

Changes in the Chinese Social Structure as Seen from Occupational Prestige Ratings and Job Preferences

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Alongside reforms in the possession of social resources and relations of distribution, there have been tremendous changes in patterns of interest among Chinese citizens, and throughout the whole economic and social structure of Chinese society. This can best be seen from people's concepts of occupational status and their choice of jobs.

I. Occupational Prestige Ratings among Chinese Urban Residents

As a core determinant of value in industrial society, occupational prestige has been widely used by sociologists to measure the direction and extent of social division. In contrast to earlier studies on occupational prestige, which focused on analyses of a static social structure, the author will combine a study of occupational prestige rankings and job preferences in an attempt to reveal the dynamic process and developmental trend of evolution of the Chinese social structure.

In order to gain a clear picture of the way in which Chinese urban residents evaluate various jobs on the eve of 21st century, the author conducted a probability proportional sampling (PPS) survey of 2,599 people aged sixteen and over in 63 cities during July and August 1999.¹ (All the data included in this article is from this survey unless marked otherwise.) A total of 69 occupations were listed in the questionnaire and the respondents were asked to give their views on each. Evaluation of these occupations was divided into five categories: the best, good, ordinary, bad and the worst. Based on the stratification developed by the American sociologists C. North and Paul Hatt, each category was represented by a specific number of marks, i. e., 100, 80, 60, 40, and 20 respectively. Once the investigation results had been pooled, an average mark was calculated for each occupation, and a table of the occupational prestige scale drawn up (see Table 1).

Table 1 Occupational prestige scale in urban China

Order	Occupations	Marks awarded	Standard deviation
1	Mayor	92.9	13.71
2	Government minister	91.4	13.85
3	University professor	90.1	13.39
4	Computer network engineer	88.6	14.08

¹ The composition of the total sample is as follows: 1. Sex: males, 51.4%; females, 48.5%. 2. Age: 16-29, 24.2%; 30-39, 27.2%; 40-49, 25.3%; 50-59, 13.3%; 60 years and above, 10%. 3. Educational level: 5% of the respondents had an elementary education or were illiterate, 22.5% had a junior-middle-school education, 21% had a senior-middle-school education, 17.1% were graduates from technical, polytechnic and vocational school, 15% had a diploma of adult higher education, and 19.4% had a college education or higher. 4. Political background: 33.8% were members of the Communist Party, 19.1% were members of the Communist Youth League, 1.4% belonged to democratic parties, and 45.8% had no party affiliation. The Social Investigation Department of the State /commission for Economic Restructuring was entrusted with the concrete work of the survey.

5	Judge	88.3	13.94
6	Court prosecutor	87.6	13.90
7	Lawyer	86.6	13.39
8	Engineer in high-tech enterprise	85.8	13.50
9	Leading cadre in a Party or government body	85.7	16.60
10	Natural scientist	85.3	15.12
11	Translator	84.9	14.62
12	Revenue officer	84.9	16.15
13	Social scientist	83.9	16.25
14	Doctor	83.7	14.38
15	Computer software designer	83.6	15.77
16	Writer	82.5	16.22
17	Reporter	81.6	15.67
18	Real estate operator or developer	81.5	15.72
19	Director or manager of a large or medium-sized state-owned enterprise	81.3	16.43
20	Manager of investment company	81.1	15.79
21	Singer	80.1	19.51
22	Editor	79.7	14.33
23	Announcer	79.5	15.83
24	Bank clerk	79.1	14.85
25	Private entrepreneur	78.6	16.24
26	Film or TV actor	78.2	19.53
27	Air hostess	78.0	15.87
28	Industrial or commercial administrator	77.3	15.41
29	Operator of computer network	77.2	15.73
30	Teacher in public middle or primary school	77.1	14.38
31	Advertisement designer	76.6	14.02
32	Policeman	76.2	18.00
33	Mechanical engineer	76.0	14.29
34	Director of small state-owned enterprise	75.9	16.11
35	Sportsman	74.4	17.09
36	Accountant in large enterprise	73.4	14.54
37	Ordinary cadre in Party or government body	73.3	15.24
38	Employee in private high-tech enterprise	73.3	15.57
39	Clerk in a stock company	72.4	14.75
40	Travel guide	71.7	14.10
41	Teacher in private school	71.5	14.92
42	Car driver in Party or government body	70.1	17.70
43	Cultural self-employed worker	68.2	15.91
44	Clerk in insurance company	67.5	15.83
45	Political cadre in business unit or institution	66.8	15.70
46	Industrial or commercial self-employed worker	65.7	16.64

47	Clerk in foreign-invested enterprise	65.4	15.05
48	Nurse	64.1	14.46
49	Hotel cook	60.6	16.73
50	Taxi driver	59.5	15.43
51	Postman	59.1	15.55
52	Bus driver	58.5	14.94
53	Social worker	56.6	16.27
54	Worker	53.2	15.76
55	Worker in an undertaker's	53.0	22.32
56	Guesthouse attendant	52.6	16.80
57	Shop assistant	50.8	15.84
58	Bus conductor	48.7	15.52
59	Worker in large or medium-sized stated-owned enterprise	47.4	18.17
60	Sanitary worker	45.5	18.54
61	Peasant	44.7	20.74
62	Worker in town or village enterprise	44.3	18.04
63	Restaurant waiter	43.5	16.67
64	Worker in small stated-owned enterprise	43.5	17.61
65	Worker in private-owned enterprise	43.2	18.31
66	Worker in collectively-owned enterprise	42.7	18.11
67	Employees of self-owned laborer	37.7	18.83
68	Housemaid	36.9	17.48
69	Peasant construction worker	34.9	17.86

Note: The author would like to acknowledge the help of Dai Jiazhong, Li Lulu, Li Peilin, Li Qiang and Shen Yuan in designing this scale.

The selection of occupations in this survey was based on the following four principles: First, the occupations selected have common ground with those selected in other similar surveys both in China and abroad so that a comparison can be made between them; Second, they were familiar to most of the respondents; Third, they reveal the unique features of Chinese society, for example, those under socialist ownership; and fourth, the selected occupations are contemporary, for example, computer network engineer.

Table 1 shows that the first 21 occupations all received more than 80 marks. These occupations are characterized by political power, scientific knowledge, high professional skill, and high income. This group also includes the newly emerging industries.

The next group, i. e., those with secondary occupational prestige, includes 28 occupations with marks ranging between 80 to 60. Although these are basically white-collar jobs, they have less power and require fewer skills and less knowledge than the jobs in the first group. It is worth noting that this group also includes some occupations “outside the state political and economic structure”, such as “private entrepreneur” and “teacher in a private school”, which points to a declining consciousness of the ownership system and less discrimination against those working outside the official structure.

A total of 20 occupations, mainly blue-collar manual jobs, gained less than 60 marks.

Obviously, people have a low opinion of jobs that require great physical effort, fewer professional skills and less education.

However, it is interesting to note that the three occupations of the same nature but under different ownership system, namely, “car driver in Party or government body”, “taxi driver”, and “bus driver”, have markedly different occupational prestige marks, 70.1, 59.5, and 58.5 respectively. Taxi drivers have the highest income, but their mark is far lower than that of a car driver for a leading cadre in a Party or government body. In terms of technical skill, it is most difficult to obtain a license to drive a bus, but a bus driver’s prestige mark is nevertheless the lowest. Clearly the decisive factors in terms of prestige are distance from the political authorities, job stability, and the opportunity for promotion, rather than income, technical level or labor intensity.

II. A Comparison Between Occupational Prestige Scale during Different Periods

A comparison of the results of various surveys conducted during different periods reveals the evolution of the Chinese social structure. Table 2 shows a comparison between four occupational scales based on surveys conducted in different places by different people during different periods. Lin Nan and Xie Wen completed their survey in 1983, the respondents were all from Beijing and their scale consisted of 50 occupations (Lin and Xie, 1988). The Project Group of the Institute for Chinese Economic Restructuring finished their survey in 1987, the respondents were from Beijing and Shenyang, and there were 85 occupations in the scale (Xu Xinxin, 2000). A survey conducted by the Project Group on the Family Life of Chinese Residents was concluded in 1993 and had a scale consisting of 100 occupations (Chen Yingying, 1995); the respondents were from ten counties (cities) (Zhe Xiaoye and Chen Yingying, 1995).

From a comparison of occupational prestige in 60 countries and regions, the American sociologist D.Treiman found that, as a result of functional and organizational imperatives inherent in the social structure, job evaluations in different countries and regions were relatively close, and the correlation coefficient was as high as 0.80 (Treiman, 1977). China is no exception. Although the four surveys mentioned above were conducted in different areas during different periods, a comparison of the prestige mark for the same occupation in different scales shows a high correlation coefficient: the correlation coefficient between the sample survey of 2,599 respondents from 63 cities conducted by the author in 1999, and the survey in Beijing by Lin Nan and Xie Wen in 1983 was 0.89; that between the 1999 survey and the survey conducted by the Project Group on Social Stratification in China under the Institute for Chinese Economic Restructuring in 1987 was 0.88; and that between the 1999 survey and the survey conducted by the Project Group on the Family Life of Chinese Residents in 1993 was 0.91.

In spite of this strong correlation, however, there were great discrepancies between the evaluations of some occupations during different periods. First, the evaluation of a “leading cadre in a Party or government body.” In the 1999 national survey the prestige of this occupation was greater than that of “natural scientist” and “social scientist,” while in the 1983, 1987 and 1993 surveys it was much lower than that of the other two occupations. Second, the occupational prestige of “industrial and commercial administrator/tax officer” and “policeman” increased by a large margin.

Table 2 A comparison of occupational prestige scales during different periods

occupations	1999 survey	1983 survey	1987 survey	1993 survey
Mayor	92.9		87.9	81.3
Government minister	91.4		82.8	87.0
Professor	90.1	83.8	88.6	87.6
Judge	88.3		80.6	
Court prosecutor	87.6			78.4
Lawyer	86.6		84.2	70.8
Leading cadre in Party or government body	85.7	68.1	77.7	71.9
Natural scientist	85.3	83.8	84.5	75.5
Translator	84.9			67.1
Social scientist	83.9	82.7	83.5	79.2
Doctor	83.7	86.2	80.9	68.8
Writer	82.5	81.7	87.4	67.4
Reporter	81.6	81.1	83.2	66.2
Director or manager of a large or medium-sized state-owned enterprise	81.3		79.4	76.9
Industrial or commercial administrator/tax officer	81.1		68.3	63.0
Singer	80.1			55.1
Editor	79.7		83.0	65.2
Bank clerk	79.1		68.7	
Private entrepreneur	78.6		67.6	58.6
Film or TV actor	78.2	57.7		60.0
Air hostess	78.0			56.9
Teacher in public middle or primary school	77.1	66.4	70.7	61.4
Policeman	76.2	43.8	65.7	66.5
Mechanical engineer	76.0			72.4
Director of small state-owned enterprise	75.9		73.6	
Sportsman	74.7	62.8		60.4
Accountant in large enterprise	73.4	66.4		60.4
Ordinary cadre in Party or government body	73.3	63.0	65.5	
Car driver in Party or government body	70.1			59.8
Cultural self-employed worker	68.2			48.5
Political cadre in business unit or institution	66.8		63.9	67.6
Industrial or commercial self-employed worker	65.7		62.2	48.3
Nurse	64.1	55.3	66.7	50.2
Hotel cook	60.6	43.5	68.8	

Taxi driver	59.5		66.5	50.4
Postman	59.1	46.3	63.0	42.3
Bus driver	58.5	63.2	67.5	50.4
Worker in an undertaker's	53.0		50.2	27.1
Shop assistant	50.8	42.1	59.9	33.4
Bus conductor	48.7	42.1	53.9	41.5
Worker in large or medium-sized stated-owned enterprise	47.4		64.8	52.4
Sanitary worker	45.5	25.9	54.6	28.5
Peasant	44.7		57.9	28.2
Worker in town or village enterprise	44.3		59.3	43.2
Restaurant waiter	43.5	39.0	58.0	33.2
Worker in small stated-owned enterprise	43.5		61.4	
Worker in collectively-owned enterprise	42.7		59.5	35.9
Employees of self-owned laborer	37.7			23.0
Housemaid	36.9	18.9	49.8	19.1
Peasant construction worker				
Sample size	2,599	1,632	753	3,012

Leading cadres in Party and government organizations, industrial and commercial administrator/tax officers, and policeman all have greater privileges than those in other occupations: the first hold posts in the most powerful organizations in China, while the other two groups hold posts in important functional departments. The markedly higher rating of these three occupations seems to suggest that people are now attaching greater importance to the power inherent in some occupations, and occupational stability in a market economy.

In addition, other occupations that greatly improved in prestige ratings compared to the three previous surveys included private entrepreneur, singer, film and TV actor, cultural self-employed worker, and industrial and commercial self-employed worker. All these occupations have been infiltrated by market factors in recent years and those in such occupations have earned more money. It could thus be said that economic earnings have played a more important part in people's assessment of the value of occupations.

In contrast, the occupational prestige of state-owned enterprises fell markedly. This is clearly due to the fact that, along with deepening of the reform in state-owned enterprises and the accelerated industrial restructuring, the number of employees laid-off from state-owned enterprises has steadily increased, leading to a decline in the economic and social status of these employees.

It is thus easy to see that the social and economic features of an occupation may change over time, which affects its prestige rating in the minds of the people. In China, occupational prestige rankings are influenced to a great degree by institutional changes.

III. A Comparison Between the Occupational Prestige Ratings of Different Social Groups

The relative prestige associated with an occupation is a subjective opinion. Different people

from different backgrounds will therefore have different opinions on the same occupation. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the occupational prestige ratings among different social groups we divided the samples into group according to age, educational level, and region.

1. A comparison of the occupational prestige ratings among different age groups

The data shows that the younger group, aged from 16 to 35 years, was less orientated towards political power (such as mayor, government minister or leading cadre in Party or government body) than the older group aged 36 and above, and the former awarded fewer marks to these occupations than the latter. They also gave a lower evaluation to “brain-power” professions, such as professor, social scientist or translator, which demand a very high scientific and technological level but attract a relatively low income. Although the public generally regards young Chinese as “star groupies” and many are saddened by this, the data from this survey indicate that the average marks awarded by this, the singers and film and TV actors were 7.4 and 6.4 lower respectively than those awarded by the older group. Obviously they do not think highly of occupations in which success depends on natural gifts.

On the other hand, the young group favored occupations of a contemporary nature and those demanding new, high-tech skill, and they gave a higher rating to operator of a computer network, advertisement designer and computer software designer than the older group. In addition, the young were not prejudiced against jobs in the non-public sector “outside the institutions,” and gave higher scores to private entrepreneur, worker in a private enterprise and employee in a private high-tech enterprise. These responses tell us that young Chinese are less influenced by tradition, have a weaker sense of political power but a stronger sense of creativity and adventure, and are more market-oriented.

2. A comparison between occupational prestige ratings among groups of different educational levels

The occupational prestige ratings awarded by groups with lower educational levels were generally higher than those awarded by groups with higher educational levels. Of the 69 occupations listed in the questionnaire, 39 received obviously higher prestige scores from the groups with lower educational levels than from those with higher educational levels.

Exceptions were, private entrepreneur, employee in a private high-tech enterprise, clerk in a stock company and advertisement designer, which received significantly higher scores from the groups with higher educational levels than from those with lower educational levels. This phenomenon could be attributed to the following factors: First, all of the four occupations emerged or re-emerged after the initiation of reform and opening-up demanded a higher level of know-how; and, second, these jobs mainly exist outside the traditional economic institutions. In China, more knowledgeable people are more market oriented, they have greater respect for professional knowledge, and are less bound by the traditional concept of ownership.

3. A comparison of occupational prestige ratings in different regions

This analysis is based on the hypothesis that the concept of region in China is not simply one of space, but to a great extent also one of time. Opening-up and market mechanisms were first introduced in large cities in eastern and central China and coastal areas. People in these cities are more accustomed to the changes brought about by reform and opening-up, and have experienced a more profound change in their values.

A comparison of occupational prestige ratings in 23 large cities in eastern and central China and the coastal regions (including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjing, Dalian, Qingdao, and Changzhou)

and those in 40 other cities (including the provincial capitals in western China) confirmed our hypothesis. Occupations which received much lower scores in the large cities in eastern and central China and the coastal regions than in cities in western China were mostly traditional occupations, while newly-emerged occupations outside the institutions which were more market orientated received higher ratings in the large cities in eastern and central China and the coastal regions.

However, government minister, leading cadre in a Party or government body, and ordinary cadre in a Party or government body received higher marks in the large cities and coastal open cities than in medium-sized and small cities. This shows that the political power and ability to control social resources inherent in certain occupations are important factors which people take into consideration when they evaluate occupational prestige. From another perspective this also reveals the “temporal” aspect of the concept of region in China. Institutionally, reform in China means a transformation from a planned economy to a market economy, and essentially involves the reallocation of social resources and a readjustment of various interest relationships. Party and government organs have the power to control and reallocate resources, and it is possible for those in power to be involved in and benefit from the whole process of resource allocation when the mechanisms for restraining power are imperfect. In the region in which opening-up was initiated at an earlier date, the abuse of power in the economic sphere is undoubtedly more apparent, and it is only natural for residents of these regions, who have a keener understanding of this power, to reflect this in their occupational prestige ratings.

IV. Occupational Mobility in Urban China

The changes and developmental trends in China’s economic and social structure can be studied not only from the perspective of occupational prestige ratings, but also from the perspective of people’s job preferences. Lin Nan and Xie Wen stated in the report on their study of occupational prestige ratings in Beijing in 1983 that, “The ultimate goal for people was to obtain a stable job in a state or collectively owned enterprise” (Lin and Xie, 1988). Is this conclusion still viable today? In the sample survey conducted by the author in 63 cities throughout the county in 1999, all respondents were asked the following question: If you were able to re-select your occupation, which job would you choose?

We can see from the occupational preferences of various group with different educational levels and political affiliations (Table 3) that while occupations in the state-owned sector are still preferred to other jobs, the occupations of “private entrepreneur” which is outside the institution has been upgraded by all the groups. Clearly, after twenty years of reform and opening-up people do not confine their job search to the state or collectively owned sectors. Although full of risk, the market is full of hope and opportunities, and is an ideal place for people with lofty ideas to give full play to their talents.

Table 3 Job preferences among groups with different educational background and political affiliations

Job preference	Junior middle school and	Senior middle school and/Polytechnic	Adult higher education	College and above	Members of the CPC	Non-Party members
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	below	school				
First	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 11.8%	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 11.2%	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 13.6%	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 11.4%	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 14.4%	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 10.3%
Second	Industrial or commercial administrator/tax officer 6.3%	Industrial or commercial administrator/tax officer 6.8%	Computer engineer 7.7%	Computer engineer 10.1%	Industrial or commercial administrator/tax officer 6.6%	Computer engineer 6.3%
Third	Private entrepreneur 5.8%	Judge 5.8%	Lawyer 7.2%	Private entrepreneur 6.5%	Computer engineer 6.1%	Private entrepreneur 6.3%
Fourth	Judge 5.8%	Computer engineer 5.8%	Industrial or commercial administrator/tax officer 6.4%	Industrial or commercial administrator/tax officer 6.3%	Lawyer 5.4%	Industrial or commercial administrator/tax officer 5.6%
Fifth	Doctor 4.6%	Lawyer 5.5%	Judge 5.1%	University professor 5.5%	Judge 5.3%	Judge 5.3%
Sixth	Court prosecutor 4.6%	Private entrepreneur 5.3%	Private entrepreneur 5.1%	Natural scientist 5.1%	Doctor 5.3%	Lawyer 5.0%
Seventh	Ordinary cadre in a Party or government body 4.4%	Doctor 4.6%	Doctor 4.8%	Lawyer 4.9%	Court prosecutor 4.7%	Doctor 4.1%
Eighth	Lawyer 3.7%	Court prosecutor 4.0%	Court prosecutor 4.0%	Reporter 4.5%	Private entrepreneur 4.4%	Teacher in public middle and primary school 3.7%, and Court prosecutor 3.7%
Sample size	655	944	375	483	830	1,629

It is worth pointing out that all the groups, whether divided according to educational level of political affiliation, gave their first preference to “leading cadre in a Party or government body.” Furthermore, in the occupational prestige scale in urban China (Table 1) a “professor” ranks third,

only just below “mayor” and “government minister”. However, in job preferences in urban China (Table 3) the occupation of professor was downgraded, while “industrial and commercial administrator/tax officer” was upgraded. These result are a telling reminder that political power plays a significant role in job evaluation and in the re-selection of employment in China.

There are two driving forces for social mobility in modern society: changes in the social structure and greater social openness. The deepening reform has not only brought about tremendous changes in the Chinese economic and social structure, but has also led to a disintegration of the barriers to free migration that existed under the traditional planned economic system (Xu Xinxin, 2000), and created more opportunities for people to change their jobs. However, the number of jobs as a “leading cadre in a Party or government body” is decreasing rather than increasing. People’s first preference therefore runs counter to reality, and we have reason to doubt their sincerity.

When all the respondents were divided into three groups in terms of their age, their differences in job preferences were revealed (Table 4).

Table 4 Future job preferences among different age groups

Job preference	16-30 years	31-45 years	46 and above	Total sample
First	Computer engineer 11.1%	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 12.2%	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 14.4%	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 11.8%
Second	Leading cadre in a Party or government body 8.4%	Industrial or commercial administrator /tax officer 6.3%	Industrial or commercial administrator /tax officer 7.0%	Computer engineer 6.1%
Third	Private entrepreneur 5.4%	Private entrepreneur 5.9%	Judge 6.05	Industrial or commercial administrator /tax officer 5.9%
Fourth	Lawyer 5.1%	Lawyer 5.5%	Private entrepreneur 5.7%	Private entrepreneur 5.6%
Fifth	Judge 4.7%	Judge 4.7%	Doctor 5.2%	Judge 5.3%
Sixth	Teacher in public middle and primary school 4.4%	Computer engineer 5.2%	Lawyer 4.7%	Lawyer 5.1%
Seventh	Policeman 4.1%	Doctor 5.0%	Court prosecutor 4.1%	Doctor 4.5%
Eighth	Court prosecutor	Court prosecutor	Teacher in public middle and primary school	Court prosecutor

	3.7%	3.8%	4.1%	3.9%
Sample size	701	1,004	772	2,477

We can see the age differentiation of job preferences. The youngest group aged 16-30 were least orientated towards power. Their first preference was “computer engineer,” which demands high-tech knowledge, skills and great human capital, rather than “leading cadre in a Party or government body.” Furthermore, “industrial and commercial administration /tax officer” did not appear among their first eight preferences, although this occupation ,which requires little human capital but brings rich rewards in terms of power, was ranked second by the other age groups. The main reason for this may be that the younger group has nurtured from an early age in the spirit of a market economy and is less shackled by conventional ethical ideology. We now live in a constantly changing information age, which is incompatible with the old hierarchical social order, ossified forms of management, and the conventional system of gradual promotion in which top priority is given to seniority. For the younger generation, securing an official position is therefore no longer the ultimate goal in life, and they yearn to be very successful like Bill Gates by relying on their own strengths. Apart from sport and show business, there is no other area but the information industry that offers such great opportunities for young people to become experts and leaders. These young people are a vital new force on the threshold of the labor market, and their occupational preferences point to future changes in China’s economic and social structure.

The occupational preferences of the other two age groups aged 31-45 and 46and above are naturally more pragmatic. Their choices truly reflect their preferences. Their first preference, “leading cadre in a Party or government body,” and their second preference, “industrial or commercial administrator/tax officer,” are directly related to their life experiences. After living for many years in a highly centralized planned economic system, their psychology is more oriented towards officialdom. On the other hand, they have a keener understanding than younger people of China’s social realities during the peiod of transformation. The transformation from a planned to a market economy cannot occur instantaneously, and during the long period of transformation, the weakening of restraints on power has left many loopholes and enabled some of those in power to line their own pockets. For those who have labored for many years in a planned economy, making a fortune in a market economy is a difficult and prolonged process. However, if the door to authority open for them, they may get rich very quickly once they have power in their hands. People are only too glad to avail themselves of such opportunities if they can. The author naturally does not intend to depreciate those who aspire to fulfill their high ambitions on the Chinese political stage, especially since the current tremendous changes offer a stage on which people of ability can direct the performance of many a drama, full of sound and color, power and grandeur.

V. Conclusions

We can see from above that changes in occupational prestige rating and occupational preferences reflect fundamental changes in the Chinese social structure. Social change has proceeded along two paths, one of which leads to a market economy. During the course of institutional restructuring, people have begun to set greater store in market-oriented occupations, and, with increasing market risks, secure occupations have increasingly found favor with ordinary people. On the other hand, during the course of social and economic transformation, traditional

forces and habits, and the temporary absence of restraints and supervisory mechanisms, have left loopholes which some of those in power have used for their own personal benefit. Jobs in departments that control national resources are therefore seen as profitable positions.

The other path leads to changes in the industrial structure. During the course of readjustment and upgrading of the global industrial structure, and the transformation of the world economy from an industrial to an information economy, intellectual occupations closely linked to knowledge and high technology have come to the fore in terms of changes in the occupational structure and social mobility. Young people will take the lead in such occupations.

Along with social development, knowledge will become more important than raw materials, capital and labor. Such changes in the relationship between knowledge and production will surely weaken the foundations of the old economic and political life, and political authority will yield to intellectual authority. It is anticipated that with the deepening of reform and opening-up, and with the improvement and perfection of the legal system, changes in China's social structure will keep pace with the times, and political authority will play a reduced role.

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