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Party, Class, and Mobility: An Empirical Investigation of Parents' Chinese Communist Party Membership's Effects on Children's Social Class in Contemporary China

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ABSTRACT

Sociological interest in post-reform China has burgeoned since sociologists such as Victor Nee and Andrew Walder had initiated a debate of whether the market transition of former socialist countries benefit the direct producers of the market rather than political elites. Informed by the market transition debate, stratification theories, and intergenerational mobility studies, this study aims to examine whether under the party-state political structure, ruling party membership is a substantial exogenous source of social class stratification. Data in this study is drawn from the 2013 Chinese General Social Survey (n = 2,209). The ordinary least square (OLS) regression suggests that for non-institutionalized Chinese adults who are born during the reform era (1978 -2013), their parents' Chinese Communist Party membership is a statistically significant factor in determining their social class measured by their income and education, when holding constant sex, age, region, urbanity, and ethnicity. This study contributes to the sociological understanding of how political institutions shape individual socio-economic status and how state intervention perpetuates or diminishes social inequality on the individual level.

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of
thought.--John Rawls

In 1985, the paramount leader of Chin, Deng Xiaoping, told the relegate of Time Inc.
about his discretion that China's reform should let some regions and some people get
richer first; these people should then lead and help others to be richer, so China can
achieve common prosperity. Since the initiation of its economic reform in 1978, China
has grown momentously and become the second largest economy of the world in 2010.
Scholars like Goodman (2014) have increasingly paid attention to the emerging
structural change and social stratification of Chinese society within its skyrocketing
economic growth and continuing assimilation into the global capitalist market. These
scholars have shown that China has gradually shifted away from a static and
egalitarian society during the Mao era and has moved to a fluid and hierarchical
society that embraces class differentiation.

However, like other post-industrial countries, social and economic capital in
China are not equally available to every social class of the society. Resources such as
access to the market, education, and network connections to political elites are more
likely to be seized by those former party cadres and their family members. As Li and
Zhu (2017) point out, class solidification and dominant class reproduction may
become prominent a social problem for China. In regard to this problem, I suggest
that connections to the ruling party may well elucidate the exogenous causes driving

social stratification in China. In other words, the study of people's political connections could answer why some fractions of the society have gained advantages or not in a radical social transition lasting for more than three decades.

The general research question of this paper asks whether during the post-reform era, China has formed a more privileged class who has benefited from the market transition because of their parents' political power and ties with the ruling party of the party-state. Grounded in past theories and findings, I hypothesize that Chinese people born in and after 1978, who have at least one parent who is a Chinese Communist Party Member (CCP), will have higher incomes, will have a higher self-perceived social class than they had at the age 14, and will complete higher education. This hypothesis is thoroughly informed by the understanding of the overall picture of China's transition and the changing characters of individual lives. As the larger implication, this study contributes to a sociological perspective on how political institutions shape individual economic powers within a society and how the interference of political institutions into the market-based society perpetuates or diminishes social inequality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Changes in China's economic institutions have fundamental implications for its stratification. The interplay of several factors such as "education, private enterprise, party membership, gender, inter-city migration, and the urban-rural divide" has

greatly reshaped the economic status of the Chinese citizen (Guthrie 2012:16). In this section, I present some of the most notable social theories concerning social stratification and relevant literature focusing on China's social class since its reform started in 1978.

Social Class

American sociologist Erik Olin Wright thinks that "the problem of deeply structured inequality is central to sociology in general, not just Marxism" (Kirby 2001:8). As Wright mentions, the analysis of social class has always been one of the most defining concerns of sociology since Marx and Weber. Despite that postmodernists have constantly challenged class analysis and appealed for 'the end of class' since the 1970s (see Lipset 1981, Holton and Turner 1994), the scholarly venture into social class analysis has persisted to the most contemporary theorists (e.g. Bourdieu 1984, Goldthorpe 1996, Wright 2002, Weeden and Grusky 2005).

The analysis of social stratification in contemporary China should be structured in the general framework of social stratification theories. Social stratification, as a component of social structure, can be both determining and determined. That is to say, social class can be both an independent variable and a dependent variable in different sociological analyses. When sociologists try to grasp more macro-level things like social change, class would better be conceptualized as an independent variable. However, if a class of people is studied as grouped agencies,

then social class is determined and should be used as a dependent variable. Weeden and Grusky (2005:148) have shown four topical scenarios when we should use class as a dependent variable: namely, "life chances (e.g., income, education, working conditions)", "lifestyles (e.g., consumption practices, institutional participation)", "culture (e.g., political preferences, social attitudes)", and "demographic composition (e.g., race, ethnicity)". Since this study intends to investigate the influence of political status on social class, class should then be operationalized in more Weberian sense (1946), that is to say, class provides "life chances as the main life conditions of interest." In order to highlight the distinction between different social classes, social class should be conceptualized as "people sharing a common position of social power" and people who have "aggregate regularities in social life" such as income, education, and political identity (Breen and Rottman 1995:455).

The influence of political institutions on social stratification has been scrutinized by stratification sociologists for a long time since Max Weber, who was the first sociologist to emphasize the association between political power and social dominance. Weber recognizes classes, statuses and "parties" as "phenomena of the distribution of power within the community" (Weber 1946:181). Although Weberian definition of 'parties' is not completely identical to a modern political party, to some extent we could still characterize political parties as "structures struggling for domination [and] influence [of] the existing domination" (Weber 1946:194-5). After Weber, the independent concept of a dominant class in a society was established first by Mosca (1939) and later crystallized by Mills' idea of 'the power elite' (Mills 2000).

Mills identifies "the power elite" as the group of people who surpasses the ordinary social order and therefore has command of the hierarchies of modern society. According to Mills, power elites of economic and political order are closely interrelated with each other and have numerous joint benefits.

In addition to the effect of political institutions on stratification, stratification scholars are also interested in how social elites ensure class reproduction by means of cultural capital, social networks, and parental motivation (e.g., Bourdieu 1998, De Graaf et al. 2000, Gamoran 2001). Bourdieu (1998) elaborates that educational institutions, especially universities, are power institutions where students coming from elite families internalize various symbols and rituals for future upper-class lives. According to Bourdieu, political power always plays an indispensable role in transforming schools to the 'fields' which reproduce class distinction and secure the monopoly of positions for the ruling class. Considering Bourdieu's idea on education, political power should therefore be taken into account as the external cause shaping educational inequality. Therefore, the strata that has already existed in educational institutions is not simply the results of class stratification but also the subjective power perpetuating the existing stratification in the future. Given this reason, I want to use the highest level of education a person has had as a dependent variable affected by political connections as well as an important indicator of a person's social class.

Post-socialist Transition

The overarching theme of market transition theory is that former socialist countries such as Russia and post-reform China have undergone the changes in the distribution of rewards when political power shifts away from "political disposition to market institutions" (Nee, 1996:910). While the state socialist redistributive economy reduces dependence on party officials who used to be monopolists of power, the market provides powerful incentives and resources for direct producers and private entrepreneurs (Nee 1996). As a result of this institutional shift, there will be increasing returns on human capital and relatively less return on political capital, thus leading to a decline among redistributive political elites.

However, whether the transformation from the state-socialist distributive economy to capitalist market has actually brought about such consequences on social hierarchies and wealth distribution is still highly debated among sociologists. Critics of market transition theory claim that the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market society has not fundamentally changed the old stratification (Rona-Tas 1994; Walder 1996). Given that former party elites have already appropriated assets, accumulated wealth, and seized advantages before and during the reform process, these party elites could easily transform their political privilege into economic capital (Eyal, Szelényi, and Towsley 1998). Therefore, Walder (2003) suggests that the trajectory of the decline of old elites in former socialist countries is gradual and enduring rather than drastic as expected by many scholars supporting market transition theory.

Compared to liberal democratic countries, state socialist regimes are usually regarded as less class-based stratified due to their emphases on common ownership, state-controlled reward systems, and the implementation of egalitarian social policies (Szelényi and Kostello 1998). Although post-reform China has largely adopted a market-oriented economic system, the administrative commands of the Chinese Communist Party still remain the exclusive policy instruments. Since the political power of China relies on tight control of the administrative apparatus, the system of domination in China may still tend towards the political "power elite" type as other state socialist societies (Giddens 1973:238-54). In addition, former technocratic elites in the socialist countries are likely to turn themselves into the economically dominant class, that is, a new propertied bourgeoisie class, fulfilling the stage of corporate capitalism (Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley 1998). Building upon Giddens and Eyal et al.'s theories, we can make the assumption that the dominant class of post-socialist China comprises communist party members who are party bureaucrats, technical intelligentsia, and corporate capitalists.

Many empirical studies have been undertaken so far to either contest or substantiate market transition theory. For instance, Xie and Hannum (1996:950) suggest that the market transition in China had no effect on the net differences of earnings "between party members and nonmembers." As Zhou and Xie (2016) point out, recent studies concerning market transition theory have moved to more micro-level questions, such as how human capital and political capital have resulted in more economic payoff over time in China (e.g. Bian and Logan 1996, Zhou 2000, Song and

Xie 2014). However, these studies have produced more or less conflicting results. On the one hand, Zhou (2014) has shown that the growth of earning in China mainly stems from increases in returns to investment in education. On the other hand, the 2005 CGSS data demonstrates that having fathers retired with the CCP membership increases people's income (Yang et al. 2010). Moreover, Appleton et al. (2009) has found a rise in the wage premium for CCP members who are more likely to secure their personal benefits from political status during the transition from planned economy to market economy.

Although all of these empirical studies contribute to a more informed understanding of the market transition in China, rarely have these studies directly examined the effect of parents' party membership on some crucial factors of social class (such as education, occupation, and intergenerational mobility etc.). To proceed with and expand upon previous enquiries of market transition in a more contemporary context, this study evaluates whether young adults born in the post-reform era have become more privileged if they have parents who are part of the ruling political party.

Intergenerational Mobility

Recently, stratification scholars have increasingly studied the role of parental class difference in shaping children's social class destination in their adulthood (see Bowles et al. 2009, Breen and Jonsson 2005, Lareau 2011). Laureau suggests that the

intergenerational inequality in children's early adulthood arises from how much social network connections, education opportunities, and class awareness parents could provide for their children (Lareau 2011).

In the Chinese context, the consequences of market transition on social mobility are inadequately investigated by academics so far. Currently, Zhou and Xie (2016) find that there is a decline of social fluidity in China in terms of vertical social mobility, but meanwhile, the dual forces of market transition and rapid industrialization have also resulted in people's greater horizontal mobility. As some famers have taken advantage of opportunities in industrial employment and successfully crossed over the sectoral boundary in intergenerational class transmission, intergenerational mobility of these farmers' families have sharply increased since the market reform. Relying on five nationally representative surveys, Zhou and Xie (2016) have studied the objective aspects of social mobility and openness of social structure in Chinese society. Whyte (2010) states that objective trends in employment and income distribution are not always consistent with people's feelings of distributive justice. A national survey in 2004 suggests that the dramatic increase in income inequality does not yield general resentment of distribution system. Rather, Chinese people are "substantially more optimistic about the chances ... to improve their livelihoods" and are likely to accept current social inequality (Whyte 2010:184). Whyte's study on perceptions of social mobility has revealed Chinese people's positive attitudes towards China's ever exacerbating distributive injustice projected by Gini Coefficients. Even if Whyte has offered a great insight into

subjective perceptions of social mobility in China, some subjective aspects of stratification such as people's subjective assessments of their social mobility in past two decades are still an under-studied territory for sociologists so far. To fill up the lacuna of studying Chinese citizens' subjective perceptions of social mobility, this research aims to evaluate how Chinese young people self-define their own place in the large social order.

Overall, datasets like CGSS (2013) have provided extraordinary opportunities to empirically study the impacts of market transition on stratification and intergenerational mobility. Based on previous literature, I hypothesize that Chinese people who were born in and after 1978, who have at least one parent who is a Chinese Communist Party Member (CCP), will have higher incomes, will self-perceive higher social statuses than they had at the age 14, and will have higher levels of education. In other words, I expect that the party membership of parents will positively affect their children's income, education, and self-perceived social mobility.

METHODS

This study has collected data from the 2013 Chinese General Social Survey, which is a biannual survey of China's urban and rural households designed to gather longitudinal demographic data. Following changes in the relationship between social structure and the quality of life over time, the Chinese General Social Survey has

been used in a number of influential academic studies by both Chinese and American social researchers (Zhang and Trieman 2012; Hu and Scott 2014).

Data

The 2013 Chinese General Social Survey (N = 11,438) is organized by Renmin University of China and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. The survey design of CGSS (2013) uses stratified sampling method from a random sample of Chinese non-institutionalized adults based on the 2010 Chinese national population census. The main themes of this dataset include people's employment, families, household composition, households, life satisfaction, quality of life, social networks, social stratification, and social structure. The overall response rate of CGSS (2013) is 72.17 percent. This dataset was downloaded online and its further information can be accessed at:

http://www.cnsda.org/index.php?r=projects/view&id=93281139.

Previous studies have suggested that social mobility before the reform was more related to political dynamics, macro-political processes and state policy shifts rather than steady institutional structure, market forces and redistributive economies (Zhou, Tuma and Moen 1996). Chinese people born in pre-reform China were more or less affected by "political mechanics of stratification" (Zhou, Tuma and Moen 1996:792), whereas the causes of social class after the year of 1978 can be better intuited by sociological theories concerning industrialized market societies. Given this reason, my study only purports to examine the effect of parents' political status on intergenerational mobility during post-reform era since 1978. I thus create a subset

that includes respondents who were born in and after 1978. After the exclusion of 562 missing cases, this subset has a sample size of 2,209.

Since this study measures parent's CCP membership as its independent variable, the two categories of political identification (Chinese Communist Youth League and Democratic Parties) are thus exempted. These respondents are recoded as system-missing ($n = 56$). Another significant source of system-missing data comes from respondents who have no permanent residence status either in urban or rural ($n = 154$). To dummy the control variable of urban residence (rural = 0; urban = 1), respondents who have temporary residence, military registrar, or no *hukou* (household registrar) were thus excluded. Finally, the subset also excluded respondents who refused to report their annual income or didn't know the amount of the total annual income in 2012 ($n = 452$).

Variables

The main sociological concepts of this study are political status, social class, education, and social mobility. Since Chinese communist party (CCP) membership is a major indicator of people's political status, I choose respondents' parents' party membership as the sole independent variable. This variable measures whether the respondent has at least one parent who is a communist party member. Every Chinese citizen except felons who have been deprived of political rights can apply to become a CCP member. But in order to become a CCP member, they have to be accepted by the party

organization and pass several tests and probation period. In 2017, the size of CCP had reached 89.45 million total members according to China's official News Agency *Xinhua* (Yang 2017). CCP membership is important for people's careers and lives, because it brings connections to other party members, many of whom are social elites and politicians (McMorrow 2015). In addition to the social connection, Appleton et al. (2009) have shown that party members in workplaces reported experiencing wage premium during economic transition.

The dependent variables comprise income, education and self-perceived social mobility. Social class is operationalized as economic capital, i.e. income; education is operationalized as the highest education level people have got (uneducated, primary, middle, high, universities etc.); and self-perceived social mobility variable is a subjective indicator, which reveals respondents' perceived social mobility. Additionally, this study will control for respondents' sex (male or female), region (east or middle/west), age, urban residence (urban or rural *hukou*), and ethnicity (Han or ethnic minority). To be more specific, the eastern area of China is more developed than the middle and western areas. The exact wordings and values of these variables can be found in Appendix A.

Social mobility, parent's political status, rural/urban division, regional difference (east or middle/west), and ethnicity are properly recoded for the regression analysis. Parent's political status, rural/urban division, regional difference, and ethnicity are dummied. In other words, they are recoded into dichotomous variables. While male, eastern regions, urban residence, and Han Chinese are recoded to 1,

female, middle and western regions, rural residence, and ethnic minorities are recoded to 0. In addition, I create a new variable for social mobility. It describes the difference between respondents' self-perceived social class in 2012 and the class at the age of 14. During the personal surveys, the interviewers of the CGSS show its interviewees a social class table of the society containing 10 levels. While 1 indicates the bottom, 10 indicates the topmost position in class stratification (see the chart below). Each respondent has to identify which level best describes their social class now and the social class of their family at the age 14. The score for self-perceived social mobility variable ranges from -9 to 9. Expanded information of this variable's coding scheme is shown in Appendix B.
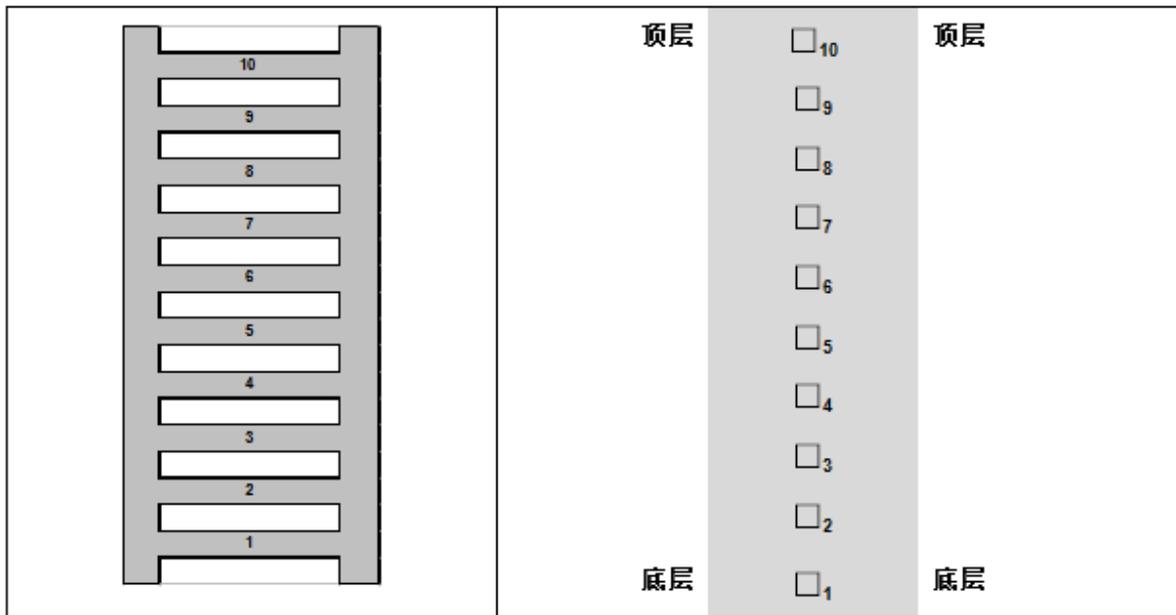
Analytic Strategy

This research employs ordinary least squire regression (OLS) to test the causal mechanism between people's social class and their parents' party identification. This model gives a description of how independent variables (Y), income (Y_1), education(Y_2) and social class (Y_3), varies based on parents' party identification(X_1), holding constant respondents' age (X_2), sex (X_3), region (X_4), urbanity (X_5), and ethnicity (X_6). The standard error is e_0.The predicated values of each dependent variable are:

$$Y=b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5+b_6X_6+e_0$$

The equation shown above illustrates the variation of each dependent variables predicted by the independent variable and other five control variables.

RESULTS

This section describes the results of univariate, bivariate and multivariate findings respectively. Table 1 reports the univariate findings of this study, namely, the means, medians, and standard deviations for independent, dependent and control variables.

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_____TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE_____

According to Table 1, the mean of the only independent variable "CCP parents" is 0.16, suggesting that 16 percent of respondents have at least 1 parent who is a CCP member. Table 1 also shows that the mean of the dependent variable, "income", is 30,686.7 *yuan*, while the median income is 21,500 *yuan*. According to Wong (2014),

Chinese government defines rural poor as people who earn annual net income per capita of 2,300 Chinese *yuan*, about $375, or less, or roughly $1 a day). The standard deviation of income is about 43, 000 *yuan*. Income is highly positive skewed towards the side of people who have relatively very high income compared to median income (maximum of income variable is 700,000 *yuan*). The frequency percentage histogram shown in Figure 1 presents the distribution of income variable, which is highly skewed towards right side, i.e. people who earn more than 700,000 *yuan*.

Figure 1 ABOUT HERE_____

Also presented in Table 1 is the mean of dependent variable self-perceived "social mobility", which is 0.88. The standard deviation of it is 1.683, that is to say, 68 percent of respondents fall between 2.7 and -0.8 in terms of the difference of respondents' perceived social class in 2012 and the age of 14 (the range of social mobility is between -9 and 9).

Moreover, Table 1 demonstrates that the mean of the third dependent variable "education" is 2.85, which indicates that the mean of education level lies close to the third degree, High School. Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents' education level, implying that more than half of respondents have received education more than middle school.

Figure 2 ABOUT HERE_____

Lastly, figure 3 shows respondents' age, which is a control variable. The distribution is slightly negative skewed to the left side, indicating that people over 23 are more likely to be selected in the sample of CGSS (2013).

Figure 3 ABOUT HERE

Bivariate correlation results are presented in Table 2. Only those statistical significant results ($p < .001$) who have more than very weak relationship are discussed here. The results demonstrate that education has weak positive relationship with income but negative very weak relationship with social mobility, suggesting that the higher the level of education completed, the higher the income people have.

Table 2 ABOUT HERE

The independent variable, CCP parents, is positively correlated with income and education but negatively correlated with social mobility, among which only education has a noteworthy positive weak relationship with CCP parents. That is to say, people who have at least one parent as Chinese Communist Party member complete more education than those whose parents are just ordinary citizens.

All five control variables (gender, age, region, urban, and ethnicity) have at least one statistical significant associations with three dependent variables. To start with, gender is positively interrelated with income weakly and education very weakly, indicating that male generally has more income than female in China. Second, while age is positively and weakly related to income and social mobility, it is

negatively and weakly related to education. That is to say, people who are older have more income and upward social mobility but complete less education. Third, region has positive weak association with income and education but has negative weak association with social mobility. This result suggests that people living in the East are likely to have more income, and higher level of education, though have relatively less perceived social mobility than people living in the comparatively less developed Western regions. Fourth, urban has a positive weak association with income and a positive moderate association with education, which means that urban residents have more income and more education than their rural counterparts. Lastly, ethnicity has positive weak correlation with education, indicating that the Han Chinese, who make up almost ninety percent of Chinese population, have a higher level of education on average than ethnic minorities (Tibetan, Uyghurs, and Hui etc.).

Moreover, the independent variable, CCP parents, has positive weak association with urban, i.e. urban residents are more likely to have at least one parent as CCP member than rural ones. The control variable, urban, has positive relationships with gender, age, ethnicity and region respectively. However, only region has noteworthy correlation strength with urban, implying that the population living in the East is more likely to be urban residents. Another control variable, region, has very weak and positive relationship with age but weak and positive relationship with ethnicity, showing that Han Chinese people are more likely to live in the East than in the West.

Multivariate results presented in Table 3 suggest that the independent variable and all five control variables explain 15.8 percent of the variance in income, 32.2 percent of the variance in education level, and only 4.1 percent of the variance in social mobility. The regression equation for income (F (6. 2202) = 69.114) is statistically significant at .001 level. The equation for education level (F (6. 2202) = 173.938) is also significant at .001 level. However, the equation for social mobility is only significant at .01 level, which is not significant enough considering my sample size ($n > 2,000$). All of these three regression equations reject the null hypotheses that the fit of the intercept-only model and the fit of my model are equal to each other.

Table 3 ABOUT HERE_____

The independent variable, parents' CCP party membership, has significant relationship with income, and education, but not with social mobility. Having at least one parent with CCP membership increases people's income by about 11,165 *yuan* and leads to higher level of education ($b = .361$), holding constant all control variables. There are also statistically significant relationships between the control variable gender and two dependent variables, income and education level. That is to say, male people make higher income ($b = 14994.39$) and have higher level of education ($b = .93$). Age has effects on people's income and education. For every additional year older, people will earn 1,261.14 more *yuan* on average but complete less education ($b = -.034$), and have slightly higher social mobility ($b = .050$). Another control variable urban residence has a significant relationship with education, suggesting that living in the city will enable people to have more education ($b = .929$). Region affects people's

income, education and social mobility. People living in Eastern areas earn 17249 *yuan* more on average and complete more education than people in Middle and Western China. However, the result also indicates that Eastern people have less perceived social mobility ($b = -.406$) than their counterparts. Ethnicity only has statistically significant relation with education, showing that Han Chinese people complete higher level of education ($b = .247$) than ethnic minority people.

Comparing the standardized coefficients of all variables, parents' CCP party membership does not have the strongest effect on each of three dependent variables. Instead, the strongest effect on income and social mobility is region ($\beta = .191$), while the most powerful indicator of education is living in urban areas ($\beta = .462$).

DISCUSSIONS

The bivariate and multivariate results have shown statistically significant relationships between the independent variable, parent's CCP membership, and people's total annual income and education. The results, to large extent, confirm the dominant class theory of China (Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley 1998) that political elite families of socialist regimes are more likely to retain economic and educational privileges during the reform than their counterparts. Even though parent's party membership is not the biggest predictor of two dependent variables, income and education, the membership is still a salient factor in shaping the class stratification of Chinese society. Overall, this result resonates with Walder's (2003) argument that

the decline of political elites in the market society is a gradual and longlasting process that could take many decades to complete, even though the market mechanics could mediate the effect of political capital on income inequality.

Overall, this research provides an empirical analysis to examine the extent to which the independent variable and five control variables (gender, age, urbanity, region, and ethnicity) affect income, education, and social mobility. It is notable that parents' CCP membership, gender, and region are the three strongest impactors of people's annual total income. Recalling the previous studies (Xie and Zhou 2014; Wang, Wan, and Yang 2014), they point out that income inequality in China nowadays is attributive to the structural factors within the unique political system of China such as regional divides, and urban–rural gaps. This study has added another crucial structural factor that contributes to income inequality in China, that is, parent's CCP membership.

Second, the multivariate result indicates that the independent variable and all control variables have significant relationships with education. While parents' CCP membership, male gender, urban residence (*hukou*), eastern region, and Han ethnicity lead to education inequality, older people tend to complete less education. Qian and Smyth (2007) find that urban-rural gaps rather than regional disparities are the prime contributor to educational inequality in China. This research not only strengthens Qian and Smyth's stance but also offers additional possible explications of what has shaped inequality of education in China. Inasmuch as the sample of this research only contains people in their early adulthood (from the age of 18 to 34), the

disparity of education may longitudinally affect people's income as they grow older, thus widening the income gap even further.

Because the most striking influence of education comes from urban-rural divide, the practical implication of this study is to caution the Chinese government to be more aware of this divide. In recent two decades, the unequal growth of the market institution inevitably gives rise to the formation of economic elite class in China. Educational institutions may result in social reproduction of such an elite class through the transmission of existing cultural values and norms from generation to generation (Bourdieu 1996). To wrestle against this potential predicament, the Chinese education system should open more opportunities to those less advantaged groups (females, Middle and Western people, rural residents, and ethnic minorities), thus rendering a more fluid rather than reproductive class structure.

Third, the regression analysis of self-perceived social mobility produces some surprising results. Although the equation has no statistical significance, it challenges the hypothesis that people who have more privileged social positions perceive better upward social mobility. Variables including parents' CCP membership, gender, urbanity, region, and ethnicity all generate the opposite results from the hypothesis. That is to say, people who were historically disadvantaged at the early stage of reform feel more confident about the mobility they have had.

I speculate that the impressive economic growth of China in recent years has greatly improved the livelihood of those people who were historically disempowered in the past. Though the distributive injustice in China is considered to be

deteriorating, the subjective assessments of social mobility made by people themselves still seem to be positive. This result coincides with the former conclusion that Chinese people are generally optimistic and confident about the upward mobility and social inequality in the market-based economy (Whyte 2010; Whyte and Im 2014). Even if social inequality of China has been more characteristic of a generationally persistent pattern over recent years (Li and Zhu 2017), the upward mobility that people could perceive in the past five to twenty years may ameliorate their negative perceptions of how bad the distributive injustice has become.

CONCLUSION

To summarize my findings, I have to first recall Deng Xiaoping's famous saying about his reform: the reform should let some regions and some people get richer first. The empirical analysis of this paper has assessed the social conditions of Chinese young adults born in and after 1978 and has revealed who have got more advantaged in the past three and half decades. Using the data from the 2013 CGSS, I hypothesized that Chinese people who are born in and after 1978 will have higher incomes, will self-perceive higher social statuses than they had at the age 14, and will have higher levels of education if they have at least one parent who is a Chinese Communist Party member. The results confirm that parent's party membership significantly determines people's income and education, but no relationship is shown between party membership and social mobility. The multivariate results suggest that CCP

parents' children, men, older people, Easterners have higher incomes; CCP parents' children, men, urban residents, Easterners, and Han Chinese complete more education than their counterparts. Overall, it is clear that the Chinese economic reform launched by Deng has made some people substantively richer and more privileged than others.

The conclusion that parent's party membership significantly determines people's income and education seems to contradict the core thesis of market transition theory that market transitions has led to the decline of distributive political elites (Nee 1989). However, it is beyond the capability of my dataset (CGSS 2013) to answer whether these people who have CCP parents derive their economic privilege from their parents' political connections to the ruling party more than their personal endeavors in the careers. Despite a statistically significant relationship between parent's CCP membership and income, the quantitative study cannot show how these people have utilized their parent's political capital to improve their positions in the society. Do their economic privileges come from their parent's social network? From the greater education they have received? Or from the special perquisites of party cadre families? Future research, especially qualitative research on social connections, is essential to unravel the process of transforming parent's political capital into children's own socio-economic privileges.

While this study is the first that examines the effect of parent's CCP membership on intergenerational mobility by using the 2013 CGSS, it still has some limitations. First, the income variable is far from perfect, since about 17 percent of

respondents (n = 377) in the subset reported no annual income in 2012. Among these 377 respondents, 83 percent are women who are jobless, housewives, or people who only have unpaid subsistence jobs. While these people report no income, they are not the same as the unemployed or the poor.

Second, the measurement of social mobility does not consider people's objective mobility aside from their subjective perceptions of social mobility due to the limitation of my dataset. Though CGSS (2013) asks respondents their horizontal mobility in terms of their occupational status and residential change, it lacks questions reflecting people's objective mobility such as job titles. The comparison of objective mobility and how much people have perceived their mobility is indispensable to understand Chinese people's acceptance of the current distributive injustice, the research question suggested by Whyte (2010).

Finally, the operationalization of social class omits other variables that may significantly impact people's social class status such as people's occupations, father's education and both parents' occupation (Weeden 2002). This limitation is due to the inadequacy of time to cover all possible variables that might indicate or influence people's social class. The distinct characteristics of the Chinese demographic, occupational, and educational system also add difficulties of recoding and dummying original variables. For example, the northeastern area of China (*Dongbei*) belongs to eastern regions of China geographically, but its economy is not as strong as most of other provinces from eastern regions. The ways these variables should be recoded or dummied can be improved in the future. In addition, this study does not well consider

China's floating population and rural immigrant workers who move to cities for jobs and better livings. Future researches studying China's social stratification, market transition, and political system would produce more comprehensive and generalizable results if researchers take into account these three limitations.

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Table 1. Descriptions, Metrics, Means, and Standard Deviations for Independent, Dependent and Control Variables ($n = 2{,}209$)

	Description	Metrics	Mean	Median	SD
CCP Parents	Does the respondent have at least one parent who is a CCP member?	0=no; 1=yes	0.16	0	0.366
Gender (Male)	Respondent's sex	0=Female; 1=Male	0.5	0	0.500
Age	Respondent's age	Number of years	26.9	27	4.807
Urban	Whether the respondent has urban or rural household *(hukou)*?	0=Rural; 1=Urban	0.39	1	0.488
Region (East)	Where does the respondent come from	0=Middle/West; 1=East	0.55	1	0.498
Ethnicity (Han)	What is the respondent's ethnicity?	0=Ethnic Minority; 1=Han	0.9	1	0.300
Income (*yuan*)	Total annual income in 2012	Number in *yuan*	30687	21500	42377
Education	What is the respondent's highest education level?	1= Primary or Less; 2= Middle School; 3=High School; 4=College or Higher	2.85	3	1.021
Social Mobility	What is the difference of the respondent's perceived social mobility from age 14 to now?	Number from -9 to 9	0.88	1	1.683

Table 2. Correlations (*r*) between Parent Party Identification and Other Eight Variables (Listwise deletion, two-tailed test, *n* = 2,209)

	Education	Social Mobility	CCP Parents	Gender (male)	Age	Region (East)	Urban	Ethnicity (han)
Income	.241***	.058**	.083***	.193***	.183***	.216***	.171***	.057**
Education		-.085***	.217***	.080***	-.119***	.225***	.536***	.172***
Social Mobility			-.076***	-.030	.128***	-.100***	-.044*	-.036
CCP Parent				.015	.014	-.020	.219***	-.039
Gender					-.043*	.028	.059**	.037
Age						.077***	.085***	.011
Region							.207***	.181***
Urban								.085***

***p < .001

Table 3. Regression of Income, Education and Social Mobility on All Variables ($n = 2,209$)

Variable	Income	Education	Social Mobility
CCP Parents	11165.71***	.361***	-.278**
	(0.098)	(0.140)	(-0.064)
Gender (Male)	14944.39***	.093***	-.182**
	(0.170)	(0.047)	(-0.054)
Age	1261.14***	-.034***	.050***
	(0.136)	(-0.164)	(0.143)
Urban	6219.71**	.929***	-.021
	(0.070)	(0.462)	(-0.006)
Region (East)	17249.07***	.249***	-.406***
	(0.191)	(0.122)	(-0.118)
Ethnicity (Han)	3661.90	.247***	-.100
	(0.025)	(0.074)	(-0.018)
Constant	-25777.73	-0.103	3.006
R^2	0.158	0.322	0.041
$F (6,2202)$	69.114***	173.938***	15.517**

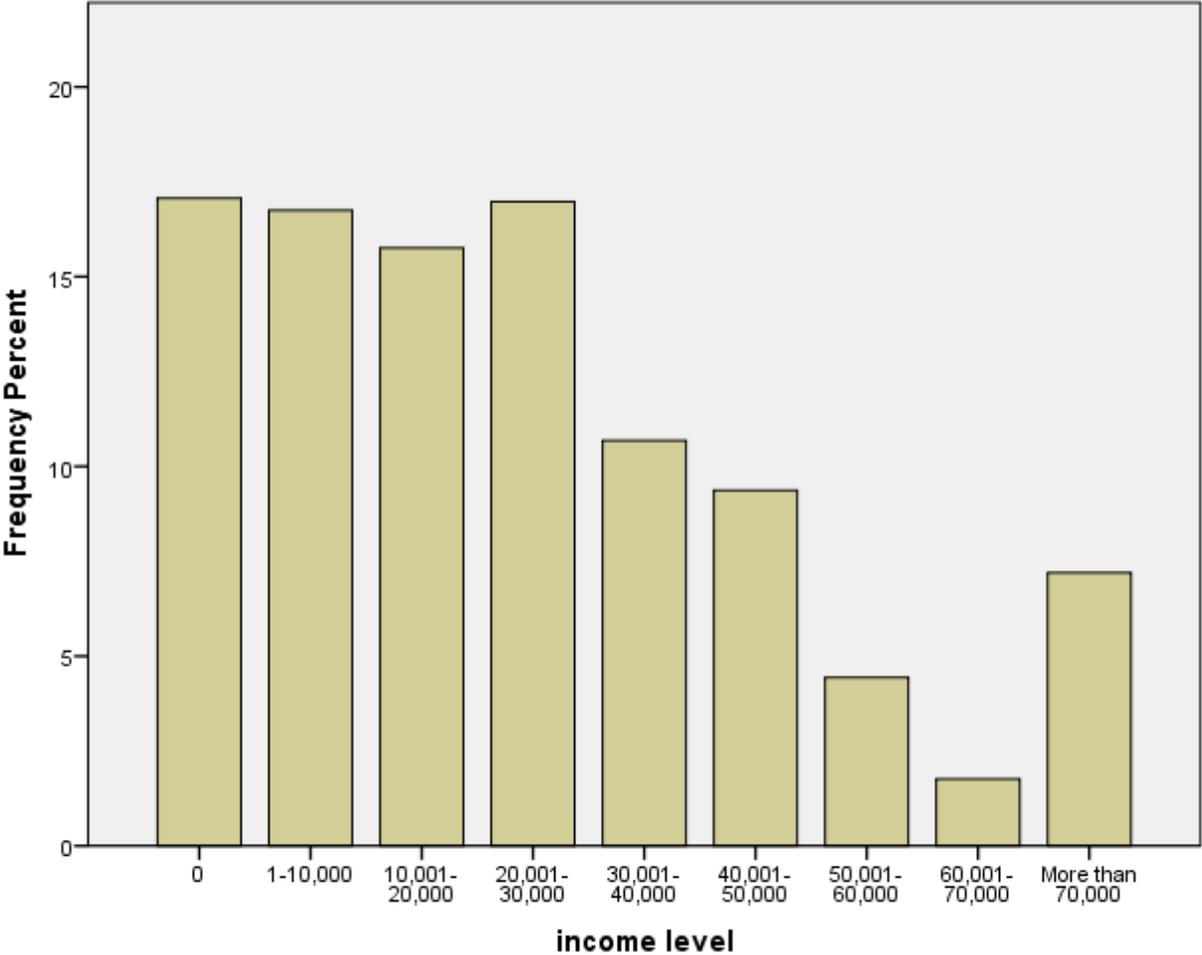** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$
Standard Coefficients Shown in Parenthesis

Figure 1. Respondent's income 2012
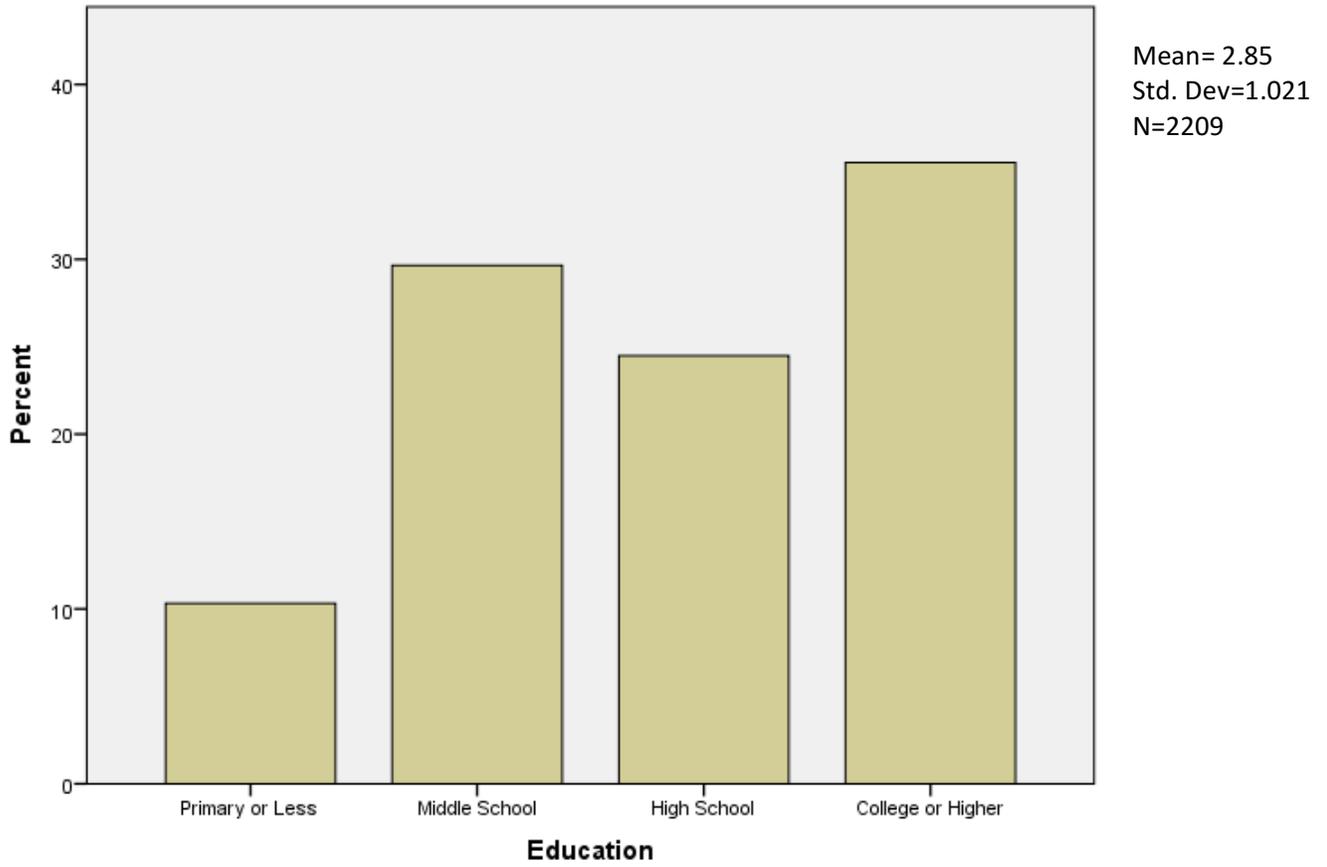
Mean= 2.85
Std. Dev=1.021
N=2209

Figure 2. Respondent's Education
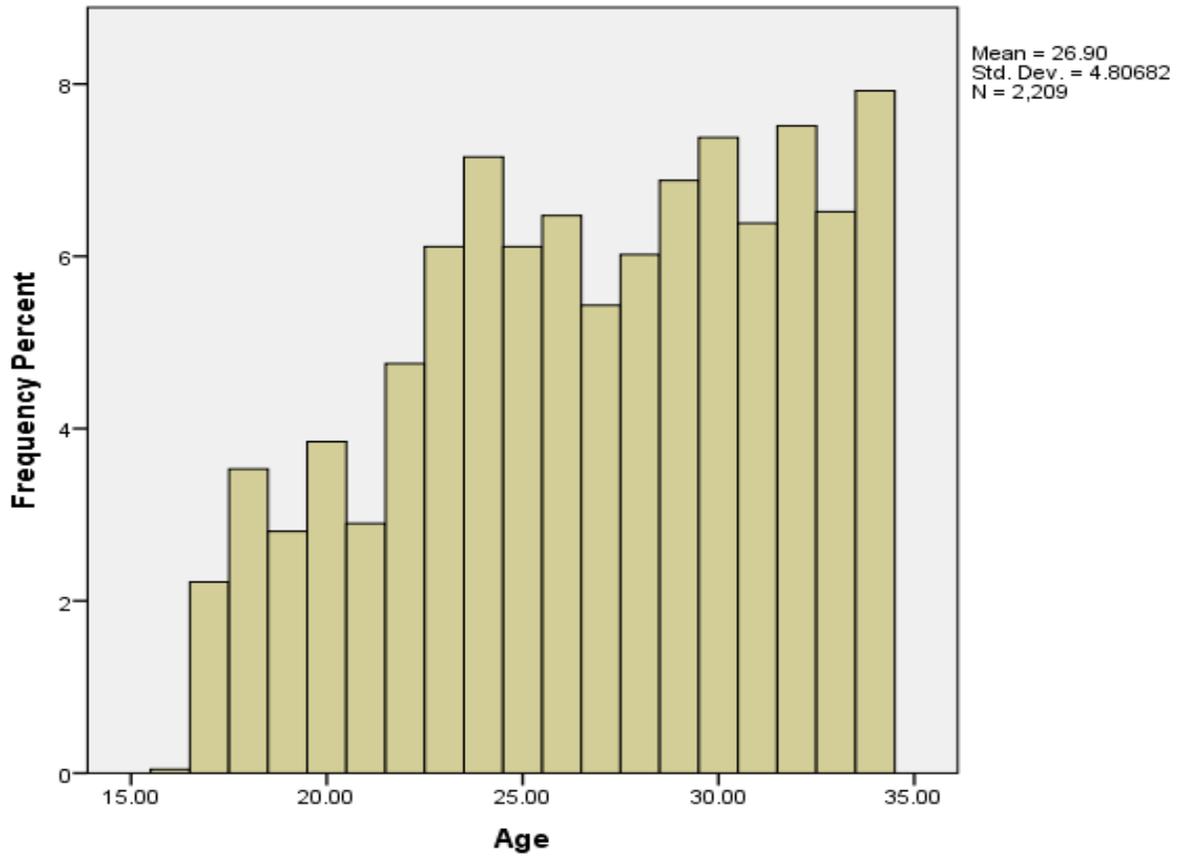
Figure 3. Respondent's Age

APPENDIX A: Wordings and Values of Variables

Independent Variable:

<u>A89c. What is your father's political status? 您父亲的政治面貌是：</u>

Communist Party Member 共产党员..1

Democratic Parties 民主党派...2

Communist Youth League Member 共青团员...3

Ordinary Citizens 群众..4

<u>A90c. What is your mother's political status? 您母亲的政治面貌是：</u>

Community Party member 共产党员..1

Democratic Parties 民主党派...2

Communist Youth League member 共青团员...3

Ordinary Citizens 群众..4

Dependent Variable:

<u>A7a.What is the highest education level you have attained? 您目前的最高教育程度是</u>

<u>No education at all 没有受过任何教育 .... 01</u>

Old-style Private School or Literacy class 私塾、扫盲班 02

Primary School 小学 03

Middle School 初中 04

Vocational High School 职业高中.. 05

High School 普通高中... 06

Technical Secondary School 中专 07

Technic School 技校 08

Junior College Education (for adults) 大学专科（成人高等教育） 09

Junior College Education 大学专科（正规高等教育） 10

Undergraduate (for adults) 大学本科（成人高等教育） 11

Undergraduate 大学本科（正规高等教育） 12

Graduate School (or more) 研究生及以上 13

Others (Please notify) 其他（请注明：） 14

A8a. What is the total income of you in the past year (2012)? 您个人去年（2012）全年的总收入是多少？(Numerical)

A43. In our society, someone is at the top this society, while some are at the bottom. The card we show you signifies the social ladder of our society, in which ladder do you identify yourself? 在我们的社会里，有些人处在社会的上层，有些人处在社会的下层。这张卡片【出示示卡 4】的 梯子要从上往下看。最高 "10 分"代表最顶层，最低"1 分"代表最底层。（高位补零）

A43a. Which ladder are you currently on according to your own opinion? 您认为您自己目前在哪个等级上？

A43d. Which ladder was your family on when you were 14 according to your personal opinion? 您认为在您 14 岁时，您的家庭处在哪个等级上？
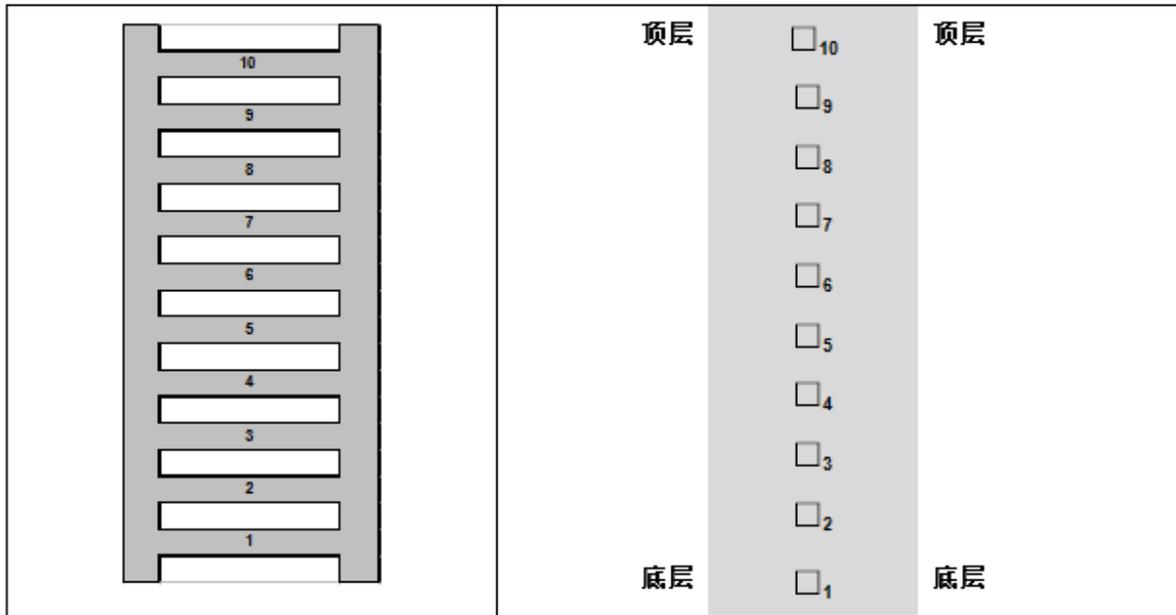
Control Variables:

A2. Sex 性别【访问员记录】:
Male　男.. 1
Female　女.. 2

A3. Your birth date (include year/month/day)　　您的出生日期是什么？(记录公历年。
如果被访者以农历、生肖或其他方式报告自己的出生年，请换算成公历后再记录)
记录：[＿＿|＿＿|＿＿|＿＿]年[＿＿|＿＿]月[＿＿|＿＿]日

A4. Your ethnicity　　您的民族是：
Han　汉 1
Mongol　蒙 2
Manchu　满 3
Hui　回 4
Tibetan　藏 5
Zhuang　壮 6
Uyghur　维 7
Others (please notify)　其他（请注明：＿＿＿＿＿＿）.......................... 8

<u>A18. What is your current household registrar status?</u>   您目前的户口登记状况是：
Agricultural　农业户口... 1 → 跳问 A21
Non-agricultural　非农业户口 2
Temporary Residence 蓝印户口... 3
Registered City Resident (agricultural in the past) 居民户口（以前是农业户口）.......................... 4
Registered City Resident (non-agricultural in the past) 居民户口（以前是非农业户口）...................... 5
Military 军籍 6
None of them 没有户口 .... 7 → 跳问 A25(第 6 页)
Others (please notify) 其他（请注明：_____）............. 8 → 跳问 A21

<u>A22. The place your household registrar is in</u> 您目前的户口登记地是：
Notify: Province/Municipality or County/District or Township/Town/Street or Village
记录：省/自治区/直辖市 市+县/区 乡/镇/街道

APPENDIX B: Coding schemes

Independent Variable:

1. Parents' political status: (A89c and A90c)

0= Neither of parents are CCP member

1=At least one parent who is CCP member

Dependent Variable:

1. Social Mobility (A43):

Socmob=A43a-A43b

Social Mobility variable equals to respondents' perceived social status now subtracted from their perceived social status at the age 14.

2. Income (A8a):

Total Annual Income of Respondent in 2012

3. Education level:

1=Primary School or less=No education at all (1); Old-style private school or Literacy class (02); Primary school (3).

2=Middle school (4)

3=High School=Vocational High School (5) ; High School (6); Technical secondary school (7)

4= Higher Education=Technic School 08; Associate degree (for adults) (9); Associate degree (10); Bachelor degree (for adults) (11) ; Bachelor degree (12); Master degree (or more) (13)

Sysmissing=Others (14)

Control Variable:

1. Region (A22):

Middle/West 0

East 1

The eastern areas include 10 provinces and municipalities: Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Shandong, Guangdong and Hainan; The Northeastern areas include 3 provinces: Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang. These east regions are coded 1.
The Central areas cover 6 provinces: Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan; The Western areas include 12 provinces, autonomous regions and municipality: Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Tibet, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang. Middle and west regions combined are coded 0.
The regional demarcation follows Chinese Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2014 National Economic and Social Development.

2. Urban/Rural divide: (A18)

Rural 0

Urban 1

0=Agricultural (1); Registered City Resident (agricultural in the past) (4)

1=Non-agricultural (2); Registered City Resident (non-agricultural in the past) (5)

Sysmissing=Temporary Residence (3) ; Military (6) ; None of them (7) ; Others (8)

3. Ethnicity: (A4)

Ethnic Minority 0

Han 1

Han ethnicity is coded 1, while other ethnicities minorities (Mongol, Manchu, Hui, Zhuang, Tibetan, Uyghur etc.) are coded 0.

4. Age:

Age=2012-the birth year (a3a)

5. Gender:

Female............0

Male...........1