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## CHILDREN OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION: THE STATE AND THE LIFE COURSE IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA\*

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*From 1967 to 1978, the state “send-down” policy in the People’s Republic of China forced 17 million urban youth to live and work in rural areas. We examine the life experiences of the children of the Cultural Revolution—those youths who entered the labor force during this period. The send-down episode provides a “natural experiment”—an opportunity to study the effects of state policies on the life course in a state socialist society. We focus on two theoretical issues: (1) how the effects of adverse state policies on the life course were mediated by the structure of social stratification, and (2) how the send-down experience affected individuals’ later life course and economic well-being. We compare and contrast patterns of entry into the labor force, subsequent major life events, and the economic well-being of sent-down youth with those who stayed in urban areas. Our findings show that all social groups were negatively affected by adverse state policies, but the bureaucratic class had some capacity to reduce such negative effects on their children. The send-down experience has had lasting effects on individuals’ life courses, as reflected in the patterns of the later life course events and in the determinants of personal income.*

*“It is necessary for the educated youth to go to the countryside, and be re-educated by the poor peasants. We need to persuade cadres and others in urban areas to send their children who graduated from junior high, senior high, and college to rural areas. Let us have a mobilization. Comrades in rural areas should welcome them.”*

—Mao Zedong, 1968

**I**n 1968, when college students in Paris took to the street to protest tuition increases by the French government, and when

students at UC–Berkeley and other campuses in the United States engaged in anti-Vietnam War protests, high school and college students in China were in a turmoil. After two years of the “Red Guard Rebellion” in the Cultural Revolution, government administrations and educational institutions were paralyzed: Most government offices were taken over by the Red Guards, and no classes were offered in schools (Pepper 1996; Unger 1982). Students could not graduate from or advance in school. Nor

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\* Direct communication to Xueguang Zhou, Department of Sociology, Duke University, NC 27708 (xzhou@soc.duke.edu). We dedicate this article to the generation of sent-down youth whose suffering, perseverance, and strife have contributed to what China is today. Like many others in this generation, the send-down experience has affected our families and us in profound ways. We are grateful that our academic research allows us to tell this story, and that *ASR* has provided the forum. An early version of this paper was presented at the ASA annual meeting in Toronto, 1997. We thank Deborah Davis, Glen

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Elder, Yu Xie, Kazuo Yamaguchi, the Editor and the reviewers of *ASR* for their helpful comments, and Phyllis Moen and Nancy Brandon Tuma for their collaboration on this research project. We thank the Departments of Sociology at Fudan University and the People’s University, the Institute of Sociology at Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences and especially Weida Fan, Qiang Li, Yunkang Pan, and Xizhe Peng for their assistance in data collection. This research is supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (SBR-9413540), an ASA/NSF fund for the advancement of the discipline, and a Spencer fellowship from the Academy of Education.

could they be assigned to jobs in urban areas.<sup>1</sup> In this context, Mao Zedong's instructions (above), often labeled as the "send-down" policy in China, began one of the most intensive political and social mobilizations during the Cultural Revolution (Bernstein 1977). In a 12-year period, over 17 million urban "educated youth" (mostly graduates from only junior and senior high school) were forced to live and work in rural areas. The send-down policy has had profound effects on the life course of a generation of urban youth in China. About one-third of the children of the Cultural Revolution—those urban youth who entered the labor force between 1967 and 1978—were sent to rural areas; many stayed there for more than 10 years.

We examine this dramatic episode in China by analyzing the life course events of a representative national sample of urban residents drawn from 20 cities. We address two main issues in the sociology of social stratification and life course. First, we investigate how large-scale sociopolitical events are mediated by social stratification structures and processes. Most studies of social stratification have focused on stable institutional structures and processes. Nevertheless, in China and other state socialist societies, highly volatile political environments and shifting state policies have characterized social stratification processes. The send-down episode may dramatically demonstrate the interaction between state policies and the structure of social stratification in this unique historical context.

Second, we examine how state policies shape and alter individual life courses. Recent studies of the life course in industrialized market societies have emphasized the role of the state and social policies in shaping individuals' lives (see Mayer and Schoepflin 1989 for a review). By situating our study in the Chinese context, we hope to illuminate how policy-induced life events such as the send-down experience affect individuals' subsequent life course and economic well-being.

<sup>1</sup> Until in recent years, almost all jobs in urban China were assigned by government administrations.

## THE STATE AND THE LIFE COURSE: THEORETICAL ISSUES

Elder's (1974) seminal work, *Children of the Great Depression*, pioneered a sociological approach linking large-scale social changes to the individual life course and set a research agenda for studying social changes through their effects on individuals' life experiences. In the last two decades, the reciprocal relationship between social change and the life course has been extensively studied in the sociological literature (Elder 1985, 1995; Hogan 1981; Moen 1985; Sørensen, Weinert, and Sherrod 1986; see George 1993 for a review). We contribute to this literature by focusing on the link between state policies, the life course, and social stratification processes in a state socialist society.

In recent years, researchers have paid increased attention to the role of the state in shaping the life course. In industrialized market societies, as Mayer and Muller (1986) pointed out, "the state has assumed an increasing amount of responsibility for the life of individuals in society" (p. 225). They discussed three modes of state actions that affect the individual life course: regulations and laws (e.g., the compulsory schooling law), various types of fiscal policies (e.g., social security), and the provision of services (e.g., social programs related to the aged). Through these social policies, welfare states tend to produce an institutionalized life course in industrialized market societies (Meyer 1986). As Mayer and Schoepflin (1989) observed:

[T]he welfare state provides continuity over the life course by preventing sudden and steep income losses through health and unemployment insurance, and by redistributing income over the life time through old age insurance. Also, the welfare state provides for people working the public sector specific education-occupation linkages, stable employment, orderly career lines with secure and progressing income. (P. 203)

Scholars studying China and other socialist societies have long recognized that the life chances of social groups are decisively affected by state policies that shape both opportunity structures and social status structures (Whyte and Parish 1984). However, in contrast to the role of the welfare state in in-

dustrialized market societies, the shifting state policies in China often dramatically disrupt and alter individuals' life courses. Whyte (1985) examined the politics of life chances in this light. He found that shifting state policies in different historical periods have created distinctive opportunity structures and have significantly affected the life chances of different cohorts. Using life history data of urban residents in two Chinese cities, Davis (1992) demonstrated that the bureaucratic practice of the socialist state, and in particular the radical state policies in the Cultural Revolution, led to the "downward mobility" of the children of the middle class, and produced noticeable intergenerational status disparities. In a similar vein, Zhou, Tuma, and Moen (1996) examined the rate of entry into the labor force in two Chinese cities and found distinctive patterns of labor force experience across historical periods (also see Deng and Treiman 1997; Elder, Wu, and Yuan 1993). In Hungary, as Szelenyi and Manchin (1987) observed, state collectivization policies in the early years severely interrupted the life courses of those engaged in "bourgeois activities" in rural areas.

Our first goal is to examine how state policy effects on the life course are mediated by existing social stratification processes. A central issue in the sociology of the life course is understanding how dramatic social and political events (economic recessions, wars, and social movements) can affect different social groups differently. Elder (1974), for instance, found noticeable differences in how the Great Depression affected the children of the working class and those of the middle class. Social groups with advantaged socioeconomic status often can protect themselves from disastrous events or minimize the negative impacts of such events. Such differential effects can provide important information about social stratification, mediating social processes, and especially about social class reproduction through the intergenerational transfer of resources.

Indeed, the send-down policy had different impacts on children of the Cultural Revolution. On the one hand, it can be seen as part of a massive state effort aimed at "destratification" that affected all social groups (Parish 1984). On the other hand, the send-down policy was by no means uniformly imple-

mented—not *all* urban youth in this cohort went to rural areas. Except during the first few years of policy implementation, a majority of the urban youth stayed in urban areas and was employed in the urban labor force; some sent-down youth returned to urban areas sooner than others. Thus the send-down episode raises some interesting issues: How did groups from different social origins respond to state policies? Which groups, if any, were able to best protect their children from adverse state policies?

In the state socialist societies, the bureaucratic class was at the center of the political authority and resource redistribution. Theoretically, we would expect that such bureaucrats were in an advantageous position to protect their children from negative state policies. During the Cultural Revolution in China, however, the radical leaders made serious efforts to dismantle the existing bureaucratic apparatus and to eradicate the bureaucratic class (Whyte 1980). Many officials and managers in bureaucratic organizations were purged and replaced during this period, and this raises questions about the extent to which the bureaucrats were able to protect their children from adverse state policies. In such a fluctuating political environment, we suspect that these bureaucrats had limited success. In particular, because the values of political and cultural capital depend on macropolitical processes (Davis 1992; Zhou, Tuma, and Moen 1996), we expect that children of bureaucrats holding political and cultural capital had no significant advantages during this period.

Our second goal is to assess the consequences of the send-down experience on the children of the Cultural Revolution. Large-scale social changes inevitably shape and alter individuals' life courses, producing lasting effects on their perceptions and behaviors (Alwin, Cohen, and Newcomb 1991; Elder and Clipp 1988; McAdam 1989). Life course events during early adulthood are especially critical. As Elder (1985) observed, ". . . variations in the transition to adulthood leave a durable imprint on the course that follows" (p. 35). For the sent-down youth, time spent in rural areas interrupted their education and delayed their accumulation of skills and work experience in the urban labor force. Therefore, subsequent life events,

such as the timing of marriage and childbearing, were likely to be interrupted or delayed. Time spent in rural areas also may have deprived sent-down youth of other opportunities available to urban residents, such as job assignments in favorable occupations and work organizations. We expect that the send-down experience had significant and negative effects on individuals' life courses and that the negative consequences were exacerbated by longer stays in rural areas.

Our emphasis on the impacts of historical events on the life course calls attention to the analytical importance of cohorts. As Ryder (1965) pointed out, "Each birth cohort acquires coherence and continuity from the distinctive development of its constituents and from its own persistent macroanalytic features. Successive cohorts are differentiated by the changing content of formal education, by peer-group socialization, and by idiosyncratic historical experience" (p. 843). The send-down policy in China targeted those urban youth who had completed their secondary education and were entering the labor force—the cohort of young people who were in transition to adulthood. Therefore, the send-down experience is cohort-specific and occurred in a particular historical context.

Accordingly, our analytical focus is on the life experience of one cohort—those youths who entered the labor force between 1967 and 1978. We compare and contrast youths who were sent down with youths who stayed in urban areas. First, we examine the factors affecting the probability of being sent down to rural areas and, among those who were sent down, the probability of returning early to urban areas. Second, we compare sent-down youths with those who stayed in urban areas in their subsequent major life events and the determinants of personal income.

### THE SEND-DOWN EXPERIENCE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The send-down policy in China was rooted in a unique historical context. The Cultural Revolution severely disrupted all walks of life, especially those in educational institutions. In the early years of the Cultural Revolution, most educational institutions and government agencies were no longer functioning. As a result, by 1968 more than 6 million

secondary school students, most of them the so-called "Red Guards," accumulated in the schools, waiting to graduate and to be assigned jobs by the government (Shi 1996:3). Unemployment loomed large in a stagnant urban economy.

Although Mao Zedong's 1968 send-down instructions marked the official beginning of the state policy and initiated the large-scale mobilization from urban to rural areas in China, the send-down episode actually had begun a year earlier. In 1967, some Red Guard students volunteered to go to rural areas to help peasants work in the fields, and the Central Committee of the Communist Party quickly issued a document to officially endorse their endeavor (Deng 1993:55). By the end of 1967, some partially functioning governmental agencies already were actively involved in organizing the send-down efforts across regions.

The implementation of the state send-down policies varied over the course of the Cultural Revolution. After intensive mobilizations in the first few years, the government allowed a larger proportion of the high school graduates to enter the urban labor force, and in later years, the send-down policies were adjusted to allow one child per family to stay in an urban area. Intermittently, the government selectively recruited the sent-down youth into college or the military, or brought some back to work in the urban labor force. Policies also allowed sent-down youths to return to urban areas for medical reasons if they could not endure manual labor. The resumption of merit-based college entrance examinations at the end of 1977 offered widened opportunities for many sent-down youth to return to urban areas by entering college. Evidence suggests that the government relaxed the enforcement of its send-down policies after 1977. For this reason, we confine our study to the period from 1967 to 1978 for our analysis of the send-down events, and to the period from 1967 to 1977 for our analysis of return events.

Policy-directed large-scale migration from urban to rural areas had occurred in China before the Cultural Revolution. For instance, during the economic disaster in the early 1960s, the government reduced the urban population between 1961 and 1963 by 26 million. Those policies, however, mainly tar-

geted those families who had recently moved from rural to urban areas, and hence the proportion of the urban population affected was relatively small. In contrast, during the send-down mobilization, all urban families with children who had graduated from secondary schools were expected to follow Mao's instructions and send their children to designated rural areas. Some "volunteered," but most were forced under political pressures to cooperate. The send-down policies especially targeted those social groups who were discriminated against during the Cultural Revolution. As two sent-down youths recounted their experiences more than 10 years later (Deng 1993):

My family background was bad and my father was labeled a "rightist." So when Chairman Mao's instruction was announced, my father "voluntarily" applied for going to rural areas on behalf of his three children. . . . When he came home that day, he held the three of us in his arms and cried: "It is not that I don't want to keep you in the city. But I dare not do so. . . ." I can never forget my father's eyes that day, filled with torture, fear, sadness, and guilt. . . . Sending his three children to rural areas did not save my father's soul. Instead, he put upon himself an enormous psychological burden. He died of lung infection in the winter of 1971.

I was only 15 when I was sent down. No one wanted to go, but no one could resist. When I refused to go, those in charge of the residential committee came to our home everyday and asked us to study Chairman Mao's instructions. A member of the worker's propaganda team came to live in our home and organized a study team for my family. My father was a cadre. He was locked up in a study team in his workplace and was not allowed to return home until his children agreed to go to the rural area. In the end, my mother begged me to go to the rural area. (Deng 1993:60)

The send-down experience was a dramatic, and for many a traumatic, event. There were vast disparities in living environments between the urban and rural areas in China, and most urban youth had never lived in rural areas prior to their sent-down experience. They were sent to designated rural areas far away from their home cities. In many cases, they were allowed to visit their families for only a few weeks in every three years. They endured harsh manual work in the field, often

for more than 12 hours a day, 7 days a week (Jiang, Shi, and Li 1996; Yang et al. 1992; Yu and Wang 1993), and most sent-down youth lived and worked in rural areas for several years. In our data, the average duration in rural areas is 6 years: 19.3 percent stayed for over 10 years, 39.3 percent between 5 and 10 years, and 41.4 percent for 5 or fewer years.

Opportunities to stay in urban areas or to return to urban areas after being sent down were scarce and valuable. Differential access to these opportunities sheds light on the social stratification processes, especially the distribution of political resources among different social groups. For instance, there is evidence that high-rank cadres succeeded in getting their children back to urban areas through various "back-door" channels (Shi 1996). According to Deng (1993:163), between 1972 and 1976, 70 percent of the college students admitted based on the system of recommendation were the children of the cadres and those with political connections. Most college graduates stayed in urban areas after graduation.

In 1979, three years after Mao Zedong died and under enormous pressures of continuous riots and protests by the sent-down youth, the reform-minded leadership denounced the send-down policy and allowed all sent-down youths to return to their home cities (except for those who were married to local residents or employed in nonrural jobs in their local areas). This signaled the official end of the send-down episode.

The end of the send-down era also marked the beginning of the great transformation of China's state socialist economy. Several major socioeconomic changes shaped the landscape of the urban economy in which the sent-down youth sought to relocate their social positions. The economic reform significantly altered opportunity structures and generated a variety of job trajectories (Nee 1989). In particular, since the late 1970s the pressure of unemployment in urban areas has forced the central government to legitimize self-employment, which has given rise to an expanding private sector (Bureau of Labor Policies and Regulations 1990a:159). Moreover, patterns of economic benefits (e.g., personal income) associated with different occupations and work organizations have

changed in the emerging market economies. Private entrepreneurs and those working in the nonstate firms earn significantly higher incomes than do employees in the state sector. It is in this historical context that we interpret the consequences of the send-down experience.

## DATA

We analyze a representative sample of urban residents drawn from a multistage scheme in 20 cities in China in 1993 and 1994. We selected six provinces (Hebei, Heilongjiang, Gansu, Guangdong, Jiangsu, and Sichuan), each representing a conventional geographical region in China. Within each province, we selected the capital city of the province to represent large cities (population above 1 million) in that province. We randomly selected a medium-sized city (population between 200,000 and 1 million) and a small city (population below 200,000) based on the *Statistics Yearbook of the Chinese Cities, 1990* (State Statistics Bureau 1990a). We also included Beijing, the political center of China, and Shanghai, China's largest industrial city. The sample size in each city was proportional to the population for that size city in the province. Within each targeted city, we selected residential blocks and households based on a systematic sampling procedure. In each household, an adult respondent age 25 to 65 was chosen based on a random-number table. If the respondent was married, his or her spouse was also interviewed using an identical questionnaire.

Information about each respondent's life history was collected using a pretested questionnaire. We obtained retrospective information on each respondent's level of education, marriage, childbearing, work place, and occupation, and the timing of these life events. We also collected information about the education and the labor force experience of their parents in selected years. We included both spouses in our study; we assumed that respondents experienced their send-down events prior to marriage. Because we are interested in the life course experiences of those who entered the labor force during the Cultural Revolution, we included in our analysis only those respondents who entered the labor force between

1967 and 1978. After deleting cases with missing information on the covariates, our data include 2,793 cases, of which 855 had been sent down.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### *Dependent Variables*

**Send-down and return events.** Information on send-down events is based on questions about respondent's work place affiliation and type of employment in their first job. If the respondent was employed in rural areas, we inquired if he or she was sent down or grew up in rural areas. We also used information on father's work place to distinguish between children of peasants and those who were sent to rural areas from cities. We excluded children of peasants from our analyses. To measure returns to urban areas, we combined various forms of return events: urban employment, enrollment in college, or joining the military.

**Subsequent life events.** To examine the consequences of the send-down experience, we focus on a set of major life course events: (1) age at marriage, (2) age at the birth of first child, (3) educational attainment after entering the first job, (4) type of first job in the *urban* labor force.

**Income.** We use inflation-adjusted "total income" (basic income, bonuses, and income from second jobs) to assess the respondents' economic well-being. We selected three years for analysis of income: 1978—the year *before* the send-down policy was abolished; 1987—the year at the initial stage of the urban reform; and 1993—the most recent year in our sample for which we have complete information on all respondents. Because we compare the group who stayed in urban areas with those who returned to the cities after the send-down experience, we excluded from our analysis those sent-down youth who were still in the rural area in these selected years.

### *Independent Variables*

**Education.** We measure education at three levels: junior high school or below (the reference category), senior high school, and college. We combined "zhongzhuān" (technical



schools) with “senior high,” and “dazhuan” (community colleges, etc.) with “college.”

**Social origins.** Father’s education and occupational status are indicators of social origins. A set of dummy variables indicates father’s educational level: junior high, senior high, and college. Fathers with only elementary education or no education are the reference category.

To operationalize father’s sociopolitical status, we created a set of dummy variables for father’s occupation. We collected information on father’s occupational status in selected years—year of father’s first job, 1965, 1975, 1978, 1986, and 1993. In our analysis we use the information on father’s most recent occupation prior to each respondent’s send-down or return event. We classify fathers’ occupations into the following five categories: high-rank cadre, low-rank cadre, high-rank professional, low-rank professional, and worker (the reference category). Cadres (managers and bureaucrats) were part of the bureaucratic class and had higher political status than did professionals in state socialist China. The Chinese bureaucratic hierarchy had mainly four levels: *bu* (ministry), *ju* (bureau), *chu* (division), *ke* (section). We classify cadres holding ranks at or above *chu* level as high-rank cadres and those at or below *ke* level as low-rank cadres. Professionals in the Chinese system included, for example, senior engineer, engineer, assistant engineer, and technician levels (and equivalent levels in other professional occupations). We classify professionals at or above “engineer” level as high-rank professionals, and those at or below “assistant engineer” level as low-rank professionals.<sup>2</sup>

To further examine political selection mechanisms, we also use an alternative measure of social origins based on the official label of family class background (“*jiating chushen*”). This label refers to a person’s class location based on his or her parent’s or grandparent’s social class before 1949. This label may coincide with father’s current occupation; however, it was a label directly de-

finied by the state and was a critical basis of political discrimination in the Mao era. Before the abolition in 1979 of official family class labels, individuals routinely were required to report this label on applications for educational enrollment, jobs, and promotions. We use the following four dummy indicators for family “class background” labels: (1) workers/poor peasants; (2) cadre; (3) middle class (small business owners, middle-rich peasants, and intellectuals); and (4) the “exploiting class” (large business owners, landlords, “rightists,” “bad elements,” etc.). The middle-class background is used here as the reference category.

Because the measure of father’s occupational status and that of family class background can overlap, we use these alternative measures to estimate different models. The “class background” measure is broader than the occupational categories, and is linked to the political selection criteria during the Cultural Revolution. Father’s occupational status, on the other hand, more directly measures the sociopolitical position occupied (e.g., cadre status) at the time.

**Types of work organizations.** In China, work organizations’ ownership relationships to the state indicate their positions in the hierarchy of socialist redistributive economy (Bian 1994; Lin and Bian 1991; Walder 1992). Within the state sector, we distinguish government agencies, public organizations, and state firms (central government-owned firms and local government-owned firms). In the nonstate sector, we distinguish collective firms, which are often sponsored by a local government, private entrepreneurs, and hybrid firms that have mixed property rights (e.g., collective and private or joint ventures between state firms and foreign firms).

**Regional variation.** Xie and Hannum (1996) called attention to the importance of regional variations in understanding urban lives in a variety of China’s urban economies. We incorporate regional variations in our analysis in two ways.

First, the send-down policy was partly the government’s response to unemployment. Therefore, we expect the probability of send-down events to vary with urban economies and employment conditions across regions. For the analyses of the send-down and return events, contextual information about changes

<sup>2</sup> In urban China, especially during the Mao era, the boundary between cadres and professionals was blurred. In ambiguous cases, we use the information on the fathers’ administrative or professional ranks to classify them as cadres or professionals.

in urban employment opportunities is critical. We devised a measure of *percentage change in urban employment opportunities* in a province in two adjacent years.<sup>3</sup> This measure is defined as follows:

$$\Delta N_{i,t} = (N_{i,t} - N_{i,t-1}) / N_{i,t-1},$$

where  $N_{i,t}$  refers to the number of urban employees in province  $i$  in year  $t$ .  $N_{i,t-1}$  refers to the same statistic but in year  $t - 1$ .  $\Delta N_{i,t}$  measures the percentage change in the urban labor force in a particular province between the adjacent years,  $t - 1$  and  $t$ . Annual labor force information is drawn from State Statistics Bureau (1990b). We use a three-year average to smooth random fluctuations for a particular year. Because we use information on employment opportunities to capture structural changes, we do not include variables measuring residential locations in the analyses of send-down and return events.

Second, for the analysis of income in the reform era, residential location is an important indicator of the type of urban economies and the overall income level. We include a set of dummy variables to indicate respondents' province and city-size locations to control for regional variations.

In addition, we use gender and labor force duration (in years) to measure individual attributes. We also include the number of brothers and the number of sisters to control for potential effects of state policies that allowed each family to keep one child in the urban area during the send-down era. For the income analysis, we include a variable measuring the sent-down youth's duration in rural areas. Because this variable overlaps with labor force duration, for the sent-down group we subtract the sent-down years from the labor force duration.

When information on father's education, occupation, or family class background is missing, we use dummy variables to indicate missing values. Individual cases with missing values for other variables are deleted from that particular model estimation. Appendix A reports descriptive statistics of the

<sup>3</sup> It would be ideal to use city-level information on employment opportunities, but such data is not available for all cities across the years studied. We use the provincial-level information as a proxy.

respondents at the time of entry into the labor force and in 1993.<sup>4</sup>

## MODELS AND METHODS

For the analysis of send-down events and return events, we use the logit model for discrete-time event history analysis (Allison 1995). An event history model allows one to incorporate time-varying covariates to account for the rate of event occurrence. Moreover, because of considerable delays in the entry into the labor force during the period of our study, there were marked variations in the "risk set" (i.e., secondary school graduates available for jobs) in any particular year, and event history models can incorporate such information appropriately (Tuma and Hannan 1984). The logit model takes the form,

$$\log [P_{it} / (1 - P_{it})] = \mathbf{x}(t)' \boldsymbol{\beta},$$

where  $P$  refers to the conditional probability that individual  $i$  experiences an event at time  $t$ , given that an event has not already occurred to that individual,  $\mathbf{x}$  is a vector of the set of time-varying covariates, and  $\boldsymbol{\beta}$  is a vector of the estimates of the corresponding parameters.

We use Pearson's chi-square test to test the null hypothesis that no substantive differences are observed in major life course events among those who stayed in urban areas and those who returned from sent-down experiences in rural areas. For the analysis of income determinants, we use the conventional OLS estimation of a multivariate linear regression model that includes respondents' attributes, education, occupation, type of work organizations, and residential locations as the covariates.

<sup>4</sup> As Appendix A indicates, large percentages of values are missing for parental variables. This is because a subset of our data (13 percent of the sample) was collected in a pilot study in 1993, and we did not collect information on spouses' parents. After excluding this subset from the sample, the proportion of missing values for parental information is reasonably small. Thus, we do not include this subset of data in our analysis of the send-down and return events where information on father's education and occupation is used in the analysis. But we do include this subset in our analysis of the subsequent life events and of income determinants.

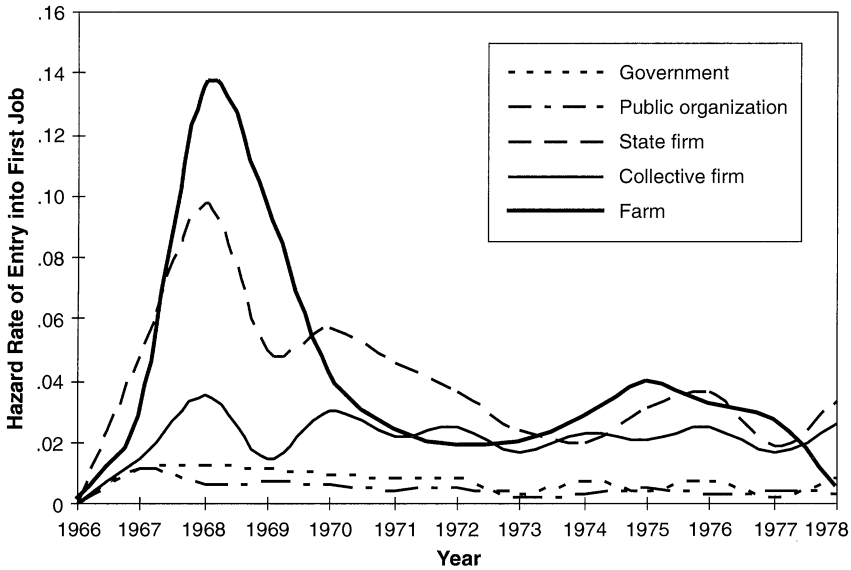


Figure 1. Nelson-Aalen Estimates of the Hazard Rate of Entry into First Job, by Type of Organization: Urban Chinese Youth Entering the Labor Market, 1967 to 1978

Note:  $N = 2,793$ .

### HISTORICAL PATTERNS OF THE “SEND-DOWN” EPISODE

We first describe the historical patterns of the send-down episode during the Cultural Revolution period. Figure 1 reports the estimates of the hazard rate of entry into first jobs from 1967 to 1978. The hazard rates measure the annual instantaneous rate of entering a specific type of job for those in the “risk set” (i.e., individuals who had completed their education). Although the official send-down policy was not in effect before the end of 1968, the send-down movement was initiated and officially sanctioned in 1967. The large-scale send-down mobilization began in 1968, as reflected in the peak of the hazard rate for farm jobs between 1968 and 1969 (the solid, bold line). Note that the peak years, 1968 to 1969, affected a larger group, including the cumulated high school graduates (junior high and senior high school) from the years 1966 to 1969. The hazard rates for other job destinations indicate different job opportunities in urban areas. As one can see, urban employment opportunities generally increased in the 1970s.

Figure 2 shows the hazard rate for sent-down youth of returning to urban areas. Before the official denunciation of the send-

down policy in 1979, some sent-down youth returned to urban areas through various channels. The peak in 1979 reflects the end of the send-down era, and most sent-down youth returned to urban areas by the early 1980s. The increase in the hazard rate in the mid-1980s coincides with the beginning of urban reforms, when state control over the urban labor force was weakened. Thus, urban reforms may have created new opportunities to return for those still left behind. Notice that, although the second peak in the mid-1980s is high, this high rate is mainly due to the relatively small number of individuals still in the risk set (i.e., still in rural areas) at the time.

Variations in the hazard rates of entering different work destinations and of returning to urban areas indicate that the implementation of the send-down policy was not uniform over time or across social groups.

### DIFFERENT IMPACTS OF STATE POLICIES ON SOCIAL GROUPS

#### *Who Was More Likely to Be Sent Down?*

We examine how the children of the Cultural Revolution were allocated into two first-job destinations: to a job in the urban area, or be-

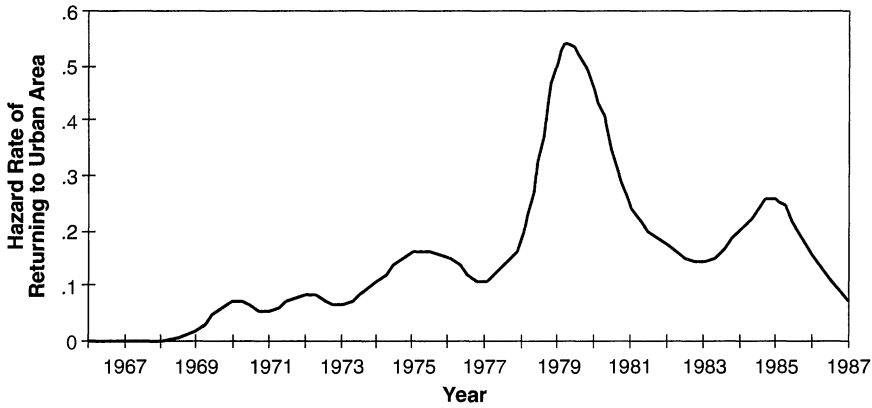


Figure 2. Nelson-Aalen Estimate of the Hazard Rate of Returning to an Urban Area: Chinese Youth Sent Down from 1967 to 1987

Note:  $N = 855$ .

ing “sent down” to a rural area. We include in our model the covariates measuring social origin, individual attributes, urban job opportunities, and number of siblings. We analyze the probability of send-down events for the entire 1967–1978 era, as well as for two refined periods: 1967–1971, and 1972–1978. The urban youth who entered the labor force during the first time period were often labeled as “old sent-down youth” in the Chinese literature, whereas those who entered the labor force during the second period were “new sent-down youth.” Important contextual changes occurred across these two periods: Colleges were reopened in 1972 on a limited basis; also, in the second period the implementation of the send-down policy allowed greater local variation. These changes provided opportunities for selected sent-down youth to enter college or to be recruited into the urban labor force. Analyzing these two periods separately allows us to detect possible changes in stratification processes that may have mediated state policies and individual life chances.

Table 1 reports maximum-likelihood estimates of the probability (in log-odds form) of being sent down to rural areas. Model A includes father’s occupation as a measure of social origins; Model B uses the alternative measure of family class background.

**The overall pattern.** The analysis in the first panel examines the determinants of being sent to rural areas during the entire Cultural Revolution period (1967–1978). The estimates presented in the first column of Table 1 (Model A) indicate that the probabil-

ity of being sent down decreases with respondent’s age, but there is no significant gender difference—the adverse send-down policy affected both men and women similarly.

The odds of being sent down for senior high school graduates were 81 percent higher ( $e^{.593} = 1.81$ ) than those for youths with junior high or lower education (the reference group). There is no statistically discernible difference in odds between college graduates and the reference group. Thus, it appears that the send-down policy especially affected urban youth who had graduated from senior high school.

An important theoretical issue concerns the role social origins play in mediating the effect of adverse state policies. In Model A, we included father’s education and occupational status as indicators of social origins. The most salient evidence of political factors is that children of college-educated fathers had a significantly higher probability of being sent to rural areas. The odds for this group are 46 percent higher than those for the reference group (whose fathers had elementary or no education). This finding is consistent with the state policies in this period, which discriminated against intellectuals.

In the Communist political order, father’s occupation (e.g., cadre status) was closely associated with political status. During this period, we find no statistically discernible differences in the effects of father’s occupational status on the probability of experiencing a send-down event—high-rank cadres were not able to help their children avoid adverse state policies.

**Table 1. Maximum Likelihood-Estimates from the Logistic Regression of Being "Sent Down" on Selected Independent Variables: Chinese Youth Who Entered the Labor Force from 1967 to 1978**

Independent Variable	1967-1978		1967-1971		1972-1978	
	Model A	Model B	Model A	Model B	Model A	Model B
Intercept	.748** (.205)	.780** (.228)	-2.295** (.280)	-2.271** (.309)	.530 (.376)	.468 (.420)
Age	-.222** (.010)	-.223** (.010)	-.012 (.014)	-.014 (.014)	-.237** (.019)	-.239** (.019)
Female	.049 (.075)	.052 (.075)	.040 (.102)	.030 (.102)	.054 (.112)	.062 (.112)
<i>Education</i>						
Senior high school	.593** (.081)	.590** (.081)	-.000 (.129)	-.011 (.129)	.927** (.115)	.938** (.115)
College	.222 (.347)	.216 (.347)	-1.329* (.594)	-1.355* (.595)	1.081* (.435)	1.126** (.436)
<i>Father's Education</i>						
Junior high	-.194 (.114)	-.211 (.113)	.019 (.148)	-.045 (.147)	-.532** (.185)	-.448* (.183)
Senior high	.098 (.141)	.077 (.140)	.398* (.193)	.271 (.191)	-.217 (.211)	-.042 (.208)
College	.379** (.139)	.369** (.131)	.365 (.190)	.243 (.178)	.231 (.206)	.453* (.196)
<i>Father's Occupation</i>						
Cadre, high-rank	-.054 (.186)	—	.137 (.243)	—	-.132 (.293)	—
Cadre, low-rank	-.123 (.121)	—	-.327 (.186)	—	.117 (.162)	—
Professional, high-rank	.010 (.242)	—	-.120 (.328)	—	.192 (.365)	—
Professional, low-rank	.078 (.149)	—	-.177 (.213)	—	.344 (.212)	—
<i>Family "Class Background"</i>						
Cadre/revolutionary	—	-.083 (.144)	—	.155 (.188)	—	-.199 (.232)
Worker/poor peasant	—	-.053 (.112)	—	-.060 (.144)	—	.114 (.184)
"Exploiting class"	—	.500 (.277)	—	.166 (.368)	—	.612 (.427)

(Continued on next page)

As expected, the probability of experiencing a send-down event was closely associated with urban job opportunities. An increase in urban employment opportunities reduced the probability of being sent to rural areas. The number of siblings did not have a significant effect.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ideally, we would want to know whether and how many of the siblings were sent down. Unfortunately, we do not have such information in our data set.

In Model B, we estimated the effect of family class background on the send-down event. The findings show that children of the "exploiting class" had a marginally significant, higher probability of being sent to the rural area ( $p < .10$ ). The odds for this group were 65 percent higher than those for the children of the middle class (the reference group). This again is consistent with the proclaimed state policies that used family "class background" labels to discriminate among social groups. The

(Continued from previous page)

Independent Variable	1967–1978		1967–1971		1972–1978	
	Model A	Model B	Model A	Model B	Model A	Model B
Number of brothers	.043 (.028)	.043 (.028)	.013 (.037)	.013 (.037)	.074 (.043)	.071 (.043)
Number of sisters	.044 (.027)	.046 (.027)	.029 (.036)	.031 (.036)	.048 (.041)	.044 (.041)
Percent change in urban labor force	-.106** (.013)	-.107** (.013)	-.116** (.017)	-.117** (.017)	-.040 (.022)	-.037 (.022)
Father's education missing	-.026 (.170)	-.147 (.155)	-.053 (.215)	-.221 (.195)	-.204 (.288)	-.381 (.266)
Father's occupation missing	-.223 (.133)	—	-.294 (.169)	—	-.373 (.225)	—
Family background missing	—	-.279 (.273)	—	-.158 (.334)	—	-.444 (.482)
$\chi^2$ <sup>a</sup>	975.5**	976.1**	90.0**	85.2**	314.5**	313.0**
Degrees of freedom	16	15	16	15	16	15
Number of events	755	755	417	417	338	338

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Reference categories are “junior high education or below” for respondent's education, “elementary education or below” for father's education, “worker” for father's occupation, and “middle class” for family class background.

<sup>a</sup> Compared with the baseline model with no covariates.

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed tests)

other covariates show effects similar to those in Model A.

**Variations over the two periods.** The second and third panels in Table 1 report the estimated effects of the covariates for the periods 1967–1971 and 1972–1978. Comparing these two periods, we find that in the earlier period (1967–1971), when the send-down policy implementation was stringent, there were few variations among social groups in the rate of being sent down, regardless of social origins. In the second period, however, selective mechanisms emerged. For instance, in 1972–1978 children of college-educated fathers (Model B) had a significantly higher probability of being sent to rural areas than did those whose fathers had only elementary or no education. Also, college graduates had a higher send-down rate in the second period and a significantly lower rate in the first period. We suspect that this was because radical policies in the 1970s advocated that college graduates under the “new educational system” participate in production processes in workshops and fields. Another interesting finding is that the effect of changes in the urban labor force was smaller and not statisti-

cally significant in the second period, compared with the first. This finding suggests that as the send-down policy was institutionalized over time it became a political ritual and was implemented regardless of urban job opportunities.

### Return to Urban Areas

Before 1979, most sent-down youth were forced to stay in the countryside. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, channels existed that permitted some individuals to return to urban areas. To investigate the advantageous political or social resources possessed by different social groups, we analyzed the probability of return events between 1967 and 1977 and in the two refined periods. Table 2 reports the maximum likelihood estimates for these analyses.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Because our sample came from the urban areas, our analyses of return events focused on those sent-down youth who eventually returned there. To the best of our knowledge, most sent-down youth did return to their home cities, and as the proportion that remained in rural areas is very small, it should not affect our analyses appreciably.

**Table 2. Maximum-Likelihood Estimates from the Logistic Regression of Return Events on Selected Independent Variables: Chinese Youth "Sent Down" from 1967 to 1977**

Independent Variable	1967-1977		1967-1971		1972-1977	
	Model A	Model B	Model A	Model B	Model A	Model B
Intercept	-4.714** (.779)	-4.577** (.802)	-5.919** (1.930)	-7.535** (2.059)	-4.425** (.869)	-4.110** (.894)
Age	.034 (.042)	.029 (.042)	.087 (.105)	.107 (.105)	.031 (.046)	.023 (.046)
Duration in rural areas	.287** (.050)	.276** (.049)	.551** (.185)	.516** (.179)	.238** (.058)	.229** (.057)
Female	-.032 (.133)	-.052 (.132)	-.832* (.354)	-.839* (.353)	.096 (.146)	.079 (.145)
<i>Education</i>						
Senior high school	.626** (.162)	.637** (.161)	.656 (.412)	.647 (.407)	.563** (.177)	.578** (.176)
College	1.741** (.348)	1.709** (.350)	3.800** (.963)	2.999** (.908)	1.503** (.378)	1.519** (.383)
<i>Father's Education</i>						
Junior high	-.237 (.201)	-.130 (.196)	-.491 (.484)	-.160 (.456)	-.175 (.222)	-.101 (.217)
Senior high	-.425 (.286)	-.271 (.277)	.050 (.601)	.397 (.628)	-.542 (.319)	-.384 (.307)
College	.036 (.235)	-.005 (.225)	-.192 (.545)	-.198 (.586)	-.014 (.259)	.041 (.245)
<i>Father's Occupation</i>						
Cadre, high-rank	.758** (.276)	—	.589 (.609)	—	.776* (.313)	—
Cadre, low-rank	.628** (.214)	—	1.044* (.444)	—	.513* (.243)	—
Professional, high-rank	-.500 (.403)	—	-1.259 (1.255)	—	-.404 (.429)	—
Professional, low-rank	-.215 (.311)	—	— <sup>a</sup>	—	-.096 (.326)	—
<i>Family "Class Background"</i>						
Cadre/revolutionary	—	.030 (.243)	—	1.692* (.700)	—	-.242 (.271)
Worker/poor peasant	—	.091 (.188)	—	1.414* (.638)	—	-.070 (.200)
"Exploiting class"	—	-.245 (.506)	—	.558 (1.244)	—	-.331 (.560)

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**The overall pattern.** Our findings for the entire Cultural Revolution period (1967-1977) show that age and gender had no significant effects on the return rate. But duration in rural areas significantly increased the probability of returning to the city.

Those with higher educational levels tended to return earlier than those with less education. Compared with the sent-down youth who had junior high school or less

education, senior high graduates had 87 percent higher odds of returning to urban areas; those with college education had even higher odds of returning. This pattern may have resulted from policies concerning college admission, urban employment, or military recruitment that favored candidates with higher educational levels.

The effects of social origins are especially illuminating. Father's education had no sig-

(Continued from previous page)

Independent Variable	1967–1977		1967–1971		1972–1977	
	Model A	Model B	Model A	Model B	Model A	Model B
Number of brothers	-.071 (.054)	-.078 (.053)	-.189 (.142)	-.198 (.133)	-.053 (.059)	-.055 (.058)
Number of sisters	.018 (.050)	.006 (.050)	.015 (.129)	.041 (.126)	.021 (.054)	-.007 (.054)
Percent change in urban labor force	.085** (.023)	.088** (.023)	.072 (.041)	.071 (.040)	.080* (.032)	.086** (.032)
Father's education missing	-.194 (.289)	-.261 (.274)	— <sup>a</sup>	— <sup>a</sup>	.074 (.307)	.111 (.288)
Father's occupation missing	-.350 (.240)	—	-1.425 (.823)	—	-.269 (.255)	—
Family background missing	—	-.180 (.468)	—	— <sup>a</sup>	—	-.108 (.480)
$\chi^2$ <sup>b</sup>	209.7**	187.5**	62.1**	59.0**	110.7**	97.4**
Degrees of freedom	17	16	15	15	17	16
Number of events	272	272	44	44	228	228

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. Reference categories are “junior high education or below” for respondent's education, “elementary education or below” for father's education, “worker” for father's occupation, and “middle class” for family class background.

<sup>a</sup> Category is not estimated because there is no variation (no return events) for this category.

<sup>b</sup> Compared with the baseline model with no covariates.

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed tests)

nificant effect on the return rate. On the other hand, the effects of father's occupation clearly indicate the importance of political status. Children of high-rank officials had a significant, higher probability of returning to urban areas: The odds of return for this group were more than twice as high as those for youth whose fathers were workers (the reference group). The odds for youth whose fathers were low-rank cadres were 87 percent higher. Children of professionals had no advantage. An increase in urban employment opportunities had a significant, positive effect, and thus increased the probability of returning to urban areas.

Family class backgrounds (Table 2, Model B) revealed no significant effects for the entire Cultural Revolution period. Clearly, access to return opportunities was more associated with positional power (father's occupational status) than with symbolic labels (class labels).

**Variations over the two periods.** Our additional analyses for the two refined periods show considerable variations over time in

return rates. In the 1967–1971 period (Model A in the second panel), only children of low-rank cadres had a significant and higher rate of returning to urban areas. We suspect that this is because, in the earlier years of the Cultural Revolution, high-rank cadres were especially targeted in the political purge. On the other hand, family “class background” (Model B) showed some significant effects consistent with the proclaimed political selection criteria: Compared with a middle-class background (the reference category), having a “cadre” background increased the odds of return by more than four times. Similarly, those with a working-class background were about three times more likely to return than the middle-class youth. Female youth had a significant, lower probability of return during the earlier period.

In the 1972–1977 period, the effects of family class background labels disappeared. Instead, the effects of father's occupational status became important. The odds of return for the children of high-rank officials were



twice as high as those for the children of workers. Children of low-rank cadres also had significant and higher odds (27 percent higher). It is obvious that, in the second period, broadly defined class labels were no longer effective in discriminating among social groups. Rather, parent's political status (father's cadre status) had a more direct effect on children's return to urban areas. Also, urban employment opportunities became a significant factor in increasing the return rate during the second period.

### CONSEQUENCES OF THE SEND-DOWN EXPERIENCE

How did the send-down experience affect sent-down youth's subsequent life courses? Given the long duration in rural areas (an average of six years), we expect that this experience should have had a lasting effect on this group. We now assess the consequences of the send-down experience.

#### *Subsequent Life Course Experiences*

To examine the consequences of the send-down experience on the subsequent life course, we first compare those who stayed in urban areas with those who were sent down in their experiences of major life course events: (1) age at marriage, (2) age at the birth of the first child, (3) educational (college) attainment, (4) type of occupation and workplace organization for first *urban* job.

Given the considerable variations in duration in rural areas, we expect that the effects of the send-down experience will vary with that duration. For those who were able to return early, the negative effects of the send-down experience may be less severe. For those who stayed longer, the negative consequences are likely to be exacerbated. Based on this consideration, we divided the sent-down youth into two groups: (1) those who stayed in rural areas for less than six years, and (2) those who stayed for six or more years.<sup>7</sup>

Table 3 reports the descriptive statistics and Pearson's chi-square test statistics for

these comparisons. The sample sizes for these different events vary because we selected only those respondents appropriate for each specific analysis. (For instance, only those who were 18 years old or older are included in the "age at marriage" analysis.) Some variations in sample sizes are due to missing information associated with the event.

**Age at marriage and at the birth of first child.** There was almost no difference between those who stayed in urban areas and those who were sent down for fewer than six years. However, for those who worked in rural areas for more than six years, marriage and childbearing events were delayed for nearly two years. We further divided the respondents in each category into three age groups (18 to 25, 26 to 30, 31 or above). The chi-square tests lead us to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the age at marriage and at first birth among the three age groups cross-classified with their send-down experiences. Since the 1970s, all urban youth delayed their marriage and childbearing as a result of the government's family planning policies, and we suspect that the observed differences among these groups would be even more salient were these policies absent.

**Educational attainment.** Because most urban youth graduated from secondary schools during the Cultural Revolution, we focus on college education. We compare college enrollment since 1977, when the national entrance examination was resumed. Since 1977, a large number of the children of the Cultural Revolution (including graduates from both junior high and senior high schools) took college entrance examinations in an effort to resume their disrupted education. The chi-square test indicates significant differences among the three groups. The descriptive statistics show that the sent-down youth with rural durations of less than six years had the highest percentage with a college education (14.2 percent). Perhaps their negative life experience fostered the sent-down youth's determination to use educational achievement to relocate their social positions. But the resumption of college entrance examination in 1977 may have come too late for some of those who stayed in rural areas for more than six years; their en-

<sup>7</sup> We chose 6 years because that duration coincides with the mean and the median rural stay for the sent-down group in our sample.

**Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Chi-Square Tests for Group Differences in Experiences of Major Life Course Events: Chinese Youth Who Entered the Labor Force from 1967 to 1978**

Event/Independent Variable	No Send-Down Experience	Sent Down for Less Than 6 Years	Sent Down for More than 6 Years
<i>Marriage</i>			
Mean age at marriage	26.5	26.6	28.2
Percent ages 18 to 25	37.7	36.1	15.9
Percent ages 26 to 30	53.8	56.6	65.6
Percent ages 31 and over	8.5	7.4	18.6
Number of respondents	1,456	366	372
Pearson's $\chi^2$ test of independence: $\chi^2 = 82.8$ ; d.f. = 4; $p < .001$			
<i>Childbearing</i>			
Mean age at birth of first child	27.4	27.4	29.1
Percent ages 18 to 25	25.7	24.8	11.7
Percent ages 26 to 30	59.1	64.0	60.2
Percent ages 31 and over	15.3	11.2	28.1
Number of respondents	1,246	339	334
Pearson's $\chi^2$ test of independence: $\chi^2 = 57.7$ ; d.f. = 4; $p < .001$			
<i>Educational Attainment</i>			
Percent obtaining college degree after 1977	8.4	14.2	9.5
Number of respondents	1,607	401	400
Pearson's $\chi^2$ test of independence: $\chi^2 = 12.6$ ; d.f. = 2; $p < .002$			
<i>Type of Workplace for First Urban Job</i>			
Percent in government	10.3	11.7	5.3
Percent in public organization	6.7	8.1	11.6
Percent in state firm	50.3	52.8	46.1
Percent in collective firm	28.0	25.4	32.4
Percent in hybrid firm	1.0	.5	1.6
Percent private entrepreneur	3.7	1.5	3.2
Number of respondents	1,960	394	380
Pearson's $\chi^2$ test of independence: $\chi^2 = 32.3$ ; d.f. = 10; $p < .001$			
<i>Occupation for First Urban Job</i>			
Percent cadre	3.1	5.9	9.3
Percent professional	13.7	11.4	10.4
Percent clerk	3.6	5.7	6.3
Percent service worker	11.1	12.9	12.5
Percent production worker	63.0	58.1	61.0
Percent military or police	5.6	5.9	.5
Number of respondents	1,799	387	367
Pearson's $\chi^2$ test of independence: $\chi^2 = 59.3$ ; d.f. = 10; $p < .001$			

rollment rate (9.5 percent) was noticeably lower than those with shorter rural durations.

***Type of occupation and work organization in the first urban job.*** Location in the labor force is highly associated with economic re-

wards. Because an individual's job location may vary over time, we compared types of first urban jobs among the three groups. For the sent-down youth this job refers to the first job after returning to urban areas. The chi-

square tests show that types of occupations and of work organizations differ significantly among the three groups. The descriptive statistics indicate, however, that those with the send-down experience tend to have similar proportions in high-status organizations and occupations (government and/or public organizations; cadre and professional occupations) when compared with those who stayed in urban areas. This may be partly due to the fact that a larger proportion of the sent-down youth received college education, which channeled them into these work organizations and occupations.

**Summary.** Overall, our evidence suggests that the send-down experience had a significant effect on important life events in the subsequent life course. The longer a respondent stayed in the rural area, the more severe its impact on the life course. However, the rural experience may have fostered sent-down youth's determination to improve their social location, as is reflected in the higher proportion achieving college education and working in high-status organizations and occupations.

### *Income Determinants*

What were the effects of the send-down experience on personal income in the post-Mao era? Our dependent variable is the logarithm of a respondent's total income—the sum of basic income, bonuses, and income from second jobs. We include in our model covariates that measure gender, labor force experience, education, occupation, work organizations, and residential locations. We estimate income models for three years (1978, 1987, and 1993) to examine variations of effects over time. To contrast the groups with and without the send-down experience, we create a set of interaction variables to measure the additional effect of the send-down experience on income. These interaction terms allow us to detect the specific channels through which the send-down experience affected personal income.

**Determinants of income in 1978.** Column 1 of Table 4 reports coefficients for income determinants in 1978, the year before the send-down policy was officially abolished. There were 301 respondents in this analysis who returned to urban areas by 1978.

In 1978, at the beginning of the post-Mao era, a female employee earned on average 11 percent less than a male employee. Labor force duration, as measured by the first- and second-order effects of years in the urban labor force, has a negative effect on income, but only the second-order effect is statistically significant. There are no significant returns to human capital in 1978, as measured by educational levels. Because our sample includes only one young cohort, returns to labor force experience and human capital may be relatively limited by 1978.

Those respondents working in government, state firms, and hybrid firms all had significantly higher incomes than did those working in collective firms and with no send-down experience (the reference category).<sup>8</sup> Income differences were less among occupational groups. Only service workers had significantly higher income than production workers with no send-down experience (the reference category). Due to the small number of private entrepreneurs, we omitted this group from the analysis.

The send-down event had no significant effect on income in 1978, as indicated by the effect of the sent-down dummy variable; nor did durations in rural areas affect income. Examining the interaction effects, most covariates (types of work organizations and occupations) show negative effects on 1978 income, but these effects are not statistically significant, indicating that there are no statistically discernible differences due to the send-down experience. Before the send-down policy was abolished, a larger proportion of those who returned early to urban areas had better educational credentials, and many were children of high-rank cadres (cf. Table 2). Their human capital and the political resources of their parents may have helped them relocate in advantageous workplaces or occupations and thus reduce the negative consequences of the send-down experience.

<sup>8</sup> Because we included in our model the workplace interaction term (collective firm  $\times$  send-down), only those employees working in collective firms *who had no send-down experience* were in the reference group for organizational categories. Similarly, only those production workers *who had no send-down experience* were in the reference group for occupational categories.

**Table 4. Estimates from the OLS Regression of Personal Income on Selected Independent Variables for 1978, 1987, and 1993: Chinese Youth Who Entered the Labor Force from 1967 to 1978**

Independent Variable	1978	1987	1993
Intercept	3.386** (.540)	4.627** (.398)	4.628** (.240)
Female	-.121** (.022)	-.188** (.025)	-.207** (.021)
Labor force duration	-.035 (.023)	.012 (.020)	.015 (.014)
(Labor force duration) <sup>2</sup> /100	-.060** (.023)	.008 (.026)	.010 (.022)
<i>Education</i>			
Senior high school	-.030 (.025)	.009 (.029)	.043 (.025)
College	-.002 (.058)	.043 (.050)	.082* (.038)
<i>Workplace</i>			
Government	.111* (.050)	.045 (.052)	.240** (.043)
Public organization	.103* (.049)	.067 (.053)	.271** (.045)
Central government-owned firm	.183** (.034)	.153** (.039)	.302** (.034)
Local government-owned firm	.142** (.033)	.127** (.038)	.155** (.034)
Hybrid firm	.252** (.054)	.146* (.059)	.203** (.048)
Private entrepreneur	— <sup>a</sup>	.501** (.065)	.575** (.053)
<i>Occupation</i>			
Cadre	.039 (.047)	.141** (.043)	.201** (.034)
Professional	.073 (.042)	.092* (.045)	.109** (.037)
Clerk	.013 (.055)	.076 (.055)	.038 (.043)
Service worker	.113** (.035)	.080* (.039)	.043 (.032)
<i>Interactions with Send-Down Experience</i>			
Sent down (sent down = 1)	-1.903 (2.747)	-.043 (1.000)	-.326 (.576)
Send-down duration (in years)	-.009 (.014)	.002 (.007)	-.003 (.005)
Female × Sent down	.097 (.061)	.080 (.048)	.084* (.039)
Labor force duration × Sent down	-.072 (.114)	-.006 (.047)	-.029 (.031)
[(Labor force duration) <sup>2</sup> × Sent down]/100	-.056 (.117)	-.007 (.056)	-.035 (.042)
<i>Education:</i>			
Senior high × Sent down	.016 (.073)	-.054 (.057)	-.005 (.047)
College × Sent down	.095 (.130)	.030 (.089)	.046 (.071)
<i>Workplace:</i>			
Government × Sent down	-.334 (.242)	.156 (.129)	-.327** (.111)
Public organization × Sent down	-.031 (.256)	-.007 (.129)	-.285* (.113)
Central government firm × Sent down	-.201 (.238)	-.017 (.116)	-.219* (.104)
Local government firm × Sent down	-.260 (.240)	-.035 (.115)	-.187 (.105)
Collective firm × Sent down	-.167 (.231)	-.028 (.104)	-.222* (.090)
Hybrid firm × Sent down	-.239 (.157)	.169 (.107)	.026 (.096)
Private entrepreneur × Sent down	—	-.212 (.201)	-.373** (.138)
<i>Occupation:</i>			
Cadre × Sent down	.165 (.193)	-.146 (.127)	-.021 (.095)
Professional × Sent down	-.264 (.194)	-.099 (.131)	.035 (.100)
Clerk × Sent down	-.156 (.212)	-.172 (.137)	.159 (.104)
Service worker × Sent down	-.010 (.202)	-.175 (.125)	.035 (.094)
Production worker × Sent down	.014 (.168)	-.073 (.109)	.019 (.081)
R <sup>2</sup>	.247	.247	.418
Number of respondents (Total/Sent down)	2,217/301	2,391/673	2,702/755

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. The reference categories are “junior high education or below” for education, “collective firm, no send-down experience” for workplace, and “production worker, no send-down experience” for occupation.

<sup>a</sup> This group is omitted from the analysis because of their small numbers.

\* $p < .05$       \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed tests)

*Determinants of income in 1987.* By 1987, most sent-down youth had returned to urban areas for several years, and urban China was in the midst of dramatic urban reforms that had begun in 1985. Thus, patterns of income determinants in our analysis reflect both the impact of the send-down experience and of the urban reforms under way.

Compared with the patterns in 1978, gender differences in income increased, but labor force duration and education had no significant effects in 1987 (column 2 of Table 4). Those working in state firms had higher incomes compared with employees in collective firms and with no sent-down experience (the reference category); so did those in hybrid firms. Private entrepreneurs had the highest earnings among all occupational groups. These results reflect the impacts of the initial urban reforms, in which the decentralization of authority in industrial and service organizations led to higher bonuses for their employees relative to those working in government and public organizations (Walder 1989). Among the occupational groups, cadres, professionals, and service workers earned more than did production workers.

The effects of the interactions between the main covariates and the send-down experience resemble those in 1978, showing no statistically discernible effects on the returned youth's economic well-being, at least as measured by personal income. These results are somewhat surprising, given the social dislocation that these sent-down youth experienced. A plausible explanation is that in the 1980s the government had adopted policies to facilitate the sent-down youth's transition into the urban labor force (Bureau of Labor Policies and Regulations 1990b:371-74). The most significant policy required that sent-down youths' durations in rural areas be counted as work experience for wage grade determination and promotions. These policies probably helped reduce the income disparity between the two groups.

*Determinants of income in 1993.* By 1993, significant changes in the effects of income variables are apparent (column 3 of Table 4). Overall, gender-based income differences increased once again, but female employees with the send-down experience had significantly higher incomes when compared with those females who were not sent

down. This indicates that female workers with the send-down experience were more active in changing their social positions than were those who remained in urban areas. College education is associated with significantly higher incomes in 1993.

Type of work organization was increasingly important by this time. For individuals who stayed in urban areas, those working in government, public organizations, state firms, and hybrid firms all had higher incomes compared with those working in collective firms with no send-down experience (the reference category). Yet incomes for the sent-down youth working in government, public organizations, central-government-owned firms, and collective firms were significantly lower than their counterparts working in the same type of workplaces. For instance, for a sent-down youth the return to income from his or her location in government is  $-.087$  ( $.240 - .327 = -.087$ ), other things being equal. Even private entrepreneurs who had the send-down experience had lower incomes, relative to their counterparts with no send-down experience. There were no significant occupational differences in income based on the send-down experience.<sup>9</sup>

*Summary.* Variations in determinants of income for sent-down youth over the three years reveal significant changes in urban China in the post-Mao era. Among the children of the Cultural Revolution, college education has become an important factor in income in recent years. Cadres and professionals earn considerably more now than before, when compared with production workers. More important, type of work organization

<sup>9</sup> In our exploratory analysis we estimated models without the interaction terms. The parameter estimates of the main effects are similar to those reported in Table 4. Compared with the models without interaction effects, the models reported in Table 4 significantly improve the model fit based on F-tests. The increments in  $R^2$  due to the inclusion of the interaction terms are relatively small for these models, indicating that overall the send-down experience plays a minor role in income inequality. In our exploratory analysis, we also included father's educational level and father's occupational status. We did not find any systematic patterns (most of these parameter estimates were not statistically significant). For model parsimony, we did not include these variables in our final model.

has become increasingly important in determining economic well-being. The rise of the private sector has had a profound impact on income distribution, as private entrepreneurs now have the highest income among urban employees. These patterns reflect multifaceted reform processes in which both redistributive institutions and market mechanisms coexist.

Such fundamental changes have affected the economic well-being of sent-down youth in several ways. Until in recent years, evidence has suggested that the send-down experience did not cause significant income disparity for the sent-down youth. We think that this may largely result from China's economic reform. The emergence of new economic sectors and the expansion of a market economy have created diverse job opportunities and avenues for obtaining economic resources (Nee 1989). Also, in the 1980s the state adopted social policies aimed at smoothing the sent-down youth's relocation in the urban labor force and equalizing opportunities for the sent-down youth in the workplace.

Ironically, the emergence of a marked organization-based income disadvantage for the sent-down youth in 1993 may also reflect the impacts of the economic reform in recent years. Workplace-based disparity coincides with the trend of work organizations moving away from the command economy. The weakening of the state may have undermined the effectiveness of those state policies that originally helped the sent-down youth's transition into the urban labor force. As a result, the lack of skills and of work experience in the urban labor force now has become a salient factor affecting the sent-down youth's economic well-being. The increasing disparity in income in recent years thus indicates a lasting effect of the negative life course experience, an effect that appears to have accelerated along with the ongoing social changes in China.

## DISCUSSION

The 12-year send-down mobilization in China has fundamentally changed the life course of a generation of urban youth. This episode provides a valuable setting to examine how state policies affect the life course,

how social stratification processes mediate these impacts, and how large-scale social changes can affect the subsequent life course and economic well-being.

Our study points to the decisive role of the state and of state policy shifts that disrupt and restructure individuals' life courses. Evidence on patterns of labor force entry and of return from rural areas show that, when an authoritarian state was highly mobilized to implement its policy, no social groups could resist its intrusion into their lives. Among children of different social origins, no significant differences emerged in the probability of being sent to rural areas. In this sense, the send-down policies had indiscriminate and adverse effects on all social groups, and the extent to which the bureaucratic class could resist state policies was indeed limited. Children of intellectual families or "exploiting class" background were especially targeted, consistent with the state policies of the time.

However, there also were significant effects of social origins on the probability of returning early to urban areas. As the political tides subsided, high-rank cadres did have advantages in reducing the adverse impact of state policies by bringing their children back earlier to the cities, compared with children of other occupational groups. An early return was extremely valuable: Our findings show that those who had shorter send-down durations were significantly better off in later life course events, compared with those with longer durations. After 1977, children of cadres and professionals were especially advantaged in attending college (Zhou, Moen, and Tuma 1998). Given the fact that educational credentials are important to status attainment and economic well-being in the reform era, it appears that the process of social class reproduction was only temporarily interrupted by the dramatic political events in the Cultural Revolution. These findings remind us of the persistent importance of social stratification structures and processes in mediating the interaction between state policies and individual life chances, even in highly volatile political environments.

State policy-induced social changes have produced lasting effects on individuals' subsequent life courses and behavioral patterns. Comparing Chinese youth who had no send-

down experience with those who endured different rural durations, we find significant variations in their experiences of major life course events. The send-down episode had an especially large and negative effect on those who experienced extended rural durations: Their marriage and childbearing were significantly delayed. When they returned to the cities, they had less advantageous locations in the urban labor force (with respect to type of occupations and work organizations) compared with those who had a shorter rural duration. With regard to the determinants of personal income, overall the send-down experience did not appear to have major effects in the 3 years we selected for analysis. However, the significant effects in 1993 of the interactions between types of workplaces and the send-down experience indicate that negative consequences of the send-down experience emerged in recent years and may become even more salient.

More interestingly, our findings also reveal some positive consequences of the send-down experience. For instance, when compared with urban youth, a noticeably higher proportion of the sent-down youth attained a college education after 1977. Partly as a result of their educational attainment, these sent-down youth, especially those with shorter rural durations, were equally likely to enter favorable employment (type of occupations and work organizations) in the urban labor force, despite their relatively short *urban* labor force experience. Women with the send-down experience also had higher incomes than did women who stayed in urban areas.

We think two main factors account for these positive consequences of the send-down experience. First, major social changes in the economic reform era have had a great impact on the reshaping of the sent-down youths' life courses upon their return to urban areas. The resumption of college entrance examinations and the expansion of the urban economy may have smoothed the sent-down youth's relocation in urban areas. The emerging market economies opened new job opportunities (private entrepreneurs) and new economic sectors (the growth of the service sector), which may have alleviated some of the negative impacts of the send-down experience.

Second, the rural experience may have fostered the sent-down youths' unique life perspectives, bolstering their perseverance and risk-taking attitudes as they faced new opportunities. In particular, we think that the send-down experience may have especially benefited this group in their adaptation to large-scale social changes taking place in China today. Although, on average, there were no major differences in job locations and income between those with and without the send-down experience, perhaps what is important is not the average but the variations within each group. It is likely that a proportion of the sent-down youth strove to change their social dislocations upon returning to the urban areas and took advantage of the emerging opportunities in the economic reform. In so doing, they became catalysts in the break from the redistributive system and stimulated the rise of a private sector in China. Although we have no systematic information to explore these issues further, numerous highly acclaimed success stories of sent-down-youth-turned-private-entrepreneur in the Chinese media support this speculation. In contrast, those who avoided being sent down may have been, by 1978, "locked into" jobs in the state sector, making them less likely to take emerging opportunities in the process of economic reform.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps more subtle but profound impacts of the send-down experience influenced the urban youths' attitudes and behaviors during the economic transformation in China. Corroborative evidence shows that historical impacts and personal reflections varied greatly within this group. As one sent-down youth commented:

I want to thank life. Without the 10-year hardship of the send-down life, our generation probably could never have been as mature as we are today. (Deng 1993:354–55)

Others were bitter, however, as one woman put it:

The lives of our generation were totally wasted. When we were in school, our learning was disrupted. We had to participate in the Cultural Revolution. Later we were sent to rural areas. When we left the city, many girls did not even

<sup>10</sup> This point was suggested by an ASR reviewer.

understand their bodies. When we returned, we all became "old women." (Deng 1993:355)

As an editor of a book on the send-down experience observed:

If the sent-down youth were born herdsmen, peasants, or rural workers, they might not have keenly felt the hardship and misfortune in the rural areas. But on the contrary, they had so-called education and civil experience. They went to those primitive areas stricken with poverty. Many of them left cities with wounded hearts and with personal or family losses. As a result, they felt much more deeply the meaning of hardship and misery, the roughness and fluctuation in life, and the coldness of youth. (Li 1993:5)

As the children of the Cultural Revolution now become the main component of the labor force in urban China, as many of this cohort are now well-known writers, intellectuals, or officials and managers at different levels of government agencies and industrial organizations, their life experiences will be inevitably reflected in state policies, managerial practice, and collective behaviors. The sent-down youth already have contributed to the economic transformation in China in important ways. For instance, the original proposal for rural reform was developed by a group of young scholars who had been sent

to rural areas during the Cultural Revolution (Chen 1991). This proposal coincided with the peasants' decollectivization initiatives emerging in the late 1970s, which led the government to adopt rural reform policies in 1979 and marked the beginning of China's rural reform. Chinese youths' disrupted life courses and harsh life experiences in rural areas may have led to the disillusion of the socialist state and fostered a materialistic orientation that better fits a market economy than does the Communist political order. The legacy of the send-down episode is likely to continue to influence the life course of the children of the Cultural Revolution and, more importantly, the future course of social changes in China.

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#### Appendix A. Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables Used in the Analysis: Chinese Youth Who Entered the Labor Force from 1967 to 1978

Independent Variable	At the Time of First Job		In 1993	
	No Send-Down Experience	With Send-Down Experience	No Send-Down Experience	With Send-Down Experience
Percent female	48.2	50.1	47.4	49.5
Mean age	19.4	18.1	39.8	39.6
<i>Education</i>				
Percent elementary or below	11.4	4.4	10.3	4.0
Percent junior high	49.5	57.1	42.1	46.3
Percent senior high	34.9	36.8	33.3	34.4
Percent college	3.4	1.5	13.6	15.2
<i>Workplace</i>				
Percent government	10.2	—	8.5	9.7
Percent public organization	6.6	—	9.5	11.9
Percent central government-owned firm	29.1	—	27.7	25.7
Percent local government-owned firm	20.3	—	20.8	20.7
Percent collective firms	27.6	—	20.7	20.1
Percent farm	.0	100.0	.0	.0
Percent hybrid/private firms	4.6	—	7.3	6.3
Percent no job or missing data	1.6	—	5.4	5.5

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Independent Variable	At the Time of First Job		In 1993	
	No Send-Down Experience	With Send-Down Experience	No Send-Down Experience	With Send-Down Experience
<i>Occupation</i>				
Percent cadre	2.8	—	14.7	14.9
Percent professional	12.4	—	19.4	16.2
Percent production worker	56.5	—	42.8	44.1
Percent service worker	10.1	—	11.7	10.9
Percent clerk	3.2	—	4.8	6.5
Percent soldier/police	5.0	—	.5	.4
Percent farmer	.0	100.0	.0	.0
Percent no job or missing data	9.7	.0	6.2	7.2
<i>Father's Education</i>				
Percent illiterate	15.1	13.7	14.7	13.8
Percent elementary or below	35.3	38.7	35.4	38.6
Percent junior high	15.8	12.6	16.1	12.5
Percent senior high	6.4	8.5	6.3	8.5
Percent college	6.0	10.9	5.9	10.6
Percent missing data	21.4	15.6	21.6	15.9
<i>Father's Occupation</i>				
Percent cadre, high-rank	3.4	4.3	5.6	5.8
Percent cadre, low-rank	12.5	11.5	11.6	12.2
Percent professional, high-rank	1.9	2.8	2.4	4.8
Percent professional, low-rank	5.6	7.7	4.6	6.8
Percent worker and others	48.3	53.5	45.7	49.6
Percent missing data	27.8	20.1	29.6	20.7
<i>Family "Class Background"</i>				
Percent worker/poor peasant	60.7	61.1	60.9	61.4
Percent cadre/revolutionary	9.2	10.6	9.1	10.5
Percent middle class	12.8	14.6	12.5	14.3
Percent "exploiting class"	1.2	2.1	1.1	2.1
Percent missing data	16.2	11.8	16.5	11.9
Number of cases	1,990	855	1,944	847

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