The persistence of inequality in a society is a central question when we study gaps, whether in income, education or health, among a population. Is there an inertia force which tends to make inequalities sustainable between the generations? Many authors have tried to answer this question both in sociological and in economical theories. Piketty (2000) presents the various causes which can influence the persistence in inequality. The transmission of wealth, of ability, the imperfections of market, the local segregations are some of the major sources he distinguishes. Behind all of them stands a common controversy: the "right wing" theory and the "left wing" one. The former argue that as for economics, inequality will be reduced thanks to the "laissez faire" of the market. Without distortions, the capital market, credit market or even education market will help to make inequality vanish. The "left wing" view corresponds more to the Marxist one which, as an interventionist point of view, thinks that the authority should help the society to reach a more equal environment. As Piketty (2000) underlines, this distinction is a little simple as some of the two theories arguments can sometimes cross or converge. Nevertheless, the today division of the political world between liberal and socialists tends to stress this distinction.

When we have a closer look at the way the authorities can be implied in the reduction of inequalities, it appears that "the only possible way to do something about persistent inequality requires a major conflict between the government and the family" (Piketty (2000)), for example concerning inequalities in education. Consequently, interventionism and a lack of democracy can sometimes co-exist to diminish inter generational inequalities. This would be in contradiction with the theory presented by Roemer (2002) who thinks that democracy can be a better environment than dictatorship to reduce inequalities. This lead us to a fundamental question : what do the empirical works conclude about that controversy?

Considering the Chinese political, social and economic context, we will shade light on these questions focusing our attention on inter generational inequalities of education and wages.

China, still not considered as a democracy and still communist oriented, have known two phases in
the role played by the family in the persistency of social status. After the 1949 revolution, the high hierarchical family relations have been discouraged by the communist party who wanted to give a greater place to the children in the political life. New marriage laws, implications of the child in the country social capital tended to create a society in which the individual could follow his own way. But since the movement of reforms, initiated at the end of the 70's, the liberalization of the markets and even in a sense of education have implied a rising intervention of the parents to finance the best schools for their children. The one child policy, which had as a consequence to focus the family education on only one child, implied an increased role played by the family in the child decision, education and life.

Using the estimation methodology described in Bourguignon and al. (2001) and the China Health and Nutrition Survey database help us to have partial answers to two questions: is there any inter generational mobility in China? and has this mobility changed during time and regarding the changes in the political context?

Giving a sample limited to the children still living with their parents, our first results emphasize that the parents’ income influences the child educational attainment and his wage during his first years of work. We also note a lack of mobility in the individual’s educational level. Even if some improvements can be done concerning the identification strategy, these first results are confirmed both by mobility matrices and by econometrics.

**Keywords:** intergenerational mobility, China.

**JEL:** O12, O15, I12, I20

**Bibliography:**

