Disparities in Subjective Well-being: Political Status, Urban-Rural Divide and Cohort Dynamics in China

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Outline

- **Context: Global and Chinese Perspectives in SWB**
- Research Questions and Hypotheses
- Data and Method
- Findings
- Discussions

Context: Global Perspectives in SWB

- Individual Determinants
  - Gender, Age, Marital Status, (Diener et al. 2000; Dush and Amato 2000) Race, Ethnicity (Barger et al. 2009; Chow 2005)
  - Education (York and Bell 2014), Income (Diener et al. 1993), Employment , Occupation (Dolan et al. 2008)
  - Religious Affiliation / Commitments (Ellison 1991)
  - Physical Health (Veenhoven 2008); Cognition / Personalities (Lyubomirsky 2001; Ryan and Deci 2001)
  - Social Capital, Social Life and Social Networks (Helliwell and Putnam 2004)

Context: Global Perspectives in SWB

- Contextual Determinants
  - Development and Affluence (Evans and Heller 2018; Sarracino 2013)
  - Inequality (Kelly and Evans 2017; Oishi, Kesebir and Diener 2011)
  - Welfare and Social Security (Veenhoven 2000);
  - Cultural, Linguistic, Religious Factors (Diener et al. 2009)
  - …

Context: Chinese Perspectives in SWB

- Factors that are unique to Chinese context
  - Rapid economic growth & Severe Inequality in Various Dimensions
    - *(1) Hukou system (Qian and Qian 2015), Urban-Rural Divide, institutional arrangements of residence, life opportunities and resources*
    - *(2) Political Affiliation such as CCP, State-sectors, "iron rice bowl" (Wang and Xie 2016)*
    - *(3) Transition to Market Economy*

- <u>What about their joint effects?</u>

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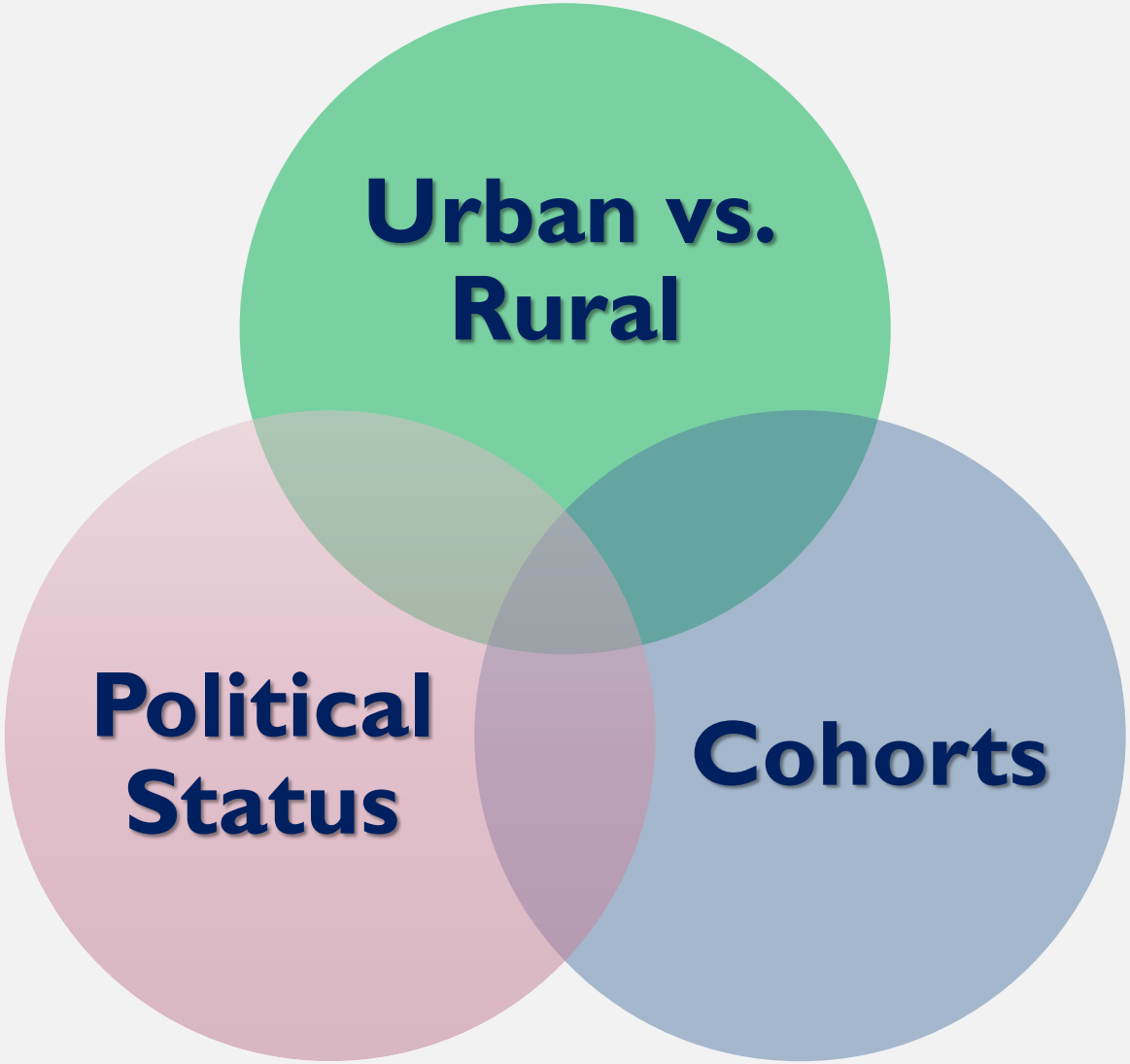
Does Political Privilege Matter?

- Yes.
- Does the effect vary across …?
  - *Cohorts* (an indirect measure of the changing centrality of CCP status in redistribution, life opportunities and happiness)
  - *Urban-Rural Divide* *(lifestyle, benefits, opportunities vary across Hukou/Residence)*

Why CCP, Cohorts, and Locations matter?



Why CCP, Cohorts, and Locations matter?

- Overall, political status (CCP membership) is associated with distributional advantages, career opportunities, and the quality of life.
- Yet, political changes (1949-present) will lead to quite different patterns of distribution and redistribution and thus influence dynamics of happiness – cohort could serve as an indirect detector of such changes over time.
  - Why not APC model? (data availability – pre-1990 China)
- The impact of changes (especially the Post-Mao economic reform) varies across urban and rural areas.

Hypotheses

- H1: Chinese Communist Party members are happier than non-members.
- H2: Impacts of political status vary across birth cohorts.
- H3: Interaction effects between political status and cohorts are conditioned by the location of residence.

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Data: Chinese General Social Survey (2003-15)

- Nation-wide representative data based on stratified sampling
  - Conducted by Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Renmin University of China
  - Multi-stage stratified sampling: provinces – counties – neighborhoods – households
  - 9 waves so far: 2003, 05, 06, 08, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15

DV: Happiness

- Dependent Variables
  - Happiness (1-5 scale)

- Ordinal or Interval-Ratio?
  - Previous practices have adopted both before; their results are often similar. This research follows the practice by Wang and Xie (2016) and Wu and Li (2017) to treat it as an interval-ratio response.

Independent Variables (IV)

- Controls
  - Year/Wave of Survey dummies
  - Gender, Education, Logged personal income
  - Provincial GDP PC, Gini
  - Weighting Variable

- Focal Predictors
  - CCP Membership (dummy, 0 = non-CCP member)
  - Urban-Rural Divide (dummy, 0 = Rural)
  - Birth Cohorts (six categories)
    - *1910-45; 1946-55; 1956-65; 1966-75; 1976-85; 1985-present.*

Modelling Strategy

- *HLM* + *Age-Period-Cohort* = *HAPC* models
  - Nearly 90,000 individuals nested within 31 provinces
  - Fixed Effects of Individual Level Predictors
  - Random Intercepts of Provincial Units

- Models:
  - Model 1: Political Status.
  - Model 2: Political Status * Birth Cohorts.
  - Model 3: Political Status * Birth Cohorts * Urban.

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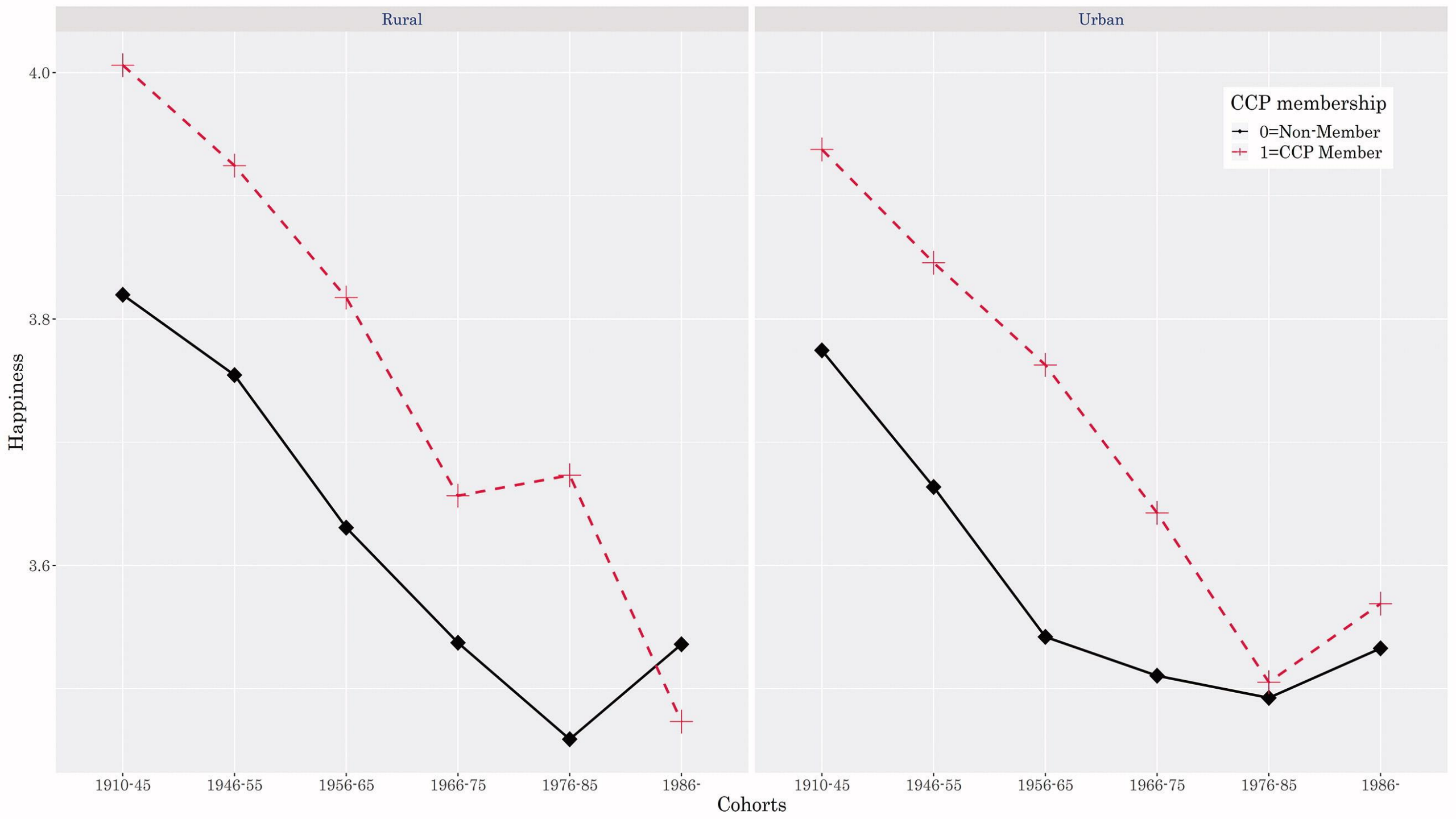
Rural
Urban
4.0
3.8
3.6
Happiness
CCP membership
0=Non-Member
1=CCP Member
1910-45
1946-55
1956-65
1966-75
1976-85
1986-
Cohorts

Findings

- H1: Chinese Communist Party members are happier than non-members. (√)
- H2: Impacts of political status vary across birth cohorts. (√)
- H3: Interaction effects between political status and cohorts are conditioned by the location of residence. (√)

Discussions

- What are the implications for the market transition debate?
  - Politics matter, but it matters less now (depoliticized economy).
  - The impacts of social change on happiness are more profound for urban China.
  - Temporal and Spatial Diffusion of De-politicization

THANK YOU!

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