.1***	254.8***	388.3***
Region[c]						
Dhaka	506.0***	-80.74	-131.2	236.8**	-6.682	-149.8***
Khulna	120.9	-398.6*	-145.2	-368.2***	-329.4***	-353.6***
Rajshahi	-265.4	-247.4	-1014.4***	-373.6***	-715.3***	-299.9***
Barisal	-39.17	-74.10	-433.8	-52.31	132.9	-33.37
Sylhet	1319.3***	808.2**	352.9	1091.6***	-166.2	391.5***
_cons	189.7	1056.6***	-357.8	-451.6***	427.0***	1043.2***
N	2228	926	1020	3687	6527	6945
adj. R-sq	0.219	0.216	0.263	0.416	0.248	0.225

Note: 1.Significant level : * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$;
      2. Reference: a=Female; b=Not Islam; c=Chittagong.

To have a look on the Chinese situation; the overall data conclusions presented in Table 7 are basically the same with Bangladesh, the indirect mechanism that class impact on income has also been confirmed in Chinese society. However, China also reflects its different side.

At first, the political status in China is an important variable, the Communist Party is dominant party, and its members usually earn more

income than non-members (Zhang Juwei, 2006). Data shows that in the service class, members' incomes are significantly higher than non-Communist party members, the average monthly income gap is about 1056Taka; in the manual worker class, it's also that Party's income is higher than the non-party members, but in other classes, the party variable is not statistically significant, which indicates that members and non-members don't have significant income gap in these groups.

Secondly, the returns of income on education in China are much higher than in Bangladesh, after projection, the rate of return on education of these six classes are 10.7%, 8.4%, 9.1%, 8.05%, 8.8%, 5.6%, but in Bangladesh they are 6.1%, 4.6%, 5.6%, 4.3%, 3.2%, 1.3%. No matter what class the returns how much, the China's education is higher than Bangladesh. It indicates that, as a human capital, education can get more economic returns in Chinese society than in Bangladesh.

Thirdly, rate of return on age in China is lower than Bangladesh, class members of Bangladesh get higher income growth rate with increasing age than China. This shows that compared to China, Bangladesh is a society that values seniority, qualifications and status.

Table7: Sub-class study of factors affecting income (China)

	Service class	Self-employed	Clerical worker	Sales/service worker	Manual worker	Peasants
Male[a]	1464.6**	2435.2*	770.8	2830.4***	1961.1***	699.0***
Age	38.53*	20.8*	25.74	-12.79	-10.65	20.60***
Edu	718.1***	576.0***	600.9***	584.2***	379.4***	127.9***
Party[b]	1056.9*	-680.6	526.3	-211.4	1373.6***	372.2
Region[c]						
Central	-566.4	1974.9	223.0	551.8	264.8	-28.89
East	3587.9***	4886.2***	2160.9**	2627.5***	2433.8***	553.8***
_cons	643.3	2902.9	-1212.6	-362.4	1206.4	1867.3***
N	1090	472	550	1141	2462	3489
adj. R-sq	0.155	0.098	0.126	0.138	0.125	0.059

Note : 1.Significant level : * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001;
       2. Reference: a=Female; b=Not Party; c=West.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, 2005 LFS data for Bangladesh part and CGSS 2005 data for China part have been used respectively to build a new class classification system that embodies the neo-Weberian ideology---the EGP schema. On this basis, the article focuses on analysis of decisive influence of class position on individual income. There're two influential logics or paths: firstly class position directly determines the members' sources of income and average income level of the class groups; also class position structurally adjust effect of individual characteristics on income. The basic findings and enlightenments of the article are as follows.

First, for the six class categories (Service class; Self-employed; Clerical worker; Sales/service worker; Manual worker; Peasants) of EGP schema, the two industrializing countries all retain a large number of peasants, this group in Bangladesh even accounted for more than half (A K Nazmul Karim). The differences in class structure between the two countries are the proportions of China's managers, professionals and industrial workers are respectively much higher than Bangladesh. China's industrialization stage is ahead of Bangladesh, so China's social structure is more "modern" than Bangladesh.

Second, income inequality is prominent between the class groups. In Bangladesh, according to the income levels, the class groups from high to low in order of priority are: service class; clerical worker; sales/service worker; manual worker; self-employed; peasants. The situation has slight differences in Chinese society, the self-employed in the third rank, behind service class and clerical worker. With the emergence of China's market transition, the self-employed and small private entrepreneurs get high economic returns in a great wave of market economy. In addition, the income of farmers in the two States are much lower than other classes, income of service class to the farmers is five times more.

Third, in Bangladesh and China, class variables can explain more than 20% variation of the individual income, it indicates that the class location does have effective constrain on members' economic interests and life chances, the constraint even is decisive.

Fourth, the decisive impact of class on income is also reflected in an indirect logic or path that class variable structurally adjusts the effect size and degree of individual characteristics on income. In other words, in different class groups, individual characteristics such as gender, age, education have different impacts on income. For Bangladesh, the largest income gap between men and women is in sales/service workers class, and, the smallest income gap between men and women is in the service class; the service and non-manual clerical workers get the highest rate of return on education and age, because their work units are mostly in government agencies and formal private companies. To increase age and educational years, the added value of human capital has been increased significantly.

Fifth, in China, the political party is a key variable in affecting earnings, although China has experienced transition from redistribution economic to a market economy (Nee. V.A. 1989), but the redistribution power (political authority) is still playing important role in the social and economic resource allocation, this is an obvious difference with Bangladesh; in addition, in Chinese society, the rate of return on education is significantly higher than Bangladesh. It is said that Bangladesh should be more emphasis on education, as education is an important human capital both for improving the individual's income and to promote national economic development and social progress, so it has significant meaning. In Bangladesh, the rate of return on age is higher than China, which means that Bangladesh is still a country lay emphasis on qualifications and seniority, this situation is not conducive to fair competition and resource optimization. It is recommended that this tradition should gradually be abandoned to build a social structure that is more open, flexible and a social order that advocate fair competition and sound development.

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