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ABSTRACT

As one of its first acts in 1950, the newly established Communist government of China introduced a system of family class labels based on the relationship of the household head to the new regime and the economic position of the household in the years just before "Liberation." These labels were hereditary until their abolition three decades later. The labels were a bureaucratic mechanism to promote the advancement of households associated with support for the Communist movement before 1949, as well as households that had been economically disadvantaged, and to penalize households associated with the former Nationalist regime, along with those who prospered based on property ownership. Researchers have long suspected that these labels benefited households with connections to the Communist movement more than economically disadvantaged households, and some have seen signs that former middle and upper class households continued to do better than the economically disadvantaged despite the discrimination enforced by these labels. The impact of these labels during the 30 years they were in effect has yet to be firmly established, and their lingering impact in subsequent decades is largely unexplored. We examine the factors affecting the initial assignment of class labels and their subsequent consequences for Communist Party membership and educational and occupational attainment. Using data from a 1996 national probability survey of China, we find that the class labels had a major impact on the life chances of individuals that persisted at least into the mid-1990s, although not always in the ways that were intended.

INTRODUCTION

In the early 1950's the new government of the People's Republic of China assigned to each family a political class label (*jiating chushen*) on the basis of the relationship of the head of household to the "revolutionary struggle" when the Chinese Red Army and Communist Party seized control of China around 1949 and the family's source of income in the three years prior to 1949. Designed to consolidate political control and lay the foundations for a socialist society, these labels were enforced for three decades, during which they were a major feature of social and political life (Kraus 1977, 1981; Unger 1982, 1984; Parish 1984; Friedman, Pickowicz, and Selden 1991; Chan, Madsen, and Unger 1992). They influenced students' educational and career strategies (Shirk 1982), shaped the choice of marriage partners (Croll 1984; Unger 1984), and became a subject of intense political debate during outpourings of popular dissent during the "Hundred Flowers" period of 1957 (Doolin 1964) and the Red Guard movement during the Cultural Revolution (White 1976; Chan, Rosen, and Unger 1980; Rosen 1982; Unger 1982; Andreas 2002).

China's practice of sorting its population into class categories was based on earlier Soviet practices. Although the categories were inspired by Marxist class analysis, they were in fact political statuses attached to entire families, passed down through generations (through the male line) and enforced by bureaucratic rules. The basic principle was to distinguish "proletarian" elements from "exploiters" and "class enemies." Those in the "proletarian" categories, assumed to be loyal to the regime, were to be given certain privileges and opportunities. Those in the "exploiter" categories, assumed to be hostile to the new regime, faced certain forms of discrimination and restricted opportunities.

These class labels were intended both to promote social justice and to consolidate Communist power. "Proletarian" categories were to be favored in admission to the Party, career advancement, and entry into higher education, because these were groups that had been denied opportunity in the old society. Individuals from "exploiter" households, who previously had enjoyed large advantages, were henceforth to face certain forms of discrimination. By favoring households that benefitted from the revolution, new elites would form through the process of higher education, replacing the old elites that had lost status and power in the revolution. These new elites presumably would be more loyal than those from former exploiting households, who were assumed to be hostile to proletarian power (Fitzpatrick 1979). They were designated as class enemies and periodically abused in political campaigns as "enemies of the people."

These class categories were fixed by the classification of the male household head at the time of the CCP's "liberation" of a locality. Communist operatives assigned these identities to rural households during the course of land reform, on the basis of their investigation of landholding and individual political histories garnered during the visits of work teams to villages (Hinton 1966). Class categories were assigned to households based on some combination of their economic status and the political activities of the male household head. In cities, individuals were told to report fully on their entire work histories, describing the positions they had held and the occupations of their parents. They also were instructed to report fully on their own and their parents' political histories. The information would be placed in individual dossiers as well as the household registers that were created in urban areas (Cheng and Selden 1994). The most thorough background checks were done on those who were already in positions of some authority, or who were applying for Party membership.

As in the Soviet Union, China's effort to distinguish households as loyal ("proletarian") and enemy ("exploiter") was plagued with ambiguity and contradictions (Fitzpatrick 1993). The ambiguity came in two forms. First, in many cases individuals worked in a variety of occupations during their lives. Individuals could rise from humble backgrounds to establish a business and accumulate some wealth; or they could lose privileged positions through bankruptcy or unemployment. These disruptions were common from 1937 to 1949, during the Japanese invasion and subsequent civil war, and could lead to drastic changes in the fate of families. Upward and downward mobility could make class designations arbitrary judgment calls. Second, large segments of the population could not readily be assigned to either "proletarian" or "exploiter" categories. In the countryside, the CCP adapted the Soviet categories of "poor", "middle" and "rich" peasant and added two more: "poor and lower-middle" and "landlord." This was necessary to cover the common situation of households that had access to land but not enough to support their families, and to identify large landowners with commercial interests. The same was true of urban professionals, white-collar workers, teachers and intellectuals. Because they were not engaged in material production, they were not exploited in Marxist terms, and they did not hire others or possess capital that made them "exploiters." Like self-sufficient family farmers labelled "middle peasants," the families of urban non-manual workers were assigned politically ambiguous labels.

The system was also rife with contradictions. The first was the conflation of "class" with political affiliation. In the Soviet Union, membership in the Communist Party before the classification of the population in the 1920s made one "proletarian," regardless of the individual's family background or personal occupation before joining. This practice was adopted in China in the 1950s. People who joined the Party or the Red Army before their victory were

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considered "revolutionary" even if they had come from the educated professional class or prosperous "exploiter" households. The Communist Party of China attracted many patriotic students during the anti-Japanese war, a period when high school and university education was limited to individuals from prosperous households. The party itself was founded and led by the highly literate sons of prosperous rural families, and it attracted many individuals from similar backgrounds. The reverse relationship also holds: no matter how humble one's origins, to have joined the Nationalist party or army would have erased one's "proletarian" origins and would make one a class enemy. The same ambiguities evident in classifying occupations apply also to these political categories. This was pronounced in cases where individuals defected from the Nationalist cause to join the Communists, which was common late in the civil war of 1946-1949.

Another contradictory feature of these labels is that they were inherited. This means that individuals who grew up in households classified as "landlord" or "capitalist" would still be considered as such, even if their family's wealth had been expropriated before they were born and they grew up in dire poverty. The same applied to individuals whose fathers or grandfathers had been officials in the Nationalist party or officers in Nationalist armies—even if they had no contact with these forebears before they were executed or fled to Taiwan. On the other hand, revolutionary cadres and soldiers were assigned to leadership positions after the party's victory, and many of them rose into important positions. This meant that their offspring were considered "revolutionary" even if they were raised in privileged households after the revolution.

The class labels were divided into three broad categories. "Good" or "Red" classes included both "revolutionary" and "proletarian" households.[1] They were presumed to be loyal to

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[1] The "revolutionary" category was composed of pre-1949 Party members, Red Army soldiers, and "revolutionary martyrs" (families of deceased revolutionary Party members and soldiers);

the party, and were to be shown preference in educational advancement, job assignments and promotions, and entry into the Party. "Ordinary" classes included a range of middling classes in both city and countryside.[2] They were presumed to be neutral, or wavering, in their loyalties to the revolution, and were to receive neither preference nor penalties. The "bad" classes were classified as either "exploiting class" or "reactionary."[3]

These labels were heavily emphasized early in the Stalin era, especially in the Soviet Union's own "Cultural Revolution" of the late 1920s (Fitzpatrick 1978). In large part because of these ambiguities and contradictions, the Soviet Union abandoned these class categories as unworkable after only a few years, and they were essentially unused by the mid-1930s (Fitzpatrick 2005, pp. 37-49). In China, however, the system was rigorously enforced from the 1950s until the end of the 1970s, when its use rapidly declined. In 1979 the stigma attached to a range of "bad" class labels was formally removed (Central Committee 1979a, 1979b). Class labels were not removed from household registers, however, and students who registered for middle school were still required to report their family's class label until 1987, when the practice was finally discontinued (Chen, Wang, and Yang 2017, p. 10). During the radical political campaigns characteristic of the Mao era, especially during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, the class labels were emphasized to an extreme degree in political and social life.

The three-decade emphasis on enforcing these bureaucratic labels in a wide range of career events has long led observers of China to suspect that the labels had a major impact on life

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the "proletarian" category included urban working class and poor and "lower middle" peasants.
[2] Specifically, self-sufficient family farmers known as "middle" class peasants, along with urban clerks, white collar workers, teachers, small shopkeepers, academics and other professionals.
[3] The category was composed of landlords, rich peasants, and capitalists, along with members of the Nationalist Party or its armies. It also included individuals given labels such as "rightist," "bad element," or "counter-revolutionary" for political or criminal offenses.

chances, especially in educational and career advancement and entry into the Communist Party, which formed the elite of the new party-state. Due to sharp limits on the availability of data, there has always been a high degree of uncertainty about what that impact actually was. The ambiguity and somewhat contradictory nature of the categories and their assignment to households have led some to wonder whether their impact might have been attenuated or that they might have had unintended consequences. Case studies based on government documents, interviews, and fragmentary statistics from local settings have suggested that politically-connected households with "revolutionary" labels benefitted far more than "proletarian" households, despite the fact that the latter were also considered "red" (e.g. Rosen 1982; Unger 1982; Andreas 2002). This would suggest that the "revolutionary" category became a *de facto* mechanism for Party patronage, as was charged by critics within China in the 1950s and 1960s (Doolin 1964; White 1976), while the "proletarian" labels were a mild form of affirmative action. This interpretation was reinforced by indications that individuals from middle class and exploiting households nonetheless did relatively well in educational attainment well into the 1960s, despite the discrimination inherent in the rules, perhaps even better than individuals from proletarian households (Unger 1982; Rosen 1982; Andreas 2002). Findings based on probability samples of the population were unknown until the 1990s. Perhaps the only study to directly address these questions with a probability sample found large advantages in occupational attainment and Party membership for "revolutionary" households, and equally clear disadvantages for "exploiting" classes (Walder and Hu 2009). The study, however, limited its inquiry to career advancement and Party membership and considered only urban residents, thereby likely introducing sample selection bias by excluding some 80 percent of the population that lived in rural areas.

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Whatever the impact of class labels might have been during the period of their enforcement, a second question is whether they continued to have lingering consequences in the period after the policy was abandoned. In conjunction with the political liberalization and economic reforms that followed the Cultural Revolution, the use of class labels was rapidly curtailed after 1979 (Lee 1991). But the class labels were retained in individual dossiers and household registers, and local decision-makers may have continued to discriminate informally according to prior practice. Even apart from the decisions of authority figures, it is likely that the experience of one's family being labeled as "Revolutionary," and therefore as especially worthy, or as "Bad," and therefore as especially unworthy, affected self-conceptions in ways that influenced choices about whether to pursue various opportunities such as higher education, cadre positions, and Communist Party membership.[4]

This paper aims to assess, for the first time with data from a national probability sample of both urban and rural populations, the role of political class labels in educational and occupational attainment and the attainment of Party membership. We do this by estimating various logistic regression models, considering the relation of family class labels to each outcome without and then with controls for covariates. We also assess for each outcome whether the impact of class labels differed in two periods (following Walder, Li, and Treiman 2000): from 1950 to to 1979, which we label the "Mao period"; and from 1979 to 1996, the year of the

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[4] There is some evidence from social psychological studies showing that high SES individuals are more likely to exhibit a sense of entitlement than are lower SES individuals and that lower SES individuals tend to exhibit a reduced sense of personal control (Kraus, Piff, and Keltner 2009; Kraus et al. 2012; Piff 2014). There also is a well-developed literature on the relationship of SES to health that focuses on feelings of adequacy and subjugation as well as on autonomy and the lack of personal control. See, for example, Marmot (2004); Wilkinson and Pickett (2009); Åberg et al. (2012); Nobles, Weintraub, and Adler (2013); Walker et al. (2013); and Bosma et al. (2015).

survey on which our analysis is based, which we label the "Reform period." We do not present

the period-specific results in this paper, because we found few differences over time. Instead, we

will note the few period differences that we did uncover as we describe the results below.

DATA

The data for our analysis are from the survey of "Life Histories and Social Change in

Contemporary China," a multi-stage stratified national probability sample of the population of

China age 20-69, conducted in 1996.[5] The total sample size is 6,090, stratified by urban vs.

rural residence (with the urban population sampled at three times the rate of the rural

population) and also by the proportion of the population with at least a middle school

education (see Treiman 1998 for details).[6] The response rate was very high, with completed

interviews obtained from about 95% of contacted households (Treiman 1998, p. I.17).[7] The

survey questionnaire includes extensive information on the respondents' educational,

occupational, and political histories and their economic activities at the time of the survey and

also similar, although less extensive, data for their parents and grandparents. We exploit this

rich body of life history information in our analysis.

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[5] Only Tibet was excluded from the sample design, but Tibet's population is so small that in a probability-proportional-to-size multistage sample of the same size as ours, it is unlikely that any Tibetan county would have been chosen. For all practical purposes this is a national sample.
[6] The data set and documentation are available online:

https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=hdl:1902.1/M889V1.

[7] Within each village or neighborhood, samples of households were drawn systematically from lists of permanent resident households (the *hukou* lists) and from lists of temporary residents that all village/neighborhood-level units were required to keep beginning in late 1994 (Treiman 1998, p. I.4). We successfully interviewed individuals in 89% of the listed households; in 6% of households it was impossible to contact anyone; in 4% of households there was no eligible respondent or an eligible respondent was never available; in less than 1% of cases was the interview refused by a respondent.

Variables

Our focal variable is "Class origin," and the remaining variables are employed either as control variables or as outcome variables. The basic definitions of the variables are given here: for more detail about definitions and coding decisions, see the Appendix. All of the outcome variables studied here were based on information for specific points in time, that is, for specific years or ages. While we cannot definitively infer causal effects, we can at least get the temporal order of predictors and outcomes correct. We do this by lagging the predictor variables by one year, relative to each outcome being studied. This makes it possible to treat the same variables as both determinants and outcomes, depending on the outcome being studied.

Class origin. We utilize the four categories discussed above. To distinguish the "good" categories defined by political affiliation versus economic status, we label the politically-defined "revolutionary" category as "Red," and the "proletarian" category as "Workers." These two categories were intended to be treated preferentially. They are distinguished from the "Middle" classes (urban white collar, professionals, middle peasants), to be treated even-handedly, and "Bad" classes (landlords and capitalists), who were to be penalized (see the Appendix for more detail).

Ancestral property. The survey included information on ownership of various kinds of property in 1948 by parents, paternal grandfathers, and maternal grandfathers, and also whether in 1948 each of these ancestors rented out land or hired agricultural labor. "Don't know" responses were treated as negative (see the Appendix for more detail).

Ancestral occupation in 1948. The survey includes information on the 1948 occupation of the respondent's father, mother, and both paternal and maternal grandfather. For each of these

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variables some respondents reported that the ancestor had no occupation in 1948; we retained

such descriptions as a separate category (see the Appendix for more detail).

Education is both as an outcome variable and a control variable for the other outcomes we

study. When we study education as an outcome, we consider matriculation at each level of

education contingent on having matriculated at the previous level. We focus on matriculation

rather than completion because matriculation may be dependent upon class background, with

those of Red Class origin being particularly advantaged and those of Bad Class origin being

particularly disadvantaged, whereas graduation having achieved admission is much more a

matter of personal effort. For several levels of education, we treat alternative types of schools

as competing risks—whether one matriculates at an ordinary or an elite junior high school;

whether one matriculates at a vocational, ordinary academic, or elite academic high school;[8]

and whether one matriculates at a specialized institute or university at a tertiary level

institution.[9] We regard those who have matriculated at one type of school at a given level to

be no longer at risk of matriculating at another type of school at the same level.[10]

Occupation appears as an outcome variable and for admission into the Party as a control

variable. When we consider occupation as an outcome we follow Walder et al. (2000), who

treat cadres (middle or high level management personnel) and professionals as the elite

segment of the Chinese occupational structure and regard entry into such occupations as

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[8] "Junior high school" and "lower middle school" are synonyms as are "high school," "senior high school," and "upper middle school."

[9] An "elite" secondary school is either one that was designated as a "key point" (i.e. "magnet") school by a city government or one that was attached to a university. A "specialized institute" was a post-secondary training program to prepare personnel for a government ministry or industrial sector (for example, railways, metallurgy, foreign language).

[10] In China one rarely moved between different types of schools at the same level, but in our data 7% of those who completed academic high school subsequently entered a vocational high school. We ignore this exception, which includes about 1½% of the total population.

competing risks. When occupational position is a control variable we combine it with information on the respondent's activity in the prior year.[11]

Communist Party membership. In China, Party membership opens up career advancement into elite positions. In our data, only 14% of men and 4% of women are members.

Parental party membership. Given both the importance of political loyalty and the importance of personal connections (*guanxi*) in China, having parents in the Party should strongly improve one's life chances. Since parents' Party membership is surely correlated with their political class labels,[12] it is necessary to control for the effect of parental Party membership to ensure that any effect of class does not simply reflect the association in the previous generation. We treat parental Party membership as a dichotomy, scored 1 if either parent became a member of the Communist Party before the measured outcome.

Parents' education. As additional controls, we have two measures of parental education: the sum of the years of school completed by the father and mother of the respondent, and the difference in their years of schooling. This parameterization of parental education has the advantage of not splitting the effects of the two parents. There is a main effect associated with the sum of parental education, and an additional effect—which usually is neither significant nor interesting—associated with the difference in the education of the father and mother.[13]

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[11] We distinguish between cadre, professional, and other occupations but add the categories "waiting for work," "in school," "other activity," and a residual category, "NA/DK," to avoid having to deal with missing data.

[12] In our survey, 78% of the fathers of those of Red Class origin were Communist Party members, compared to 13%, 9%, and 3% of fathers for those of Working, Middle, and Bad Class origin. The corresponding percentages for mothers were 26, 2, 2, and .2.

[13] It is easy to show that the coefficients for mother's and father's education can be recovered from the coefficients for the sum and difference in parental education. If b_1 is the coefficient for

Father's and mother's occupational position. In research throughout the world it has been shown that parental occupation is an important determinant of socioeconomic outcomes (Ganzeboom, Luijkx, and Treiman 1989; Treiman and Yip 1989; Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Breen 2004). However, due mainly to China's household registration (*hukou*) system, the association appears to be much weaker than in many other nations (Wu and Treiman 2007). In each of our analyses we include two typologies, respectively for father's and mother's occupational position, in the year prior to the age at risk.[14] In each case we distinguish between managerial (cadre), professional, and other occupations and, to avoid the problem of missing data, treat as a separate category those with no occupation and those for whom we have no information. Cadre and professional occupations have been shown to have distinct recruitment paths (Walder 1995; Walder et al. 2000; Li and Walder 2001). We do not distinguish other occupational categories because, except for elite positions, there was little difference in socioeconomic outcomes associated with parents' occupational positions.

Male (male = 1, female = 0). In China, more than in many other nations, power is mainly in the hands of men and this strongly limited opportunity for women during the Mao era, despite wide participation in the labor force (Stacey 1983). This was still substantially true in 1996.

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the sum of parents' education and b_2 is the coefficient for the difference in parents' education (father minus mother), then the coefficient for father's education is just (b_1+b_2) and the coefficient for mother's education is (b_1-b_2). We are indebted to James Morgan (personal communication) for pointing out this parameterization to us.

[14] We do not, in fact, have data on the exact years. Rather, we exploit the fact that father's and mother's occupation was recorded for the year the respondent was age 14 and for several specific years: 1948, 1963, 1970, 1979, and 1989. When the age at risk was greater than 14, we use the parental occupation when the respondent was 14. When the age at risk was 14 or earlier, we use the parental occupation for the latest year prior to when the respondent was age 14.

THE DETERMINANTS OF CLASS LABELS

Before analyzing the consequences of class labels we need first to explore how such labels were assigned. As we have noted, nominally they reflect the objective position of the head of the family in the years just prior to 1949. However, due to the inherent ambiguities and contradictions in the classification scheme, those who initially assigned class labels to households could exercise a certain amount of discretion.[15] In addition, individuals had a clear incentive to present their occupational histories and family assets in a manner that would give them the most favorable possible class label. If their biographies and the accounting of family assets were not rigorously verified the labels may not have reflected actual circumstances. In addition, the "revolutionary" label (which we designate as "Red") could include individuals who participated in the Communist Party or Red Army, but who were in fact from relatively prosperous households. If not for their participation in revolutionary organizations, these individuals would have been given a much less desirable class label.

We start by assessing the relationship between family property ownership in 1948 and the class label assigned.[16] Table 1 shows the percentage of those in each of the four class categories whose families owned various kinds of property or were "exploiters" because they rented out land or hired agricultural labor. Specifically, we count as an owner/exploiter all those for whom at least one of their parents, paternal grandfather, or maternal grandfather

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[15] Another, well documented, example of the classification of an entire population by local bureaucrats was the assignment of South Africans to one of four race categories (White, Asian, Coloured, or Black) in 1952. In the South African case, the classification was of individuals, not families, with the result that many people found themselves in different categories from their siblings or parents (Watson 1970; Thompson 1990, p. 190).

[16] There is some imprecision in assessing the linkage between socioeconomic position and class labels because we did not ask—nor is it certain that our respondents would have been able to tell us—precisely to which family member a class label had been assigned, and also because we did not collect sufficient information on fathers and grandfathers—the most important omissions being rural vs. urban residence in 1948 and adequate data on military service in 1948.

owned/exploited each kind of property in 1948.[17] The extremely small proportion of non-responses (about one-half of one per cent) is a very strong indication of the continuing salience of class labels in 1996, the year of the survey.

Table 1 is an "inflow" table. Rather than showing the conditional probability of each class label given owner/exploiter status, the table shows the conditional probability of each owner/exploiter status given the class label. The utility of an inflow table is to show the social origins of those assigned to each class. Consider first those assigned Red Class labels. Some evidence that Red Classes were disproportionately drawn from the urban elite is that in 1948 they were less likely to own either a home or land than were Middle or Bad Class members but were differentiated from Working Class members by their substantially greater probability of owning a business and also of hiring farm labor and renting out land. By contrast, Bad Class members were more likely than members of any other class to own each type of property and were much more likely to hire farm labor or rent out land, which indicates that Bad Class labels were reserved mainly for rural elites. Still, it is clear that there is no tight correspondence between property ownership/exploitation and class membership.

This is particularly clear when we consider the occupational origins of those with each class label. Table 2 shows the occupation in 1948 of the parent (almost always the

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[17] All "don't know" responses were treated as negative. No more than about 1% of respondents claimed not to know about the property owned by their parents, fewer than 5% responded "don't know" regarding paternal grandfathers' property, and fewer than 6% regarding maternal grandfathers' property. "Not applicable" responses, mainly due to the parent/grandparent dying before 1948, were treated as negative responses. Thus the denominator for each percentage in the table is 6,055; the only excluded cases are the three for which both grandfathers were born after 1930 and the 32 for which the respondent could not be assigned a class label: 12 blank responses, 2 refusals, 9 "don't know" responses, and 9 "other" responses that could not be recoded. We treated the 91 respondents who indicated "other" and volunteered "poor/ordinary urban resident" as members of the Working Class.

father) if it was available and otherwise for one of the grandfathers.[18] This table is

informative in several ways. First, there is substantial overlap between categories, although

the Red Class is more distinctive than are the other groups.[19] Also, despite the assumption

that the Bad Class was reserved for rich peasants and landlords, about a third of Bad Class

members in both generations had non-agricultural origin. Second, consistent with the idea

that the Red Class was disproportionately drawn from the urban elite (in addition to the

military), the 1948 occupations of ancestors of Red Class people were much more likely to be

in the cadre and clerical sectors and much less likely to be in the agricultural sector than those

of any other class category; they also were more likely, together with those of Bad Class

origin, to be professionals. Finally, the Red Class was drawn disproportionately from the

military.[20]

We have here presented "inflow" tables—showing the social origin of each class

category—because such tables make the differences between classes clearer than would

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[18] The occupational categories shown in Table 2 are derived from the father's occupation if he was born before 1930 (and therefore was at least 18 years old in 1948) and had an occupation. If neither condition held, information for the mother's occupation in 1948 was substituted if she satisfied the same conditions. If neither parent satisfied these conditions, information on the paternal grandfather's occupation in 1948 was used, provided he satisfied the two conditions, and otherwise information on the maternal grandfather's occupation was used. Three cases were omitted because both grandparents were born after 1930; 32 cases were omitted because there was no information on the family class label; and 326 additional cases were omitted because information on the 1948 occupation was available for neither parent and neither grandfather. The table thus includes 5,729 cases, of which 66% were for the parents' generation and 34% for the grandparents' generation.

[19] This assertion is based on a comparison of the Index of Dissimilarity (Δ) between pairs of categories. They are, in order from Red to Bad (i.e., Red-Working, Red-Middle, ... Middle-Bad), .44, .37, .32; .14, .18; .07.

[20] Table 2 understates the military origins of the Red Class due to the fact that we asked about military service for parents but not for grandfathers. The consequence is that almost no grandfathers are identified as having been in the military in 1948 (7% of fathers' fathers and 3% of mothers' fathers) compared to 60% of fathers. The true proportion of grandfathers in the military in 1948 is surely less than 60% since grandfathers were on average older in 1948 than were fathers, but it is likely to be substantially higher than the 7% observed for fathers' fathers.

"outflow" tables given that about three quarters of the population in both the parents' and grandparents' generation were peasants in 1948 and nearly an additional 10% were urban workers. However, a multinomial logit analysis predicting class labels from grandfather's or father's 1948 occupation and property ownership, not shown here, leads to essentially the same conclusions regarding the link between class labels and objective socioeconomic status: the Red Class was disproportionately drawn from the Red Army and urban white collar employees, while the Bad Class was disproportionately made up of prosperous rural elites with more land than they could farm based on household labor.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CLASS LABELS

Given the dramatic changes in Chinese society over the past 50 years, it is not entirely obvious how, and how heavily, these class labels affected life chances. Certainly, we would expect that their effect was most pronounced during the Mao era, a time of orthodox communism and very strong intervention in local life by the state. However, there were fluctuations in the radicalism of state policy even within the Mao era. The emphasis on class labels in educational and career advancement was most pronounced during the radical Great Leap Forward of 1958-1960 and the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976, but other periods, particularly the early 1960s, were notable for the de-emphasis of class labels and a more lenient treatment of those in the Middle classes (Unger 1982). In addition, the Cultural Revolution involved extensive purges of the party-state elite, the vast majority of whom would have had "Red" labels (Walder 2015, pp. 266-267). An earlier study limited to the urban portion of this survey found that the advantages enjoyed by "Red" households were attenuated during the Cultural Revolution decade (Walder and Hu 2009). Given these policy

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fluctuations, it is something of an open question what the net impact of the labels would have been during the entire Mao era for China as a whole.

During the subsequent reform era political criteria for advancement were de-emphasized in favor of merit (Lu and Treiman 2008). Previous publications based on the urban portion of this dataset have documented the declining impact of Party membership and the increasing impact of higher education in attaining elite occupations in the post-Mao era, but they have not considered the impact of class labels (Walder et al. 2000; Li and Walder 2001). The stigma of class cannot have disappeared overnight. It was undoubtedly true that people continued to be identified by their class labels, especially in villages and small towns where everyone knew everyone else. It is quite possible that differences in life chances associated with class labels persisted, especially in rural areas.

There also are indications, based on an analysis of the urban population in this dataset, that the political liberalization of the post-Mao era somewhat paradoxically benefited the "Red" households (Walder and Hu 2009). That study found that the advantages to "Red" households, suppressed during the Cultural Revolution, rebounded in the following period because the persecution of veteran Party officials and their offspring, characteristic of the Cultural Revolution, was largely reversed as part of the political liberalization. For the population as a whole, therefore, it also remains something of an open question what the enduring legacy of these class categories was.

Models

For all the analyses presented here we have time-specific measures. For cadre or professional positions and Communist Party membership, we estimate discrete-time hazard-rate models. For achievement of specific education levels, we fix outcomes in time and exploit the availability of

time-specific measurements. For all these models we include period as a variable scored zero for all years at risk prior to 1979; for 1979 and later, we set the variable equal to 1.

The main concern of our analysis is to explore the impact of class origin on various socioeconomic outcomes. Detailed results for educational attainment, Party membership, and occupational attainment will be presented here. Due to space limitations, we will only briefly summarize additional results for family income, military service, the conversion of rural to urban household registration, and being sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution.[21]

Figure 1 shows a conceptual diagram of how family class labels, assigned mainly on the basis of parents' or grandparents' attributes in 1948, are likely to be related to outcomes observed in 1996. As noted earlier, class labels were assigned on the basis of the family's characteristics in 1948. We expect that class labels affected subsequent outcomes, in both the parent's and the respondent's generation. But as we know, in China as elsewhere, there is a certain amount of inter- and intra-generational continuity in aspects of advantage (Deng and Treiman 1997; Walder et al. 2000; Li and Walder 2001; Wu and Treiman 2007; Lu and Treiman 2008; Walder and Hu 2009; Wu 2010a, 2010b). Thus, we expect each outcome to be affected both by the individual's class label and by prior characteristics, including parental and grand-parental status attributes.

We restrict our analysis to the outcomes shown at the right-hand side of Fig. 1.[22] In our analyses of each outcome we estimate three separate models. The first (Model 1) includes, in addition to class labels, only the mediating effects of 1948 family characteristics; a second

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[21] Full results have been posted in the Working Paper Series of the California Center for Population Research (http://papers.ccpr.ucla.edu/index.php/pwp).
[22] It would be desirable to first study the effect of class labels on each parental outcome before studying effects on respondents, but our data are not a probability sample of parents.

(Model 2) adds parental characteristics when the respondent was a child, around age 14; and a third (Model 3) adds the respondent's prior outcomes.[23] This means that the same variables may appear both as an outcome variable and, lagged by a year, as a determinant of another outcome. For example, having a cadre occupation may increase the odds of subsequently becoming a member of the Communist Party; and being a member of the Party may increase the odds of subsequently gaining a cadre occupation. In all three models for each outcome, we treat age and gender as "concomitant" variables; that is, we treat them as control variables but not as intervening between class origins and outcomes. We do this for gender in order to take account of the fact that males are favored with respect to each advantageous outcome, and for age to take account of the fact that the likelihood of many outcomes varied over time because of China's rapid economic development after 1978.

Contrasts between the coefficients in the three models allow us to assess whether the effect of class labels is direct or whether it is indirect, the consequence of class-label differences in advantage with respect to important determinants of each of the outcomes—1948 family characteristics in Model 1; additionally, parents' characteristics in Model 2; and, in Model 3, also the respondent's own prior achievements. We would expect that insofar as there are remaining class differences in advantage in 1996, most would be indirect. Moreover, we would expect the size of the direct class effect to decline in successive models because

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[23] For the education models, the additional variables are the type of previous schooling. For the other two outcomes, the additional variables include lagged measures of the respondent's highest level of schooling, whether ever sent down to the countryside, occupation and, specifically, military service, Communist Party membership, and size of place of residence. Of course, CP membership is excluded as a predictor of CP membership as an outcome and occupation is excluded as a predictor of occupation as an outcome.

class labels should exert their effect first on the achievements of parents and then on the early achievements of respondents. Thus, that class labels have any direct effect at all in Model 3—which, as we will see, is often the case—is highly significant and indeed rather surprising.[24]

Comparing coefficients across models

All of our outcomes—educational level, Party membership, and occupation—are dichotomies or polytomies, necessitating the estimation of logistic or allied models. However, for such models it is not legitimate to directly compare the size of corresponding coefficients in nested models since the coefficients are rescaled as additional variables are introduced (Winship and Mare 1983).[25] Several solutions to this problem have been proposed, the most attractive of which was introduced by Karlson et al. (2012) and elaborated by Breen, Karlson, and Holm (2013). The basic idea behind the method, implemented for Stata as the -khb-command (Kohler and Karlson 2010; Kohler, Karlson, and Holm 2011), is that it permits separation of changes in key coefficients—here, those associated with class origin—due to the confounding effects of other variables from those that are artifacts of rescaling. The former is what we care about—to what extent class-origin differences in outcomes are mediated by class differences in other, intervening, variables. Thus, our basic strategy is to derive our estimates

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[24] There is some ambiguity for the oldest respondents about the temporal relationship between the assignment of class labels and parental characteristics, and for a small number of respondents, their own characteristics. The most obvious remedy, albeit imperfect, would be to restrict the analysis to those young enough so that their own achievements and their parents' advantages were unambiguously acquired after class labels were assigned, say after 1950. But this would result in the loss of too many cases to permit viable analysis of the outcomes of those of Revolutionary and Bad Class origin. To take this ambiguity into account we exclude from the analysis of each outcome those that occurred prior to 1950, which avoids the possibility that the outcome itself was a determinant of the class label assigned to the household.

[25] This may not be well known. Karlson, Holm, and Breen (2012, p. 291) note that the problem "may be known by most sociologists specializing in quantitative methods but the sociological literature is replete with examples in which the naïve comparison is made and interpreted as though it reflected pure confounding."

using the -khb- procedure. Although the survey is based on a multistage probability sample

that optimally would be analyzed using survey estimation methods, which are available in

Stata, the -khb- command does not fully permit this. The method does permit the specification

of weights and a cluster option but not to correct for stratification or more than one level of

clustering. However, since stratification generally leads to smaller standard errors, it is likely

that our significance tests are conservative. We correct for clustering at the lowest level, the

village or urban neighborhood, because there is more internal homogeneity at this level than at

the township or county level.

Apart from solving the technical problem of rescaling, the -khb- command has the

attractive feature of producing a decomposition of total effects into direct effects and

indirect effects operating through the covariates in the model.[26] These are the coefficients

shown in Tables 4 and 6 below. Note that these coefficients can be interpreted as the effects

of class origin on *latent* or underlying dependent variables (see the references cited for a

technical explication). We can think of such variables as indicating the propensity that an

outcome occurs, e.g., the likelihood of joining the Communist Party, rather than a true

dichotomy. But this is, in fact, how we usually interpret coefficients associated with logistic

regression and similar procedures involving limited dependent variables. The practical

implication is that the coefficients usually will not be identical to those derived from

conventional logistic regression, even when no controls are included in the model. Note also

that for some outcomes we estimate discrete-time hazard-rate models. It is sometimes

claimed that in such models the standard errors are biased given the non-independence of

the observations for each individual. However, Allison (1995:223) argues that this is not a

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[26] The -khb- command labels direct effects "Full" and indirect effects "Diff" (and also, total
effects as "Reduced"). Breen et al. (2013) use the nomenclature we use here. See their Table 3.

problem for the kinds of models estimated here because the conditional probability of an event at time T can be factored into the likelihoods of the preceding times, and these likelihoods are independent.

We study several socioeconomic outcomes: matriculation at successive levels of education, with distinctions between types of schools at each level, the attainment of Communist Party membership, and the attainment of a professional or cadre position. For each analysis we restrict the sample to those who were at risk in 1950 or later, because family class labels were widely introduced in 1950. This restriction is most important for our analysis of entry into the Communist Party. Were we to include those who joined the party prior to 1950, we would artificially inflate the association between class membership and party joining since one of the criteria for Red Class assignment was pre-1950 Party membership.

As indicated in the introduction, an important question is whether the legacy of class labels continued beyond their formal abolition in 1979. We attempted to explore this question by including interactions between period (Reform vs. Mao) and the other predictor variables in each of our models. Since interaction terms cannot be handled in -khb- models (Breen et al. 2013, pp. 180-181), we estimated conventional logistic regression models, which revealed significant interactions only for junior high and tertiary education. If these results are taken seriously,[27] they indicate that for the most part the effects of class labels on socioeconomic outcomes—party membership and educational and occupational attainment—were essentially the same during the Mao and Reform periods. This is an important finding.

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[27] The analysis of interaction effects for logistic and allied outcomes is a very unsettled issue in the statistical literature (see Allison 1999 and the subsequent literature, e.g., Williams 2009).

Given these results, we do not present period differences even for the two levels of education for which there is a suggestion of period differences.[28]

Table 3 shows the percentage distribution of matriculation at each type of school conditional on completion of the previous level, while Table 5 shows corresponding percentage distributions for Party membership and occupational attainment. These tables make immediately clear the way those of Red Class origin were advantaged and those of Bad Class origin were disadvantaged. Tables 4 and 6 show the odds of each outcome propensity relative to the odds for those of Working Class origin. Table 4 shows the coefficients for educational matriculation and Table 6 shows the coefficients for Party membership and occupational outcomes. In each case the total effect is shown together with a decomposition into direct and indirect effects, where these coefficients are estimated using the -khb- method discussed above.[29] We do not show the contribution of each of the variables that together produce the indirect effect—this would be a very large number of coefficients—but comment on them as appropriate in the course of our discussion of direct and indirect effects.

Educational attainment

Table 3 shows that those of Red Class origin were advantaged at every level of educational attainment. They were most likely to enter primary school; to enter junior high school and especially elite junior high school; to enter senior high school and especially academic senior high school and most especially elite academic senior high school; and to enter both non-university and university tertiary institutions. On the whole those of Bad Class origin were the most disadvantaged. The exceptions are that they were more likely to

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[28] Another reason for not presenting period differences is the small number of people in our sample who achieved tertiary matriculation, making period-specific results unreliable.
[29] Note that because of the rescaling inherent in the –khb- procedure, the odds ratio for each total effect typically will vary across models.

get at least some primary education than were those of Middle and especially Working Class origin; they were about as likely to get a high school education as all but those of Red Class origin, but were more likely to matriculate in vocational schools and less likely to enroll in academic or elite schools than were those of any other class origin. They were more likely to enter tertiary education than were those of Working Class origin—they were about equally likely to enter a professional institute but more likely to enter university.

Recall that matriculation at each level of schooling is contingent on completing the previous level. It is well known that the effect of social origins tends to decline with successive levels of schooling (Mare 1980, 1981; Shavit and Blossfeld 1993), largely because at each transition only the "brightest and most ambitious" of those from disadvantaged origins are able to make the transition (Treiman and Yamaguchi 1993, p. 230), which means that those from disadvantaged origins tend to be successively more highly selected than those from more advantaged origins. Given this, it is striking that class origins continue to be influential even at advanced levels of schooling.[30]

For the three models discussed above, Table 4 shows the odds of those of each class origin matriculating at each level of education relative to those of Working Class origin and also shows a decomposition of these odds ratios into direct and indirect effects. The table also shows the ratio of the odds for those of Red and Bad Class origin. Note that (within the limits

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[30] As noted above, for two levels of schooling—junior high and tertiary—there are significant differences across periods, however for tertiary matriculation the sample sizes, especially for those of Bad Class origins, are too small to produce stable results. Thus we restrict our comments to junior high matriculation. First, during the Mao period not all those of Red Class origin were able to enter junior high, but during the Reform period not a single person of Red Class origin experienced this fate although substantial fractions of other origins did. Second, the strong disadvantage among those of Bad Class origin disappeared in the Reform period and they became somewhat more likely than those of Middle Class and especially Working Class origins to gain admission to elite schools. In sum, the Red Class advantage continued during the Reform period but the Bad Class disadvantage weakened.

of rounding error) the product of the direct and indirect effects equals the total effect. The point of focusing on matriculation rather than on completion of each level is that it is matriculation that was subject to political and other influences. At each level above primary we carry out a competing-risk analysis by estimating a multinomial logit equation.

We begin with primary matriculation. Model 1 shows us that those of Red Class origin were far more likely to enter primary school than were those of Working Class origin and that this was not simply an artifact of their modest family socioeconomic advantage in 1948. Even in Model 2, which takes account of parental socioeconomic advantage, the direct Red Class advantage remains very large—the odds of primary matriculation were about 14 times as large for those of Red Class origin as for those of Working Class origin. Interestingly, with respect to primary matriculation those of Bad class origin also were advantaged and their advantage, too, was largely direct, even taking account of socioeconomic differences in the parental generation (Model 2). However, both the direct advantage of class label and the indirect advantage through parental SES were far larger for the Red Class than for the Bad Class, as we see in the right-hand panel.

Among those who completed primary school, class differences in the likelihood of matriculation at an ordinary junior high school became smaller than for primary matriculation but also more in line with our expectations: those of Red Class origin were strongly advantaged and those of Bad Class origin were strongly disadvantaged relative to those of Working Class origin. The disadvantage of those of Bad Class origin remains when parental SES is controlled, but the direct advantage of those of Red Class origin disappears entirely, replaced by a very strong indirect effect resulting from their SES advantage as children, particularly their urban registration and father's Communist Party membership. A similar but

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much stronger pattern holds with respect to Red Class matriculation at an elite school: the strong direct effect disappears once account is taken of parental SES (especially the same two variables plus parental education) but the overall advantage of Red Class origin increases very substantially. By contrast there is no significant disadvantage in elite matriculation experienced by those of Bad Class origin, with or without controls for parental SES. Presumably, those clever enough to merit enrollment in elite junior high schools, as demonstrated by their performance in primary school, were not denied admission due to their class origin.

Those who complete junior high school may either leave school or may enter one of three types of high schools: vocational, academic, or elite. Those of Red Class origin are advantaged in the likelihood of matriculating at all three types of school but particularly academic and most particularly elite high schools, advantages that are mainly due to their parents' education and their fathers' Communist Party membership. By contrast, those of Bad Class origin are not significantly disadvantaged with respect to vocational matriculation— indeed, they may be advantaged, although our sample size does not have enough power to produce significant coefficients. They are, however, significantly and strongly disadvantaged with respect to academic and elite matriculation, although to some extent their direct disadvantage is offset by their advantageous SES relative to those of Working Class origin. Those of Bad Class origin who matriculate in academic or elite schools tend to have better educated parents and to be more likely to be from families that held property in 1948. The combination of Red Class advantage and Bad Class disadvantage means that those of Red Class origin were about seven times as likely to matriculate in academic high schools and about 23 times as likely to matriculate in elite high schools after taking account of SES

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differences and their previous schooling.

As suggested by Table 3, those of Red Class origin were strongly advantaged in entering both types of tertiary education. However, the Red Class advantage was not direct but rather was due to their advantage with respect to SES, particularly parental education, and the respondent's graduation from an elite high school and, for university, father's Communist Party membership. However, in contrast to lower levels of education, those of Middle Class origin also were advantaged, due to a combination of a positive direct effect and a positive indirect effect. Those of Bad Class origin were neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. It seems that those of Bad Class origins who were able to overcome their political handicap and complete high school suffered no further handicap with respect to university admission.

What is striking about these results is that, in contrast to the pattern observed in the U.S. and other developed nations, various forms of advantage—political blessing or stigma on the one hand and resulting socioeconomic advantage on the other—continued to influence educational opportunity through successive levels of the educational system, although in a generally weakened way. An obvious comparative task would be to study the same sorts of outcomes in other societies in which political loyalty was or is important.[31]

Communist Party Membership

Before considering occupational attainment, we consider the effect of class origin on the odds of joining the Communist Party. The Party has dominated the political and social life of China to the present day, and party membership has long been both a symbol of success

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[31] The questions are not identical, but the 1993 six-nation survey, "Social Stratification in Eastern Europe after 1989," could be used to carry out a similar analysis since that survey includes a range of comparable measures. The data set and documentation can be obtained from https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=hdl:1902.1/M653V1 .

and a resource that enhances prospects for future advancement (Walder 1995; Walder et al. 2000; Bian, Shu, and Logan 2001). Only a minority of the population ever was allowed to join the party—in our data 9.2 per cent of the sample are party members Moreover, those who became members of the Party early in their adult lives were identified for sponsorship for subsequent advancement into higher positions (Li and Walder 2001).

Given the role of the Party, we would expect that those from Red Class origin were more likely to be admitted. Li and Walder (2001) have shown that this is the case for the urban sample, but we here consider all of China, both urban and rural. Also, Li and Walder did not distinguish other class categories. At the other extreme, we would expect those from Bad Class origin to have been less likely to be admitted into the party. These expectations are confirmed in Table 5: 20% of those of Red Class origin were party members compared to only 6% of those of Bad Class origin, with the percentages for the other groups falling in between.

From Table 6 we see that the Red Class advantage and Bad class disadvantage shown in Table 5 hold but that the much greater likelihood that those of Red Class origin joined the Party relative to any other class was entirely due to the cumulative advantage of socioeconomic origins and previous achievements. By contrast, those of Bad Class origin had no particular SES disadvantage but a very strong direct disadvantage. Bad class origin itself inhibited admission to the Communist Party throughout the period under study—that is, during both the Mao and the Reform periods.

Occupational attainment

As we see from Table 5, those of Red Class origin had a very strong advantage with respect to the attainment of both cadre and professional positions but those of Bad Class origin were not particularly disadvantaged relative to those from Working Class origins. Those of

Middle Class origin were more likely to attain such positions than were those of Working or Bad Class origin, perhaps because many of their parents had such occupations themselves and there is a well-known tendency to inherit the same class of occupation as one's parents, although no longer exactly the same occupation (see the references cited earlier).

In Table 6 we show coefficients for a competing risk model of the odds of attaining either a cadre or a professional position, with those who attain either type of occupation treated as no longer at risk of attaining the other type. There is a strong Red Class advantage in obtaining a cadre position, which holds for all three models: they were more than seven times as likely to secure cadre positions as were those of Working Class origin. But, as expected, the direct benefit of Red Class origin declines as additional mediating variables are introduced. Still, even considering family SES and the respondent's own educational attainment, Party membership, sent-down experience, and the size of place lived, all lagged a year (Model 3), the direct effect of Red Class origin remains strong and significant: the odds of gaining a cadre position were nearly twice as large for those of Red Class origin as for those of Working Class origin.

By contrast, the odds of obtaining a cadre position were much lower for those of Bad Class origin than for those of Working Class origin and the Bad Class disadvantage was direct since the indirect effects favored those of Bad Class origin. The direct Bad Class disadvantage continues to hold for all three models and in fact becomes stronger as successive mediating factors are introduced. Thus, despite gaining a cumulative advantage over those of Working Class origin with respect to parental SES and their own previous achievements, mainly education, those of Bad Class origin were substantially excluded from cadre positions. Note that both the Red Class advantage and Bad Class disadvantage continued during the Reform

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period since there was no interaction between period and origin class.

The findings are different for professional positions. Here the direct Red Class advantage is much weaker and largely disappears in the presence of mediating factors (Models 2 and 3). Red Class descendants were strongly advantaged over Working Class descendants, but this was entirely due to their cumulative prior advantages. Those of Bad Class origin also were advantaged in much the same way, but to a much smaller extent, and their socioeconomic advantage offsets a direct disadvantage that only appeared in Model 3. Strikingly, those of both Red and Bad Class origin were much less likely to obtain professional positions than were those of Working Class origin with comparable SES background and prior achievement, but perhaps for different reasons—the propensity for those of Red Class origin to become cadres, which did not hold for those of Bad Class origin.

Other Outcomes

In additional analyses we found that class labels had a significant impact on several other outcomes. Red households had the highest incomes of any group in 1996, and Working Class households by far the lowest incomes. The significantly higher incomes of Middle and Bad Class households suggests the persistence of family socialization across generations, and echoes findings from Eastern Europe (Szelenyi 1988; Hanley and Treiman 2004). Red class individuals were much more likely to serve in the military, and Bad class individuals much less likely. Those of Red class origin had clear advantages in shifting their household registration (*hukou*) from rural to urban, an important determinant of standard of living in China to the present day (Cheng and Selden 1997; Wu and Treiman 2004; Wu and Treiman 2007; Chan and Buckingham 2008; Treiman 2012; Zhang and Treiman 2013). Regarding the likelihood that one would be "sent down" to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution

(Bernstein 1977), Red classes were sent down at the same rates as Proletarian households, but Bad class individuals were sent down at much higher rates than all others.[32]

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have shown that those of Red Class origin were greatly advantaged in educational attainment, career advancement, and acceptance into the Communist Party, and we found similarly large advantages in other outcomes not presented here. The continuing legacy of Bad Class origin was not so striking, but still held with respect to those outcomes that required loyalty to the state or party, especially the attainment of cadre occupations and Communist Party membership. It is striking that class origins continued to matter for nearly two decades after their use was formally abolished and perhaps longer. We see remarkable continuity extending across several generations. In our survey, conducted in 1996, only about 4% were adults in 1948, 61% had fathers who were adults in 1948, and 35% had only grandfathers who were adults in 1948. Thus, for nearly two thirds of the sample we have a legacy that extends across two generations and for about a third of the sample it extends across three generations.

To a substantial extent the influence of class origins is indirect, resulting from the effect of class on the advantages and disadvantages felt by grandparents and parents and by respondents at the beginning of their adult lives, following the process suggested in Figure 1. But for many outcomes strong direct effects persisted, especially for those of Bad Class origin. For those of Red Class origin, direct and indirect effects were in general both positive, in the sense that they increased the odds of the outcomes we studied. But for those of Bad Class

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[32] Full results have been posted in the Working Paper Series of the California Center for Population Research (http://papers.ccpr.ucla.edu/index.php/pwp).

origins they often were contradictory, with indirect effects often increasing the odds of advantageous outcomes but direct effects decreasing the odds.

What does this pattern tell us? The direct effects are straightforward. Those of Red Class origin were favored by the regime—the leadership of which was much like themselves—while those of Bad Class origin were punished, following the notion—alien to Americans—that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. But the indirect effects are perhaps more interesting. For those of Red Class origin there is nothing particularly remarkable, because the increasing advantage simply reflects the combination of cumulative advantage and the sense of entitlement that develops in those who are privileged from childhood. For those of Bad Class origin, however, the often positive indirect effects suggest that despite hardship and humiliation Bad Class families were able to sustain the motivations and skills that had made them successful enough in 1948 to be singled out for labeling and punishment by the new regime. Thus, for as long as half a century and many times across two or three generations, they were able to seize whatever opportunities came their way, much as pre-communist entrepreneurial elites in Eastern Europe were able to do after the collapse of communism and immigrants to the U.S. from entrepreneurial backgrounds were able to do within a generation, no matter how poor they were in their first years in the U.S. Thus, apart from what we have learned about one aspect of the history of modern China, this analysis raises a broader question that is confronted by analysts of social stratification in all economic and political settings—how is it that families are able to transmit motivations and perceptions of possibilities across generations?

Finally, there are two aspects to our findings that may not immediately be apparent. First, in some ways, our analysis is a tale of two elites. The long revolutionary conflict that

culminated in the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 marked the downfall of an old elite based on property ownership, a group that not only suffered from the expropriation of their property but in the following decades found their decline reinforced by the stigma of Bad Class political labels. They were replaced by a new revolutionary elite that formed out of service to the Red Army and Communist Party, but whose origins were not from the poorest classes that they claimed to represent. They were predominantly from urban white collar occupations that in many respects resembled the groups labelled as Middle Class. Thus their advantages were substantially due to relatively high levels of parental education and occupational attainment, and their family members' life chances were further boosted across generations by their designation in the Red household category.

Yet in another sense the extent to which the life chances of the poorest Chinese were boosted by their designation as a "good" class is obscured by the focus of our analysis, which treats the Working Class as a contrast category. Because this is the largest group in the population—close to three quarters of the sample—any improvements in life chances that some of them enjoyed would be swamped by large numbers of others who did not benefit from this kind of "good" class label. Prior to the revolution, China's rural and urban poor had few if any educational opportunities, and rates of illiteracy remained high. High school education was the near exclusive province of the groups later classified as Middle or Bad Class, and university education was almost exclusively enjoyed by students from the most prosperous professional and propertied households (Lang 1946). While those in the very large Working Class category continued to lag behind other households in a great many respects, there should be little doubt that educational and career opportunities

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improved considerably for many. The striking ways in which those in the much smaller Middle and Bad Class categories were able in some respects to overcome the disabilities enforced by their class labels should not blind us to this shift in China's structure of opportunity. To gauge the extent of such improvements, and the extent to which class labels improved the life chances of the Good Class above and beyond the structural mobility induced by the socialist transformation, economic growth, and the expansion of the educational system is a topic for another paper.

Appendix: Further Information on the Coding of Variables

Class origin. These class categories were derived from direct responses to a question in the questionnaire: "Your family origin [*jiating chushen*] is..." The categories were: 1 Revolutionary cadre, 2 Revolutionary soldier, 3 Revolutionary martyr, 4 Worker, 5 Poor or middle peasant, 6 Middle peasant, small businessman, 7 Ordinary staff or independent occupation, 8 Capitalist, 9 Rightist, 10 Rich peasant, 11 Bad element, 12 Landlord, 13 Counter-revolutionary, 14 Other (specify). During data preparation a category, "Poor/ordinary urban resident," was added by recoding "Other (specify)" responses. We recoded 1-3 to Red, 4-5 and "Poor/ordinary urban resident" to Working, 6-7 to Middle, and 8-13 to Bad. Red and Bad labels were rare. About 84% of the 1996 population claimed Working Class origin, and an additional 11% claimed Middle Class origin. Only 1.5% claimed Red Class origin and 3.6% claimed Bad Class origin.

Ancestral property. For each kind of property or "exploitation" we created a variable scored 1 if there was a positive response with respect to any ancestor (parents, paternal grandfather, or

maternal grandfather) and scored 0 otherwise. In this way we created a set of family property

ownership/exploitation variables in 1948. Although 4.6% of the sample (278 people) was age

18 or older in 1948, no information about the respondent's property in 1948 was collected in

the survey. However, the oldest respondents were only age 21 in 1948, which makes it unlikely

that their family class position was affected by their own property rather than their parents'

property. The same point applies to the ancestral occupation in 1948.

Ancestral occupation in 1948. We coded the father's occupation if it was reported; then the

mother's occupation, if the father's occupation was not reported and the mother's occupation

was reported; then the paternal grandfather's occupation then the maternal grandfather's

occupation. In each case, we excluded those who were less than 18 years old in 1948. In all,

there were three respondents for whom both grandfathers were less than 18 in 1948. In about

4% of cases we have no information about the occupation of either parent or grandfather (see

Table 2).

One other point warrants comment. Unfortunately, the occupational information

collected for parents and grandfathers was not identical. In particular, there is no way to identify

grandparents serving in the military in 1948 or who were rentiers in 1948. The latter omission

probably is unimportant, given that only two of the fathers for whom we have a report on the

source of income were identified as rentiers. But the lack of information regarding military

service is more consequential given that about a quarter of those from red class origins had

fathers who served in the military in 1948 and probably many grandfathers did as well. The best

we can do is to identify grandfathers who were Communist Party officials in 1948 (and also

nationalist party officials) and to identify fathers serving in the military in 1948. Even here the

coding was not straightforward but required the combination of several variables.

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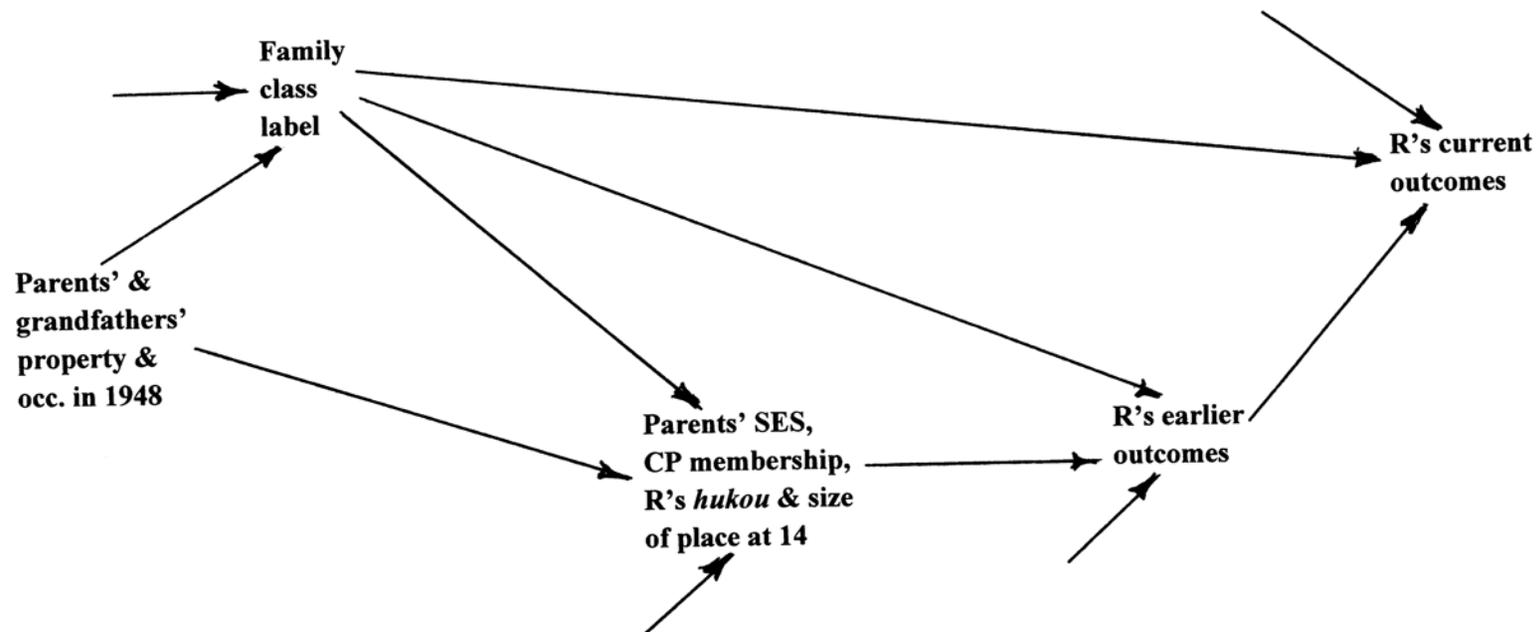
Fig. 1. Conceptual model of the relationship between family class labels and their determinants and consequences.

Table 1. Property Ownership of Parents or Grandfather in 1948, by Class Label, Chinese Adults Age 20-69 in 1996.[a]

	Class Label				
	Red	Working	Middle	Bad	Total
Pct. owning home	76.0	77.1	89.6	92.4	79.0
Pct. owning buildings[b]	7.3	3.0	8.0	24.5	4.4
Pct. owning land	42.4	45.6	70.9	85.8	49.8
Pct. hiring farm labor	6.2	2.3	10.1	37.5	4.5
Pct. renting out land	4.7	1.2	4.3	26.4	2.5
Pct. owning business	15.3	6.4	15.1	23.8	8.1
Class origin %	1.5	83.7	11.2	3.6	100.0
N (unweighted)	(144)	(4,976)	(734)	(201)	(6,055)

[a] All percentages are based on weighted data.

[b] Other than home.

Table 2. Occupational Status of Father or Grandfather in 1948,[a] by Class Label, Chinese Adults Age 20-69 in 1996.

	Class Label				
	Red	Working	Middle	Bad	Total
Professional-technical	9.0	1.9	6.1	9.2	2.7
Cadre	4.4	.5	.4	3.1	.6
Clerical	3.3	.3	.5	.7	.4
Sales	6.0	2.7	10.1	9.5	3.8
Service	.5	1.5	1.7	.2	1.4
Agriculture	40.3	81.0	67.9	67.2	78.4
Manual	7.1	9.4	11.0	7.3	9.5
National Party official	.5	.3	.3	1.2	.3
Communist Party official	4.4	.4	.3	.1	.4
Military	24.6	2.0	1.7	1.4	2.3
Total	100.1	100.0	100.0	99.9	99.8
N (unweighted)	(136)	(4,713)	(699)	(181)	(5,729)

[a] See text for details on which ancestor's occupation was used.

Table 3. Percentage Distributions of Educational Matriculation, Conditional on Being at Risk (Having Completed the Previous Level).

	Class label				Total
	Red	Working	Middle	Bad	
Primary matriculation					
No	.9	23.2	15.2	11.7	21.6
Yes	99.1	76.8	84.8	88.3	78.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N[a]	(138)	(4,478)	(602)	(148)	(5,366)
Junior high matriculation					
No	10.2	25.2	27.0	36.2	25.5
Ordinary	65.6	68.0	65.4	55.0	67.1
Key point	24.2	6.8	7.6	8.8	7.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	(135)	(3,150)	(520)	(128)	(3,933)
Senior high matriculation					
No	21.1	58.5	55.6	57.8	56.9
Vocational	10.3	10.3	12.0	18.5	10.8
Academic	46.2	25.3	24.1	19.7	25.7
Key point	22.5	5.9	8.3	3.9	6.7
Total	100.1	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.1
N	(124)	(2,179)	(385)	(80)	(2,768)
Tertiary matriculation					
No	52.8	79.3	67.2	71.9	75.6
Specialized institute	29.8	14.2	20.0	14.6	16.0
University	17.3	6.5	12.8	13.6	8.3
Total	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.1	99.9
N	(95)	(929)	(204)	(39)	(1,267)

[a] N's shown here and in Table 5 are unweighted; percentages are based on weighted data. Respondents achieving the outcome before 1950 and those missing data on any of the variables analyzed for each outcome in Table 4 are excluded.

Table 4. Decomposition of Effects of Class Labels on Levels of Education into Direct and Indirect Components, Chinese Adults 1996. (Contributions to odds ratios, with p-values in parentheses.)

	Red			Middle			Bad			Ratio of Red to Bad		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Primary (N = 5,366)[a]												
Total	27.35 (.00)	164.0 (.00)	-[b]	2.09 (.00)	2.32 (.00)	-	3.00 (.00)	3.05 (.00)	-	9.13 (.00)	53.74 (.00)	-
Direct	21.78 (.00)	13.97 (.00)	-	1.96 (.00)	1.58 (.03)	-	2.59 (.01)	2.23 (.04)	-	8.42 (.01)	6.27 (.03)	-
Indirect	1.26 (.01)	11.74 (.00)	-	1.07 (.36)	1.46 (.14)	-	1.16 (.17)	1.37 (.22)	-	1.08 (.53)	8.58 (.00)	-
Junior high (N = 3,933)												
Ordinary[c]												
Total	2.51 (.01)	6.05 (.00)	-	1.00 (.98)	1.06 (.72)	-	.67 (.10)	.60 (.05)	-	3.72 (.00)	10.04 (.00)	-
Direct	2.16 (.04)	.66 (.23)	-	.93 (.65)	.84 (.28)	-	.58 (.03)	.60 (.07)	-	3.74 (.00)	1.09 (.86)	-
Indirect	1.16 (.02)	9.20 (.00)	-	1.08 (.18)	1.26 (.31)	-	1.17 (.08)	1.00 (.99)	-	.99 (.94)	9.24 (.00)	-
Key point												
Total	9.20 (.00)	22.06 (.00)	-	1.20 (.48)	1.23 (.43)	-	1.11 (.82)	1.07 (.89)	-	8.31 (.00)	20.71 (.00)	-
Direct	7.44 (.00)	1.39 (.42)	-	1.01 (.97)	.79 (.34)	-	.75 (.53)	.85 (.73)	-	9.92 (.00)	1.65 (.42)	-
Indirect	1.24 (.02)	15.83 (.00)	-	1.19 (.05)	1.56 (.09)	-	1.48 (.01)	1.26 (.42)	-	.84 (.29)	12.56 (.00)	-
Senior high (N = 2,768)												
Vocational												
Total	2.96 (.01)	3.64 (.00)	3.65 (.00)	1.13 (.55)	1.13 (.57)	1.12 (.58)	1.50 (.32)	1.43 (.46)	1.44 (.45)	1.97 (.25)	2.54 (.16)	2.54 (.16)
Direct	2.69 (.02)	.72 (.40)	.72 (.39)	1.03 (.90)	.84 (.42)	.84 (.43)	1.20 (.66)	.97 (.94)	.97 (.96)	2.25 (.18)	.74 (.64)	.73 (.63)
Indirect	1.10 (.10)	5.08 (.00)	5.10 (.00)	1.10 (.11)	1.34 (.12)	1.34 (.12)	1.25 (.07)	1.49 (.08)	1.48 (.08)	.88 (.28)	3.42 (.00)	3.45 (.00)

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

	Red			Middle			Bad			Ratio of Red to Bad		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Academic												
Total	5.29 (.00)	6.08 (.00)	5.15 (.00)	.98 (.89)	1.00 (1.00)	.99 (.96)	.74 (.32)	.75 (.33)	.73 (.30)	7.15 (.00)	8.16 (.00)	7.06 (.00)
Direct	4.73 (.00)	1.55 (.08)	1.57 (.09)	.87 (.39)	.77 (.10)	.76 (.08)	.55 (.06)	.54 (.05)	.55 (.06)	8.66 (.00)	2.87 (.01)	2.86 (.01)
Indirect	1.12 (.09)	3.93 (.00)	3.29 (.00)	1.13 (.05)	1.30 (.12)	1.31 (.15)	1.35 (.00)	1.38 (.10)	1.33 (.18)	.83 (.08)	2.84 (.00)	2.47 (.00)
Key point												
Total	10.97 (.00)	13.30 (.00)	11.79 (.00)	1.48 (.11)	1.42 (.16)	1.53 (.13)	.66 (.42)	.67 (.42)	.51 (.26)	16.58 (.00)	19.98 (.00)	23.08 (.00)
Direct	8.90 (.00)	2.40 (.01)	1.76 (.13)	1.19 (.49)	.93 (.77)	1.05 (.87)	.39 (.09)	.37 (.06)	.28 (.04)	22.64 (.00)	6.52 (.00)	6.32 (.01)
Indirect	1.23 (.04)	5.55 (.00)	6.69 (.00)	1.24 (.04)	1.53 (.05)	1.46 (.16)	1.68 (.00)	1.81 (.03)	1.83 (.05)	.73 (.09)	3.07 (.00)	3.65 (.00)
Tertiary (N = 1,267)												
Specialized institute												
Total	3.05 (.00)	3.28 (.00)	3.41 (.00)	1.82 (.01)	1.90 (.01)	1.95 (.01)	1.36 (.50)	1.38 (.46)	1.47 (.39)	2.25 (.11)	2.37 (.09)	2.32 (.11)
Direct	2.94 (.00)	1.39 (.24)	1.16 (.61)	1.74 (.02)	1.47 (.12)	1.54 (.08)	1.20 (.72)	.77 (.60)	.98 (.97)	2.46 (.09)	1.81 (.27)	1.18 (.76)
Indirect	1.04 (.56)	2.36 (.00)	2.95 (.00)	1.05 (.41)	1.29 (.17)	1.26 (.36)	1.14 (.37)	1.81 (.02)	1.49 (.20)	.91 (.49)	1.31 (.40)	1.97 (.12)
University												
Total	4.33 (.00)	4.14 (.00)	5.01 (.00)	2.20 (.01)	2.27 (.00)	2.22 (.01)	2.05 (.17)	1.99 (.24)	1.45 (.58)	2.11 (.18)	2.08 (.23)	3.46 (.09)
Direct	3.92 (.00)	1.12 (.78)	.72 (.41)	1.98 (.02)	1.65 (.11)	1.82 (.07)	1.58 (.45)	1.02 (.98)	1.32 (.70)	2.47 (.14)	1.10 (.90)	.55 (.45)
Indirect	1.11 (.18)	3.69 (.00)	6.91 (.00)	1.11 (.19)	1.38 (.28)	1.22 (.74)	1.29 (.25)	1.95 (.06)	1.09 (.89)	.85 (.48)	1.89 (.21)	6.32 (.07)

[a] **Number at risk.**
[b] **Model 3 is not estimated because the level of education precedes respondent's own characteristics available in the survey.**
[c] **The models for lower middle, upper middle, and tertiary matriculation are all competing risk models.**

Table 5. Percentage Distributions of Party Membership and Occupational Outcomes, by Class Label.

	Class label				Total
	Red	Working	Middle	Bad	
Ever joined Communist Party					
Per cent	20.2	8.7	12.0	5.8	9.2
N at risk	(141)	(4,875)	(724)	(197)	(5,937)
Occupational position (ever)[a]					
Cadre	12.5	2.5	3.2	2.4	2.7
Professional	28.9	8.8	17.6	11.6	10.2
Other	58.6	88.7	79.1	86.0	87.1
Total	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0
N at risk	(143)	(4,880)	(713)	(195)	(5,931)

[a] Achieving cadre and professional occupations are treated as competing risks. Thus, anyone who achieves either occupation is treated as no longer at risk for the other occupation. See text for further discussion.

Table 6. Decomposition of Effects of Class Labels on Selected Outcomes into Direct and Indirect Components, Chinese Adults 1996. (Contributions to odds ratios, with p-values in parentheses.)

	Red			Middle			Bad			Ratio of Red to Bad		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Joined Communist Party												
Total	3.51 (.00)	3.68 (.00)	3.53 (.00)	1.16 (.34)	1.14 (.42)	1.12 (.50)	.44 (.00)	.40 (.00)	.37 (.00)	7.90 (.00)	9.16 (.00)	9.52 (.00)
Direct	3.48 (.00)	1.24 (.44)	1.23 (.47)	1.14 (.41)	1.07 (.68)	.96 (.82)	.43 (.00)	.40 (.00)	.35 (.00)	8.04 (.00)	3.11 (.00)	3.54 (.00)
Indirect	1.01 (.84)	2.98 (.00)	2.86 (.00)	1.01 (.76)	1.06 (.57)	1.17 (.32)	1.03 (.76)	1.01 (.92)	1.06 (.73)	.98 (.82)	2.94 (.00)	2.69 (.00)
Cadre occupation												
Total	7.24 (.00)	7.59 (.00)	7.83 (.00)	1.18 (.46)	1.17 (.49)	1.18 (.44)	.62 (.23)	.62 (.19)	.74 (.48)	11.60 (.00)	12.23 (.00)	10.59 (.00)
Direct	6.08 (.00)	2.37 (.00)	1.89 (.03)	1.00 (1.0)	.90 (.67)	.77 (.26)	.42 (.04)	.41 (.02)	.37 (.03)	14.40 (.00)	5.82 (.00)	5.11 (.00)
Indirect	1.19 (.02)	3.20 (.00)	4.14 (.00)	1.18 (.07)	1.29 (.21)	1.54 (.10)	1.48 (.01)	1.52 (.07)	2.00 (.02)	.81 (.19)	2.10 (.01)	2.07 (.05)
Professional occupation												
Total	4.22 (.00)	2.88 (.00)	6.12 (.00)	2.15 (.00)	1.98 (.00)	2.34 (.00)	1.12 (.59)	1.14 (.53)	1.77 (.03)	3.75 (.00)	2.53 (.00)	3.45 (.00)
Direct	3.71 (.00)	.73 (.19)	.71 (.16)	1.98 (.00)	1.64 (.00)	1.25 (.12)	.92 (.72)	.92 (.66)	.62 (.05)	4.01 (.00)	.79 (.45)	1.14 (.70)
Indirect	1.14 (.01)	3.96 (.00)	8.64 (.00)	1.09 (.13)	1.21 (.39)	1.87 (.09)	1.22 (.02)	1.24 (.34)	2.85 (.01)	.93 (.46)	3.18 (.00)	3.03 (.02)