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# CAREER MOBILITY AND THE COMMUNIST POLITICAL ORDER\*

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*All ruling communist parties have allocated career opportunities to the loyal in an effort to promote conformity and discipline within their ranks and among their subjects. Yet little is understood about how these political reward mechanisms operate. I offer a model of selective political screening and incorporation, using survey data from urban China to demonstrate the existence of two distinct career paths that lead to a divided elite. One path requires both educational and political credentials and leads to administrative posts with high prestige, considerable authority and clear material privileges; the second path requires educational but not political credentials, and leads to professional positions with high occupational prestige but little authority and fewer material privileges. This division of the elite and the relatively small magnitude of administrators' material privileges reveal some striking vulnerabilities in China's political institutions to the growth of a market economy.*

This research is motivated by the conviction that understanding the evolution and decline of communist political institutions must begin by examining the mechanisms through which these regimes maintained a relatively stable political order for much of this century (Walder 1994). Those inspired by Szelényi's (1978) model of a redistributive economy have focused attention on the positions in political and administrative hierarchies that grant their occupants authority over the allocation of income from

public property. This pillar of the communist political order is weakened to the extent that the party's monopoly over productive activity is eroded, and studies in this vein now focus on changes in patterns of privilege for the "redistributive elite" owing to the expansion of market allocation and the consequent erosion of this communist monopoly (Nee 1989, 1991; Róna-tas 1990, 1994; Szelényi 1988; Szelényi and Manchin 1987). I redirect attention to the allocation of individuals to elite positions of varying power and privilege and develop a separate set of implications regarding political stability and change.

The command economy gave party administrators the authority to redistribute revenue and income among organizations and individuals, but it also gave them the authority to allocate valued jobs. The power to offer career opportunities has long been recognized as a central pillar of communist rule, either as a system of social control (rewards for loyalty) or as a means of fostering anticipatory socialization and (at least outward) ideological conformity (Connor 1979b; Djilas 1957; Feldmesser 1960; Walder 1985, 1986). Many have described the ways that local party officials screen candidates for advancement according to political reliability, and the Russian term *nomenklatura* has come to symbolize the privileged party elite that

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has been the primary beneficiary and most steadfast supporter of the system (Barnett 1966; Burns 1987; Harasymiw 1969; Manion 1985; Matthews 1978; Oksenberg 1968; Voslensky 1984).

How did these mechanisms for elite selection operate? Did they change over time? What kind of an elite did they create? How significant were the rewards for political loyalty, and did the rewards decline as these regimes matured? The answers are still far from clear. In asking these questions we confront a longstanding gap in both comparative mobility research and in the political sociology of communism. Interview and documentary studies have long stressed the party's screening of candidates for career advancement according to political loyalty; published cross-tabulations of survey data from a number of communist regimes show very high concentrations of party members in high status occupations.<sup>1</sup> Yet analyses of survey data in the first generation of multivariate mobility studies from Eastern Europe have shown that educational credentials are just as important a determinant of upward mobility there as in the market economies.

How can we reconcile this seemingly divergent evidence of a "particularistic" emphasis on political loyalty with a "universalistic" stress on educational credentials? Does the emergence of meritocratic standards imply a corresponding decline in the importance of political loyalty in getting ahead, or does it indicate that prior interview and documentary studies may have exaggerated the role of political loyalty in career advancement? We have no clear answers to these questions, nor have we established ways to pursue them. Past mobility studies have not posed these questions, largely because past political restrictions prevented the

collection or examination of party membership data and the publication of analyses that included this variable. Research in political sociology—including the defining analyses of the "redistributive elite"—has not brought survey evidence to bear directly upon propositions about career advancement and elite status in communist societies, despite the fact that it is now common to refer to a single "redistributive elite" as if it were an established fact and to collapse administrative and professional categories into one variable that represents this elite in studies of housing, income, and party membership. A few studies of the attainment of party membership have examined closely related issues, but they focus more on the effects of education and first occupation on the attainment of party membership than on the effects of education and party membership on occupational attainment (Bian 1994, chap. 6; S. Szelenyi 1987). Thus, despite the widely recognized importance of these questions, we have only recently begun taking steps to answer them (Bian 1994, chaps. 4 and 6; Lin and Bian 1991).

I pursue these long-neglected questions, not primarily to contribute to the comparative study of mobility, but to address issues in the political sociology of communism. If the allocation of opportunity and privilege according to party loyalty has been an important foundation of communist states, then career mobility might provide some clues regarding their decline. Reviving the concerns of the first generation of post-war mobility studies (Lipset and Bendix 1952), I pose questions about mobility that have their origins in political sociology.

### EDUCATION VERSUS POLITICAL LOYALTY

Two recurrent findings coexist uneasily in the study of social mobility in communist states. The first, and oldest, is that communist parties systematically allocate career opportunities according to political loyalty. Because they could use their unusually high degree of organizational penetration and control of educational and work institutions, and could monitor citizens through such means as political dossiers, ruling communist parties are said to have had an unequalled ca-

<sup>1</sup> An almost identical pattern was found in surveys from the Soviet Union (Shkaratan 1973:66–67, 83–84; Yanowitch 1977:49), Poland (Pohoski 1986:34–35), Yugoslavia (Denitch 1976:91), and China (Walder, Zhou, Blau, Ruan, and Zhang 1989): The percentage of Party membership in an occupation rises monotonically with the status of the occupation, from figures of less than 5 percent for farming to figures never below 60 percent and sometimes in excess of 90 percent for administrative or managerial occupations (see also Hough 1977).

capacity to intervene systematically in mobility processes. Feldmesser (1960), one of the first sociologists to examine status attainment in the Soviet Union, argued that "Loyalty to the political leader and his ideology is again the cause, not the consequence, of hierarchical position. . . . I am exaggerating, but with a purpose" (p. 248). More recently, Connor (1979b) observed, "[W]here a person would get in Soviet society . . . would depend on his loyalty and positive viewpoint. Everyone was expected to manifest loyalty equally, to march to the same drummer—independent of social class or stratum" (pp. 315–16). The same observation appears in many studies of the Soviet Union, China, and Eastern Europe (Inkeles and Bauer 1959, chap. 13; Parkin 1969; Shirk 1982; Unger 1982; Walder 1986).

The second finding is that communist parties, as economic development proceeds, place increasing stress on educational qualifications and occupational competence. This nascent trend was discovered by researchers who first identified the political aspects of mobility in the Soviet Union (Anderson 1975:398; Feldmesser 1953; Inkeles 1950; Inkeles and Bauer 1959). It has since been documented in the analysis of survey data from Poland and Hungary (Connor 1979a; Meyer, Tuma, and Zagórski 1979; Simkus 1981; Simkus and Andorka 1982; Slomczynski 1978), and from the Soviet Union and China (Blau and Ruan 1990; Rigby 1968; Yanowitch and Fischer 1973). While these studies rarely address the political dimensions of mobility, their results are often interpreted by others to mean that political loyalty has become, or is rapidly becoming, relatively unimportant. As Parkin (1969) put it, albeit with some ambiguity, "[W]ith the emergent emphasis on industrial efficiency the tendency has been to appoint men to positions of authority and responsibility more on the basis of their formal qualifications than simply as a reward for political loyalty" (p. 365).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Kelley and Klein (1977) provide a theoretical basis for these claims: Great revolutions have a leveling effect—breaking the old patterns of status inheritance—but this leveling effect makes human capital more valuable than property. As they put it, "Revolutions do not benefit the poor-

These findings coexist uneasily because their relationship has yet to be explored. Educational qualifications clearly have become important in every communist state for which evidence exists; "educational effects" in mobility models are just as great there as in market economies. But does this mean that the practice of political screening has declined (Walder 1985)? Is this yet more evidence to support the finding that mobility processes in industrial societies vary because of structural changes in the economy, not because of their different institutional arrangements (Featherman, Jones, and Hauser 1975; Goldthorpe 1969; Grusky and Hauser 1984)? Or are the two standards combined in ways we do not yet understand, resulting in a mobility process with distinctive features?

### CAREER ORGANIZATION: TWO PATHS INTO A DUAL ELITE?

When Konrád and Szelényi (1979) argued that intellectuals were "on the road to class power," they pointed toward a future in which the old party elite—Djilas's (1957) "New Class"—would be replaced by elite professionals with higher levels of education. Inherent in this prediction is the assumption that as late as the 1970s, the elites of communist regimes were still divided between politically loyal bureaucrats and professionals holding higher educational degrees. In a recent reconsideration of the original thesis, Szelényi (1986) has argued that this division of elites never disappeared, and that Hungary's elite in the 1980s maintained the division between politically loyal bureaucrats and better educated professionals.

The dual elite hypothesis implicitly raises two questions yet to be addressed in empirical research. The first is whether there are distinct career paths in which educational and political credentials are weighed differently and that lead to different kinds of elite positions. The earlier Konrád and Szelényi

est as much as those who already possessed human or physical capital. Those with human capital, already better off before the revolution, have a great advantage in the new bureaucratic, commercial, and political jobs" (p. 82).

(1979) position implies that paths into the political elite do not differ from paths into the professional elite; that the same attributes that bring professional accomplishments also bring political authority, and that political screening, to the extent that it operates, is the same for entry into all elite positions.

The later Szelenyi (1986) (and the earlier Djilas [1957]) position implies that there are separate paths into the elite, one more political than the other. There are several possible dual path models,<sup>3</sup> but the only one compatible with the observed strong impact of education on career mobility is a model of selective political screening and incorporation: The candidates for all elite positions are screened for educational credentials, but only those on paths to positions of authority are screened for political loyalty and incorporated into the party. The party, in other words, screens and incorporates only those to be entrusted with power; those needed primarily for their valued skills will not be politically screened nor incorporated into the party in the same way.

The second unanswered question is whether the regime seeks to co-opt political and professional elites equally by providing similar levels of privilege, or whether these privileges are restricted to those with administrative power. In effect, this is a question about who is in fact a member of the "redistributive elite." Konrád and Szelenyi (1979) implied that a broad undifferentiated elite was in formation, in which highly educated professionals were "redistributors" (Szelenyi

1982)—an expectation reinforced by studies of housing privilege that show advantages for the better educated (Szelenyi 1983). If, however, the regime incorporates the political elite using privileges denied the elite professionals, this would indicate a divided elite and would support Djilas's (1957) original insistence that privilege is restricted to politically loyal officials.

### PROCESSES WITHIN PATHS: POLITICAL SCREENING AND INCORPORATION

While it is customary in stratification research to distinguish among such abstract principles as ascription and universalism, these principles do not in themselves tell us much about the organizational processes that allocate people to occupational positions. Such concepts are essentially labels for patterns of association between individual background variables and occupational destinations: to the degree that parental status, gender or ethnicity affects mobility, we call it ascription; to the extent that education affects destinations, we call it universalism. But what social processes generate these associations?

The contrast between a particularistic emphasis on party loyalty and a meritocratic emphasis on education tends to obscure the fact that these principles are enforced at the same time by the same organizations. It is useful to think of mobility as a process of allocation into "closed" positions; that is, a vacancy must occur for an allocation to be made, competition for this vacancy takes place according to organizational rules, and filling the vacancy is subject to decisions of authority figures—decisions based on rules that restrict the range of potential candidates (Sørensen 1983).

The dual path hypothesis implies that in communist regimes those who have not obtained the necessary political credentials are denied access to those elite positions that involve the greatest power and privilege. Following Spence (1973) and Arrow (1973), I treat credentials as "signals" to decision-makers in organizations. Unlike educational credentials, however, political credentials do not serve as a proxy for ability. For example, party membership, the most common such political credential, is essentially a signal of

<sup>3</sup> One possibility is a polarized elite that recalls the division between "red" and "expert" in the early history of communist regimes (e.g., Konrád and Szelenyi 1979; Schurmann 1968), when relatively uneducated party loyalists exercised authority over a politically excluded and suspect group of "intellectuals." A second possibility is the political incorporation of professionals under the authority of political loyalists who lack higher education. In both cases, educational credentials are important only for the attainment of professional positions, while only in the latter are professionals subjected to political screening and incorporation into the Party. Neither of these possibilities, however, is consistent with the demonstrated effects of education on occupational attainment and Party membership (Rigby 1968; S. Szelenyi 1987).

the willingness of individuals to commit themselves to a greater degree of political scrutiny and responsibility vis-à-vis the ruling party's organization in exchange for career advancement. As a credential, party membership signifies that the party organization at some point has examined the individual's background and behavior, and has certified that the person meets the organization's standards for political trustworthiness; it also signifies that the person has not violated that trust in the period since admission. It has often been noted that individuals invest time and effort to earn this credential, just as they invest time and effort to earn educational credentials.<sup>4</sup>

### *Political Screening*

In communist societies, political screening takes place primarily within work organizations when candidates are evaluated for promotion, and it focuses particularly on people being considered for positions of authority. A certain range of positions within the party apparatus, of course—party secretaries, heads of propaganda and security departments, directors of the youth league and trade union—can be filled only by career party cadres. But appointments to positions of authority outside the party apparatus are either made by or reviewed by a party committee at the appropriate level.

In China, for example, every bureau official, factory director, section or department head, foreman or workshop director, must be certified as reliable by the relevant Party committee, and these committees examine the political dossiers that are kept continuously on each urban citizen after entering middle school, and the testimony of coworkers and supervisors regarding their political reliability (Barnett 1965; Bian 1994; Burns 1987; Manion 1985). This certification is simplified greatly if the candidate is a Party member,

because membership indicates that the candidate already has been screened. Indeed, candidates will undergo close political scrutiny only if they are not Party members, and in this way it becomes clearly understood by all that Party membership is an essential credential for those who wish to be appointed to the higher positions that bring with them greater privileges. The higher the rank of the position, the more essential party membership becomes as a *minimum* requirement for consideration, as most or all potential candidates for promotion will already be Party members. At the higher levels, therefore, Party membership is less of a guarantee of selection than it is at lower levels, but a lack of this credential will often disadvantage a candidate. In fact, sometimes an individual identified by superiors as a worthy candidate for promotion will be pressured to apply for Party membership.

This political selection process is one form of what Akerlof (1983) calls a "loyalty filter," a social institution common to a wide variety of social settings (e.g., Merton [1957] 1968). When people are rewarded according to their display of values—in this case a highly formalized political mechanism—the career-minded strive to display those values, and those who pass through the "filter" tend to be homogenized on those characteristics. More interestingly, people's values may be changed, consciously or unconsciously, both after or in anticipation of this filtering process. This has been, at least in some periods and countries, a conscious strategy of communist party officials (Walder 1986, chap. 4). The effect of this filtering experience on the political beliefs and loyalties of those who pass through it are known to vary, but this topic is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>5</sup>

### *Political Incorporation*

Party membership is different from an educational credential in one crucial respect: It entails membership in a selective political organization and therefore places its holders under heightened scrutiny and obligation. As

<sup>4</sup> In recent research, party membership has also been treated as an "achieved status" and intervening variable (Lin and Bian 1991) and as a destination (Bian 1994, chap. 6; S. Szelenyi 1987). My treatment of party membership as a credential is similar, but I emphasize the ways in which this status operates as a signal in organizational processes.

<sup>5</sup> Such "mobility effects"—attitudinal or other correlates of upward mobility—have long been controversial in the study of market economies (Halaby and Sobel 1979).

a political organization, the party's interest is not limited to screening candidates for advancement and providing incentives for loyalty and party membership. It also seeks to incorporate and thereby co-opt and control those who occupy strategic positions in its public institutions and enterprises. Political screening within organizations therefore necessarily entails a corresponding process of political incorporation. To the extent that political screening is focused on entrants into certain types of positions, the occupants of those positions shall be incorporated into the party at higher rates.

But selective incorporation also works in a different way: While party organizations exhibit a preference for those with party credentials, they do not and cannot promote *only* party members. These are not mass parties—membership is usually around 10 percent of the population—and because of the screening practices just described, party members are already concentrated in the higher occupational statuses. This means that significant numbers of people will enter an elite occupation or a position of authority *before* joining the party. Those who follow this career trajectory will subsequently be faced with two kinds of pressures to join. First, in these higher positions a lack of party membership will be seen as a barrier to further promotion, because increasing proportions of the other potential candidates for promotion will already be party members. Second, a lack of party membership may impair one's effective functioning, especially in positions of authority, because party membership gives one access to information and a political network of elites that monopolizes authority and resources.<sup>6</sup> For its part, the party will recruit preferentially from among those who are on the path to an elite position, because it will be able better to monitor, control, and co-opt them after they have joined.<sup>7</sup> It is far more important for the

party's purposes to incorporate high percentages of influential decision-makers than of ordinary employees. Therefore in addition to the fact that party membership generally leads to higher positions, higher positions also lead to a higher probability that one will become a party member (Bian 1994, chap. 6; S. Szélenyi 1987).

The interplay among party membership, occupational position, and promotion is illustrated in Table 1 with data from a survey of China described below. The four job titles comprise a typical job hierarchy in a Chinese enterprise, as seen in the pronounced rise in the number of subordinates as one moves up column 2. The typical concentration of Communist Party members in higher positions is evident in column 3, but it is also evident from column 4 that significant numbers of people gain positions of authority without the Party credential.

## EMPIRICAL IMPLICATIONS OF A DUAL PATH HYPOTHESIS

The arguments I test in this paper revolve around the relationships among education, party membership, and occupation. Convergence and human capital theories, which are consistent with the early Konrád-Szélenyi (1979) position, imply that occupation and party membership are simply two measures of elite status, both of which are attained via education. Any correlation between party membership and occupation would be spurious, as there is no posited causal relationship in either direction. If it is education or human capital that truly drives the attainment of both measures of higher status, political screening should not be evident.

A second ordering of the variables models the selective party recruitment implicit in studies of party membership (Bian 1994, chap. 6; Rigby 1968; S. Szélenyi 1987) and explicit in Hough's (1977) model of "party saturation." Here education selects people into occupations, and the party recruits preferentially from the higher occupations. This model may also be viewed as isolating the "selective incorporation" half of my own "screening and incorporation" argument. Unlike the first view, the correlation between party membership and elite occupation would not be spurious, but would result from

<sup>6</sup> For example, Csánadi (1989) found that factory directors who are simultaneously members of higher Party councils were able to obtain more investment loans, even after controlling for a number of organizational variables.

<sup>7</sup> The increased obligations upon time and political loyalties are commonly perceived by educated individuals as an onerous burden to be avoided if possible.

**Table 1. Party Membership by Job Title in Enterprises: Tianjin, China, 1986**

Job Title	Number of Cases (1)	Mean Number of Subordinates (2)	Percent Who Are Party Members (3)	Percent Who Were Party Members Before Promotion (4)	Number of Promotions in Job Title (5)
Leading cadre	21	479	76	62	1.5
Workshop director	65	84	43	31	1.6
Group leader	141	17	13	9	1.0
Employee	560	0	6	0	0
Total	787	21	15	7	.4

*Note:* Only the respondents who worked in economic enterprises, where the above job hierarchy is common, provided answers to this question.

a bias in party recruitment toward the elite. (S. Szelenyi 1987, however, found that *first* occupation had no effect upon party membership after controlling for education.)

The model of political screening and incorporation I develop here, the dual path hypothesis, implies a third ordering of the variables. The key difference between this model and the previous one is in the relationship between occupation and party membership. While it is understood that the party recruits preferentially from certain elite occupations, it is also argued that party membership makes it more likely that an individual will be promoted into certain elite positions. Thus, there is reciprocal causation between party membership and occupational position that can be fully untangled only by examining the timing of career events—especially whether promotions occur before or after the party credential is obtained.

The dual path hypothesis has one clear empirical implication. If two different paths can lead to elite positions, one into administrative positions, which entail authority, and another into professional positions, which do not entail authority, and if the path to administrative authority is subjected to political screening and incorporation and professional positions are not, then our attention must be focused on the relationship between position and party membership. This clearly implies that in our data we should find no relationship in either direction between professional position and party membership, once the effect of education on both is taken into ac-

count; for administrators the relationship to party membership should hold after the effect of education on both is taken into account. Moreover, in this administrative path the relationship should hold even if we exclude as “party members” those who did not join until after they reached their current positions.

# **EVIDENCE FROM A CHINESE CITY: DATA AND VARIABLES**

I use data from a 1986 survey of a multistage stratified random sample of 1,011 households. The sample was drawn in 1983 in the urban districts of Tianjin, China’s third largest city (Walder 1992:530–31; Walder et al. 1989). The households were interviewed annually by sociologists working with the city government; Lin and Bian (1991) reported findings from a 1985 survey of a different sample of respondents from the same households. In 1986, the wage-earner in each household whose birth date was closest to October 1 was interviewed.

Most of the variables used in the analyses presented below—*gender* (a dummy variable, coded 1 for males), *seniority* (total number of years of work experience after the completion of formal schooling), and *Party membership* (a dummy variable, coded 1 for members)—require no explanation. I will define additional variables recoded or transformed from these basic ones as they appear in analyses below. *Education* is represented by dummy variables for highest degree



earned (college and high school).<sup>8</sup> *Salary* is measured as the current basic monthly wage, not including bonuses and "other" income; *total income* refers to monthly salary, bonuses, and "other" income. *Housing space* is measured as the total number of square meters in the respondent's apartment. The variables for occupation and authority, however, require further explanation.

The most important limitation of our data on occupation is that we do not have complete career histories. We know how long the respondents have been in their current position and how long they have been in the labor force, but we have no information about any prior positions. This prevents us from employing the structural equation models necessary to disentangle the complex interplay among education, Party membership, and occupation, because the relevant models are underidentified and nonrecursive. This does not prevent us from putting the dual path model to a test, however—it will prevent us from estimating path coefficients and the relative effects of political screening versus selective Party recruitment, a matter of secondary importance in distinguishing between career paths to discrete occupational outcomes.

**Professional.** This variable, based on the same category definitions used in the 1980 Chinese census, is defined as "professional and technical personnel." It includes such occupations as scientist, engineer, science and technology management staff, medical worker, social scientist, lawyer, teacher, artist, professional athlete, and artistic and musical performer. This group contained 26.4 million people nationwide in 1980, 18 percent of the nonagricultural labor force, or 5 percent of the total labor force (Taylor 1985:41–42). In our urban sample, 21 percent of the respondents are professionals.

The category "professional" is too broad to be appropriate in an analysis of elite occupations: It includes a large number of primary

and secondary school teachers, factory and medical technicians, and nurses. In the analyses presented below, I use a narrower definition of professional—labeled, as in Chinese census categories, *high professional*. This category is defined by Chinese civil service grades rather than occupational titles, although there is a close relationship between the two. For example, it includes scientists, researchers, university professors, engineers, lawyers, and doctors. *Low professional* includes, for example, secondary and primary school teachers, nurses, and technicians. In our sample 29 respondents are "high professionals," 2.9 percent of our sample.

Both categories, low professional and high professional, have relatively high prestige, according to scores developed by Lin and Xie (1988) from a 1983 survey of Beijing. The occupations reported by our respondents were coded according to the reported raw scores for their occupations (Lin and Xie 1988:804–805). Those in the high professional category had an average prestige score of 87.4; those categorized as low professionals had an average score of 85.4; the combined professional category had an average score of 85.8.

**Administrator.** This category, also taken from the 1980 Chinese census, is defined as "heads of organizations." It includes people who hold decision-making positions in government agencies and their subunits, Party committees and mass organizations, street administrative offices, enterprises, institutions, and other administrative organs. There were 8.1 million administrators nationwide in 1980, some 9.7 percent of the nonagricultural labor force, or 1.6 percent of the total labor force (Taylor 1985:41–42). In our urban sample, 8.2 percent of the respondents are heads of organizations, or what I call "administrators." This category is perhaps too broad to be categorized as "elite" for some purposes, although the problem is less serious for this category than for professionals. The Tianjin survey further categorized administrators (or "cadres") as "high and middle" or "lower" ranking, again according to Chinese civil service scales, but only 10 of our respondents were in the "high and middle" category. The retention of "lower" administrators in the definition of the category,

<sup>8</sup> Research findings on returns to education in market economies often depend on the measure of education used—total years, degree attained, quality of school, specificity of training (Spilerman and Lunde 1991). The "credential as signal" argument is appropriately represented by a dummy variable for degree.

however, provides a more rigorous test of the dual path and dual elite hypotheses: The broader the "administrator" category, the less likely it is that we shall find differences between administrators and professionals in levels of political screening, incorporation into the Party, and material rewards.

The prestige scores of both categories of administrators are relatively high, and comparable to those for professionals. The score for high and middle administrators is 93.3, higher than high professionals; for low administrators 78.3, lower than for low professionals; and for the combined administrator category it is 80.1, lower than for the combined professional category. Therefore, by this important measure of status, both professional and administrator categories represent roughly equivalent "elite" statuses.

**Number of subordinates.** This measure of authority was adapted from a study by Spaeth (1985:610). Respondents were asked whether they supervised other people and how many they supervised directly. They were then asked whether any of these people supervised anyone else and how many levels of organization there were beneath them. Then they were asked to calculate how many people were responsible to them both directly and indirectly, counting all these levels. The responses ranged from 0 to 2,500 people. Because of the highly skewed distribution on this variable, I add 1 to all observations and use the natural logarithm of this sum as the variable in the analysis.

# ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

## Career Mobility

In this first stage of the analysis, I examine the relationships among education, Party membership, and occupation. Because multi-equation models cannot be used, I analyze instead each of the three relationships separately with methods justified by the nature of the data.

**Effect of education on Party membership.** Table 2 reports logistic regression coefficients for a model in which Party membership is predicted by seniority, gender, education, and father's Party status. Not surprisingly, both college and high school degrees make it more likely that one will be recruited

**Table 2. Logistic Regression Coefficients for Regression of Attainment of Party Membership on Selected Independent Variables: Tianjin, China, 1986**

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2
Seniority	.071*** (7.50)	.078*** (7.69)
Gender (male)	.715*** (3.49)	.699*** (3.36)
College degree	1.28*** (4.85)	1.31*** (4.89)
High school degree	.553* (2.54)	.558* (2.51)
Father Party member	—	.620* (2.23)
-2 log likelihood	754.7	732.3
Chi-square	111.2	116.6
Degrees of freedom	4	5

\* $p < .05$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed tests)

Note: Numbers in parentheses are  $t$ -ratios;  $N = 1,011$

into the Party. Also not surprisingly, men are more likely to become Party members than women, and the odds of joining the Party grow with seniority. Several measures of father's status (i.e., education and occupation) were employed in analyses not shown here, but the only one that had any net effect on the respondent's Party membership is whether the father is a Party member. It would be useful to examine whether the effect of education is similar for one's first occupation, indicating that the effect of education might be due partly to a bias in Party recruitment from elite occupations. Because we do not know the first occupation of the respondents, we cannot examine this possibility. However, S. Szelenyi (1987), analyzing data from Hungary, included first occupation in a logistic regression model by controlling for a dummy variable equivalent to a combination of our professional and administrative categories. In her study, first occupation had no net effect on Party membership, but, net of it, education had a strong effect on Party membership. Bian (1994:136-137), analyzing data from a 1988 sample of urban Tianjin, found that the Party recruited preferentially those whose first jobs were in administrative and office staff positions, but

**Table 3. Multinomial Logit Coefficients for Regression of Attainment of Elite Occupations on Selected Independent Variables: Tianjin, China, 1986**

Independent Variable	Contrast			
	Model 1 High Profes- sional/Other	Model 2 Low Profes- sional/Other	Model 3 Administrator/ Other	Model 4 Administrator/ High Professional
Gender (male)	-1.29** (-2.94)	-.840* (-2.41)	.340 (.988)	1.63** (3.17)
Seniority	.145* (2.11)	.117* (2.01)	.017 (.283)	-.128* (-2.13)
College degree	4.95*** (7.49)	4.40*** (7.54)	2.13*** (4.38)	-2.82*** (-3.80)
High school degree	2.74*** (4.26)	2.87*** (5.12)	1.52*** (3.51)	-1.22 (-1.87)
Party member <sup>a</sup>	-.705 (-.651)	.734 (1.05)	3.65*** (5.95)	4.35*** (4.25)
Father administrator	-.362 (-.496)	.578 (1.36)	-.052 (-.086)	.310 (.344)
Father college	-.320 (-.439)	.715 (1.63)	.885 (1.40)	1.21 (1.32)
Pearson chi-square = 133.5				
Degrees of freedom = 81				

\**p* < .05      \*\**p* < .01      \*\*\**p* < .001 (two-tailed tests)

<sup>a</sup> Party member is a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondent joined the Party before attaining the current job.

*Note:* Numbers in parentheses are z-values; N = 1,009

not professionals, and that education had a net effect only in the post-Mao period.

**Effects of education and Party membership on occupation.** Table 3 reports a multinomial logit analysis of careers in which high professional, low professional, and administrator are treated as separate destinations. Variables for gender, seniority, father's occupation, and father's education are added as controls. Here we are able to include Party membership as a predictor because our data include information on the number of years in the current position and the number of years in the Party. If a respondent joined the Party prior to attaining the current position, the dummy variable for Party membership was coded as 1. The coefficient for this variable represents the effects of political screening for Party membership.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>This measure for Party codes as 0 the 73 Party members, almost half, who joined after attaining their current position. This is not an ideal variable to capture screening effects because we still do

The analysis contrasts the effects of the independent variables on the odds attaining a certain occupation compared to a contrast category. Model 1 compares the odds of becoming a high professional versus "other" occupations (clerical, service, sales, skilled manual, unskilled manual), Model 2 low professional versus "other," Model 3 administrator versus "other," and Model 4 administrator versus high professional. Column 4 presents the crucial tests for differences in screening processes between the administrative and high professional paths.

Two findings are evident. First, educational credentials, while important in both the professional and administrative career paths, are screened more rigorously in both

not know whether entry into the current position involved a transition from another occupational category. The conceptual slippage, however, is probably not large: leading cadres and workshop directors averaged a total of only 1.5 promotions over the course of their careers (Table 1).

professional paths (only the results for the contrast with high professionals are shown). The coefficients for college degree in Models 1 through 3 are significant for all three occupations, although they are larger for professionals than for administrators. The difference between high professionals and administrators is seen in Model 4, where the negative coefficient indicates that having a college degree makes it less likely that one will become an administrator than a professional. Therefore a college degree significantly increases the odds of becoming both a professional and administrator versus a less desirable occupation, but it also makes it more likely that one becomes a high professional rather than an administrator. This indicates that the professional path involves more rigorous screening for college credentials. A similar finding is evident in the coefficients for the high school degree, although the differences are less pronounced and the coefficient for the contrast between high professional and administrator is not statistically significant. While the contrast between administrators and high professionals may be due to the fact that administrators are a broader and less elite category, the differences in screening for education also hold between low professionals and administrators (results not shown).

Political screening, represented by the variable for Party membership, shows an even clearer contrast. Party membership has no significant effect on the odds of becoming either a high or a low professional versus "other." There is a fairly large effect on the odds of becoming an administrator versus "other." The contrast in the odds of becoming an administrator versus high professional is also substantial, as seen in the large positive coefficient in Model 4. There is no evidence for political screening in the professional path, while it is clearly evident in the administrative path.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> While seniority and gender are control variables, note the gender differences in career paths. First, men are more likely to become Party members (Table 2). Second, in Table 3, the coefficients for gender for *both* the professional occupations, and not just low professionals (i.e., nurses and teachers), indicate that men are less likely to become professionals versus entering some non-elite occupation, while the positive co-

***Relationship between current Party membership and occupation.*** In this bivariate relationship, the screening/incorporation model does not involve any assumptions about causal order, because any correlation would be the result of causation running in both directions. The test for the existence of dual career paths hinges on whether there is different correlation between Communist Party membership and occupation (controlling for seniority, gender, education, and parental status) among occupants of professional and administrative positions. The partial correlations are significant for all administrative categories (e.g., .386,  $p < .001$ , one-tailed test, for administrators), nonsignificant for all professional categories (e.g., .004,  $p < .445$ , one-tailed test, for high professionals). While we cannot assess the relative importance of screening versus selective Party recruitment based on partial correlations, it is evident that some combination of political screening and incorporation is at work in the administrative path, while it is absent in the professional path, however defined.

### ***Authority***

Another way of thinking about elite occupational destinations is to consider the "amount" of authority that a position gives its occupant. Not only is authority itself a reward in most organizations, but in socialist economies authority over people coincides closely with authority over the allocation of incomes and benefits from public property—what Szelényi (1979, 1982) has called "redistributive power." Authority over persons also brings many informal advantages—a superior position gives one access to the social networks so useful in attaining scarce goods and positions for family members (Bian 1994, chap. 5; Lin and Bian 1989).

In this sample from China, there is clearly a contrast between paths to the higher professions and to administrative occupations,

efficient for the administrator/high professional contrast indicates that men are more likely to become administrators. Should these gender differences be replicated in future studies, gender should be incorporated into explanations of the formation of dual paths and dual elites (Lin and Bian 1991).

but what are the relative returns to educational and political credentials in terms of authority? To be sure, this overlaps with the earlier analysis of professional versus administrative destinations, but now we have a scaled measure of authority—number of subordinates—which, within a regression framework, allows us to gauge more carefully the associations between educational and political credentials and authority (a good proxy for informal privilege).

Table 4 presents an analysis of the relative returns for political and educational credentials in terms of authority. As in Table 3, the dummy variable for Party membership includes only those who joined the party before attaining their current position. Prior Party membership yields very strong returns in authority. There are significant but much smaller returns in authority to education. Controlling for seniority and gender, the coefficients for Party membership, college, and high school degrees are statistically significant, but the coefficient for Party membership in Model 3 is more than 10 times the size of those for either educational degree, and 6 to 8 times the size of those for education, even when Party membership is not included in the equation (Model 2). The interaction terms for education and Party membership (not shown) were not statistically significant.

Income

Returns in money income are not as skewed toward political credentials as are returns in authority. In fact the returns for both political and educational credentials in the egalitarian wage structure of the urban public sector are small and roughly equal. Table 5 presents the results of an OLS regression analysis of salary and total income, and prompts the following observations. First, the salary structure in the Tianjin sample is highly constrained by gender and, especially, seniority, as reflected in the high  $R^2$  in Model 1, and in the relatively small differences in  $R^2$  between Models 1 and 2. (Note that the effect of seniority in all equations is non-linear and diminishes as age increases.) Second, controlling for gender and seniority (Model 2), both college degree and Party membership (though not high school degree)

Table 4. OLS Coefficients for the Regression of Authority (Log(n) of Number of Subordinates) on Selected Independent Variables: Tianjin, China, 1986

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Male	.573*** (5.68)	.540*** (5.37)	.404*** (4.47)
Seniority	.031*** (6.06)	.039*** (6.46)	.018*** (3.67)
College degree	—	.526** (3.14)	.308* (2.05)
High school degree	—	.319** (2.89)	.229* (2.32)
Party member <sup>a</sup>	—	—	2.79*** (15.3)
R <sup>2</sup>	.082	.096	.278
Number of cases	934	934	934

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed tests)

<sup>a</sup> Includes those who joined the party prior to entering their current position.

Note: Respondents who were retired or who worked in the private sector were excluded. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported with  $t$ -ratios in parentheses.

have a significant effect on salary, with the effect for party membership being roughly equal to that of having a college degree. Third, when one adds the occupational categories to the salary equation (Model 3), one gains a statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) but not large increment in  $R^2$ . In addition, the salary premium for Party membership is still roughly equal to that for a college degree, while the net salary premium in professional and administrative positions are about the same, except that the coefficient for high professional is no longer significant. In this salary analysis, which represents income most directly set by government-established pay scales, there are clear payoffs for both a college degree and Party membership, and there are additional significant but smaller salary premiums for both administrators and professionals. The interaction terms for Party membership with educational credentials were not statistically significant (not shown).

**Table 5. OLS Coefficients for the Regression of Monthly Salary and Total Monthly Income on Selected Independent Variables: Tianjin, China, 1986**

Independent Variable	Monthly Salary (Log(n))			Total Monthly Income (Log(n))		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Male	.099*** (7.30)	.084*** (6.28)	.087*** (6.57)	.121*** (8.06)	.113*** (7.46)	.117*** (7.63)
Seniority	.039*** (16.1)	.039*** (16.1)	.038*** (15.8)	.030*** (11.2)	.030*** (10.9)	.029*** (10.7)
Seniority <sup>2</sup> × 100	-.037*** (-6.63)	-.038*** (-6.90)	-.038*** (-6.84)	-.031*** (-5.00)	-.032*** (-5.03)	-.032*** (-5.01)
College degree	—	.127*** (5.75)	.089*** (3.60)	—	.064* (2.51)	.039 (1.38)
High school degree	—	.024 (1.63)	.006 (.428)	—	.010 (.613)	.001 (.036)
Party member	—	.081*** (4.23)	.060** (2.93)	—	.045* (2.06)	.036 (1.52)
High professional	—	—	.068 (1.79)	—	—	.086 (1.94)
Low professional	—	—	.074** (3.03)	—	—	.032 (1.15)
Administrator	—	—	.078** (2.90)	—	—	.037 (1.20)
R <sup>2</sup>	.596	.621	.627	.414	.422	.425
Number of cases	934	934	934	934	934	934

\* $p < .05$     \*\* $p < .01$     \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed tests)

*Note:* Retired respondents and private sector excluded. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported with *t*-ratios in parentheses.

Models 4 through 6 of Table 5 show rather strikingly that the effects of occupation, education, and Party membership shrink, and in some cases disappear, when the dependent variable is total monthly income. Total income includes monthly bonuses and other subsidies allocated at the discretion of the managers of workplaces, and is constrained far less by gender and seniority than the base salary (as seen in the lower  $R^2$  in Model 4). There is a small but statistically significant ( $p < .01$ ) increment in  $R^2$  when one adds education and Party membership to the equation (Model 5), and party membership is still worth about the same as a college degree, but the premium paid for both is smaller. When one adds the occupational variables to the equation (Model 6), the sizes of these coefficients are reduced further, and none of the coefficients except those for gender and se-

niority are statistically significant. This contrast between the determination of salary and of total income is instructive, because the latter reflects the new sources of income (primarily bonuses) that have emerged as part of the economic reforms of the past decade. I shall return to their implications later. The overall conclusion from Table 5 is that the income returns for a college degree, Party membership, and for administrative and lower professional positions are small in absolute terms and are limited primarily to differences in the base salary. Interaction terms for Party membership with educational credentials were not statistically significant (not shown).

While this multivariate analysis of income determination shows roughly equal returns for educational and political credentials, and smaller but roughly equal advantages for

professional and administrative positions versus other jobs, one-way analysis of variance presents a somewhat different picture. Here the question is whether the mean income of administrators is significantly higher than that of professionals and other occupational positions. An analysis of variance employing the complete set of dummy variables for occupation (not shown) indicated that administrators received mean salaries (96 *yuan*) that were significantly larger ( $p < .05$ ) than high professionals (86 *yuan*), and that both received salaries significantly larger than the average salary for all the other occupations. The same analysis for total income showed a similar pattern, though with smaller differentials. Only administrators (123 *yuan*) enjoyed a statistically significant income advantage over the nonelite occupations (103 *yuan*); however the mean for high professionals (114 *yuan*), was not significantly different from the mean for administrators. In terms of group means, the income advantages enjoyed by administrators and high professionals are small, with the advantages for administrators being somewhat larger than those for high professionals.

### *Privileged Access: Housing Space*

Income does not reflect standards of living in centrally planned economies to the same degree as in market economies. This is because many goods and services are distributed in kind as income by administrators in work places or government agencies (Konrád and Szelényi 1979; Szelényi 1978, 1983; Walder 1986, 1992). It is in the bureaucratic distribution of housing, the single most valuable such good, that Szelényi (1983) founded his analysis of inequalities under state socialism. China experienced an extreme form of such in-kind distribution under Mao, when consumer austerity was enforced by widespread rationing through coupons and goods supplied by workplaces and by the severe suppression of even marginal private markets (Walder 1986; Whyte and Parish 1984). It is possible that the small income advantages of administrators are compensated for by larger advantages in the form of privileged access to housing and to other goods and services not widely available on markets. This would

be entirely consistent with the large advantages administrators have in the exercise of organizational authority, for it is precisely through such authority that apartments are allocated.

Housing is the most valuable and coveted of goods distributed directly by organizations. It is not distributed entirely in kind; rents for publicly owned apartments do not come close to covering either costs of construction or of maintenance—in our sample respondents paid an average of only 3.6 percent of their individual monthly income on rent. In China housing is a particularly accurate indicator of privilege, because housing space is extremely scarce in urban areas: a national average in urban areas of only 8.0 square meters per person in 1986; in our sample from a large and crowded city, 5.4 square meters (People's Republic of China 1989:726).

The OLS regression models reported in Table 6 indicate clear advantages in apartment size for administrators—and no advantages for educated professionals. In none of the models is education a significant predictor of housing space; nor are the dummy variables for professionals significant. In fact, other than seniority, the *only* individual level variables that are significant predictors of housing space are Party membership in Model 1, and being an administrator in Models 2 and 3.<sup>11</sup> Analysis of variance (not shown) reveals that the only significant occupational difference in housing space is that between administrators and all others: Administrators' apartments were an average size of 25 square meters, compared to 19.7 for high professionals and 19.1 for all non-elite occupations—a premium of some 25 percent over all other occupations.

### *Summary of Results*

I have found evidence that in China two separate career paths lead to two distinct kinds of elite positions. In the 1986 Tianjin sample,

<sup>11</sup> When square meters of housing space per family member is the dependent variable (results not shown), the effect for Party membership is no longer statistically significant in Model 1, and the effect for administrator is no longer significant in Model 3; the effect for administrator in Model 2 remains significant.

**Table 6. OLS Coefficients for Regression of Housing Space (Log(n) Apartment Size, in Square Meters) on Selected Independent Variables: Tianjin, China, 1986**

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Male	-.027 (-.906)	-.021 (-.728)	-.031 (-1.05)
Seniority	.014*** (8.87)	.014*** (8.87)	.014*** (8.53)
College degree	.053 (1.05)	—	.052 (.934)
High school degree	.013 (.377)	—	.006 (.182)
Party member	.111** (2.80)	—	.069 (1.61)
High professional	—	.010 (.112)	-.018 (.200)
Low professional	—	.021 (.440)	-.007 (-.124)
Administrator	—	.185*** (3.58)	.137* (2.39)
R <sup>2</sup>	.115	.117	.121
Number of cases	831	831	831

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed tests)

*Note:* Includes only respondents who are household heads or their spouses. Unstandardized coefficients are reported with *t*-ratios in parentheses.

candidates for administrative positions are screened for both educational and political credentials; on becoming administrators they have large advantages in the exercise of organizational authority, and are tightly incorporated into the Party. Educational credentials are associated with increased organizational authority, but the association of Party membership with authority is much stronger. Administrators enjoy income and housing advantages over professionals and all other occupational groups. Professionals, on the other hand, are screened according to educational but not political credentials, and they are not preferentially incorporated into the party. Despite the fact that their positions are accorded high prestige in popular evaluations, professionals' high educational attainment alone does not bring them the advantages in authority, income, and housing enjoyed by administrators.

Our sample is too small for cohort analysis, but we must assume that screening and incorporation varies over time (see Bian 1994, chap. 6). My findings pool the effects of different processes from different periods of recent Chinese history. It is possible that the lesser screening of administrators for education may be due to the denigration of intellectuals, the severe de-emphasis of expertise as "bourgeois," and the closure and crippling of universities during the Cultural Revolution, which lingered for a decade after 1966. The absence of political screening and political incorporation in the professional career path may have a similar historical cause and may have been exacerbated by a subsequent professional aversion to party membership.

Speculation about cohort effects leads directly to the question of whether there is anything exceptional about China. Writings on Eastern Europe long heralded the emergence of a single administrative-technical elite. The Cultural Revolution was intended in part to prevent such an outcome, and it appears to have done so, at least through the mid-1980s. But my findings raise a more fundamental question: Who actually comprises the "redistributive elite"? The answer for China appears to be that higher professionals do not. Replications of this study for China or other communist countries using national data sets and complete career histories will permit us to examine the extent to which the various regimes of Eastern Europe differed from one another and from China.

While these results shed light on some longstanding questions in the study of comparative mobility and elite formation, I began this paper by emphasizing the fact that career rewards for the politically loyal has been one of the foundations of communist party rule. I now turn to the implications of these findings for contemporary processes of political change.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIME STABILITY AND CHANGE

If a communist party's ability to shape career mobility is an important foundation of its power, this analysis reveals two cracks in that foundation in China. First, we have seen that the Party created a *divided* elite, and sec-



ond, we have seen that even the administrators are a *tenuous* elite—their privileges are relatively small. Both these cracks would be widened by the kinds of market-oriented economic reforms that have increased income opportunities outside the planned economy and have led to increases in living standards and consumer prices.

### *A Divided Elite*

There are clear distinctions between elite professionals and elite administrators in China. Professionals do not receive the returns to education that they would in a market economy. Their skills, which are not specific to a communist regime, would if anything be rewarded more highly in a market economy, because market economies and liberal political systems allow professionals to organize along occupational lines, gain control over licensing and certification, and create monopolies that magnify their earnings. Therefore Chinese professionals might reasonably expect that a transition away from central planning and Party dictatorship would bring them authority and material compensation more consistent with their education and occupational prestige. The fact that authority and privilege is denied them because of their lack of political credentials would also tend to make them identify the Party system as a source of their subordination. Such a mentality may have been reflected in the relatively active participation of Beijing professionals in the 1989 demonstrations supporting the student hunger strikers. Professionals employed in government agencies took the lead in organizing delegations from their workplaces to march in street demonstrations (Walder 1989). These activities remind us that many higher professionals (e.g., journalists, writers, editors, academic researchers, and the educated staff of central government agencies) occupy strategic positions in state structures and at crucial historical junctures can play a pivotal role.

### *A Tenuous Elite*

While the political implications of elite divisions are fairly self-evident, more striking and less evident are the implications of these findings for the administrative elite itself. I

found the expected material privileges associated with Communist Party credentials and administrative positions, but I also found that these privileges are small. This appears to contradict the popular image of a Party elite that enjoys access to limousines, relatively luxurious housing, foreign consumer goods, and summer villas. But in fact these findings are fully consistent with this popular image. They indicate instead an important fact about the distribution of privilege in the party-state hierarchy. The administrative elite in China is a “tenuous” one—large privileges are restricted to a very small regional and national elite of political and military officials and do not extend very deeply into the lower rungs of the administrative ladder. The administrators that occupy the party-state’s hierarchies at the lower levels enjoy relatively modest material advantages.

The political implications of the tenuous nature of administrator privileges are probably greater than that of elite divisions, for basic-level cadres are the foundation of the entire political hierarchy. If professionals suffer from status inconsistency, their support for the regime may be weak and their support for change may be strong, but their orientations will be unlikely to induce political change without the opportunity for collective action. A weakening of the loyalty of administrators, however, may have a large impact upon the regime without any collective action whatsoever (Walder 1995).

### *Market Reform and Career Rewards*

The distinct but small privileges accorded administrators originated in an earlier period of consumer austerity and price stability in China, when there was no alternative source of income and advancement outside the planned economy. With such austerity, even small privileges were meaningful (Whyte and Parish 1984; Walder 1986). But with the onset of market reforms, incomes rose rapidly, austerity became relative affluence, inflation eroded fixed salaries, and lucrative new income sources opened up outside the planned economy. In this setting the value of the small material advantages of administrators has diminished rapidly. Administrators in our sample earn an average of 123 *yuan* per month, 25 *yuan* more than unskilled

workers, the lowest paid group. In 1976, 25 *yuan* would have been equal to roughly half the average urban monthly wage (Walder 1986:195). By 1986 that same 25 *yuan* was less than one quarter of the average urban wage (People's Republic of China 1989:125, 688); it would buy only one family meal at a moderately priced private restaurant, and would easily be less than one day's income for even a small private entrepreneur.

Moreover, wage increases in the public sector have not favored administrators. Compare the regression coefficients for administrators and professionals in the models for salary and total income in Table 5. Clear occupational advantages for administrators still exist in the salary structure, but when one adds rising bonus incomes—the main new form of income for employees in the public sector after the late 1970s—the premiums paid for Party membership and premiums to administrators decrease to the point of non-significance.

The rapidly diminishing value of traditional cadre privilege takes on special meaning in connection with our other striking finding about administrators—that they enjoy substantial advantages in the exercise of authority over persons and public assets. Virtually every analyst of market reform has noted the phenomenon of administrators who use their existing organizational authority to create new income opportunities for themselves outside the planned economy through a variety of means ranging from entrepreneurship to corruption (Liu 1992; Nee 1991; Oi 1989; Szelényi and Manchin 1987; Wank 1995). The present study suggests how rapidly incentives can shift for basic-level officials (see also Nee and Lian 1994). Market reforms do not have to go very far, and the income opportunities they provide do not have to be very large, before they outstrip the privileges these officials traditionally enjoy and create new opportunities through their one large advantage—their organizational authority.

In China, a relatively limited introduction of market mechanisms could, in short order, disrupt a pattern of career incentives through which the Party has for decades motivated and disciplined its grassroots cadres. Administrators could develop new sources of income that would soon outstrip the relatively

small ones for which they depended upon their bureaucratic superiors in the past (Walder 1994). These new sources of income would decrease their dependence on their superiors in the Party hierarchy, weaken the discipline and cohesion of the Party apparatus, and create second-order political problems, as other occupational groups (including professionals) react against the trend of perceived official corruption—something that actually burst prominently to the surface in the protests of 1989.

## CONCLUSION

China's Communist Party, as all others, has had an unusual capacity to monitor individuals and control access to privileged jobs, and it has allocated career rewards in a way designed to reinforce its hold on political power. In spite of this control, as proponents of convergence arguments have claimed, education has become an important determinant of status attainment and of mobility into both professional and administrative positions. These are especially telling findings for China, which for a decade after 1966 systematically discriminated against intellectuals and disrupted its own system of higher education. Moreover, as convergence arguments state, the primary mechanism behind the impact of education on mobility is the educational system, which in China, as in all communist regimes, has been highly tracked and linked to a job-assignment bureaucracy that ensures a fit between educational credentials and occupation as least as tight as in market economies.

Despite this partial confirmation of the convergence view, there are enduring peculiarities in China's mobility regime related to its political and economic institutions. In addition to educational credentials, political credentials are crucial for entry into administrative positions in China, positions for which real authority and privilege are reserved. Professionals, who have even higher educational attainment than administrators, are not politically screened, are not selectively recruited into the Party, and do not enjoy significant material advantages. In China it does not appear that intellectuals have been on the road to class power; instead, party bureaucrats have been on the road to college.

These findings about China shed light on the broader historical trajectory of the consolidation, evolution, and eventual decline of centralized communist party-states. One of the foundations of communist power in China, and elsewhere, has been the Party's ability to reward political loyalty with career advancement and privilege. These practices served as sufficient incentive for Party-screened and Party-incorporated administrators, but only so long as consumer scarcity reigned and there were no alternative sources of income outside the traditional command economy.

The most important single political implication of the findings of this paper is the evident vulnerability of Party reward structures to the kinds of market-oriented reforms underway in China today. The administrative elite is tenuous, as advantages for cadres below the apex of the hierarchy are modest. Market reform is rapidly eroding the value of these modest privileges. Those who can will compensate for their eroding privileges by using their organizational authority and influence to increase their income either as entrepreneurs or through corruption. Those administrators who lack such opportunities will simply suffer an erosion of their traditional material advantages. Both outcomes undermine the foundations of a once formidably centralized regime.

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