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Abstract

Military service as a turning point that redirects life trajectories has long been recognized in the U.S. literature, but it has not been systematically studied in China. Using data from the China Family Panel Studies, this study examines the returns to military service on extensive social outcomes, including tertiary education, marriage, Party membership, income, housing, and occupational status. The study not only compares the outcome differences between male veterans and a matched sample of male nonveterans, but also analyzes variation in military effect across social origin, historical period, life cycle, and service status. The findings show that military service is an important channel for men's upward mobility in China, but its effect is contingent on when the service occurs, how long the service lasts, and which outcome is under examination.

Introduction

China maintains the largest active military force in the world. According to the latest Census in 2010, the active force of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is 2.3 million (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011). As a result, China has a vast former military population comprising millions of servicemen who have been demobilized due to end of service. Although the number of Chinese men who have ever served in the military is unknown to the public, it is clear that millions of Chinese men (but relatively few women) have had military experience.

The U.S. stratification literature has long recognized the significance of military experience as a factor in subsequent life trajectories. Many studies have examined its impact on post-service socioeconomic achievements (e.g. Angrist 1990; Angrist 1998; Angrist and Krueger 1994; Browning, Lopreato, and Poston 1973; Cohen, Warner, and Segal 1995; Elder 1987; Fredland and Little 1985, Sampson and Laub 1996; Xie 1992). Results indicate that military service is a career contingency that either mediates the effects of social origin or has an independent impact on post-military status attainment (Duncan, Featherman, and Duncan 1972).

On the one hand, military service may help men achieve higher socioeconomic status in their post-service lives through its positive impact on human capital accumulation, its offer of an alternative to a disadvantaged setting during young adult years, and its value as an endorsement of military fitness. Training and skill development in the military may make veterans more competitive in the civilian labor market (Browning, Lopreato, and Poston 1973). The disciplinary and bureaucratic environment of the military may protect men from disadvantaged backgrounds from the effects of discrimination, crime, and other poverty-related conditions during critical young adult years (Sampson and Laub 1996). And, because military enlistment and service also act as screening devices, veteran status may act as an endorsement to prospective employers of positive "military fitness" qualities (Fredland and Little 1985).

On the other hand, military service may act as an obstacle to status attainment. Veterans, especially those who enlisted right after high school, often have accumulated less work experience and schooling than same-age non-veterans given that their military years correspond

to a period in life usually devoted to tertiary education and/or career advancement. In fact, some studies have found that military service leads to lower earnings (Angrist 1990; Cohany 1990). Physical or psychological traumas relating to combat service may also harm veterans' health and social lives, impeding post-service achievement.

Beyond its socioeconomic impacts, U.S. military service also has been studied for its effects on a range of other outcomes, such as marriage (e.g. Call and Teachman 1996; Teachman 2007), criminal behavior (e.g. Bouffard 2005), and health (e.g. Teachman 2011). The findings from research in these areas are also inconclusive overall. That is, while some studies have found evidence that military service has positive effects on attainment and wellbeing in civilian life (Browning, Lopreato, and Poston 1973; Elder, 1987; Xie, 1992), others have found that military service leads to psychological trauma (Aldwin, Levenson, and Spiro. 1994; Spiro, Schnurr and Aldwin 1994) and problematic family relationships (Gimbel and Booth 1994).

In China, military service is generally considered beneficial. Soldiers and veterans in contemporary China enjoy honorable reputations and substantial government benefits, although these benefits have varied across periods. For a long time, the Communist Party of China (Party) considered the military their political power base.[1] The significance of the military has been demonstrated by the well-known saying of Mao Tse-tung that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." Given the importance of the military as the foundation of national security, the guarantee of state power, and the source of manpower reserves for economic construction,[2] serviceman are well subsidized by the government and receive extra welfare benefits not available to civilians. Once they return to civilian life, veterans are given special consideration for education, employment, and access to government allowances.[3] Such special considerations are both a reward for their prior services to the state and a means of avoiding veteran activism, which has great destructive potential and can cause social instability (Diamant 2009).

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[1] The absolute leadership of the Party over the PLA has been written into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China.
[2] The tasks of the PLA are specified by the Constitution of the Communist Party of China.
[3] These benefits are specified in the Conscription Law (1955 and 1984), Regulations on Pension and Preferential Treatments for Servicemen (1998 and 2004), and Regulations on the Resettlement of Veterans (2011).

In addition to the above benefits, soldiers and veterans also enjoy relatively high social esteem, as military experience may be a greater source of public pride in China than in many other societies. Under communist ideology, soldiers were once listed as one of the three purest proletarian classes, being ranked with workers and peasants, and were portrayed as role models for all citizens.[4] Although such ideological zealotry has faded since the end of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of the economic reform, the image of soldiers and veterans is still very positive in mainstream propaganda.

The beneficial impact of military service on individuals' status attainment in China has been recognized and, in a few cases, studied (e.g. Wu and Treiman 2004, Wang 2011). These research efforts, however, have been sparse and inconclusive. Research that systematically examines more outcomes and the effect heterogeneity across demographic groups, service time periods, and domains of achievement is needed to enrich knowledge on how military service impacts the life trajectories of all veterans in China. To help meet this need, this study empirically examines the effects of military service in China on men's educational attainment, entry into first marriage, attainment of Party membership, income, housing, and occupational status. (Because so few Chinese women serve in the military, our study is confined to men.[5]) Except for attainment of Party membership, these social outcomes have not been examined in previous research. Moreover, this study analyzes differential military service effects across social origin, life cycle, and historical period.

Research Questions

What are the consequences of military service for wellbeing? The life-course perspective posits that social outcomes are cumulative products of prior social processes that involve many significant life transitions, the relationship between various transitions, and the way that individuals respond to the opportunities and constraints resulting from the transitions (Elder

[4] The Communist Party of China (Party) selected many national role models from PLA soldiers, such as Dong Cunrui, Lei Feng, and Qiu Shaoyun. In 1964, the Party launched a nationwide movement of "Learning from PLA."

[5] According to the 2000 Census, female serviceman only accounts for 5.4% in military population. In CFPS, the data for this study, there are only 17 veteran women, accounting for 0.1% of female sample.

1987). Therefore, accounting for variation is very important in gauging the effects of military service on men's wellbeing. In a review of literature on U.S. veterans, MacLean and Elder (2007) conclude that the effects depend on the serviceman's social origin, enlistment age, and historical period of service, and on whether or not he was exposed to combat. Except for combat exposure, these effect heterogeneities can be explained by two theories: the bridging hypothesis and the life-course perspective.

The bridging hypothesis, which views military service as a context providing "conditions and opportunities for movement from one occupation or cluster of occupations to another" (Broom and Smith, 1963: 322), may be used to explain the effect of social origin. Military service presents new recruits with a range of opportunities to improve themselves through training aspirations and performance, and to develop life skills necessary to navigate and flourish under a highly bureaucratic organization. In the U.S., the bridging benefit of military service is viewed as having more potential potency among those who enter the military with fewer life prospects and who otherwise would be unlikely to obtain such skills, values, and attitudes (Browning, Lopreato and Poston 1973). In this sense, the bridging hypothesis implies that military service offers a more important channel for social mobility among men from disadvantaged than from advantaged backgrounds.

In the case of China, rural populations have fewer upward mobility prospects than urban populations, given the very uneven distribution of resources. Men of rural origin are disadvantaged in the competition for tertiary education and Party membership (Wu and Treiman 2004); and converting from a rural to an urban *hukou* status remains difficult without admission to college, marriage to an urbanite, or military service. Because military service offers men of rural origin the chance to convert their *hukou* through post-military job allocation and Party membership (Wang 2011; Wu and Treiman 2004), we expect military experience to have a more powerful effect on social status for men of rural rather than urban origin. The bridging hypothesis does not allow a clear prediction for urban men in China, who comprise the more socially advantaged group. If military service is a bridging occupation, it may also benefit urbanites in terms of human capital accumulation, but since urbanites have more and better

achievement channels available to them outside of the military, we expect the benefit to be smaller than for rural enlistees. Further, the opportunity costs of military service for men of urban origin in terms of foregone alternatives to enhance their education or accumulate work experience suggest a negative impact for time spent in the military that may counter any positive "bridging" effects. My first research question addresses this potential heterogeneous effect: *Do the effects of military service vary between men of rural and urban origins?*

The life-course perspective may be used to explain differential outcomes for military service depending on historical period of service and age at enlistment. This perspective highlights how the timing of key life events – either across historical time periods or over the life course – affects the impact of these events. Certain individuals who undergo a given experience at the "right time" in terms of their era in history and their stage of life may benefit more than others.

Clearly, historical circumstances shape individuals' life trajectories (Elder 1995, 1998). In the case of military service, both government policies and economic conditions at the time of service affect the concomitant rewards and costs. Veteran studies in the U.S. found that military service had positive effects on social status among World War II veterans, had no impact on Vietnam or Korean War veterans, and has had negative effects for veterans serving during the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) era (1973 to the present). Wang (2011) argues that military service in China has had a declining impact on status attainment in the post-reform years as a result of decreases in state control. But his model fails to test this premise over historical time.[6] In addition, while in the post-reform period the state has loosened its control in some domains such as job allocation and consumption goods, it remains strong in others such as political control, and it may also have strengthened its impact by providing training and education to modernize its military. Thus, the premise of decreasing state control and a related decline in military service effects in China seems speculative. Therefore, my second research question is: *Do the effects of military service change over cohorts?*

[6] Wang fails to use an interaction term between military service and historical period to test whether there is a decline in the veteran effect over periods. He wrongly takes the main effect of period on outcome variables to be the interaction effect between period and veteran status.

The life-course perspective also addresses how the impact of a life event may vary depending on the age or time of life when an individual experiences it (Elder 1995, 1998). Elder (1987) argues that the benefits of military service tend to be larger for individuals who serve before they have established a family or career, as the military offers these men a legitimate time-out period in which to envision and make plans for the future. This benefit is especially strong for men from disadvantaged backgrounds, as the military provides an improved social environment in which to make a new start. This perspective suggests that an early-age enlistment, which is likely to occur before family and career formation, may serve to maximize the benefits of military service, while enlistment at a later age, after a family or career has been established, may act to disrupt life trajectories (Elder 1987).

In contemporary China, most men enter the military at a relatively young age.[7] Although special programs exist that facilitate veterans' attendance at schools[8], veterans discharged at an old age from the military service are unlikely to take advantage of such programs. Hence, late enlistment incurs a higher opportunity cost. For such reasons, old veterans may enjoy smaller benefits than younger veterans relative to nonveterans. Thus, the third question for this study is: *Do the effects of military service vary by age of enlistment?*

The military is a highly disciplined institution with uniquely demanding role requirements. Servicemen must follow strict rules and schedules that may compete with those associated with other life roles, in particular with that of husband (Cooney and Hogan 1991; Goldscheider and Waite 1986; Hogan 1978; Segal 1986). Although married men may enlist in China's military, regulations prevent single enlisted men from marrying until they return to civilian life, because group living arrangements and intensive military training are believed to interfere with servicemen's ability to invest the time and energy that married life requires. However, servicemen also enjoy privileges that they lose upon leaving active duty. Thus, my fourth research question focuses on variance by service status, that is: *Do the effects of military service vary by military duty status (active versus veteran)?*

[7] The age of entry is mainly from ages 18 to 20. See Figure 1.
[8] See section 55 in the Conscription Law of 1984.

The above four questions explore the heterogeneity of the military effect from the standpoints of the bridging hypothesis and life-course perspective. Although these two theories have been tested on military service effects in the U.S., they have not been systematically tested in China.

This analysis of the military effect and its variations focuses on six outcomes: tertiary education,[9] age at first marriage, Party membership, income, housing, and occupation. Much research finds that education is a strong determinant of social status attainment (Blau and Duncan 1967; Featherman and Hauser 1978; Treiman and Ganzeboom 1990), and tertiary education in particular is associated with both higher status occupations and higher incomes in modern societies (Fischer and Hout 2006). Military experience may facilitate or impede attainment of tertiary education. On the one hand, veterans in China are given priority status in college admission and receive government scholarships if admitted within a short period after they are demobilized. On the other hand, spending time in the military during the ages when many of their peers attend college may disadvantage veterans in terms of completing traditional college/university educations. In the U.S., the G.I. Bill was much less beneficial to older veterans, who were often burdened with family responsibilities (Elder 1987; Xie 1992). Also, because upon leaving the military veterans in China have the opportunity to be assigned urban jobs, most often in government agencies and state-owned work units (Shichor 1996), they may have lower incentives to attain tertiary education. Given these complexities, it is worthwhile to test the effect of military experience and its timing on attending college.

The timing of marriage formation is associated with men's socioeconomic status in that entry into first marriage is facilitated by an early-age transition to a career job or full-time employment and a higher income potential, and inhibited by career-entry difficulties and a lower income potential (Oppenheimer, Kalmijn, and Lim 1997; Xie, Raymo, Goyette, and Thornton 2003). For the U.S., Teachman (2007) has found that rising military pay rates and the stability of military employment in the AVF period are positively related to early entry into first marriage among servicemen. In China, being a serviceman or veteran may increase marriageability given

[9] Tertiary education refers to both 3-year junior college education and 4-or 5-year university education for a bachelor's degree. The college mentioned in this study also refers to either a 3-year junior college or a 4-or 5-year university.

the favorable policies and programs associated with military service and the positive images of PLA soldiers promulgated by political propaganda.[10] These advantages in the marriage market may induce men with military experience to marry earlier than their nonmilitary counterparts.

Party membership is an important political credential and route to upward mobility in China (Bian, Shu and Logan 2001; Walder, Li, and Treiman 2000). Although previous studies have found a positive association between military experience and Party membership (Wu and Treiman 2004; Wang 2011), it is still unclear whether this association results directly from military opportunities for servicemen to join the Party or from post-military opportunities for urban employment and cadre identity that increase the likelihood of Party membership. This study will account for the sequence of military service and other life events in examining the relationship between military service and Party membership in different historical periods, life course stages, and military duty statuses (active versus veteran).

This analysis also looks at how occupational status and income, both well-known indicators of men's social standing, may be impacted by military service. Studies have found that military service is beneficial to employment for both U.S. veterans (Fredland and Little 1985) and to Chinese veterans in state sector or in administrative jobs (Wang 2011), but little is known about the occupational status conferred by these military-related employment opportunities. For example, although veterans in China have advantages in seeking state-sector jobs or administrative positions (Wang 2011), which tend to offer higher pay and better welfare benefits, little is known about what kinds of jobs veterans actually get in these areas. This study will examine veterans' and non-veterans' occupational status in China measured by the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI), a standard measure used in stratification research that is more evaluative of job status than work sector or administrative position. In terms of income, some U.S. veteran studies have found that military service leads to lower earnings (Angrist 1990; Cohany 1990), while in China, veterans may enjoy higher incomes given their enhanced prospects for state employment and Party membership (Wang, 2011).

[10] PLA soldiers were portrayed as heroes in many popular movies and TV shows, such as *Heroic Sons and Daughters*.

This analysis will also look into the association between military experience and post-service attainment of housing or other assets. This is an area examined by few studies, although asset/wealth disparity has become a new dimension to explain the persistence and enlargement of social inequality (Oliver and Shapiro 1997), and housing is a wealth pillar for economic security and stability. Accounting for 74.7% percent of household wealth in China (Xie and Jin 2014), housing has become increasingly unequal since the onset of housing commercialization. Privatization of work unit housing allows individuals to buy at the low state price and sell at a higher commercial price, or to simply own a home worth more than they paid for it. In either case, those with higher work unit status and better unit housing benefited the most in potential wealth accumulation from this privatization. Since military service facilitates state-sector employment for veterans, it may also improve prospects for state-provided housing.

Data and methods

The data used in this study come from the 2010 baseline survey of the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS 2010), a nationwide panel survey of households and household members. The baseline survey interviewed 33,600 adults in 14,798 households, from which we drew an analytic sample of adult men, because it is very rare for Chinese women to serve in the military. We also limited the sample by bracketing our birth cohorts between the years of 1937 – the first birth cohort that would have reached age 18 at the time of China's selective Conscription Law in 1955, and 1986 – the last cohort to reach an enlistment age by 2010.

I use the CFPS baseline survey data for their two unique advantages for studying the effects of military experience on social outcomes. First, the CFPS is more recent than either the 2003 China General Social Survey (CGSS) or the 1996 survey of Life Histories and Social Change (LHSC), which were used in Wang's (2011) and Wu and Treiman's (2004) studies. The fact that the CFPS was done only a few years ago makes it possible to examine social outcomes over a longer period of time and to include veterans from more recent cohorts than in prior studies. Another advantage of the CFPS is that it includes almost twice as many male veterans as the

CGSS or LHSC.[11] In addition, the CFPS baseline retrospectively collected data on the timing of military experience as well as the timing of other major life events, such as school transitions, marriage, and joining the Party – data that make it possible to use the sequence of these life-course transitions to construct event-history data. With information on when military service started and ended, active-service effects and post-service effects can also be differentiated.

However, the CFPS baseline survey data also have certain shortcomings. One shortcoming for purposes of this study is that it did not collect many details regarding military experience, such as types of duty,[12] combat exposure, or promotions in rank. Since combat exposure is a strong predictor of negative consequences for military experience, lack of such information restricts the scope of the analysis of this study. An additional lack of data on rank is also limiting, as officer veterans usually have better prospects than non-officer veterans when they return to civilian life. Because of this limitation, duration of military experience is used as a proxy for rank. According to China's Conscription Laws, the service period for ordinary servicemen was 3 years[13] from 1955 to 1983 and 2 years after 1984. Sampled veterans who reported staying in the army for more than 4 years between 1955 and 1983 and for more than 3 years after 1984 are considered military officers for the purpose of this analysis.

Finally, the CFPS does not provide retrospective income, job, or housing history. Due to these data limitations, the event-history analysis cannot be extended to occupational status, income, and housing value, though personal income in 2009, occupational ISEI in 2010, and housing value in 2010 are examined. The income in 2009 is personal income, including wages, bonus, and income from agricultural activities. As for those who retired before 2009, their income is missing. Occupational status is measured by the International Socioeconomic Index (ISEI), an international standard measure of occupational status based on education and income for each occupation (Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and Treiman, 1992). The CFPS provides the

[11] The China General Social Survey 2003 contains only 436 veterans, including female veterans. The number of veterans in the survey of Life Histories and Social Change is only 365. By contrast, there are 708 male veterans in the CFPS baseline (698 men without missing value), which generates greater statistical power.
[12] e.g. ground force, navy, air troop, armed police etc.
[13] The normal service period for air troop and navy was 4~5 years. Since ground force accounts for the majority of the military, a 3-year threshold is used.

occupational ISEI of current main job for employed or self-employed respondents or the ISEI of last main job for those who were retired at the time of interview. However, the missing value of the ISEI for retired persons tends to be larger. Because over 80% of Chinese households own housing, self-reported housing values in 2010 are used to differentiate the quality of housing. Personal income and housing values are taken logarithm because they are skewed distributed.

Veterans are a selected population,[14] and they could be different from civilians regardless of their military experience. Selection into the military is determined by both institutional and individual factors (MacLean and Elder 2007). In China, military eligibility includes minimum schooling[15] and basic physical requirements.[16] Moreover, candidates must pass political screening that is based on *hukou* status, occupation, political performance, religion, criminal records, and family background.[17] In terms of individual characteristics, enlistees must be willing to give up their civilian lives for military service – which suggests that attitudes about the military and perceptions of the opportunity costs of enlistment are large factors. Wang (2011) argues for a change in benefits accruing to benefits: When joining the military was viewed as highly beneficial, advantaged young men used their resources to secure this opportunity, but since the premium of military service has declined, young men have had less incentive to compete for it. Although his argument is not fully supported by empirical evidence,[18] there is little doubt that public interest in military service has changed over cohorts, which adds another dimension to military selection.

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[14] The military service system in China is a mixture of compulsory and voluntary service systems. Enlistment is not universal.

[15] An exact minimum schooling for enlistment is not specified by Regulations on Military Recruitment (1985 and 2001). But the Regulation requires that enlistees should be "well-educated" (*wen hua cheng du gao*). According to website for conscription (http://www.gfbzb.gov.cn/bydj/), the minimum education requirement for prospective enlistees in 2014 is graduation from senior high school or its equivalents.

[16] Physical examination is required by Regulations on Military Recruitment (1985 and 2011). The contents of physical examination are specified in Physical Examination Standard for Drafted Citizens, including the evaluation of body height, weight, eyesight, skin, teeth, and medical history and so on.

[17] For details, see Regulation on Political Screening for Military Recruitment (2004).

[18] Wang (2011) argues that youths from cadre families lost interest in military service in the post-reform years. He provides contradictory evidence that both having a cadre father and having a peasant father increase the likelihood of joining the military in the pre-reform years and decrease the likelihood in the post-reform years. This finding, rather than being interpreted as resource competition between classes, could also be seen as indicating that the importance of political screening in recruitment had changed: political credentials were more important in the pre-reform years. Youths from both peasant families and cadres were politically and ideologically privileged and more likely to be conscripted. When political credentials became less important in the post-reform years, the advantages enjoyed by youths from cadre and peasant families were no longer obvious.

Given these potential individual and institutional variations, selection into military service may act to confound the causal effects of military experience on outcomes. My approach to reducing pre-service heterogeneity is to use propensity scores to create a matched sample in which nonveterans are similar to veterans. Refined matching, which compares one-to-one values for each variable, is impractical given the presence of many variables to match on. Propensity score matching, which reduces various salient dimensions of pre-treatment characteristics into a single score, provides statistical matching that can be as effective as refined matching (Rosenbaum and Rubin 1984). Propensity scores are generated via a logistic model in which the variables reflect the characteristics that differentiate people who have served from those who have not.

The second column of Table 1 shows the estimates of the logistic model that is used to generate propensity scores. To capture both institutional and individual factors that may influence military enlistment, the independent variables of the model include respondent's birth cohort, educational level at age 17, *hukou* status at age 12, mother's education, parent's Party membership,[19] family class background,[20] and sibship size. Because the CFPS does not include retrospective data on previous physical condition, body height is used to proxy physical condition, assuming that height becomes nearly stable by age 17 and that people who are taller were better-nourished during childhood and adolescence. The third column of Table 1 shows the bivariate statistical test of the differences between veterans and nonveterans for each variable used in generating the propensity score. We can see an imbalanced distribution of veterans and nonveterans across most variables. The estimates of the logistic model show more clearly how veterans were different from nonveterans before they enlisted. A positive coefficient indicates an increase of the enlistment likelihood and a negative coefficient indicates a decrease of likelihood. From the first column of Table 1, we can see that being from a more recent cohort, being tall, having received more education by age 17, and having a mother with at least upper secondary education all make it more likely that a man will enlist. Consistent with Wang's (2011) finding,

[19] The data on mother's education and parent's CPC membership are modified by CFPS 2012.

[20] Family class background refers to the class of a family defined by the government during the Cultural Revolution. The classification was originally designed for redistributing land and other properties during the land reform in the 1950s. The classification is based on the occupation, the relationship to the means of production, the degree to which a family has exploited the working class, and the political performances of major family members. The family class was further divided into three types: red class (including revolutionary cadres, revolutionary martyrs, revolutionary soldiers, workers, and poor and lower-middle peasants), black class (including landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, criminals, rightists, intellectuals, and other bourgeoisie), and medium class (including clerks, tradesmen, handicraftsmen, etc.).

men from "red-class" families – or the offspring of cadres, workers, and poor peasants, who are favored in political screening – are more likely to have military experiences than men from "black-class" families – landlords, rich peasants, intellectuals, and other bourgeoisie. There is no difference in enlistment likelihood between men from "red-class" families and those from "medium class" families. Contrary to Wang's (2011) finding, however, men of urban origin are less likely to have military experience, the effect of urban *hukou* being significantly negative. Men with more siblings are also more likely to have military experience, which suggests that Chinese parents with few children may be less likely to support a son's military enlistment.

The propensity scores are generated based on the logistic model. A higher score indicates a higher likelihood of having military experience. The distribution of the sample across propensity scores is presented in Appendix figure 1. "Greedy matching" with calipers is used to match each veteran to four nonveterans in terms of their propensity scores, and discard unmatched nonveteran cases, to produce a sample with 698 veterans and 2,032 nonveterans. The distribution of covariates in the matched sample is then checked. As shown in the fourth column of Table 1, veterans are no longer significantly different from matched nonveterans in all the pre-service characteristics examined.

Using the matched sample, event history analysis is applied to estimate the effects of military experience on three important life transitions: tertiary education, entry into first marriage, and attainment of Party membership. The data is constructed as a set of person-years at risk, with each person initially exposed to the risk of attending college, getting married, or joining the Party beginning at age 16. In any subsequent year that a person made one of these transitions, he was dropped from the data for the following years for the analysis of this transition. Those who did not make any transition remained in all subsequent analytic years until 2010. Discrete-time hazard-rate models are then used to estimate the effects of four types of military status on the outcome variables: not serving/never served in the military, active service within the normal service period, active service beyond the normal service period,[21] and veteran status. The category of active service beyond the normal service period usually implies promotion in the military.

[21] According to China's Conscription Laws, the normal service period was 3 years from 1955 to 1983 and 2 years after 1984. Soldiers staying in the army for 3 years or less from 1955 to 1983 and for 2 years or less from 1984 to the present are defined as active service within the normal service period; otherwise, they are active serviceman beyond the normal service period.

Table 1: The model for predicting propensity of being a veteran and imbalance check

Variables	logistic model	χ^2 or F test for imbalance check pre-matching		post-matching	*df*
Birth cohort		116.820	**	6.683	3
1950-1959	-0.389**				
	(0.103)				
1960-1969	-1.341**				
	(0.119)				
1970-1979	-1.691**				
	(0.150)				
Body height (cm)	0.040**	37.740	**	0.200	1
	(0.007)				
Non-Han ethnicity	-0.209	9.628	**	1.350	1
	(0.182)				
Urban *hukou* at age 12	-0.277*	5.558	*	0.432	
	(0.114)				
Education at age 17		84.565	**	2.299	3
Primary school	1.033**				
	(0.143)				
Lower secondary school	1.392**				
	(0.144)				
Upper secondary or above	1.940**				
	(0.213)				
Mother's educ: upper secondary or above	1.040**	7.739	**	0.078	1
	(0.256)				
Party membership of parents	0.203	6.890	**	1.558	1
	(0.113)				
Family class background		31.189	**	0.755	2
Red class	1.150**				
	(0.234)				
Medium class	0.413				
	(0.253)				
Sibship size	0.071**	16.950	**	0.390	1
	(0.023)				
Constant	-10.909**				
	(1.190)				
Log likelihood	-2352.47				
Wald χ^2	401.82				
df	14				
Observations	10,274				

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; ** p<0.01, * p<0.05. The dependent variable of logit model is whether the man is a veteran (non-veteran=0). Omitted variables as the reference category include 1937-1949 birth cohort, Han ethnicity, rural hukou at age 12, no school at age 17, mother's education is lower secondary school or below, no parents are Party member, and from black class family.

For cross-sectional outcomes such as income, occupational status, and housing, ordinary least square models are applied to the matched sample to estimate the effects of military experience both within and beyond the normal service period, using nonveterans as the reference category.

To model the varying effects of military experience across *hukou* origin, historical period, and life cycle, interaction terms are added between military status and these variables to the best model for the main effect of military service on a specific outcome. *Hukou* origin is a dichotomous variable, coded 1 for urban status at age 12, 0 for rural. Historical periods are measured by four birth cohorts: 1937-1949, 1950-1959, 1960-1969, and 1970-1979. As the conscription age in China since 1955 has been confined primarily to 17- 24 and has been stable across birth cohorts (see Figure 1), veterans in the same birth cohort are likely to enlist and be demobilized in the same period. Life course stage is a time-variant variable defined in any given year by one of four age groups: below age 20, ages 20-24, ages 25-29, and age 30 or above. For OLS models for cross-sectional outcomes, veterans are divided into three age groups for the start of military service: before age 20, ages 20-24, and age 25 or older. The three groups are compared with nonveterans on outcomes.

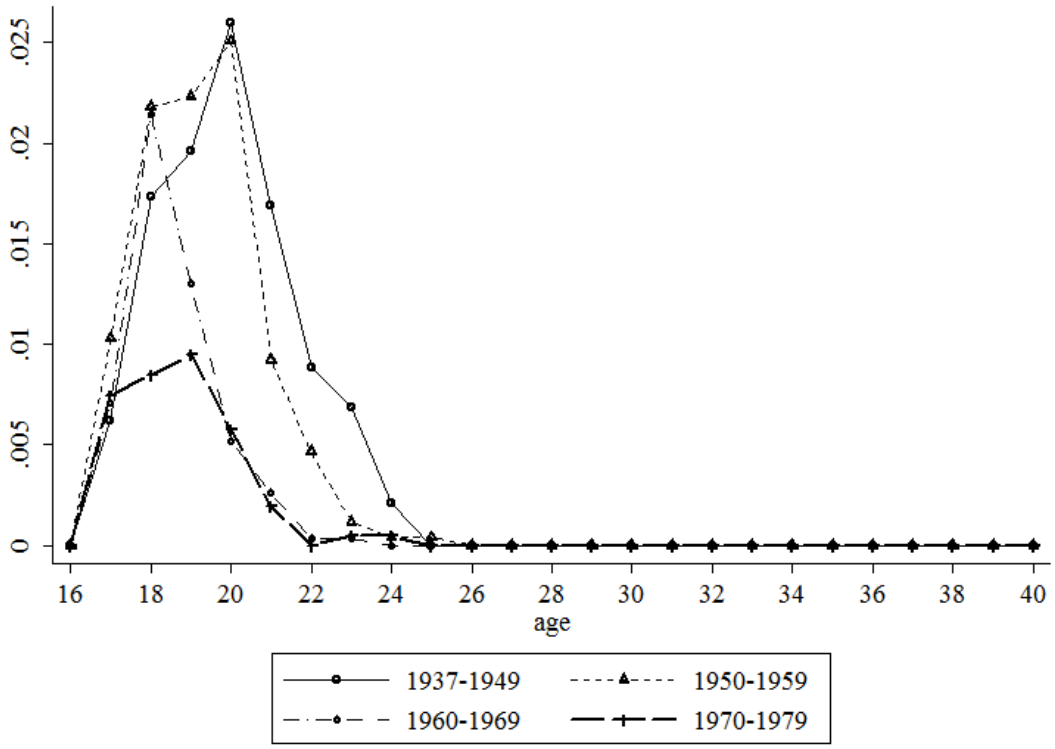
Results

Figures 2 through 4 display findings for the lifetime cumulative probabilities in attaining tertiary education (Figure 2), marriage (Figure 3), and Party membership (Figure 4) separately for all veterans, officer veterans (those serving beyond the normal service period), nonveterans in the matched sample, and all nonveterans (without matching), not controlling for any covariates. The results are presented in separate charts by birth cohort.

Figure 2 shows an increasing probability of college attendance over birth cohorts, with veterans having a higher cumulative probability of attending college than nonveterans with increasing age, except in the first cohort. However, military-related disparities in college attendance vary across cohorts and ages. For the 1950s and the 1960s cohorts, the cumulative probability of attending college was higher among veterans than among nonveterans at all ages

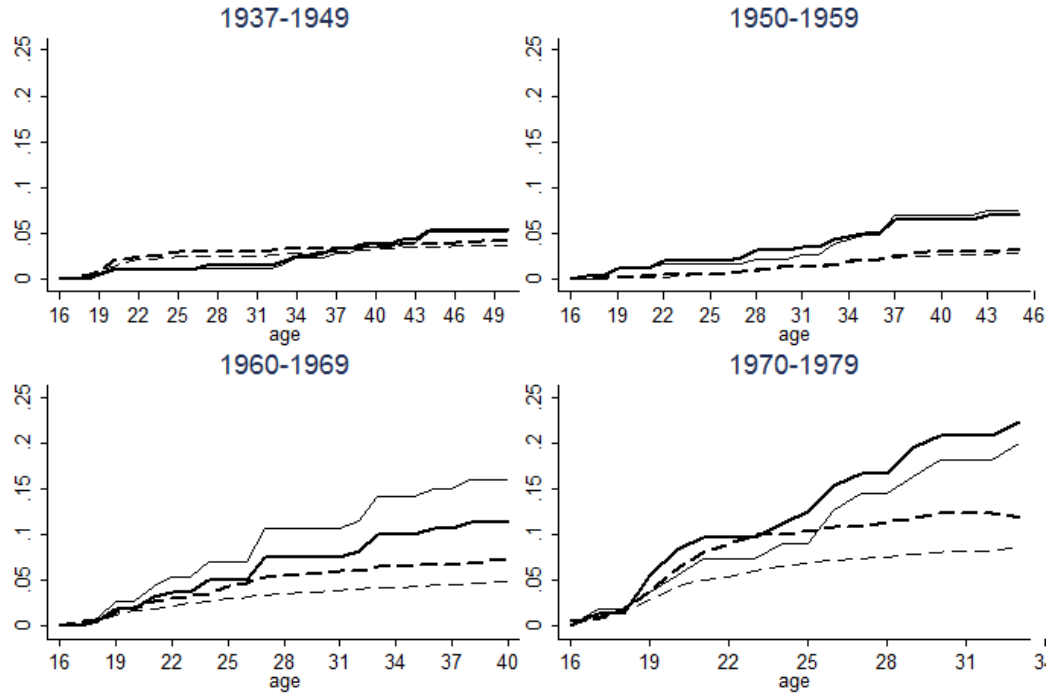
after age 18. However, for the most recent cohort, the cumulative probability of veterans (including officer veterans) rose sharply above that for nonveterans only after about age 26. This suggests that as many non-veterans begin to attend college in large numbers, the educational advantage of military service on tertiary education comes at a later age, because there is an increased opportunity cost associated with military service (Xie 1992). This pattern is clear for the 1970s cohort because access to tertiary education for this cohort was high overall.

Figure 1: The observed probability of active military service by birth cohort



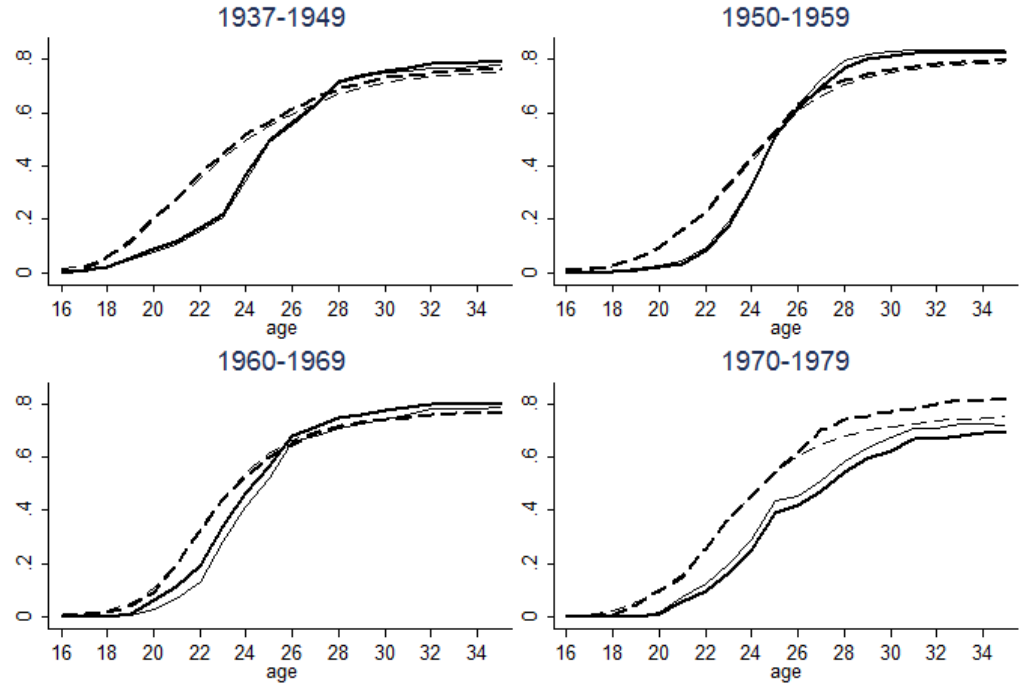
Notes: Since 1955, military service in China has mainly become an early adulthood transition. Minimum and maximum ages of enlistment are regulated and enforced by China's Conscription Law. According to the law, conscription ages for most citizens are between 18 and 22. Volunteers, however, may enlist in the military as early as age 17. For those enrolled in tertiary education, the maximum age of conscription is 24. Based on the CFPS 2010, Figure 1 displays the average yearly probabilities of initiating military service for each single year of age from 16 through 40 by birth cohort. The trajectory is consistent with the Conscription Law and relatively stable across birth cohorts. The rate of military transition is virtually zero at age 16, rises at age 17, peaks between ages 18 and 20, and then gradually falls from ages 21 to 24.

Figure 2: Cumulative probabilty of attending tertiary education over age, by veteran status and birth cohort



Notes: The thick solid lines refer to veterans. The thin solid lines refer to officer veterans. The thick dash lines refer to the matched nonveterans. The thin dash lines refer to all nonveteran.

Figure 3: Cumulative probabilty of getting married over age, by veteran status and birth cohort

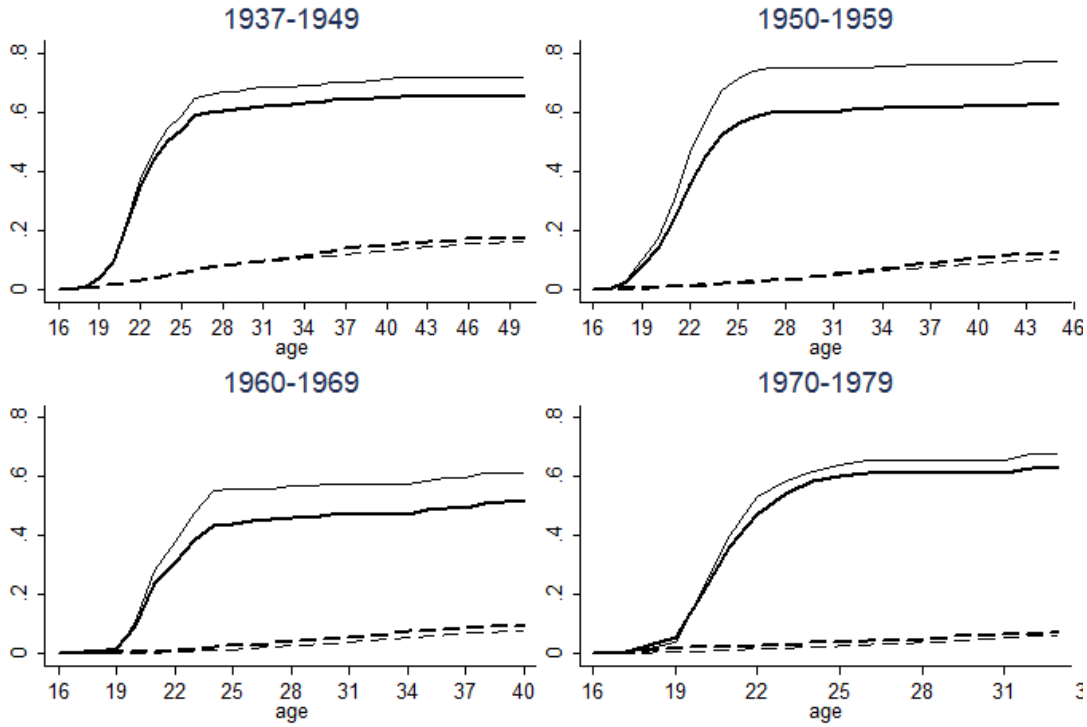


Notes: The thick solid lines refer to veterans. The thin solid lines refer to officer veterans. The thick dash lines refer to the matched nonveterans. The thin dash lines refer to all nonveteran.

Figure 3 plots the cumulative probability of entry into first marriage by age, military experience, and cohort. Given that first marriage in China is almost universal and mainly takes place during early adulthood, I limit the observation window from ages 16 to 34. In the first three cohorts, a lower proportion of men with military experience were married in their teens and early twenties, but this proportion grows rapidly around age 23 and exceeds that of nonveterans around age 26 – a marriage-age pattern that is particularly clear for the 1950s cohort. In the last cohort, however, men with military experience have a lower marriage rate at any age.

The cumulative probabilities of becoming a Party member by age and cohort are displayed in Figure 4. The four cohorts produce similar trajectories over the age range, with the proportion of veterans who are Party members rising quickly and far exceeding the very slowly rising proportion of nonveterans from ages 18 to 25, then flattening thereafter. Officer veterans have a higher cumulative probability than non-officers of becoming Party members, at least in part because Party membership is a factor for promotion to be officers.

Figure 4: Cumulative probabilty of joining Party, by veteran status and birth cohort



Notes: The thick solid lines refer to veterans. The thin solid lines refer to officer veterans. The thick dash lines refer to the matched nonveterans. The thin dash lines refer to all nonveteran

The discrete-time hazard-rate models offer estimations of the effects of military experience on the outcome variables with other covariates controlled. Since I used the matched sample to ensure balance between veterans and non-veterans, I focus on only the main effects of military status and summarize them in a single table. For each outcome in Table 2, I present two versions of estimates. The first version is based on the original model, which provides estimates for the three types of military status: active status, normal period; active status, extended period; and veteran status, with no military service as the reference category. It shows that not all military statuses are significantly different in outcome effects from the reference category. For simplicity, in the second version, certain categories of military status are grouped based on the original model and a best and simplified model is constructed for each outcome.

As shown in Table 2, men with military experience are more likely to attend college. The estimates of three military statuses are all positive, but only the estimate of active service in extended period is significant. This finding is a bit surprising and can be attributed to servicemen being able to receive tertiary education during their extended enlistment period. The simplified model, which combines the three military status categories into a single variable, shows that having any type of military experience increases the odds of having tertiary education by 50% ($e^{0.405} \times 100\%$).

The interaction terms for *hukou* origin, birth cohort, and age group are then included in the estimates so as to examine whether the relationship between military experience and tertiary education attainment varies across these factors. The interaction models are not presented here, but the interaction effects are presented in Table 3. The odds ratios indicate the differences in the likelihood of attaining tertiary education between men with and without military experience by the three factors examined. The first panel of Table 3 shows that military experience significantly increases the likelihood of tertiary education for men of rural origin, but has a smaller and statistically insignificant effect for men of urban origin. The LR Chi-square test however shows that the interaction term between military service and *hukou* origin is not significant. In regard to cohort variation, the relationship between military experience and tertiary education is positive across the four birth cohorts, but only servicemen/veterans born in 1950-1959 are significantly more likely to have tertiary education than nonveterans.

Table 2: A summary of main effects of military service on tertiary education, entry into first marriage, and Party membership, based on time-discrete logit models and a matched sample of veteran and nonveteran males

	Tertiary education		Entry into first marriage		Party membership	
	Original	Simplified	Original	Simplified	Original	Simplified
Never/not serving in the military		Ref.				Ref.
active status: normal period	0.379		-1.705**		3.404**	
	(0.349)		(0.214)	Ref.	(0.152)	3.755**
active service: longer period	0.724*	0.405*	0.101		4.092**	(0.133)
	(0.294)	(0.166)	(0.089)		(0.142)	
veteran status	0.303		0.395**	0.348**	0.384*	Ref.
	(0.207)		(0.075)	(0.075)	(0.163)	

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; ** p<0.01, * p<0.05; "Ref." denotes reference category (=0). The coefficients are estimated from discrete-time logit models. For each outcome, two models are constructed. In an original model, the effects of four different statuses regarding military experience are estimated. In a simplified model, the statuses of military experience are simplified based on the result of the original model. The estimates for covariates are not presented. Time-invariant covariates include birth cohort, *hukou* status at age 12, mother's education, one or both parents being Party member (for Party membership), Time-varying covariates include age at year, years of schooling (for entry into first marriage and Party membership), years of schooling at last year (for tertiary education), being married or not (for tertiary education), in-school status (for entry into first marriage).

Table 3: Odds ratios of attending tertiary education between active serviceman/veterans and nonveterans by *hukou* origin, age group and birth cohort

	Hukou origin				Model test	
	Rural	urban			LR χ^2	*df*
servicemen/ veterans	1.87**	1.11			2.44	1
	Birth cohort					
	1937-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	3.09	3
servicemen/ veterans	1.41	2.35**	1.43	1.04		
	Age group					
	<20	20-24	25-29	>=30	10.97*	3
servicemen/ veterans	2.56*	0.61	1.52	2.25**		

Notes: The significant test of odds ratio is for the difference between men having military experience (i.e. active servicemen and veterans) and men without this experience. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10.

The military effect on tertiary education is very small in 1970-1979. The odds of attending college for men with military experience in the 1970-1979 cohort are only 4% higher than for men in the same cohort without experience, in contrast with the 135% advantage enjoyed by servicemen and veterans in the 1950-1959 cohort. This may be attributed to the increasing availability of tertiary education for later cohorts. For men from this cohort, military service is no longer an effective way to receive tertiary education. In fact, it could delay it. The third panel of Table 3 shows that the advantage of military service for education is large and significant for men who are either younger than age 20 or age 30 and older. This variation across life stages in the effect of military service on education is significant at the 0.05 level. The serviceman and veterans of the youngest age group may benefit from early service entry. They receive the benefits of servicemen/veteran status for college attendance and face less of the competing challenges of careers and family life. For servicemen and veterans aged 30 or above, they are likely to obtain tertiary education through adult programs suited to their life stage. The adult program offered to officer servicemen or veterans is a channel for "sponsored mobility" (Li and Walder 2001), through which officer servicemen or veterans meet the educational requirement for their promotion in military rank or in a post-service job.

In regard to the main effect of military status on entry into first marriage, Table 2 shows that military service within the normal period decreases the odds of getting married, while veteran status increases the odds. This lends support to the life-course position on the incompatibility of marriage and active military duty. Men on active duty within the normal service period face an especially demanding schedule that may leave little room for marital life. But once men leave the military, both their veteran status and their increased likelihood of being assigned a stable urban job are advantages in the marriage market. To further show the advantages of veterans in the marriage market, an additional analysis compares the social status of veterans' and nonveterans' wives, assuming that the assortative mating norm will act to pair highly valued men with women of higher social standing. We can see from Table 4 that in comparison to nonveterans' wives, veterans' wives tend to have significantly higher education and ISEI, and are more likely to be Party members, to be of urban *hukou* origin, and to have a better educated father.

Table 4: Wives' social status of veteran males and nonveteran males

	Husband's veteran status			
	Veteran	Non veteran	F-test	
Wife's background				
Years of schooling	6.72	5.35	33.59	**
ISEI (for wives being employed only)	31.95	29.21	7.42	**
Party membership	0.08	0.04	20.36	**
Urban hukou at age 12 (for husbands of rural origin only)	0.04	0.11	29.34	**
Father's years of schooling	1.81	1.40	6.10	*
Mother's years of schooling	3.63	3.24	2.97	

Notes: ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$, † $p<0.10$.

Since only veteran status speeds up the probability of marrying, the analysis is limited to the interactive effects of veteran status with other factors. Table 5 presents the odds ratio of transition to first marriage between veterans and nonveterans by *hukou* origin, birth cohort, and age group. Veteran status is found to be advantageous to marriage among men of both rural and urban origin, which may be linked to the similarity in returns to military service for these two groups. Veteran status is an advantage in the probability of first marriage for the first three birth cohorts, with men in the 1950s birth cohort benefitting the most from veteran status. The positive effect of veteran status declines and becomes insignificant with the 1970s cohort, providing evidence in support of a declining veteran premium over the historical time. Given that job allocation for veterans has weakened since the 1980s, veterans of the latest cohorts no longer have a faster rate of marriage than non-veterans. For the age variation, the veteran premium is most pronounced at ages 20-24 and declines at subsequent ages. This may be driven by the life-course pattern: the earlier the service ends, the earlier the veteran can get married.

Table 5: Odds ratios of entry into first marriage between veterans and nonveterans (including active servicemen) by *hukou origin*, age group, and birth cohort

	Hukou origin				Model test	
	rural	urban			LR χ^2	*Df*
veterans	1.54**	1.43*			0.16	1
	Birth cohort					
	1937-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	2.98	3
veterans	1.38*	1.69**	1.60**	1.19		
	Age group					
	<20	20-24	25-29	>=30	12.41**	3
veterans	8.33	2.05**	1.44**	0.97		

Notes: The significant test of odds ratio is for the difference between veterans and nonveterans (including active serviceman) in each category of *hukou* origin, age group, and birth cohort. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05.

Returning again to Table 2 for the main effect of military status on Party membership, we see that both active and veteran statuses increase the odds of joining the party relative to no military service. However, the effects of both types of active service – within and beyond the normal service period – are much larger than that of veteran status. Active service status within the normal service period increases the odds of attaining Party membership by 30 times ($=e^{3.404}$), beyond the normal service period by 60 times ($=e^{4.092}$), while veteran status only increases the odds by 1.5 times ($=e^{0.384}$). This explains what we observed earlier in Figure 4: the proportion of Party members among those with any military status grows quickly between ages 18 and 25, when men are most likely to be actively serving in the military.

Since active status strongly contributes to the attainment of Party membership, only its interactive effect is modeled, Table 6 showing the odds ratio (between active duty servicemen and non-active duty servicemen) of becoming a Party member by *hukou* origin, birth cohort, and age group. Although active service increases the odds of Party membership for men of rural and urban origin, its effect for men of rural origin, a 54% increase in odds, is significantly larger than the effect for men of urban origin, which increases the odds by 46%. This is consistent with Wang's (2011) argument that servicemen of rural origin are particularly eager to get Party memberships, which facilitate promotion in the military, because they face more restricted opportunities outside of the military[22] than their urban-origin counterparts. Regarding cohort differences, active service increases the likelihood of joining the Party across all cohorts, with the effect strongest for the 1950s cohort, lowest for the 1960s cohort, and in between for the 1970s cohort. This overall persistent effect makes sense because the military is firmly controlled by the Party and supplies the Party with eligible, loyal members. Finally, the relationship between active status and Party membership is significantly positive in all age groups, with the effect increasing with age. This may be because active service at older ages implies a prolonged service and military promotion, which usually requires Party membership.

[22] However, an alternative interpretation is that military service results in a great contrast in Party membership between men of rural origin with and without military service, because men of rural origin in general have few chances of becoming party members.

Table 6: Odds ratios of Party membership between active servicemen and veterans/nonveterans by *hukou* origin, age group, and birth cohort.

	Hukou origin				Model test	
	Rural	urban			LR χ^2	*df*
active servicemen	49.40**	22.60**			12.54**	1
	Birth cohort					
	1937-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	6.24	3
active servicemen	44.88**	51.68**	28.45**	42.78**		
	Age group					
	<20	20-24	25-29	>=30	6.74*	2
active servicemen	24.56**	38.47**	66.29**	--		

Notes: The significant test of odds ratio is for the difference between active servicemen and veterans/nonveterans. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, †p<0.10.

Table 7 presents OLS estimates of the veteran status effect on cross-sectional outcomes — personal income, housing value, and occupational ISEI in 2010. Control variables include birth cohort, *hukou* origin at age 12, and years of education. Since models for this study are constructed based on the matched sample, the estimates of control variables are not a key concern and not presented here. Original models estimate the effect of military experience within and beyond the normal service period, while the simplified models combine these two categories and estimate a general effect of military experience.

The simplified models show that veterans in general enjoy higher incomes, more valuable housing, and higher occupational status than nonveterans. The original models show that these premiums are mainly enjoyed by veterans who served in the military beyond the normal service period. In comparison to nonveterans, veterans who served in the military for extended periods enjoy a 31% advantage in income, a 28% advantage in housing value, and 2.35 points higher ISEI scores. These premiums, however, may be indirectly brought about by military experience through post-military job allocation. When Party membership and urban residency are included in the Table 7 models, the premiums of military experience disappear (estimates not shown here), suggesting that these premiums occur through military opportunities to attain Party membership and convert to an urban *hukou* status – both bridges to good urban employment.

Table7: A summary of main effects of veteran status on personal income in 2010, housing value in 2010, and occupational ISEI, based on OLS models and a matched sample of veteran males and nonveteran males

	Log income in 2010		Log housing value		ISEI	
	Original	Simplified	Original	Simplified	Original	Simplified
Non-veterans	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Military service for normal period	0.103		0.218†		1.104	
	(0.108)	0.255**	(0.128)	0.263**	(1.168)	2.315**
Military service for longer period	0.313**	(0.063)	0.279**	(0.074)	2.776**	(0.677)
	(0.071)		(0.083)		(0.768)	

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses; ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10.; "Ref." denotes reference category (=0). The coefficients are estimated from ordinary least square models. For each outcome, Itwo models are constructed. In an original model, the effects of military service within normal period and military service for a longer period are estimated. In a simplified model, Ithe statuses of military experience based on the result of the original model are simplified. The estimates for covariates are not presented. Covariates include birth cohort, *hukou* status at age 12, and years of education.

Tables 8 to 9 present the estimates of interactive effects between veteran status and *hukou* origin, and between veteran status and birth cohorts on income, housing value, and occupational ISEI. The interactive models are all based on the simplified models in Table 7. Although the interactive effects models show that veteran status yields significantly higher premiums in income, housing value, and ISEI for veterans of rural origin, but not for veterans of urban origin, the LR chi-square tests do not show the significance of this advantage. In terms of cohort variation, we find income and housing premiums only for veterans born in the 1937-1949 cohort, and higher ISEI only for veterans born in the 1950-1959 cohort. The premiums seem to decline in later cohorts. Since these outcomes are cross-sectional, it is still unclear whether veterans in later cohorts enjoyed some premiums early on but lost them over time, or never enjoyed these premiums at all. Table 10 shows the effects of age at military entry on income, housing value, and ISEI. The results support the life-course perspective that an earlier military experience confers more benefits than a later military experience. And in comparison to nonveterans, veterans who started service before age 20 enjoy significantly higher incomes, housing values, and occupational ISEI.

Table 8: Effects (in exponential form) of veteran status on log housing value by *hukou* origin and birth cohort

	Hukou origin				Model test	
	rural	urban			LR χ^2	*df*
veteran	1.36**	1.08			1.42	1
	Birth Cohort					
	1937-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	3.28	3
veteran	1.56**	1.26	1.09	1.24		

Notes: The significant test of odds ratio is for the difference between veterans and nonveterans. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, †p<0.10.

Table 9: Effects of veteran status on occupational ISEI by *hukou* origin and birth cohort

	Hukou origin				Model test	
	rural	urban			LR χ^2	*df*
veteran	2.177**	3.181			0.26	1
	Birth Cohort					
	1937-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	0.94	3
veteran	2.368	3.002**	1.458	2.091		

Notes: The significant test of odds ratio is for the difference between veterans and nonveterans. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, †p<0.10.

Table 10: Different effects of military experience by starting age on income, housing value and ISEI

	Log income in 2010	Log housing value	ISEI
<20	0.261**	0.341**	3.636**
	(0.076)	(0.089)	(0.822)
20-24	0.237*	0.125	0.150
	(0.094)	(0.110)	(1.020)
>=25	1.921	1.994	--
	(1.219)	(1.444)	

Notes: ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10. Nonveterans are the reference category. The estimates for covariates are not presented. Covariates include birth cohort, *hukou* status at age 12, and years of education.

Conclusion

This study examines the relationship between military experience and characteristics indicating socioeconomic wellbeing, including attainment of tertiary education, entry into marriage, attainment of Party membership, personal income, housing value, and occupational ISEI. The study also explores how the effects of military experience vary by *hukou* origin, service status, service timing, and birth cohort. In general, these analyses show that military experience facilitates attainment of educational credentials, marriage, political credentials, economic advantages, and career achievement.

The bridging hypothesis is somewhat supported in that military service has a significantly larger positive effect on obtaining Party membership during military service for men of rural than those of urban origin. However, rural-origin veterans do not enjoy greater benefits from military service than urban-origin veterans in terms of tertiary education, entry into first marriage, income, housing value, or occupational ISEI.

Life course transitions matter. The results show that active status and veteran status produce different effects for different outcomes. Active status beyond the normal service period has a significantly positive influence on attending college – an effect not seen for other military status categories. Also, active service status has a significantly negative effect on the odds of entering a first marriage, presumably because of the incompatibility of the service role and marital life, but veteran status has a large positive effect on marriage. Active service has a significantly positive effect on becoming a Party member, but veteran status has only a slight positive effect.

In addition, the timing of enlistment also matters. The effects of veteran status on tertiary education, entry into marriage, income, housing, and ISEI are larger for younger men than for older men. Enlistment age, however, has no effect on obtaining Party membership.

Consistent with earlier research, the effects of veteran status on social outcomes were found to vary by birth cohort, with a general pattern of diminished veteran premiums in recent periods. The veteran advantage in tertiary education, marital transition, and occupational status was highest in the 1950-1959 cohort and declined in subsequent cohorts. The highest veteran premiums in personal income and housing value were found in the 1937-1949 cohort. No cross-cohort decline was found in the veteran premium to obtaining Party membership.

Most studies of military service in the U.S. over the past two decades reveal a negative impact of service on veterans' socioeconomic wellbeing (MacLean and Elder 2007), while in China, military service remains a positive turning point for many men.[23] One possible explanation is that military service in China, which, unlike the U.S., has had very limited involvement in any war since the end of the Korean War in 1953,[24] exposes servicemen to far less combat than military service in the U.S. We know that exposure to the dangers and trauma of combat is a key factor in negative consequences of military service. Another possibility is that the strong control of China's socialist government over military-related resource allocation has contributed to positive outcomes for veterans and servicemen. This possibility is highlighted by the finding that the highest veteran premium was for the cohort born in 1950-1959, when the Party and the government still exercised strong control over all aspects of society. Veterans' premiums on marriage, education, earnings, and career achievement declined in subsequent

[23] My findings empirically challenged the argument of Diamant (2009) that veterans in post-1949 China are suffered rather than benefited. He collected cases of veteran protests and suicides to show that veterans in China are not truly respected and well treated. According to Diamant, Veterans encounter medical and family difficulties when they return home. They are powerless when they appeal to the authorities. He explains the sufferings of veterans as the absence of cross-class experience and veteran organizations that create solidarity among veterans from various classes. Given that most veterans are from the peasant class, they are discriminated against by urban elites. Even the service cannot change their low status, which only brings them "minimal upward mobility" (Diamant 2009: 15). Although Diamant's evidence that veterans have encountered many difficulties after their demobilization is credible, his argument fails to raise a counterfactual question: What if these veterans did not serve in the military? Would they achieve upward mobility by other means? Without a comparison of veterans and nonveterans of similar backgrounds, it is hard to tell what the overall effect of military service might be.

[24] The wars that involved China after the Korean War in 1953 were the Sino-Indian War (1959-1962), the Zhenbaodao War with Soviet Union (or Sino-Soviet border clash) (1969), and the Sino-Vietnamese War (1977-1988). These wars were mainly border clashes.

cohorts, as the government partially withdrew from certain domains of economic life during the post-reform years.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that not all veterans in China have received equal benefits from military service. Diamant (2009) has documented the experiences of veterans being maltreated and discriminated against. Since 1949, the PLA has launched several large waves of disarmament that reduced the number of troops, forcing a multitude of servicemen to return to civilian life without adequate local resources for allocating jobs to them (Schichor 1996). Given limited job vacancies relative to the number of veterans wanting jobs, veterans with high in-service ranks and with better social connections were more likely to secure better positions. This is supported by this study's finding that service beyond the normative period – which is associated with military promotion – is more beneficial than service within the normative period.

In China, military experience may not guarantee good life prospects, but it still provides opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable, especially to men from disadvantaged backgrounds. In particular, men who remain in the military beyond the normative period of service – who become officers – may be better able to make use of military resources and experiences to achieve upward mobility in Chinese society.

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