

# Ideas Mobilize People: The Diffusion of Communist Ideology in China\*

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*Date: June 26, 2023*

## Abstract

Can ideas mobilize people into collective action? We investigate this question by analyzing how exposure to Communist ideology shaped an individual's decision to join the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during its formative stage. Our study focuses on cadets at the Whampoa Military Academy, who played crucial roles in China's major 20th-century conflicts. Our identification strategy leverages the locality-time-content variation in the circulation of the *New Youth* magazine—the primary platform promoting Communism following the Treaty of Versailles in 1919—and the variation in an individual's location over time. Comparing Whampoa cadets living in a locality with access to post-1919 *New Youth* against those who lived in the same locality but missed this channel, we find that the former were significantly more likely to join the CCP, and that this party choice was consequential in subsequent conflicts. We also find that family background did not predict party choice of these political pioneers, but that social networks mattered.

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\*We thank Sam Bazzi, Ernesto Dal Bo, Harris Doshay, Matthew Gentzkow, Saad Gulzar, Yasheng Huang, Debin Ma, Suresh Naidu, Nancy Qian, Marvin Suesse, Shaoda Wang, Yang Yao, David Yang, Noam Yuchtman, Enying Zheng, Fabrizio Zilibotti and seminar/conference participants at Academia Sinica, Call to Service Conference, Columbia, CUHK-Shenzhen, Harvard Business School, HKU 1st Annual Conference on China and the Global Economy, National School of Development (PKU), NBER China meeting, Northwestern-U Chicago Development and Political Economy Conference, New Economic History of China Conference, PKU-Tsinghua conference on Chinese economy, Quantitative History Webinar, Trinity College Dublin, and UCSD for their comments.

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# 1 Introduction

How do people get mobilized into collective action that sometimes changes the trajectory of history? Among many determinants, the importance of ideas has long been noted and debated. Do new ideas spur political and economic action, or do they merely serve to justify pre-existing material interests?<sup>1</sup> While influential economic literature has investigated the effects of ideological exposure and ideology on voting behavior (e.g., [DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007](#), [Adena et al. 2015](#)), public opinion ([Cantoni et al. 2017](#)), and policy-making ([Ash, Chen and Naidu 2022](#), [Spenkuch, Teso and Xu 2023](#)), there is limited evidence on the role of ideas in shaping significant political and social movements, which often serve as pivotal turning points in history. This study focuses on the diffusion of Communist ideology in China to illustrate how ideas can influence individuals' political actions, ultimately shaping the destiny of a nation.

The spread of Communist ideology was one of the most significant political events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: For a large part of the century, approximately one-third of humanity lived in Communist countries. Yet, little is known about how such an ideology got diffused across such vastly different contexts, ranging from Germany and Italy in the west to China and Indonesia in the east. China, during the 1910s–1920s, provides a useful context for understanding Communism's spread via the printing press. As well recognized by abundant historical narratives (discussed in Section 2), the most prominent press in spreading Communist ideology is the *New Youth* magazine (1915–1922), a leading literary magazine founded in 1915 that spearheaded the New Culture Movement (1915–1923) but turned to promoting Communism after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.<sup>2</sup>

Identifying the impact of ideology diffusion, however, is challenging. First, it is difficult to differentiate ideological exposure from other confounding factors. For instance, the circulation of the *New Youth* magazine across localities would, in most cases, be associated with locality size or urbanization rates. Second, it is similarly hard to determine the direct population that was influenced

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<sup>1</sup>More broadly, the debate between idealism and materialism as an explanation for historical change has been going on since the early days of civilization. Among modern classical works on ideas, [Hirschman \(1977\)](#) discusses how the ideas of capitalism initially emerged. [Berlin \(1979\)](#) emphasizes the importance of dissenters in the history of ideas.

<sup>2</sup>Even though China was on the winning side of WWI, the Treaty of Versailles allowed Japan to retain territories in Shandong that had been surrendered to Germany. Such actions of Western powers undermined the moral prestige of the West in China and directed the leadership of the *New Youth* towards Russia for enlightenment. See more on the background in Section 2.

by the ideology. In a setting like the one being discussed in this paper, where over 80% of the population were illiterate and printing press was the primary form of media, it is conceivable that only a small share of the population could be influenced. Although these individuals might go on to become pioneers in the coming Communist revolution, it is challenging to identify them with certainty.

To address these challenges, we leverage a specific and significant context: the choice of individuals at the Whampoa Military Academy to become a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) member during the CCP's formative stage in the 1920s. The Whampoa Military Academy, established in 1924, produced commanders and legendary graduates who would subsequently go on to fight China's most important wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including two civil wars between the CCP and the Kuomintang (KMT) as well as the anti-Japanese war. It remains to be understood what motivated these individuals to become revolution leaders.

This setting offers four strengths in evaluating the significance of ideological exposure. First, the initial cohort at the Whampoa Military Academy consisted of 689 individuals who provided comprehensive data regarding their family background, life histories, and even the references they utilized when applying to Whampoa. Given the subsequent importance of these individuals, we can also gather information on their future political trajectories. This rich biographical information enables a thorough examination of individual-level political choices within a significant historical context, a task that has posed challenges for researchers in the past. Second, studying a group of individuals who shared the same environment at Whampoa allows for more accurate comparisons. Third, the introduction of Communist ideas to China in the early 1920s renders the influence of ideas more discernible compared to scenarios where certain ideas have a longer historical presence. Lastly, the availability of detailed data on individual mobility, the spread of the *New Youth* magazine, and archival information on other relevant periodicals and organizations provides valuable resources for identification and interpretation purposes.

We use two variations in our identification strategy: time-varying geographical variation in the circulation of the *New Youth* and its content change before and after 1919, and time-varying location of individuals due to education or employment. We compare cadets who were living in a locality with access to the post-1919 *New Youth* against those who were in the same locality but missed it due to the timing of their life events. By controlling for locality fixed effects, we can address the challenge that ideological exposure is correlated with other locality characteristics. Our analyses use two definitions of localities—prefectures and counties—for comparison and robustness. We show

that, conditional on locality fixed effects, individuals with or without access to post-1919 *New Youth* are comparable in terms of a rich set of personal characteristics, including family socioeconomic status, education, the political identities of their references, age, numbers of siblings and children, marriage, and even behavioral traits such as smoking and drinking. This pattern suggests that an individual's location is primarily driven by economic concerns (especially education and jobs) rather than the presence of the post-1919 *New Youth*. We further demonstrate that, after accounting for fixed effects related to locality, there is no correlation between exposure to post-1919 *New Youth* and inclusion in our Whampoa sample.

Our main finding is that exposure to the *New Youth* at the prefecture during 1919–1922 increases an individual's probability of joining the CCP by 11.7 percentage points compared to individuals who resided in the same locality but missed this exposure. The magnitude becomes 17.2 percentage points when we zoom into county-level exposure. These estimates imply a persuasion rate of at least 18.9%.<sup>3</sup> This relatively high persuasion rate is partly because our studied sample is a group of educated young radicals who were actively making a decisive choice regarding party affiliation. In contrast, the other personal characteristics, except for the political identity of one's references, cannot predict the decision to join the CCP and the KMT and do not offer strong heterogeneous impact for ideology exposure.

Two primary concerns of our main finding are whether the *New Youth* entered certain localities due to potential demand and whether individuals relocated to those localities in response to the availability of post-1919 *New Youth*. We should note that our estimate is similar even if controlled for the interactions between prefecture fixed effects and the post-1919 dummy, which allows us to then control for possible changes in the demand for Communism in different prefectures before and after 1919. Moreover, we take a closer look at possible endogeneity concerns regarding the circulation locations of the *New Youth* and the relocation of individuals. We find that exposure to the *New Youth* during 1915–1918 had no similar influence on the CCP choice, suggesting that our finding is not driven by the endogenous entry of the *New Youth*. Additionally, our estimate is similar when restricting exposure to the localities that *always* had access to the *New Youth*, which helps eliminate the possible entry concerns of *New Youth* after 1919. To more effectively capture the location preferences for an individual, we construct placebo locations of an individual by assuming that he were in his previous or following location based on his life event records. We use

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<sup>3</sup>We also explore very local exposure based on school information and obtain an upper bound of 29.2%. DellaVigna and Gentzkow (2010) summarize persuasion rates across different settings, ranging from 0.7% to 30%. Our estimates are sizable compared with those in the literature.

these placebo locations to calculate placebo exposures to post-1919 *New Youth* and find that these placebo exposures cannot explain our finding either. Furthermore, we separate our comparison group who had resided in prefectures ever with post-1919 *New Youth* but missed it into several cohorts, including those who arrived before 1919, during 1919–22, and in 1923. Comparing with these various cohorts, we find similar estimates to our baseline results. We also addressed concerns regarding possible measurement error at both the locality and individual levels. Additionally, we extended our analysis to include potential spillover effects and another 700 selected cadets from the second to fourth cohorts, and our findings remain robust.

We focus on post-1919 *New Youth* exposure because it is widely recognized as the main channel for Communist ideology diffusion (see qualitative evidence in Section 2). It is certainly possible, however, for our studied individuals to read other magazines or be exposed to activist groups in this period, some of which might also help spread Communist ideology. Because of this, we conduct three sets of analyses to help interpret post-1919 *New Youth* exposure. First, based on archival information on pro-Communism periodicals that existed during 1919–1922, we are able to characterize a network by examining whether these magazines shared editors or editorial offices. This network reveals that the *New Youth* was the most central magazine and its editors often would be instrumental in helping co-found other magazines. Comparing the exposure to post-1919 *New Youth* to that of two other pro-Communism magazines, we find that few would have been exposed to the other magazines without being exposed to post-1919 *New Youth*. Estimates are similar regardless of whether we further consider these additional periodicals. Second, we use archival information on activist groups in this era and find our result still holds in localities without these groups. Third, we leverage the timing of joining the CCP and information on potential social interactions in locality of exposure to show that it would be difficult to use factors such as local CCP recruitment to account for our main finding. Based on these analyses, we interpret post-1919 *New Youth* exposure as a reasonable proxy for the diffusion of Communism ideology in a locality.

In the latter part of our analyses, we investigate whether individuals who were mobilized by Communist ideology exhibit different behavior in critical historical moments. This is a challenging yet important issue to study. To explore this, we examine the future political outcomes of our studied individuals during various political struggles in which many quit their parties and sacrificed their lives. We find suggestive evidence that those who were more influenced by Communist ideology exposure were less likely to quit the CCP and more likely to sacrifice their lives. This difference is primarily driven by the period from 1927 to 1936, during the first Civil War between the CCP and the KMT when the CCP was the weaker party and was under severe attacks by the KMT. These

findings suggest that initial ideology exposure can work in conjunction with other factors of the revolution process to significantly influence an individual's political choices.

Our study contributes to the challenging task of quantifying the importance of ideas in shaping political and economic processes, which has long been recognized.<sup>4</sup> For instance, in a series of perceptive works, Joel Mokyr points out the importance of a set of ideas collectively known as “the Enlightenment” in creating the Industrial Revolution (e.g., Mokyr 2005). Our study joins the economics literature mentioned in the beginning that has investigated the impacts of ideological exposure on voting behavior, public opinion, and policy-making by providing evidence on the relevance of ideas in shaping a large-scale political movement. To the best of our knowledge, our study is the first to trace the diffusion of Communist ideas and demonstrate their impacts on an individual's political choices, thus contributing to a better understanding of the role of ideas in critical historical junctures.<sup>5</sup>

We are also able to compare the role of ideology exposure with that of family background and proxies for social networks. We find that one's political choice is positively associated with his personal references' political identities, consistent with a recent literature that highlights the importance of social networks (e.g., Satyanath, Voigtlönder and Voth 2017, Enikolopov, Makarin and Petrova 2020).<sup>6</sup> Our findings also reveal a complementary relationship between social networks, proxied by reference identity, and exposure to ideology. In contrast, family background does not significantly predict CCP membership of these political pioneers. It is important to note that our analysis focuses on a group of political pioneers who can be regarded as leaders in a revolution, and the findings regarding family background may not apply to the entire population. These results underscore the importance of ideas and social influences in political and social movements, particularly in the face of significant uncertainty.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to illustrating the role of ideas in political movements, our study also sheds lights

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<sup>4</sup>Religion is a longstanding example of ideas, and existing literature has primarily focused on how material incentives affect religion diffusion (e.g., Cantoni 2012, Michalopoulos, Naghavi and Prarolo 2018, Becker and Pascali 2019), rather than the impacts of ideas separate from material incentives.

<sup>5</sup>Numerous historical studies on Communism exist, although they primarily focus on a few nations as case studies (Smith 2014). Magness and Makovi (2022) document the Russian Revolution's central role in mainstreaming the ideas of Marx. In our setting, the Russian Revolution and the Treaty of Versailles facilitated the adoption of Communism in China.

<sup>6</sup>This pattern is nicely summarized as “from friend to comrade” in historical narratives (Van de Ven 1992). The political sociology literature on social movement participation has also discussed the role of social networks (see Walder (2009) for a review).

<sup>7</sup>Individuals who joined the CCP after its growth became more pronounced are likely to differ from the political pioneers we examine. Scholars have explored the contribution of nationalism against Japan in the CCP's growth after 1937, highlighting the complex dynamics at play during different periods (Johnson 1962, Chen and Kung 2020).

on the formation of leaders in the Communist revolution. While existing literature has recognized the significance of leadership in economic and political development (e.g., Jones and Olken 2005, Dippel and Hebllich 2021, Cagé, Dagorret, Grosjean and Jha 2023, Bai, Jia and Yang 2023), there is limited understanding of the origins of leaders themselves. Our findings contribute to filling this gap by suggesting that ideas, specifically ideological exposure, can play a crucial role in shaping leaders and influencing their subsequent behavior. This highlights the importance of considering the role of ideas in understanding the emergence and actions of leaders in transformative historical contexts.

Finally, scholars studying the origins of the CCP have recognized the formative role of the *New Youth* (e.g., Dirlik 1989, Meisner 1999, Smith 2000, Ishikawa 2013). However, the influence of the *New Youth* remains a historical conjecture due to the empirical challenges mentioned above. Our study provides an approach to trace the spread of the *New Youth* and evaluate its impact on a group of individuals who would jointly determine China’s political path. Although we focus on China, the role of the printing press in spreading Communist ideology is likely relevant in other contexts. Thus, our study contributes to the growing literature on the impact of media in shaping political behaviors, which has documented the influence of various forms of media in a variety of contexts (see DellaVigna and Gentzkow (2010), Prat and Strömberg (2013), and Zhuravskaya, Petrova, and Enikolopov (2020) for reviews), most of which focus on macro-regional patterns.<sup>8</sup> Our setting provides novel individual-level evidence while also highlighting the role of magazines, a medium that has received little attention in the literature. We also find suggestive evidence that such an impact may partly determine the life and death of political pioneers at critical historical moments.

## 2 Background and Data

### 2.1 The *New Youth* (1915–1922) and the Founding of the CCP (1921)

The period of 1910s–1920s, known as the “Chinese enlightenment” (Schwarcz 1986), is exemplified by the New Culture Movement (1915–1923), the later stage of which is also known as the May Fourth Movement (1919–1923).<sup>9</sup> Arising out of a disillusionment with traditional Chinese culture after the

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<sup>8</sup>For example, Adena et al. (2015) use the variation in the locality-slant variation in radio exposure to demonstrate how media exposure contributed to the rise of the Nazis across localities in prewar Germany. Ang (2023) documents the impact of popular media on racial hate by studying the influence of *The Birth of a Nation* on county-level Klan support.

<sup>9</sup>The May Fourth Movement is named after the May Fourth incident on May 4, 1919. On that day, students gathered in front of Tiananmen to protest the government’s weak response to the Treaty of Versailles. These demonstrations sparked nationwide protests and contributed to the demand for political action.

failure of the Beiyang government (1912–1928) to address social and economic problems, many intellectuals joined the movement to promote a new culture based upon western ideals, particularly democracy and science. The movement was launched by the writers of the *New Youth*, a monthly magazine founded in 1915 by Chen Duxiu. Different from those who thought that democracy and constitutional government could be easily established in China, Chen argued that there must be a change in *thought* to support the constitutional government (Chen 1916). He believed that there couldn't be a new political system without a new culture.

Following the emphasis on culture, the *New Youth* magazine initially focused on culture and literature, offering such debates as promoting written vernacular Chinese over classical Chinese. It became popular very quickly with its monthly circulation rising from 1,000 for the first issue to over 16,000 after 1917 (Chow 1960). Over time, frustrated with the inadequacy of cultural change and influenced by the Russian Revolution, the magazine, led by Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, started considering more political action. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles marked a turning point, where Chinese intellectuals, disillusioned at the compromising of Chinese interests by Western powers, found the Russian way as a new role model.<sup>10</sup> In May 1919, the *New Youth* published a special issue on Communism. After that, the magazine became increasingly aligned with the Communist ideology and served as the fountainhead of Chinese Communism (Ishikawa 2013).

To track the ideological shift in the *New Youth* magazine, we analyze the distribution of article titles as depicted in Figure 1. Panel (a) highlights the mention of different nations, showing that France and Britain were initially prominent, reflecting a focus on Western ideals. However, a significant transformation occurred after 1919, with Russia becoming the most discussed nation, comprising 10–15% of annual articles. In Panel (b), the dominance of culture and literature topics initially gives way to political discussions on Communism and revolution from 1919–20 onwards. In Appendix A.1, we provide additional insights by examining the most frequently used words in titles. Notably, post-1919, words associated with Communism (e.g., labor, Russia, socialism, Marx, and revolution) prominently emerge, indicating its relevance as a set of ideas centering around proletarian revolution and the concept of organized “unified action” (Dirlik 1989).

The leaders of the *New Youth* were also among those who founded the CCP. In July 1921, the first National Congress of the CCP was held in Shanghai. It was here that Chen Duxiu was elected as the Chief Party Secretary, and following the event, the *New Youth* would then become a

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<sup>10</sup>In sharp contrast with the Treaty of Versailles, the Karakhan Manifesto, issued in 1919 on behalf of the Soviet government, nullified unequal treaties forced upon China by Czarist Russia. Not surprisingly, Russia “ascended the ideological throne forfeited by the West, and became the symbol of justice and freedom” (Huang 1964).



theoretical journal for Communism. The *New Youth* published its last issue in July 1922.<sup>11</sup> The *New Youth* published 54 issues in total during 1915–1922, which has served as an important source for studying the political intellectual history of modern China.<sup>12</sup>

**Personal Accounts.** There is ample anecdotal evidence regarding the influential role of the *New Youth* magazine in shaping the ideology of the youth in the early 20th century, including memoirs from future leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). For instance, Mao Zedong was an avid reader of the magazine and made his first contribution to it in 1917. In his 1936 interview with Edgar Snow ([Snow 1937](#)), Mao reminisced:

“I began to read this magazine [*New Youth*] while I was a student in the normal school and admired the articles of Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu very much. They became for a while my models, replacing Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei.”<sup>13</sup>

Deng Xiaoping provides another example of being influenced by the *New Youth* (more specifically, post-1919 *New Youth*). In 1926, while studying in Moscow, he wrote an autobiography reflecting on his journey towards becoming a socialist believer ([Yang 1994](#)):

“At that time [1922], my life was still considered romantic and not suitable for so-called “respectable” people. However, I felt that I was making progress because I began reading books and newspapers about socialism. The most influential works for me were the 8th and 9th volumes of the *New Youth* and a collection of socialist discussions. My work environment reinforced my belief in the words of Chen Duxiu and his colleagues, so whenever I heard people arguing with each other, I always sided with the socialist perspective.”

Similar recognitions of the formative role of the *New Youth* can be found in life experiences of other Communist pioneers including Peng Dehuai in Hunan ([Snow 1937](#)), Zhou En-lai in Tianjin ([Snow 1937](#)), Zhang Guotao in Beijing ([Zhang 1971](#)), Yun Daiying in Hubei ([Yun 1981](#)), and Shi

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<sup>11</sup>Although the original *New Youth* was stopped in 1922, the CCP continued to use the title for a new quarterly journal during 1923–1926. Because of the timing of our study, we do not focus on this latter period.

<sup>12</sup>For instance, [Jin and Liu \(2008\)](#) analyze the word frequencies in the *New Youth* and confirm the magazine’s transition to being a political journal after 1919.

<sup>13</sup>Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei were influential intellectuals who proposed reforms (instead of revolution) of the imperial system.

Cuntong in Zhejiang (Yeh 1996). We summarize these personal accounts in Appendix A.2. These accounts reveal two patterns. First, the *New Youth* was influential across many regions in China. Second, the *New Youth* served as a source of inspiration for other publications (which are explored in Section 4.2), and it was common for some young people to read the *New Youth* and its satellite publications.

Given the importance of the *New Youth*, few scholars studying the history of the CCP have missed mentioning it. As put by Meisner (1999), “it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the intellectuals who coalesced around the *New Youth*, for their writings molded the beliefs and attitudes of a whole generation of young students who were to achieve political prominence after the May Fourth incident of 1919 and who were to become the leaders of the modern Chinese revolution.”

**Other Magazines and Organizations.** As reflected by the personal accounts in Appendix A.2, the post-1919 *New Youth* was the major but not the only channel for Communist ideology diffusion. Following in the footsteps of the *New Youth*, quite a few pro-Communism periodicals emerged, some of which were co-founded by the editors of *New Youth*. Moreover, there existed various activist groups that also helped spread Communism. In Section 4.2, we examine how these alternative channels contribute to our understanding of the role played by the *New Youth*.

## 2.2 The Whampoa Military Academy (1924–1927)

The Whampoa Military Academy was established in 1924 in Whampoa, Guangzhou, as proposed and supported by the Soviet Union. In 1924, under the demand of the Soviet Union, the KMT formed a political alliance with the CCP to fight against the incumbent Beiyang government and other regional warlords. In this era, known as the First United Front, the KMT was the dominant revolutionary party whereas the CCP was at its more nascent stage. While initially everyone at Whampoa was required to be a KMT member, one could choose to join the CCP if they hadn't before 1924.

However, the KMT-CCP collaboration ended in 1927, and a civil war broke out, lasting until 1937. After the breakup, one was only able to have one party identity. Afterward, during 1937–45, the KMT and the CCP formed a second political alliance, the Second United Front, to fight against Japan. After winning the anti-Japanese war, the KMT and the CCP fought in another civil war until the CCP won the mainland, and the KMT withdrew to Taiwan in 1949–1950.

Despite its relatively short presence, the Whampoa Military Academy played a profound role in Chinese modern history.<sup>14</sup> Whampoa concentrated the revolutionary military talents into training regiments that followed the Soviet Red Army model. The exigencies of the revolution limited the time available for training, lasting only half a year for most cohorts. The emphasis was on the practical knowledge and skills required in the battlefield (Graff and Higham 2012). Whampoa cadets would become commanders for both the KMT and the CCP and fight both the civil wars and the anti-Japanese war.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the Whampoa graduates have influenced both parties' policies and governance. For Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the KMT, the "Whampoa clique" was a pivotal force for his military organization and governance (Taylor 2009). For the CCP, when it built its first Red Army in 1927, most of its commanders were from Whampoa. In the following two decades, the CCP trained its army in the Whampoa way, which would finally serve in bringing the CCP victory.<sup>16</sup> In 1955, the CCP recognized the Ten Founding Marshals of the People's Republic of China, and five out of the ten had affiliations with Whampoa.

## 2.3 The Timeline

We present a timeline of significant events from the 1910s to 1949 in Figure 2. Our study specifically examines how exposure to Communist ideology through the *New Youth* magazine during 1919–1922 influenced individuals' decision to join the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during its formative stage in the 1920s. As depicted in Figure 2(a), the number of CCP members initially remained small but experienced a remarkable growth in this period. At the 3rd National Congress of the CCP in June 1923, there were only 432 registered Communist members, but by the 5th National Congress in April 1927, the number had surged to over 57,000. We also explore the subsequent trajectories of the individuals in our study, spanning the 1920s to 1949, to gain insights into the extended impacts of ideology exposure.

Figure 2(b) presents the founding years of Communist parties in different countries, along with the year of the translation of the *Communist Manifesto*. This visualization reveals that the Russian

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<sup>14</sup>After the KMT-CCP breakup, the KMT established the Republic of China Military Academy in Nanjing.

<sup>15</sup>For instance, legendary commanders on the KMT side include Chen Cheng, Du Yuming, Xue Yue, Hu Zongnan, Hu Lien, and Guan Linzheng, whereas the CCP side includes Lin Biao, Xu Xiangqian, Liu Zhidan, and Chen Geng.

<sup>16</sup>In a 1937 interview with James Bertram, Mao Zedong emphasized that the Red Army had inherited and advanced the traditions and practices of the Whampoa.

Revolution spurred the emergence of many new Communist parties worldwide. Thus, the formation of the CCP is one among many examples influenced by both international politics and domestic tensions. It is noteworthy that the Chinese translation of the *Communist Manifesto* was published in 1920, relatively later than in many other countries. This highlights that Communist ideas were relatively new to China and aligns synchronously with our timeline of 1919–1920.

## 2.4 Data

We present the summary statistics in Appendix A.3 and the detailed data construction process in Appendix A.4–A.5. Below, we describe our key variables.

**The First Cohort of Whampoa.** The initial cohort of the Whampoa Military Academy consisted of 706 individuals, with 17 missing information about their background.<sup>17</sup> Our analysis focuses on the remaining 689 individuals for whom we have information. Out of these, 530 were directly recruited by Whampoa and were required to provide comprehensive details about their family background and life history at the time of enrollment in 1924. At Whampoa, they were assigned to Teams 1–4. Appendix A.4 provides an example of the life history records based on the *Detailed Survey for the First to Fourth Teams of the First Cohort of the Military Academy* (Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang 1924). The remaining 159 cadets were recruited from a regional military school in Guangzhou. We obtain information on the background of all 689 individuals from the work of Chen Yuhuan, a historian and Whampoa expert (Chen 2017a). In our analyses, we consider the entire sample of 689 individuals and present results specifically for Teams 1–4. Appendix A.5 provides an example of our coding system for tracking life events.

It is important to note that not all individuals recorded their life events on a year-by-year basis. The datasets contain two types of missing information. First, some individuals omitted the end year of their life events. In such cases, we assume that the life event lasted until the start of the next recorded event. Second, some individuals reported certain life events but did not specify the year. In these instances, we infer the years based on their birth year, the end year of available records, and knowledge about the school system between 1912 and 1922 (Fan and Popkewitz 2020).<sup>18</sup> To check the validity of our inference, we present results by pretending that we do not know the specific years

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<sup>17</sup>These individuals either did not appear at Whampoa or potentially left before graduation.

<sup>18</sup>This system is known as the *Renzi Guichou* school system, implemented during 1912 (the year of *Renzi* in the Chinese calendar) and 1913 (the year of *Guichou*). This system remained in effect until 1922.

and applying the same inference method to all our sample. We also conduct checks regarding the precision of life events by examining how the number of records affects our findings.

**CCP Membership and Future Political Outcomes.** Our primary outcome variable of interest is CCP membership. We gather data on the political party affiliation and subsequent outcomes of the individuals in our sample. This includes information on whether they chose to quit their party or if they died in political struggles, particularly between the KMT and the CCP. We code these variables based on information provided by [Chen \(2017\)](#), and we validate the data using Wikipedia and Baidu. While it is possible for individuals to have concealed their CCP membership in the 1920s, this is not a concern for our study as our source on CCP membership is based on information disclosed later.

During the 1920s, the CCP was considerably weaker compared to the KMT: Only a relatively small proportion of our sample (17.1%) joining the CCP. When examining the timeline of CCP membership (presented in [Appendix A.6](#)), we observe that all participants who joined the CCP did so during its early years (1921–1928), with 77% of them joining during or after the Whampoa period (i.e., 1924–1928). The small number of individuals joining the CCP before the Whampoa period suggests limited access to party organizations during that time, as evidenced by the mere 432 registered CCP members across the country by 1923.

Our study focuses on a critical moment in history where the cadets in our sample faced significant risks and uncertainties in their political careers. Specifically, 24.1% of them experienced death in future conflicts, and 16% chose to quit their respective parties, including instances of surrendering to the opposing party in the conflicts. These outcomes highlight the high stakes and volatility of the revolutionary era, suggesting that the political identity choices made by the cadets could have substantial consequences.

**Personal Characteristics.** We consider 13 variables of a Whampoa cadet’s personal characteristics categorized into three groups, which together provides a clear portrait: These were a group of men in their early 20s in 1924 who had received middle-school or secondary-school education and came from families of the middle and lower strata.

(i) Education and socioeconomic background. As reported in [Appendix A.3](#), 96% of the cadets had completed middle school and 61% attended secondary vocational schools. 11% had some college education or attended some college classes but usually did not hold college degrees. 54% came from families with some education or business tradition; 39%, 58%, and 3% ranked their

family status as “poor”, “middle-income”, and “rich”. We code this status as a categorical variable (1–3), which has a mean value of 1.63.

Alongside education and socioeconomic background, we know the political identity of the personal references that cadets used in their application to the Whampoa and can measure how many CCP references one had. This variable proxies whether one had direct or indirect connections with existing CCP members and can be considered as a crude measure of social networks. This variable ranges from 0 to 5 and has a mean value of 0.18, which again implies that few could directly access CCP references by 1924.

(ii) Demographic information. The average age of the studied individuals was 23 in 1924. The average number of siblings they had is 3.4. 54% of them were married and 14% had children, reflecting marriage at an early age in this era.

(iii) Religion and behavior traits. 11% reported believing in some religion (mostly Confucianism and Buddhism). 5% reported a habit of smoking or drinking.

**Exposures to the *New Youth* and Communist Ideology.** Each year, the *New Youth* discloses information on its circulation locations in at least one issue, which we use to construct prefecture-year and county-year datasets on the availability of the *New Youth*. The variation in circulation is driven by both the expansion effort of the magazine and the censorship imposed by the Beiyang government. We present an example of this circulation data and a map of circulation locations over time in Appendix A.5 (Step 1). By 1920, the *New Youth* had reached 53 prefectures, covering 37.9% of China’s population. See the maps in Appendix A.5 for the circulation locations. Notably, the *New Youth* was always available for a group of prefectures whereas there existed entry and exit in others. We leverage such a variation to examine whether the potential endogeneity concerns of the *New Youth* circulation matter for our findings.

We measure the *New Youth* exposure by analyzing the intersection between the locality-year circulation variation and the variation in an individual’s life history. In Appendix A.5 (Step 2), we explain our life history coding process and present maps of cadets’ locations over time. By 1924, the individuals we study had been to 160 prefectures, covering 80.0% of China’s population.

Considering that A and B lived in the same locality, Person A could have been exposed because he happened to be there during the years the *New Youth* was available, whereas Person B could have not been present during the years it was available. We illustrate the intersection between cadets’ locations and *New Youth* locations in our data in Appendix A.5 (Step 3). Further, our measure of

Communist ideology exposure considers the content change of the *New Youth* before and after 1919. If an individual was living in a prefecture (or county) when post-1919 *New Youth* was available, we define him as being exposed to Communist ideology. By this design, we study an intention-to-treat effect. In addition to this dummy exposure indicator, we present the results using a continuous variable that calculates the number of exposure years.

**Supplementary Data.** While the first cohort at Whampoa was surveyed systematically, the other cohorts were not. However, historical research has yielded biographical information on a substantial number of cadets from the second to fourth cohorts, albeit in a non-systematic manner. To supplement our analysis of the first cohort, we digitize the biographical data of 700 cadets from the second to fourth cohorts, based on Chen (2017b, 2017c, and 2018).

Furthermore, we collect data on other pro-Communist magazines and activist organizations during our study period to help interpret the findings on the *New Youth*. In Section 4.2, we present these additional data sources and the corresponding measures used in our analysis.

### 3 Descriptive Evidence and Research Design

**Descriptive Evidence.** Did exposure to the *New Youth*, more specifically to post-1919 *New Youth*, have an impact on joining the CCP? We present two pieces of evidence from the raw data to motivate our empirical analyses.

First, we explore the temporal pattern by dividing individuals into an exposed group (those living in a prefecture with access to the *New Youth* after 1919) and a non-exposed group and comparing their probabilities of joining the CCP. We compare their probabilities of joining the CCP over time. As depicted in Figure 3(a), the difference in probabilities becomes positive after 1919–20, coinciding with the period when the *New Youth* actively promoted Communism. A similar pattern emerges when we define *New Youth* exposure at the county level, as illustrated in Figure 3(b).

Second, we examine the spatial pattern, which suggests the relevance of ideology exposure across different localities.. Figure 4(a) shows the number of CCP members among the group with post-1919 *New Youth* exposure across prefectures, while Figure 4(b) shows the number among the group without post-1919 *New Youth* exposure. On average, the group with post-1919 *New Youth* exposure has a higher probability of joining the CCP in the raw data, with mean ratios of 19.3% and 11%, respectively.

Although these patterns offer suggestive evidence, their interpretation is challenging due to the correlation of post-1919 *New Youth* exposure with various other characteristics specific to each locality. Therefore, in our subsequent analysis, we employ a within-locality research design to address these concerns.

**Estimation Strategy.** Our estimation strategy takes into account the localities individuals had been to during the period of 1915–1922 by including locality fixed effects and focusing on the intersection between two key factors: (1) the variation in *New Youth* availability at the locality-year-content level and (2) the variation in an individual’s life events at the locality-year level. We will also address potential endogeneity concerns related to each variation, such as by examining localities where the *New Youth* was consistently available. We begin with a baseline specification for prefecture-level exposure as follows:

$$CCP_i = \beta NYExposure_{i,p,1919-22} + \alpha NYExposure_{i,p,1915-18} + Pref_p + X_i + \epsilon_i. \quad (1)$$

Here,  $CCP_i$  is a dummy variable indicating whether individual  $i$  became a CCP member.  $NYExposure_{i,p,1919-22}$  and  $NYExposure_{i,p,1915-18}$  represent the availability of the *New Youth* during 1915–1918 and 1919–1922 when individual  $i$  was located in prefecture  $Pref_p$ .  $Pref_p$  is a set of prefecture fixed effects that control for various locality characteristics.  $X_i$  includes the 13 variables on personal background. We also include five Whampoa-team fixed effects in some specifications to further account for individual experiences at Whampoa.

To account for possible changes in different prefectures before and after 1919, we can further control for the interactions between prefecture fixed effects and the post-1919 dummy ( $Pref_p \times Post1919$ ). However, this reduces the number of observations with variations to approximately half (358 individuals). Nonetheless, we present these results as additional evidence.

In addition to prefecture-level exposures, we also conduct a study on county-level exposures. We compare individuals who lived in the same county and control for county fixed effects with county-level exposures, providing more precise information at the cost of having smaller cells to compare.

We report standard errors clustered at the home county level in our baseline estimations. Moreover, we present standard errors two-way clustered at the prefecture and the year levels. To address potential issues with the parametric assumptions of error structure, we implement a nonparametric permutation test that randomly assigns exposures, following [Chetty, Looney, and Kroft \(2009\)](#).



**Balance Tests and Selection into Whampoa Sample.** Our identification assumption is that, conditional on the localities an individual had been to,  $NYExposure_{p,1919-22}$  is close to random. This assumption is reasonable to consider when an individual’s relocation was primarily driven by economic opportunities and life events rather than the presence of the *New Youth*. To confirm this, we conduct balance tests with respect to all personal background variables considered. In Columns (1)–(3) of Table 1, we divide individuals into three groups: (1) those who could access post-1919 *New Youth* in their county, (2) those who could access post-1919 *New Youth* in their prefecture but not their county, and (3) those who could not access post-1919 *New Youth* in their prefecture. Our analyses on prefecture-level exposures are built by comparing (1) and (2) against (3). As shown in Columns (4)–(5), the characteristics between those exposed to the post-1919 *New Youth* and those who weren’t are not significantly different once we control for prefecture fixed effects. This confirms the importance of controlling for locality fixed effects to account for the sorting of individuals. Similarly, our analyses on county-level exposures compare (1) against (2) and (3). As shown in Columns (6)–(7), the characteristics between the exposed and everyone else are not significantly different once we control for county fixed effects. Again, this is not true without county fixed effects and confirms the importance of controlling for locality fixed effects.

Moreover, we examine the correlation between the exposure to the *New Youth* and the number of Whampoa cadets in our sample before and after 1919. Once we control for prefecture fixed effects, we find that the change in *New Youth* exposure is not significantly correlated with the change in the number of Whampoa cadets (Appendix A.7), indicating that sample selection is not a critical concern for our research design.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Impact of Ideology Exposure on CCP Membership

**Main Results.** Our analysis shows that exposure to post-1919 *New Youth* has a substantial impact on CCP membership. We present the results for prefecture and county-level exposure in Columns (1)–(6) and Columns (7)–(12) of Table 2, respectively. After controlling for prefecture fixed effects in Column (1), we find that the estimate for  $\beta$  in equation (1) is 0.109, indicating a significant positive effect of post-1919 *New Youth* exposure on CCP membership. By contrast, exposure to pre-1919 *New Youth* had little impact on CCP membership (Column (2)), highlighting the importance of

ideological content. Column (3) confirms the previous finding by comparing the impacts of post- and pre-1919 *New Youth*.

We include personal characteristics such as education background, birth year fixed effects, team fixed effects, and the number of CCP references in Column (4) to account for the potential confounding factors. The estimate remains similar in Column (5), where we restrict the sample to individuals in Teams 1–4. In Column (6), we further control for additional personal characteristics, such as family background, demographic information, and behavior traits. The estimated coefficient (0.117) in Column (6) serves as our baseline estimate. Columns (7)–(12) present the results for county-level exposure, where we replace prefecture fixed effects with county fixed effects. The estimate for  $\beta$  increases to 0.172, indicating a larger impact for a more precise exposure measure.

Our estimates are similar if we further control for  $Pref_p \times Post1919$ , indicating that our finding is robust with regard to considering changes in different prefectures before and after 1919 (Table 3). As previously mentioned, 358 individuals would still have variations after including this set of controls, explaining the increase in standard errors compared with our baseline estimates.

Based on the estimate in Column (12), we calculate the persuasion rate following the approach [DellaVigna and Gentzkow \(2010\)](#) and obtain a persuasion rate of 18.9%.<sup>19</sup> The relatively high persuasion rate is likely because we are studying a group of radical youth who were making a sharp choice in party identity, and were therefore more susceptible to persuasion.

Among the personal characteristics, having a personal CCP reference in most of the specifications is associated with an increased chance of joining the CCP. This is consistent with research on the importance of social networks in political participation. In contrast, socioeconomic variables are not predictive of CCP membership. Our examination of the interaction effects between personal characteristics and post-1919 *New Youth* exposure (Appendix B.1) does not reveal strong heterogeneities, except for some complementarity between ideology exposure and social networks, as well as between ideology exposure and having a business family background. The relatively insignificant impact of socioeconomic characteristics may be due to the high risk the CCP faced during this period, making it difficult to identify specific characteristics that may have been more advantageous for joining the revolution.

The impact of post-1919 *New Youth* exposure is robust to various ways of calculating standard errors (Appendix B.2). Moreover, a nonparametric permutation test by randomly assigning the

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<sup>19</sup>This is a lower bound because we assume the reading rate in treated counties to be 1 in this calculation. Our analysis across heterogenous localities below provides estimates to shed light on possible influence on reading rate.

treated sample 10,000 times confirms the significance of our estimate on post-1919 *New Youth* (Figure 5). Since these results do not rely on parametric assumptions, they further support the relevance of post-1919 *New Youth* exposure. Additionally, we also employ a continuous measure for  $NYExposure_{p,1919-22}$  by counting the share of years exposed and find a pattern similar to using a dummy variable (Appendix B.3). For ease of interpretation, we focus on the dummy variable of exposure in the following analyses.

**A Closer Look at Possible Endogeneity Concerns.** While we have accounted for time-invariant locality characteristics and changes in their influence before and after 1919 in our main analyses, we acknowledge potential endogeneity concerns and address them in this section. Specifically, we examine the endogenous entry of the *New Youth* and possible relocation preferences of those interested in reading it.

First, we find that the impact of  $NYExposure_{p,1915-18}$  on CCP membership is insignificant, suggesting that endogenous entry of the *New Youth* is not a critical concern (Table 2). Furthermore, when we separate localities that always had access to the magazine from those that experienced its entry and exit, the estimates are similar, as shown in Table 4. These results suggest that the endogenous entry of the *New Youth* is not a critical concern.

To address concerns about relocation preferences, we construct placebo relocations by assuming an individual's location was in the previous or next locality in their life history. We use these placebo relocations to calculate placebo exposures to post-1919 *New Youth*. If relocation preferences were driving our results, we would expect placebo exposures to explain the impact of  $NYExposure_{p,1919-22}$ . However, Table 5 shows that placebo exposures cannot explain our finding, suggesting that our main result is unlikely to be driven by individuals' relocation preferences.

Finally, by incorporating locality fixed effects, our comparison group comprises individuals who have resided in the prefectures ever with post-1919 *New Youth* exposure but did not experience it. We can divide the comparison group into (i) individuals who lived in these prefectures before 1919, and (ii) individuals who resided in these prefectures during the post-1919 period but narrowly missed the *New Youth* exposure. Within group (ii), we can further separate those who arrived in a locality during 1919–22 and those who arrived in 1923, the latter of which missed the *New Youth* exposure due to national-level exit. As shown in Figure 6 and Appendix Table B.4, when comparing with these different cohorts, our estimates are similar to our baseline one, suggesting that sorting of individuals is unlikely to be the driver of our main finding.

**Measurement Error.** Measurement error is likely in our setting. In Appendix B.5, we conduct three sets of analyses at the locality and individual levels to examine the robustness of our results. First, we test the sensitivity of our estimate by dropping major metropolitan cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou). Our finding remains robust, indicating that our results are not driven by a few large cities. In our subsequent analysis of the persuasion rate, we further examine the heterogeneity across localities.

Second, we investigate the precision of life events in an individual's records. We find that our results are not sensitive to the number of life events recorded, as our findings hold even when we drop those with few or many life events. Thus, the abundance or lack of records on individuals does not affect our results.

Third, we infer certain missing years based on an individual's other records with concrete year information and formulate a calculation against the timeline of the education system in this era. To check whether our method is reasonable, we apply the same inference method by pretending that we only knew the birth year, end year, and life events for all individuals. As shown in Appendix B.5, the estimate is similar to our baseline if we apply the same inference method to all our sample, which solidifies the validity of inferring missing years on an individual's records.

**Heterogeneous Circulation Locations.** Our research design delivers an intention-to-treat estimate without using information on reading rate. To gauge the influence of reading rate, we conduct three sets of analysis across localities. First, we separate the prefecture-level post-1919 *New Youth* into a breakdown of within a county and outside the county. Columns (1)–(2) of Table B.6 show little impact if the post-1919 *New Youth* was available outside of a cadet's located county, implying that the reading rate is small if the magazine was not available within the same county.

Second, we separate the circulation county into small and big cities, using an urban population size threshold of 100,000. Using the same specification as in our baseline, we obtain estimates of 0.26 for small cities and 0.13 for big cities (Columns (3)–(4) of Appendix B.6). One possibility is that the reading rate was higher if the *New Youth* was available within a small city.

Third, a subsample of the circulation points were bookstores located in schools. Based on the life history of the cadets, we know whether a cadet was studying in those schools. If the *New Youth* was available at a cadet's school, it seems reasonable to assume the reading rate being close to 1 given that the *New Youth* was the most discussed periodical in this era. When separating this very local exposure from others, we find its coefficient to be 0.26 whereas that of the rest is 0.15

(Columns (5)–(6)), which implies a persuasion rate of 29.2%. These patterns support that within our studied individuals, our baseline persuasion rate is likely to be a lower bound.

**Potential Spillover Effects.** Although we cannot directly observe how the cadets influenced each other, we can use proxies of social connections to check for potential spillover effects among cadets. Specifically, we examine whether individuals are more likely to join the CCP if their connected group has a higher degree of ideology exposure. We define one’s connected group in two ways: the first refers to their hometown group, and the second concerns their social group connected via shared references. As reported in Appendix B.7, we do not find strong evidence of spillover from the hometown group, but we do find suggestive evidence of spillover from the group connected via shared references. However, considering these potential spillover effects does not alter our main finding.

**Additional Results from Cohorts 2–4.** We also conduct an analysis on the 700 cadets from the second to fourth cohorts whose biographical information is available. As shown in Appendix B.8, we find that ideology exposure also matters for these cohorts, who were enrolled during 1925 and 1926. Therefore, our finding on the first cohort appears to apply to other cohorts whose information is less systematically available.

## 4.2 Interpreting Post-1919 *New Youth* Exposure

Our use of post-1919 *New Youth* exposure as a measure of Communist ideology exposure is motivated by historical narratives (Section 2.1). However, similar to those who left personal accounts on their reading experience, the cadets likely read other periodicals and were exposed to various activist organizations during the New Culture Movement, which may have also contributed to the recruitment of the CCP. In this section, we examine whether post-1919 *New Youth* was reasonable proxy for Communist ideology diffusion by leveraging archival data on pro-Communism periodicals and activist groups in this era, the timing of joining the CCP, and proxies for potential social interactions.

**The Network of Pro-Communism Periodicals.** The *New Youth* inspired other pro-Communism periodicals to start, with the editors of the *New Youth* helping to co-found several of those periodicals. Based on a series of archives published as *Red Collections: Progressive Periodicals from 1915–1949* (Xue 2014), we gather information on the editors and editorial offices for all 19 pro-Communism

periodicals that existed during 1919–1922 in these archives. We define a link between two periodicals as sharing an editor or editorial office.

We plot the network among these pro-Communism periodicals in Figure 7. As shown by the closeness centrality index noted in the figure, the *New Youth* is indeed the most central periodical in the network. In comparison to the *New Youth*, the other periodicals started later and thus had a shorter period of influence during 1919–1922.

We also gather information on the circulation locations of two other pro-Communism periodicals in the network, *Young China* and the *Guide Weekly*. We specifically chose these because of their closeness in circumstance to the *New Youth*. *Young China* had the same length of existence as the post-1919 *New Youth* during 1919–1922 and the *Guide Weekly* is the second central periodical in the network. We find that exposures to these additional periodicals can be considered a subset of exposure to the post-1919 *New Youth*: 47% of our studied cadets were exposed to the circulation of these two periodicals, out of which 99.4% overlapped with post-1919 *New Youth* exposure. When separating individuals out between those exposed to post-1919 *New Youth* only and those exposed to all three periodicals, we find similar estimates (Panel (a) of Table 6), supporting the importance of post-1919 *New Youth* as a reasonable proxy for Communism diffusion.

**Activist Groups and Communist Organizations.** There existed various voluntary groups in the New Cultural Movement. We focus on the 28 of them that have been characterized as left-wing activist groups from archival information of their reports and meeting minutes (Zhang, Yin, Hong and Wang 1979, Xu 2013).<sup>20</sup> To check the relationship between these organizations and ideology exposure, we code an exposure measure to these organizations using the same way we code exposure to the *New Youth*. When examining the relationship between these exposures, we find a heavy overlapping pattern: 31% of our studied individuals were exposed to those activist groups, out of which 99.1% overlapped with post-1919 *New Youth* exposure. When separating out the individuals that were only exposed to post-1919 *New Youth* and those exposed to both post-1919 *New Youth* and these 28 activist groups, we find an estimate of 0.11 for the former and an estimate of 0.18 for the latter (Panel (b) of Table 6). Thus, exposure to post-1919 *New Youth* has a major impact in localities even without these activist groups.

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<sup>20</sup>Zhang, Yin, Hong and Wang (1979) provides the data source. Xu (2013) studies why five of these 28 groups became Communist groups. We follow Xu (2013) in identifying these groups.

**Further Evidence.** Despite all the evidence, one may still wonder whether the post-1919 *New Youth* captures non-idea factors such as CCP recruitment and non-Communism social interactions in a locality. To check the importance of such concerns, we examined the timing of joining the CCP and the relevance of potential social interactions for our finding.

If post-1919 *New Youth* captured local recruitment effort, we would expect individuals to join the CCP in the locality where they were exposed (i.e., before moving to Whampoa). However, as discussed above, few could access Communist organizations and only a small portion of CCP members in our sample joined before the Whampoa period (i.e., during 1921–1924). We analyze the effect of post-1919 *New Youth* exposure by the year of CCP membership and find that pre-Whampoa CCP memberships can only explain one third of our main finding (Appendix B.9). Additionally, using references to the CCP to proxy for the party’s stronghold in a certain locality, we find a strong influence of having CCP references for those who joined the CCP before the Whampoa period, but not for those who joined during 1924–1928. This suggests that our main finding regarding the role of ideas is unlikely to be explained by local recruitment efforts alone.

Moreover, for each cadet, we know who co-located with him before joining the Whampoa and can calculate the average post-1919 *New Youth* exposure ratio among his co-locaters at Whampoa. If post-1919 *New Youth* captured primarily social interactions rather than ideas, we would expect a strong heterogeneous pattern: After arriving at Whampoa, those who were more likely to share experience with his exposed co-locaters would be more likely to join the CCP. In the data, however, we do not find any strong heterogeneity in the impact of idea exposure with respect to such potential social interactions (Appendix B.10), which again shows the difficulty to attribute our main finding to the role of non-idea factors alone.

In sum, we interpret the role of post-1919 *New Youth* as a reasonable proxy for Communism diffusion. Although a subgroup of our studied individuals could access additional pro-Communism periodicals and organizations, considering the additional sources does not change our main finding.

### **4.3 Subsequent Political Outcomes**

Can individuals mobilized by ideas behave differently in critical historical moments? We aim to shed light on this important question by exploring information on the subsequent careers of the Whampoa cadets. During the 1920s–1940s, the CCP and the KMT experienced various political struggles, resulting in many members quitting their parties and even sacrificing their lives. For instance, in

1927, the KMT under Chiang Kai-shek's direction conducted a purge to eliminate Communist influence, causing the CCP to lose over 90% of its members. The two civil wars (1927–1936 and 1945–1949) and the anti-Japanese war (1937–1945) were also significant conflicts that caused both parties to experience membership losses.

We compare four groups of individuals: CCP members with and without post-1919 *New Youth* exposure, and KMT members with and without post-1919 *New Youth* exposure. Although all cadets was initially a KMT, they had to make a choice between the KMT and the CCP after 1927. Our KMT sample refers to those who did not join the CCP. Table 7 presents our findings, using KMT members without post-1919 *New Youth* exposure as the reference group. We use seemingly unrelated regressions to allow for correlated error terms across the equations (for quitting and sacrifice). Our results show that CCP members are more likely to quit or sacrifice than KMT members, reflecting greater uncertainty faced by the CCP. Furthermore, among CCP members, those who were exposed to post-1919 *New Youth* were 23 percentage points less likely to quit the party and 25 percentage points more likely to sacrifice their lives (Columns (1)–(4)).

Upon closer inspection, we find that our main finding is primarily driven by the period from 1927 to 1936, during which the CCP was weaker and faced severe attacks from the KMT. Out of the 66 CCP members who sacrificed their lives, 27 died during 1924–27, and 33 died during the first KMT-CCP Civil War. Out of the 38 CCP members who quit the party, 5 quit during 1924–27, and 33 quit during the first KMT-CCP civil war. A similar pattern emerges when we zoom into the period of the first civil war (Columns (5)–(6)).

To better comprehend the extent to which our findings are mechanically driven by political assignments, we delve deeper by examining both the leadership positions held by cadets in Whampoa Academy and their subsequent army assignments after graduation (see Appendix B.11). Our analysis reveals no significant association between post-1919 *New Youth* exposure and these assignments and controlling for these assignments does not vary our finding on sacrifice or quitting. These results further strengthens the argument that individuals mobilized by ideas have the capacity to exhibit distinct behaviors and make diverse choices, particularly in times of turmoil. However, it is important to acknowledge that pivotal individual decisions during historical junctures are influenced by a myriad of factors. As highlighted by historians, the majority of revolutionaries underwent a complex process of transformation, gradually becoming committed Communists (Van de Ven 1992, Esherick 1995). Therefore, our findings do not imply predetermined future political outcomes but rather suggest that ideology exposure can interact with other elements to shape personal choices.



## 5 Conclusion

Ideas and their diffusion may have played pivotal roles in many social and political movements. One may even claim: “no ideas, no revolution” (Brinton 1938).<sup>21</sup> For instance, Bailyn (1967) emphasizes that the American Revolution had an ideological grounding centered on the struggle between power and liberty, which is further argued to have shaped the American identity (Huntington 1981). Likewise, the French Revolution was motivated by a set of ideas encapsulated as liberty, equality, and fraternity. Such arguments, however, can be contested due to the challenges of evaluating the specific impact of ideas. In this study, we focus on the ideas of Communism, which have had profound and global impacts yet have not been studied significantly by social scientists. We measure Communism exposure by combining information on the supply of ideas with the biographical life history information on a group of key individuals. Through the process, we are able to demonstrate the importance of ideology exposure in shaping the political choice of a group of individuals who would influence the fate of modern China.

To be certain, ideology exposure is not ever going to be the only determinant of one’s political choice. On the contrary, we find that the political identity of one’s personal references also serves as another predictor of an individual’s own political identity, suggesting the strength of the influence that social networks can have. At the same time, the association between one’s socioeconomic background and political identity is found to be minimal in our specific context. The particular relevance of ideology, in contrast with socioeconomic status, reflects a general uncertainty faced by the CCP during our studied period. These findings are likely to be more relevant for movements that face high risk. While it is generally difficult to study individual participation in high-risk social movements, our study offers a path to depict the profile of individual participants and, in turn, understand their political choices. We believe that this approach can be applied to other settings where systematic information exists on a selected group of relevant individuals.

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<sup>21</sup>As noted by Brinton, this does not mean that ideas cause revolution. The processes of ideas and revolution are often mutually dependent, which creates challenges in identifying the influence of ideas.

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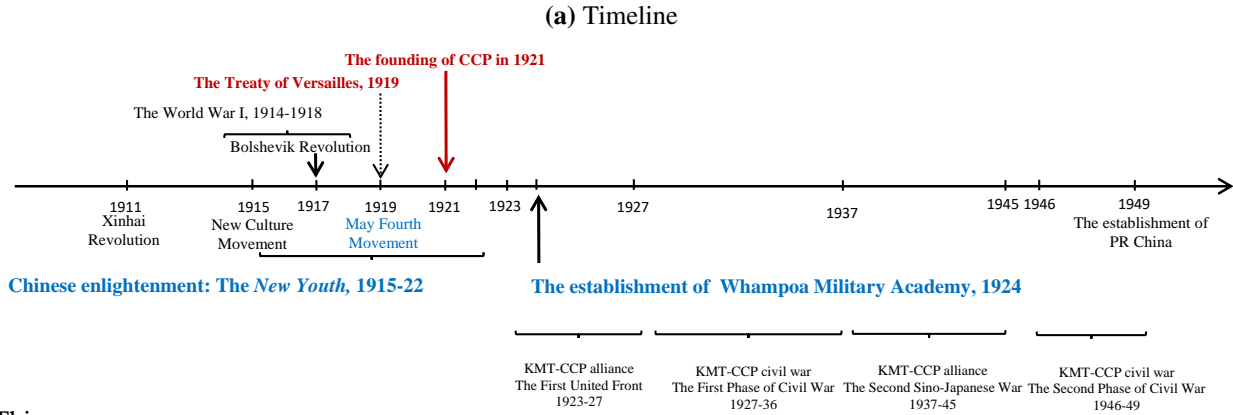
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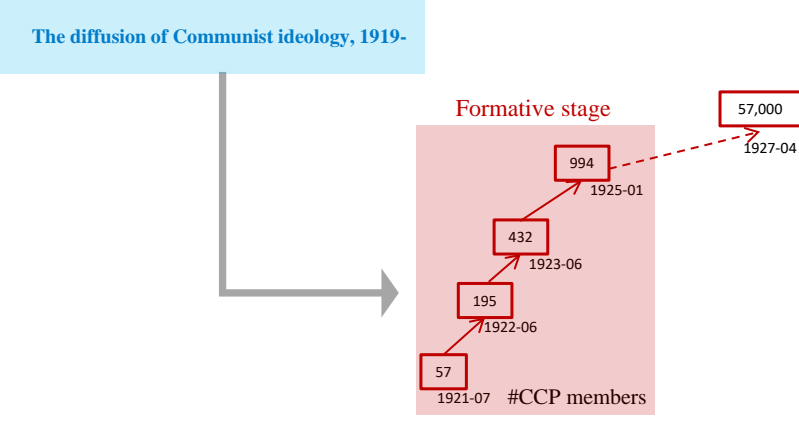
**Figure 1.** Ideological Transition of the *New Youth*

*Note.* This figure shows the content change of the *New Youth* around 1919–20. In Panel (b), the “Communism” topic includes the phrases “Marx”, “Lenin”, “socialism”, “Communism”, “Soviet”, “Bolshevism”, “revolution”, “labor”, “worker”, “strike”, and “proletariat”. “Literature” includes all novels, dramas, literary critics, essays on linguistics and philology, and book-reading notes. We exclude poems when calculating these shares.

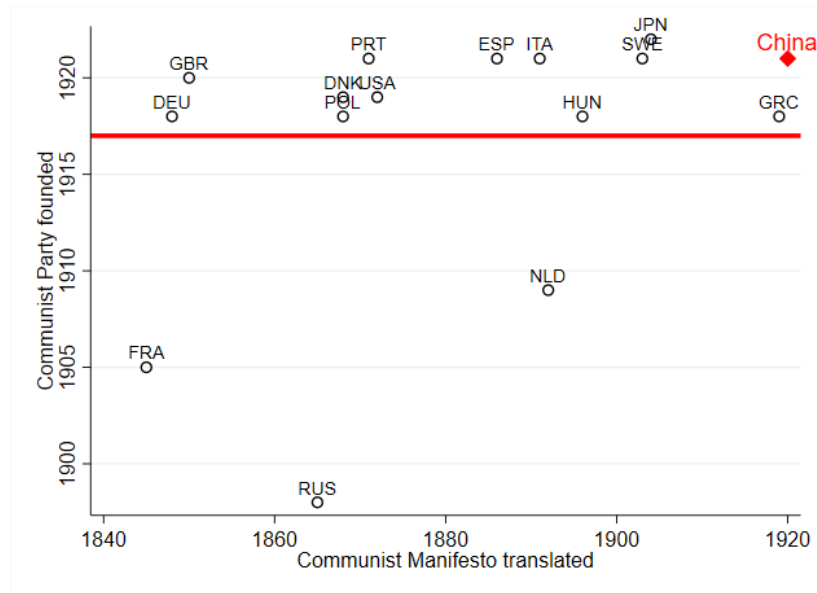
**Figure 2. Key Events (1911–1949)**



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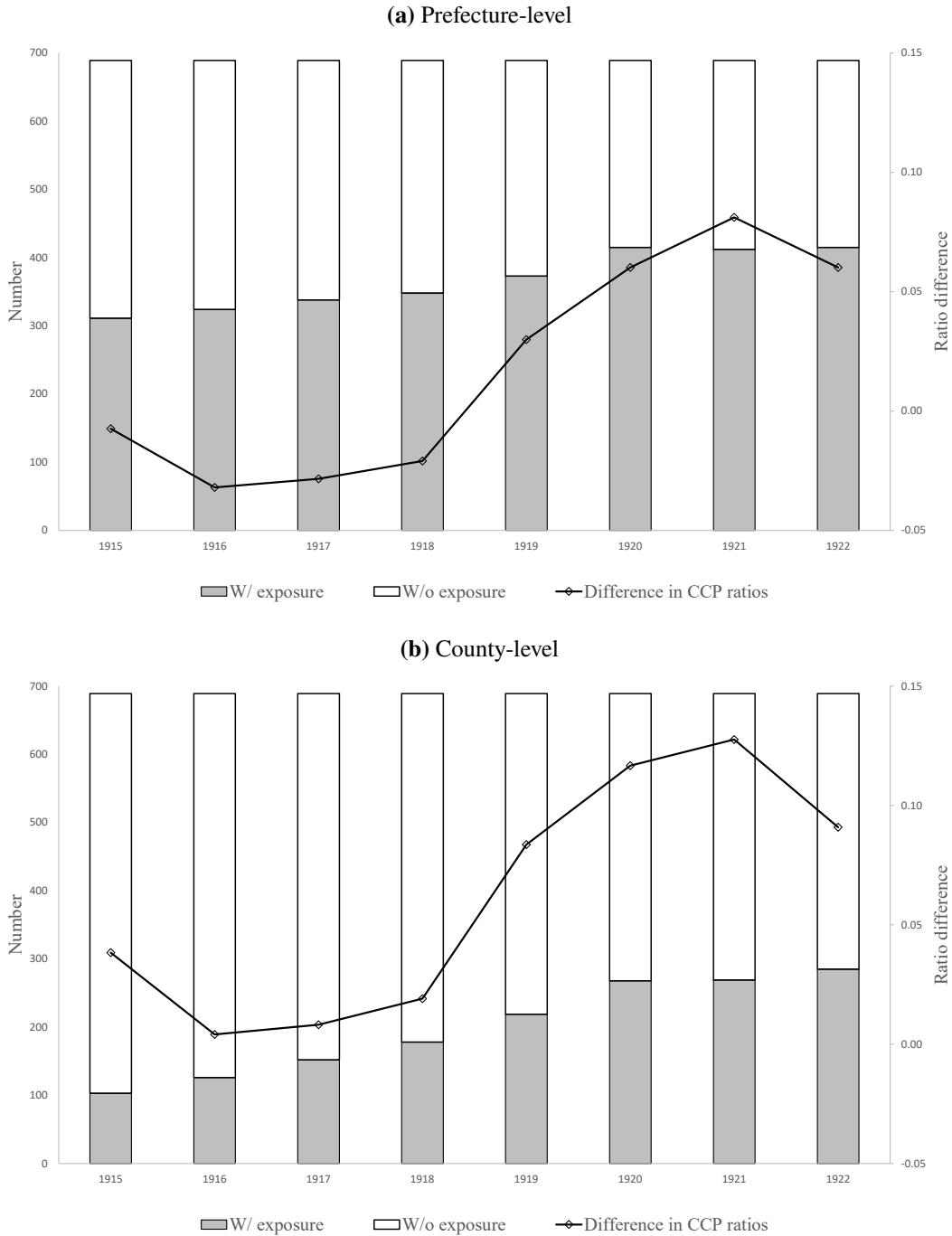


(b) Communist Parties vs. the Communist Manifesto



Note. Panel (a) presents the major events in China during 1911–1949. Our analyses focus on how exposure to the *New Youth* (1919–22) affected the Whampoa cadets’ choice to become a CCP member in CCP’s formative stage in the 1920s. Panel (b) plots the founding years of Communist parties and the years of Communist Manifesto translation across countries.

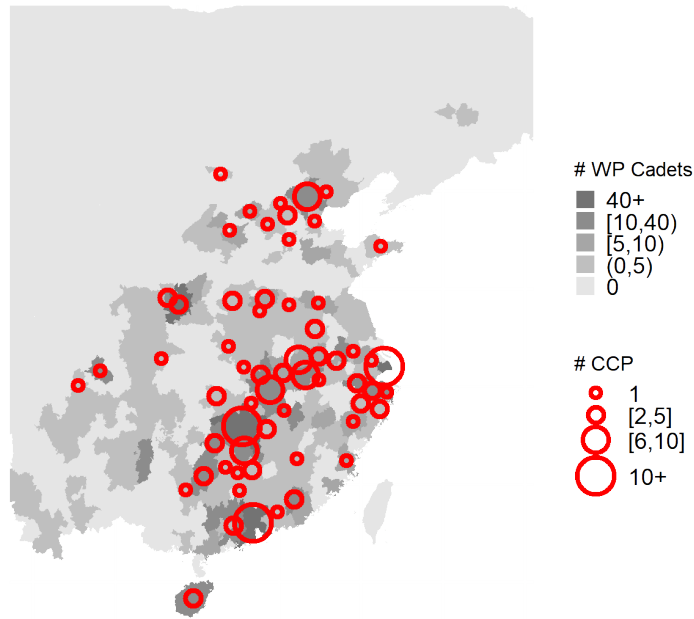
**Figure 3. Raw Data I: Exposure to the *New Youth* and CCP Membership**



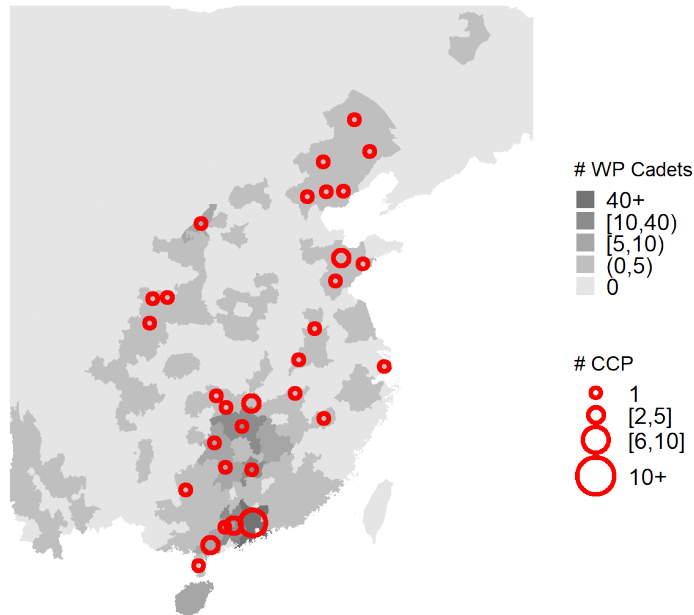
*Note.* The shaded and unshaded areas in the bar represent the number of cadets with and without *New Youth* exposure in each year respectively. The solid line with diamond markers represents the difference in CCP ratios between the cadets with *New Youth* exposure and those without. As shown, the differences became positive after 1919.

**Figure 4.** Raw Data II: Post-19 *New Youth* Exposure and CCP Membership

(a) CCP w/ Post-19 *New Youth* Exposure



(b) CCP w/o Post-19 *New Youth* Exposure

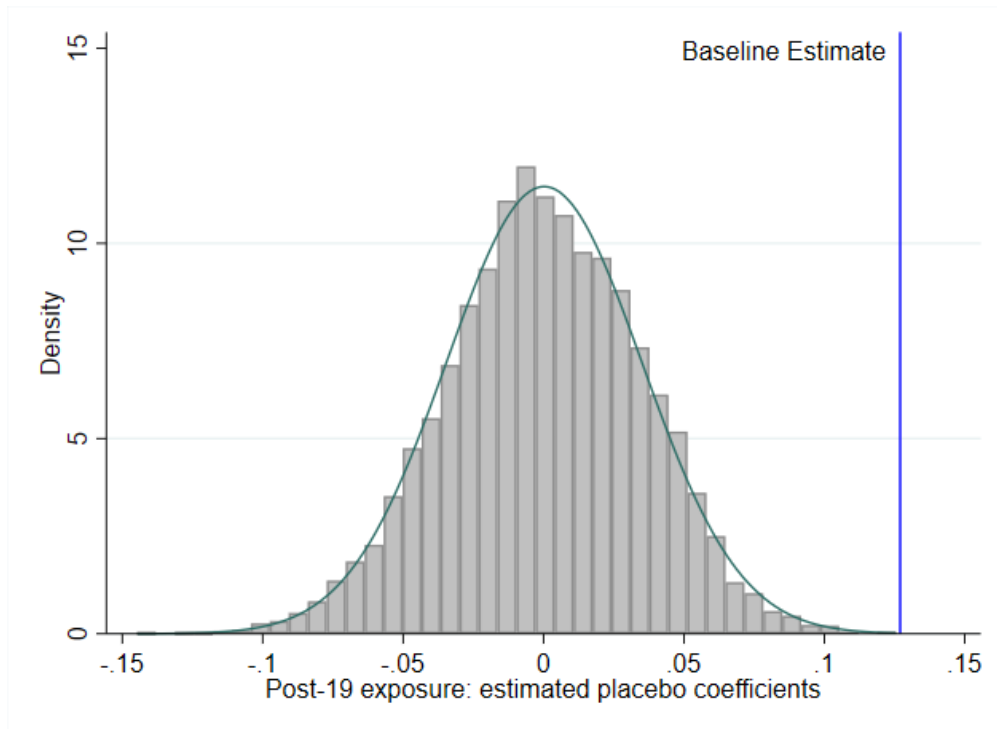


*Note.* These figures plot the number of CCP members and the number of cadets across the groups with or without post-19 *New Youth* exposure.

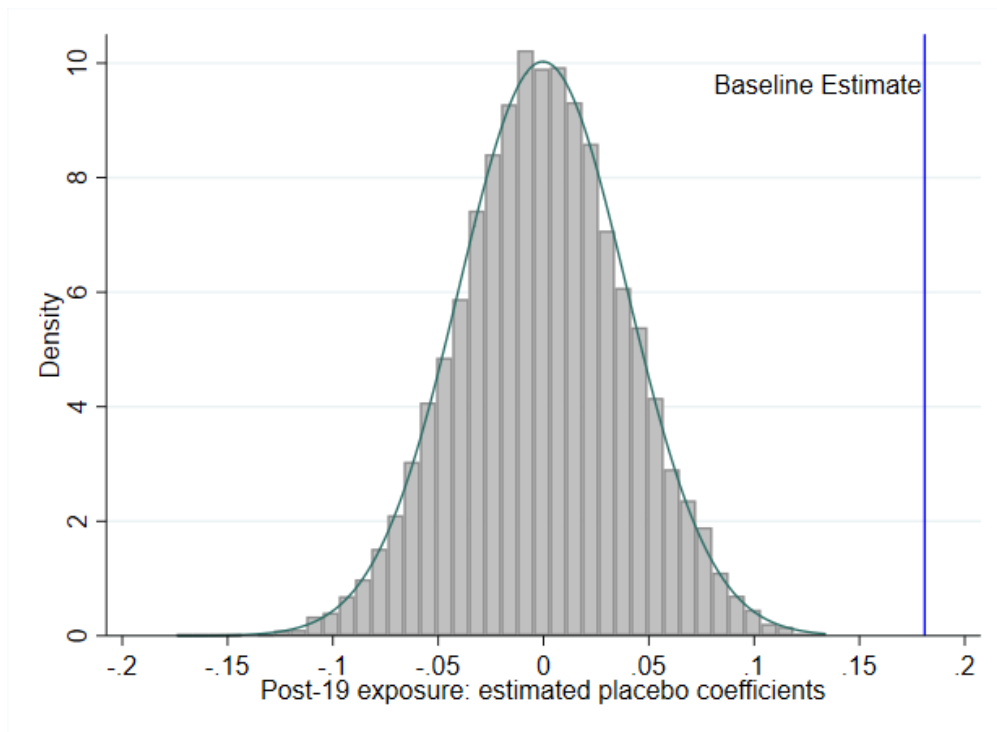


**Figure 5.** Distribution of Placebo Estimates

**(a)** Exposure Defined at Prefecture Level

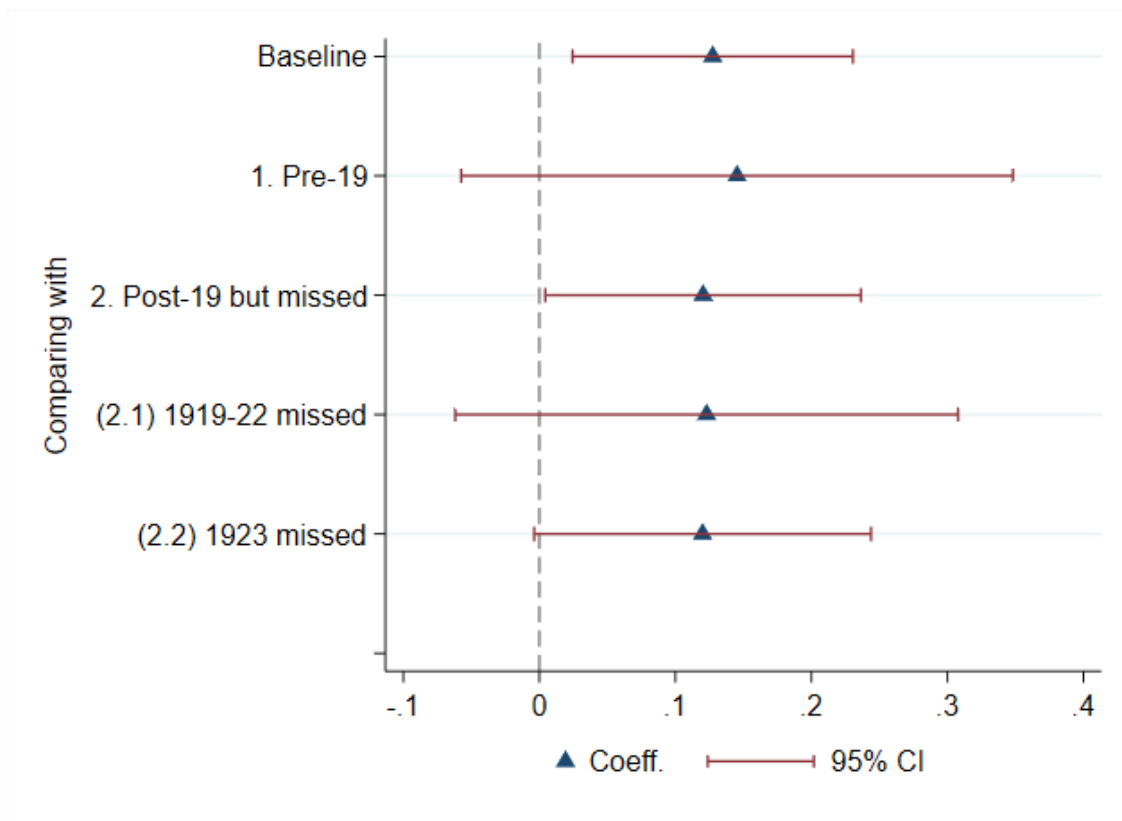


**(b)** Exposure Defined at County Level



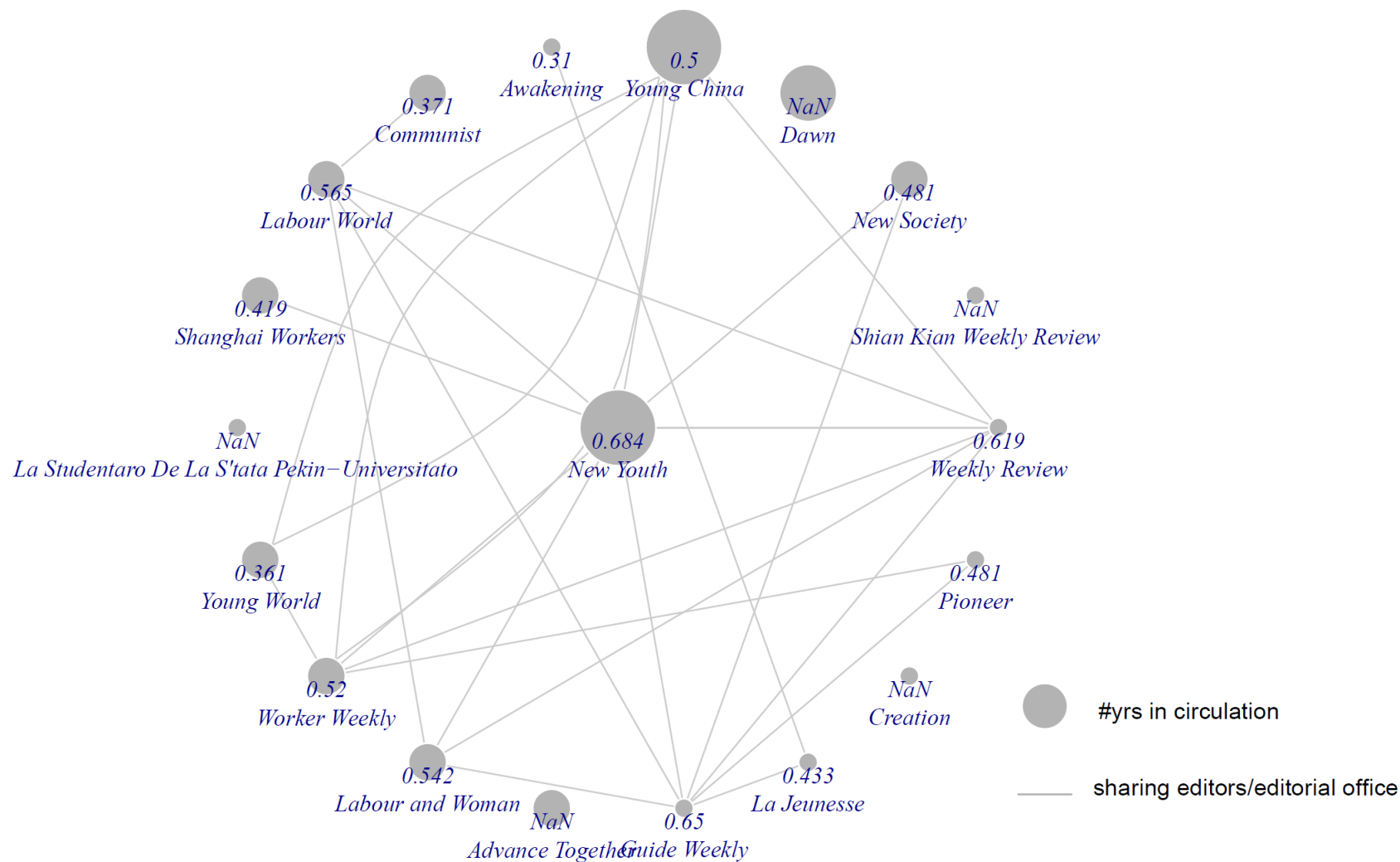
*Note.* These figures plot estimates from randomly assigned exposures. They demonstrate that our estimates are significantly different from these randomly assigned treatment effects.

**Figure 6.** Comparison Groups by Cohorts



*Note.* This figure plots the estimates when comparing with different cohorts that had resided in prefectures ever with post-1919 *New Youth*. These estimates show a similar pattern to our baseline results.

**Figure 7.** The Network of Pro-Communism Periodicals



*Note.* This figure plots links among all 19 Pro-Communism periodicals in existence during 1919–1922. A link means that two periodicals share editors or an editorial office. The size of the circles indicates the number of circulation years during 1919–1922, and the number in the circle indicates the closeness centrality of a periodical in this network.

**Table 1. Balance Tests**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	New Youth exposure, 1919-22			Differences			
Prefecture-level exposure	=1	=0	=0	(1)+(2) vs. (3)		(1) vs. (2)+(3)	
County-level exposure	=1	=0		w/o Pref. FE	w/ Pref. FE	w/o county FE	w/ county FE
Sample: All							
Personal characteristics I, N=	365	143	181				
Birth year	1900.5 (2.889)	1901.2 (2.802)	1900.7 (2.911)	0.009 [0.260]	0.297 [0.457]	-0.445** [0.218]	0.223 [0.491]
Education: Middle school and above	0.981 (0.137)	0.930 (0.256)	0.928 (0.259)	0.038* [0.023]	0.012 [0.037]	0.052*** [0.016]	0.001 [0.042]
Education: vocational	0.633 (0.483)	0.615 (0.488)	0.541 (0.500)	0.087 [0.055]	-0.055 [0.065]	0.059 [0.051]	-0.020 [0.108]
Education: college	0.164 (0.371)	0.035 (0.184)	0.050 (0.218)	0.078*** [0.025]	0.000 [0.035]	0.121*** [0.024]	-0.032 [0.050]
Networks: # CCP references	0.263 (0.608)	0.049 (0.247)	0.116 (0.570)	0.087* [0.051]	0.069 [0.084]	0.177*** [0.042]	0.090 [0.113]
Sample: Teams 1-4:							
Personal characteristics II, N=	314	85	131				
Family: gentry	0.280 (0.450)	0.188 (0.393)	0.214 (0.412)	0.047 [0.043]	0.042 [0.082]	0.077** [0.039]	0.132 [0.118]
Family: business	0.303 (0.460)	0.294 (0.458)	0.328 (0.471)	-0.027 [0.049]	0.007 [0.082]	-0.012 [0.041]	-0.058 [0.139]
Family economic status (1-3)	1.675 (0.521)	1.518 (0.569)	1.611 (0.549)	0.031 [0.060]	0.102 [0.098]	0.101** [0.050]	0.051 [0.148]
# Siblings	3.274 (2.258)	3.624 (2.502)	3.489 (2.761)	-0.140 [0.254]	0.182 [0.558]	-0.268 [0.216]	-0.292 [0.879]
Married	0.506 (0.501)	0.471 (0.502)	0.679 (0.469)	-0.181*** [0.051]	-0.141 [0.092]	-0.091* [0.048]	0.005 [0.146]
Having children	0.146 (0.354)	0.129 (0.338)	0.122 (0.329)	0.021 [0.035]	0.001 [0.070]	0.021 [0.031]	0.073 [0.102]
Religious	0.099 (0.299)	0.129 (0.338)	0.122 (0.329)	-0.017 [0.035]	0.045 [0.047]	-0.026 [0.029]	-0.006 [0.073]
Smoking and drinking	0.035 (0.184)	0.106 (0.310)	0.053 (0.226)	-0.003 [0.021]	0.028 [0.032]	-0.039* [0.022]	-0.100 [0.066]

*Note.* Standard deviations are reported in the parentheses in Columns (1)–(3). Standard errors clustered at the home county level are presented in brackets in Columns (4)–(7). Once locality fixed effects are included, the groups with or without exposure are balanced across all characteristics (Columns (5) and (7)).

**Table 2.** Baseline Estimates: Impact of Post-19 *NewYouth* Exposure on CCP Membership  
Dependent Variable: CCP=1/0

New Youth exposure defined at	Prefecture level						County level					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
	Teams 1-4						Teams 1-4					
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.109** (0.048)		0.128** (0.050)	0.127** (0.052)	0.127** (0.058)	0.117** (0.056)	0.153** (0.077)		0.152** (0.077)	0.181** (0.073)	0.162** (0.081)	0.172** (0.082)
New Youth exposure, 1915-18		-0.047 (0.046)	-0.081* (0.048)	-0.055 (0.051)	-0.091 (0.066)	-0.094 (0.068)		-0.044 (0.099)	-0.038 (0.097)	-0.006 (0.095)	-0.103 (0.115)	-0.104 (0.116)
Education: vocational				0.009 (0.046)	0.022 (0.047)	0.018 (0.047)				-0.066 (0.067)	-0.074 (0.075)	-0.078 (0.076)
Education: college				-0.028 (0.062)	-0.003 (0.073)	-0.002 (0.075)				0.041 (0.138)	0.003 (0.159)	-0.005 (0.179)
#CCP references				0.181*** (0.048)	0.171*** (0.050)	0.173*** (0.049)				0.179** (0.078)	0.076 (0.089)	0.079 (0.092)
Family: gentry						-0.015 (0.052)						-0.030 (0.092)
Family: business						0.021 (0.052)						0.004 (0.090)
Family economic status (1-3)						0.022 (0.039)						-0.011 (0.059)
#Siblings						-0.001 (0.007)						-0.000 (0.011)
Married						-0.072* (0.043)						-0.022 (0.078)
Having children						-0.012 (0.064)						-0.076 (0.101)
Religious						-0.030 (0.051)						-0.069 (0.090)
Smoking and drinking						0.042 (0.087)						0.042 (0.143)
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y						
County FE							Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE				Y	Y	Y				Y	Y	Y
Birth year FE				Y	Y	Y				Y	Y	Y
Observations	689	689	689	689	530	530	689	689	689	689	530	530
R-squared	0.386	0.381	0.389	0.443	0.534	0.542	0.560	0.552	0.560	0.603	0.747	0.750

Note. Columns (1)–(4) and (7)–(10) include all cadets whereas Columns (5)–(6) and (11)–(12) focus on Team 1–4 on whom we have more information. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 3.** Controlling for Prefecture FEs × Post 1919  
Dependent Variable: CCP=1/0

New Youth exposure defined at	Prefecture level		County level	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.126** (0.054)	0.125** (0.057)	0.150* (0.085)	0.181** (0.083)
New Youth exposure, 1915-18	-0.081 (0.050)	-0.053 (0.053)	-0.043 (0.101)	-0.006 (0.100)
Prefecture FE	Y	Y		
County FE			Y	Y
Prefecture FE * 1919-22	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics I		Y		Y
Team FE		Y		Y
Observations	689	689	689	689
R-squared	0.391	0.445	0.569	0.611

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 4.** Always-New Youth vs. Not-always-New Youth  
Dependent Variable: CCP=1/0

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Always-New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.109** (0.049)	0.126** (0.050)	0.117** (0.056)
Not-always-New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.121* (0.073)	0.125* (0.073)	0.151** (0.071)
New Youth exposure, 1915-1918		-0.078* (0.047)	-0.049 (0.050)
Team FE			Y
Birth year FE			Y
Personal characteristics I			Y
Observations	689	689	689
R-squared	0.388	0.390	0.445

*Note.* This table separates the exposures to those localities always with the *New Youth* and those with the *New Youth* entry and exit. Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 5.** Impacts of Placebo Exposures: Assuming One Were in His Previous or Next Locations  
Dependent Variable: CCP=1/0

	Relocation to the next location				Relocation to the previous location			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Teams 1-4				Teams 1-4			
Placebo New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.041 (0.046)		0.035 (0.045)	0.041 (0.050)	0.098 (0.068)		0.065 (0.060)	0.018 (0.064)
Placebo New Youth exposure, 1915-18		0.033 (0.039)	0.024 (0.038)	0.010 (0.049)		0.128* (0.067)	0.108* (0.061)	0.062 (0.063)
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics II				Y				Y
Observations	689	689	689	530	689	689	689	530
R-squared	0.456	0.455	0.457	0.558	0.458	0.460	0.461	0.558

*Note.* Columns (1)–(4) assume that one were located in the previous prefecture according to his life event records whereas Columns (5)–(8) assume that one were located in the next prefecture.

Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references; Personal characteristics II include family backgrounds (gentry, business), family economic status (1-3), number of siblings, marriage status, a dummy indicating whether they have children, religious belief, and smoking and drinking habit.

Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table 6. Other Pro-Communism Periodicals and Activist Groups**  
 Dependent Variable: CCP=1/0

(a) New Youth exposure vs. Two other Communist periodicals

	(1)	(2)	(3)
New Youth, 1919-22 + no other two Communist mag.	0.100* (0.059)	0.116* (0.061)	0.142** (0.063)
New Youth, 1919-22 + other two Communist mag.	0.113** (0.052)	0.134** (0.055)	0.120** (0.057)
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y
New Youth Exposure, 1915-18		Y	Y
Team FE			Y
Personal characteristics I			Y
Observations	689	689	689
R-squared	0.386	0.389	0.443

(b) New Youth exposure vs. Activist groups

	(1)	(2)	(3)
New Youth, 1919-22 + no Activist org.	0.086* (0.047)	0.103** (0.049)	0.110** (0.051)
New Youth, 1919-22 + Activist org.	0.169** (0.075)	0.204*** (0.076)	0.178** (0.082)
New Youth Exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE		Y	Y
Team FE			Y
Personal characteristics I			Y
Observations	689	689	689
R-squared	0.388	0.392	0.444

*Note.* This table compares exposure to post-1919 *New Youth* and those also exposed to other Communist magazines and activist groups. Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.



**Table 7. Impact on Future Political Outcomes**

	(1) 1924-1949		(2) 1924-1949		(3) 1927-1936	
	(1.1) Quit	(1.2) Sacrifice	(2.1) Quit	(2.2) Sacrifice	(3.1) Quit	(3.2) Sacrifice
(1) KMT w. New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.016 (0.045)	0.152*** (0.052)	0.029 (0.046)	0.147*** (0.053)	-0.006 (0.025)	0.055 (0.038)
(2) CCP w/o New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.355*** (0.092)	0.303*** (0.106)	0.353*** (0.092)	0.304*** (0.106)	0.580*** (0.053)	0.249*** (0.081)
(3) CCP w. New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.109* (0.056)	0.554*** (0.065)	0.120** (0.057)	0.550*** (0.065)	0.327*** (0.033)	0.413*** (0.049)
<b>(3)-(2)</b>	<b>-0.245***</b> (0.100)	<b>0.251**</b> (0.115)	<b>-0.233***</b> (0.100)	<b>0.246**</b> (0.115)	<b>-0.253***</b> (0.057)	<b>0.164*</b> (0.087)
New Youth exposure, 1915-18			Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	689	689	689	689	594	594
R-squared	0.354	0.375	0.356	0.376	0.588	0.417

*Note.* This table compares the future outcomes of our studied individuals. The reference group is the KMT without post-1919 New Youth exposure.

Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

# Online Appendix

## Table of Contents

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<b>A</b>	<b>Background and Data: More Results</b>	<b>A-2</b>
A.1	Ideological Change of the <i>New Youth</i> : Top words . . . . .	A-2
A.2	More Personal Accounts on the Influence of the <i>New Youth</i> . . . . .	A-3
A.3	Summary Statistics and Data Sources . . . . .	A-5
A.4	The Whampoa Cadets: A Biographical Dataset . . . . .	A-6
A.5	Coding Life History and Exposure to the <i>New Youth</i> . . . . .	A-9
A.6	Years of Joining the CCP . . . . .	A-15
A.7	The <i>New Youth</i> and Number of Whampoa Cadets . . . . .	A-15
<b>B</b>	<b>Additional Analyses</b>	<b>A-16</b>
B.1	Heterogeneous Effects across Personal Characteristics . . . . .	A-16
B.2	Alternative Standard Errors . . . . .	A-18
B.3	A Continuous Measure of <i>New Youth</i> Exposure . . . . .	A-19
B.4	Comparison Groups by Cohort . . . . .	A-19
B.5	Measurement Error . . . . .	A-21
B.6	Heterogeneous Circulation Locations . . . . .	A-24
B.7	Possible Spillover Effects . . . . .	A-25
B.8	Results from Cohorts 2–4 . . . . .	A-26
B.9	Timing of Joining the CCP . . . . .	A-27
B.10	Potential Social Interactions . . . . .	A-28
B.11	Assignments in Whampoa and the National Revolutionary Army . . . . .	A-29

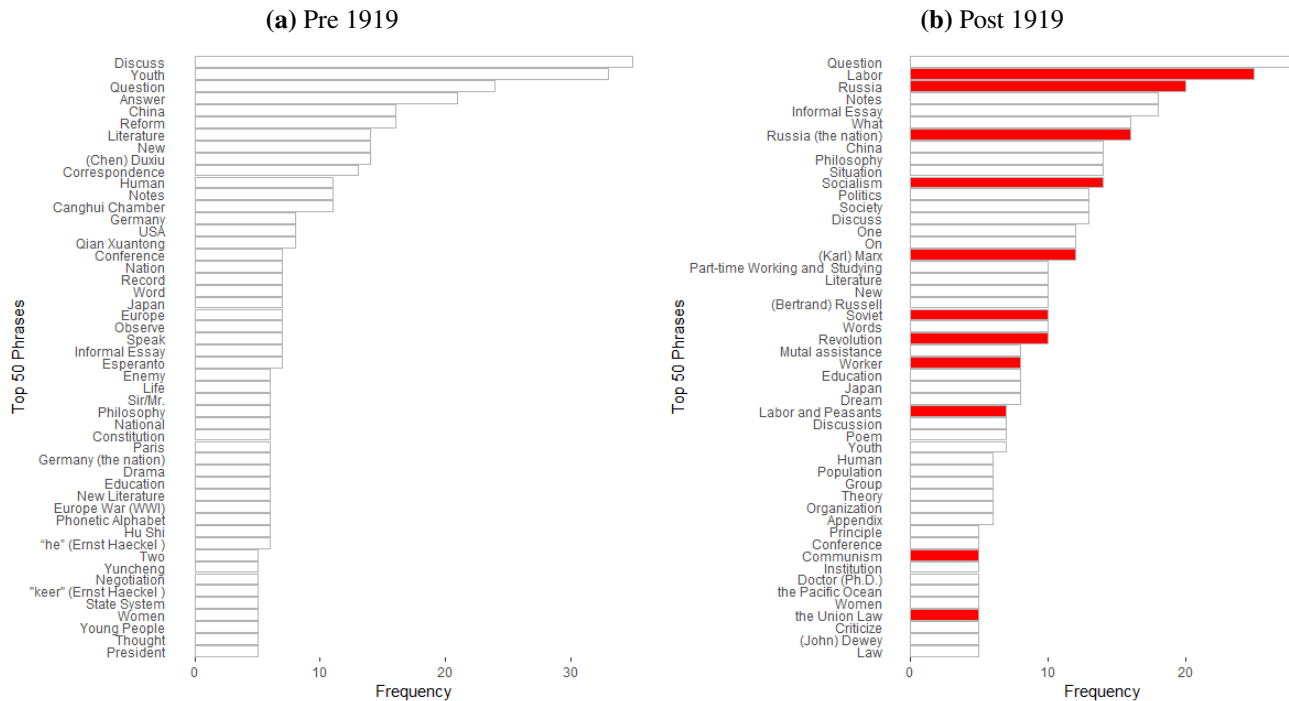
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# A Background and Data: More Results

## A.1 Ideological Change of the *New Youth*: Top words

Figure A.1 presents the top words from the titles of *New Youth* articles. Panel (a) displays the pre-1919 articles, while panel (b) focuses on post-1919 articles. As shown in Panel (b), several words related to Communism, such as labor, Russia, and socialism, become prominent after 1919.

Figure A.1. Top words in the titles pre-post 1919



## A.2 More Personal Accounts on the Influence of the *New Youth*

In addition to Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, many other Communist pioneers attribute the shaping of their ideas to the *New Youth*. Here, we provide a summary of their accounts, which reveal two patterns. First, the influence of the *New Youth* was widespread across various regions of China. Second, the *New Youth* served as a source of inspiration for other publications (which are also explored in this paper), and it was common for young people to read both *New Youth* and its satellite publications. Therefore, we further collect data on other pro-Communism periodicals in this era to help interpret our findings on post-1919 *New Youth*.

**Peng Dehuai (in Hunan).** According to Snow (1937), Peng Dehuai's reading experience is similar to Mao's. Snow notes that "Peng read Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei and many of the writers who had influenced Mao Zedong. For a time he had some interest in anarchism. In Chen Duxiu's *New Youth* he learned of socialism, and from that point he began to study Marxism."

**Zhou En-lai (in Tianjin).** According to Snow's account, Zhou En-lai informed him that he had read various Communist publications through the efforts of the *New Youth*. Snow quotes Zhou En-lai as stating, "I read translations of the *Communist Manifesto*; Kautsky's *Class Struggle*; and *The October Revolution*. These books were published under the auspices of the *New Youth*, edited by Chen Duxiu" (Snow 1937).

**Zhang Guotao (in Beijing).** Zhang Guotao mentioned in his memoir (Zhang 1971) that he was influenced by the *New Youth*, and that it served as an inspiration for other satellite magazines. He noted, "The circulation of the *New Youth* increased significantly, and every issue sold out immediately at Peking University. In December 1918, Chen Duxiu launched another politically-oriented publication called the *Weekly Review*, and in January 1919, Fu Sinian and Luo Jialun, who were fellow students at Peking University, published *New Tide*, a monthly literature magazine that responded to the New Culture Movement. These two magazines were considered as satellites of the *New Youth* at the time."

**Yun Daiying (in Hubei).** The diaries of Yun Daiying in the years before and after 1919 reveal that how he transitioned from supporting the cultural movement to embracing Marxist revolution. In his

diary on September 9, 1919, Yun wrote, “I enjoy reading the *New Youth* and *New Tide* because they spread the message of freedom, equality, love, mutual aid, and labor”(Yun 1981).

**Shi Cuntong (in Zhejiang).** Yeh (1996) notes that the *New Youth* had a significant impact on Shi Cuntong, and the magazine was extremely popular among students in Hangzhou. She writes, “In the fall of 1919, Shi Cuntong and Fu Binran, a fellow senior at First Normal, opened a student bookstore called the New Life Book Society, which aimed to disseminate New Culture publications in the province. The bestsellers on their stands were the *New Youth* magazine and the *Weekly Review*. The new tide of iconoclasm was sweeping over Hangzhou’s students, with over four hundred copies of these two journals being sold weekly on the First Normal campus alone, which was approximately the school’s total enrollment.”

### A.3 Summary Statistics and Data Sources

**Table A.3.** Data Sources and Summary Statistics

Variables	Data source	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
CCP membership	A	689	0.171	0.377	0	1
Quit	A	689	0.160	0.367	0	1
Sacrifice	A	689	0.241	0.428	0	1
NY exposure, post-19	A, B	689	0.737	0.440	0	1
NY exposure, pre-19	A, B	689	0.552	0.498	0	1
NY exposure, post-19 (County)	A, B	689	0.530	0.499	0	1
NY exposure, pre-19 (County)	A, B	689	0.293	0.456	0	1
Just miss	A, B	689	0.125	0.331	0	1
Other Communist magazines	C	689	0.466	0.499	0	1
Activist Groups	D	689	0.376	0.485	0	1
Team	A	689	3.274	1.736	1	6
Birth year	A	689	1900.7	2.888	1886	1909
Education: middle school and above	A	689	0.956	0.204	0	1
Education: vocational	A	689	0.605	0.489	0	1
Education: college	A	689	0.107	0.310	0	1
#CCP references	A	689	0.180	0.549	0	5
Teams 1-4 only						
Family: gentry	A, E	530	0.249	0.433	0	1
Family: business	A, E	530	0.308	0.462	0	1
Family economic status (1-3)	A, E	530	1.634	0.538	1	3
# Siblings	A, E	530	3.383	2.430	0	16
Married	A, E	530	0.543	0.499	0	1
Having children	A, E	530	0.138	0.345	0	1
Religious	A, E	530	0.109	0.312	0	1
Smoking and drinking	A, E	530	0.051	0.220	0	1

Sources.: A. Chen (2017a), *Complete Records on the First-Cohort Cadets of the Whampoa Military School*.

B. *The New Youth*. Reprinted in 1970. Tokyo: Kyukoshoin.

C. Xue (ed. 2014), *Red Collections: Progressive Periodicals from 1915–1949*.

D. Zhang et al. (ed. 1979), *Voluntary Societies during the May Fourth Era*.

E. Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang (1924), *Detailed Survey for the First to Fourth Teams of the First Cohort of the Military Academy*.

## A.4 The Whampoa Cadets: A Biographical Dataset

We use two related sources of data to construct a biographical dataset on the first cohort of Whampoa cadets. First, [Chen \(2017a\)](#) compiled the biographies for all 689 cadets. Second, the Whampoa conducted a detailed survey for the 530 cadets that were directly recruited (Teams 1-4). Figure A.4(I) presents an example of the admission questionnaires.

Figure A.4. I. The Admission Questionnaire of Xu Xiangqian

陸軍軍官學校詳細調查表		第 號
姓 名	徐 象 謙	職 別 學 生
年 歲	二十四	
籍貫及住址	山西省五臺縣永安村	
通 信 處	山西省五臺縣東冶鎮寶和店轉	
家 族	父名懋淮兄一人姊一人 母姓趙氏弟一人妹一人 子妻姓名朱氏	
家庭主要職業	士	
家庭生活狀況	中常	
專門技能或特長	無	
有無烟酒嗜好	無	
有無宗教信仰	孔教	

受過教育	國民師範學校畢業
經過履歷	本縣第一高小學校畢業 山西省立國民師範學校畢業 曾任陽曲縣立第四國民學校教員及川至中學附設小學教員
何時入黨	十三年三月二十九日
人黨介紹人及職業住址	王用賓大本營參議 陳振麟參議員 現住上海霞飛路霞飛巷
何以要入本校	為求軍事知識作將來為本黨工作改進國家之準備
入校介紹人及職業住址	趙連登苗培成 本黨山西代表委員
備 攷	

明說 (一)本表每人填寫一張 (二)除成績備考三欄外均須親筆填寫 (三)家族欄內父母名姓並須填明存亡兄弟姊妹俾便人數 (四)家庭生活狀況欄下填明貧富及地產之有無數量等

102

101

Figures A.4(II) and (III) provide an example that illustrates our coding process, explained below.

Figure A.4. II. An Example of Coding Based on the Biography



**徐向前 (1901~1990)**

廣州黃埔中國國民黨陸軍軍官學校第一期畢業，原名象謙，<sup>①</sup>別字子敬，後改名向前。山西五台人，五台縣第一高等小學、太原省立國民師範學校速成班畢業，父懸淮，乾涸秀才，早年在內蒙古麻林格爾、涼城教書，母趙金鑾，沒讀過書，勤儉持家，家境中等。胞兄受謙（1899~1975），早年在晉軍當過軍需官，中華人民共和國成立後任太原市人民政府文史研究館館員；妹古月，後改名羅，太原女子師範學校畢業後教書，抗日戰爭爆發後到延安加入中共。自撰早年信奉孔教。自撰登記處：山西五台縣永安村，通信處：五台縣東冶鎮寶和匠轉交。自填入學前履歷：本縣第一高等小學校畢業，山西省立國民師範學校畢業，曾任陽曲縣立第四國民學校教員及川至中學附設小學教員。

1901年11月8日生於五台縣永安村一個農戶家庭，幼時三年私塾啟蒙，1914年考入東冶鎮陀陽高等小學讀書。因家境不濟，兩年後返回本村讀私塾。1917年至1918年在河北省阜平縣書店裡當書徒，1919年3月考入山西國民師範第一期速成班學習，1921年10月畢業，任陽曲縣立第四國民學校教員，每月薪俸二十塊大洋，任教一個學期即被辭退。後任河邊村川至中學附設小學教員，月俸仍為二十塊大洋，任教四年餘，其間與東冶鎮朱香輝結婚，生有一女松枝。

1924年3月經王用賓（時任廣州大本營參議及奉派北方軍事委員，孫中山指派國民黨一大代表，前中國國民黨本部參議兼北方黨務特派員），陳志毅（時任國民黨山西省臨時黨部籌備委員，山西省參議會參議，前北京政府參議院參議員、上海國會議員）介紹加入中國國民黨，1924年4月由趙建登（國民黨一大山西省代表，前北京大學文科生參與五四運動，太原國民師範學校教員，山西晚報社長兼總編輯，國民黨山西省臨時黨部籌備委員）、苗培成（國民黨一大山西省代表，原山西平民中學校長，時任國民黨山西省臨時黨部執行委員兼宣傳部長）無黨投考黃埔軍校，繼往上海參加黃埔軍校招生考試，後至廣州復試，1924年6月考入黃埔中國國民黨陸軍軍官學校第一期第一隊學習，在學期間隨隊北上擔任孫中山副官大本營的警衛工作，1924年11月畢業。

分發黃埔軍校第三期入伍生隊第三隊見習，排長，1925年參加第一次東征和對滇桂軍閥楊希閔部、劉震寰部軍事行動，參加中國青年軍人聯合會活動，在黃埔軍校沒加入中共系因不願作“跨黨分子”。1925年夏派赴謝景翼部國民軍工作，任國民二軍（軍長胡景翼、岳維峻）第六混成旅（旅長弓富魁）教導營教官、旅司令部參謀、第二團少校團附。1926年11月到武漢，任中央軍事政治學校武漢分校南湖學兵團指揮員，軍校學員總隊政治大隊第一隊少校隊長，工兵大隊大隊長。1927年3月在漢口經樂鵬、梅德魁介紹加入中共，<sup>②</sup>後任國民革命軍第二方面軍總指揮部參謀。1927年9月到廣州，參加廣州起義的準備工作，任工人赤衛隊第六聯隊

Name: Xu Xiangqian  
Birth year: 1901

Education (middle or above)=1  
Education (vocational)=1  
Education (college)=0

CCP membership =1  
Time: 1927

隊長。起義失敗後隨部撤退花縣，改編為工農革命軍第四師，任第十團黨代表。1928年1月1日紅四師到海陸豐，任第四師參謀長。1928年6月葉劍英後接任第四師師長，領導廣東海陸豐農工暴動。

1929年1月根據中共廣東省委指示撤離海陸豐，轉赴上海。1929年6月被中共中央軍委派赴鄂豫邊根據地，任紅軍第十一軍第三十一師師長、代師長，中共鄂豫邊特委委員，鄂豫邊軍事委員會主席，參與領導發展鄂豫邊區紅軍及根據地和指揮反圍剿作戰。1930年2月起任中共鄂豫皖特委委員，紅軍第一軍副軍長兼第一師師長，中共第一軍前敵委員會委員。1931年1月任紅軍第四軍參謀長，1931年7月任紅軍第四軍軍長，1931年11月任紅軍第四方面軍總指揮兼紅四軍軍長，當選為中蘇蘇維埃共和國中央革命軍事委員會委員，參與發展和擴大鄂豫皖邊區紅軍和根據地。1932年10月率紅四方面軍西征，任西北革命軍事委員會副主席，領導創建川陝邊根據地，當選為中蘇蘇維埃第二屆中央執行委員，同中央紅軍會師後，任紅軍前敵總指揮部總指揮。1936年7月紅二、四方面軍會師後，任中共中央西北局委員。1936年10月任中央革命軍事委員會主席團委員，1936年11月任西路軍軍政委員會副主席。

抗日戰爭爆發後，任中共中央軍委委員，國民革命軍第八路軍第一二九師副師長，改裝番號後仍任第十八集團軍第一二九師副師長。<sup>③</sup>1939年6月任八路軍山東第一縱隊司令員。1940年12月返回延安，任陝甘寧省綏德軍區副司令員兼參謀長。1941年10月參與籌備組織延安黃埔同學分會，被選進為理事，排名第一。1943年後任抗日軍政大學總校代理校長，1945年5月當選為中共第七屆中央委員。抗日戰爭勝利後，1946年任晉冀魯豫軍區副司令員，華北軍區副司令員兼第一兵團（後改為第十八集團）司令員兼政委。1948年秋兼任華北人民政府委員，後任太原前線司令部司令員兼政委，指揮解放太原戰役。中華人民共和國成立後，任中國人民解放軍總參謀長，人民革命軍事委員會副主席，中共中央軍委副主席，國防委員會第一至三屆副主席，第二、三屆全國人大常委會副委員長，國務院副總理兼國防部部長，中共第八屆中央政治局委員，第九、十屆中央委員，第十一、十二屆中央政治局委員。

1955年9月27日被授予中華人民共和國元帥軍銜。1984年6月任黃埔軍校同學會會長，1988年2月任黃埔軍校同學會名譽會長，1990年5月10日在北京馬所接見從臺灣回大陸觀光的一期同學鄧文儀等，實現了海峽兩岸黃埔生和解。1988年主動辭去中央軍委副主席、中華人民共和國國務院副總理等職。1990年9月21日因病在北京逝世。著有《歷史的回顧》、《徐向前軍事文集》等。1988年被中華人民共和國中央軍事委員會確定為中國人民解放軍軍事家，是中國人民解放軍創建人和領導者之一。<sup>④</sup>其子徐小岩，歷任中國人民解放軍總參謀部通信部部長，南京軍區副司令員，中國人民解放軍總裝備部科技委員會副主任，中將軍銜。2010年聘任中央新聞圖片廠拍攝的大型歷史文獻紀錄片《黃埔軍校》攝製組歷史顧問。

References:  
Zhao Liandeng  
Miao Peichen  
Team no.=1

Political outcomes:  
Quit=0  
Sacrifice=0

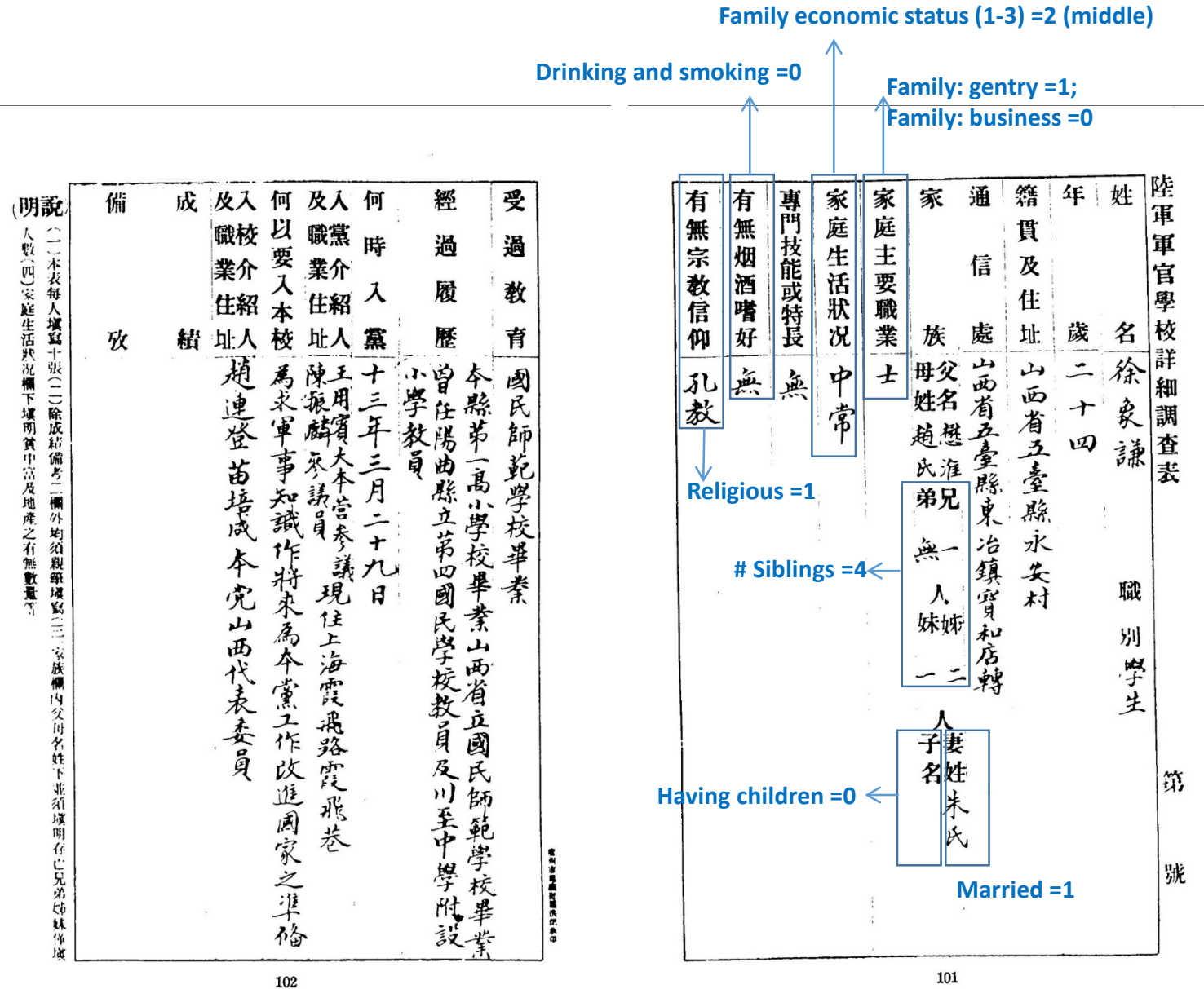
A-7

315

①、自廣州黃埔軍校第一期畢業生名錄（參見《黃埔軍校同學會名譽會長》）；  
②、《湖南省檔案館校閱》，湖南人民出版社《黃埔軍校同學會》第一期第一隊學員名單記載。  
③、徐向前著，解放軍出版社1988年4月《歷史的回顧》第29頁記載。  
④、鄧知聖主編，軍工總社大學出版社1999年10月15日《中國人物小傳》第十八輯記載。  
⑤、廖雲雄主編，中共中央文獻出版社2001年6月《中國共產黨歷史大辭典》增訂本第419頁記載。



Figure A.4. III. An Example of Coding Based on the Detailed Survey



**i. CCP Membership and Other Political Outcomes.** Based on the cadets' biographies, we define three binary variables to indicate their CCP membership, whether they quit the party, and whether they died during the war. For example, Xu Xiangqian's biography shows that he joined the CCP in 1927 and became one of the ten marshals of the People's Liberation Army in 1955. Therefore, for Xu Xiangqian, CCP membership=1, quitting=0, and sacrifice=0. We highlight the corresponding coding in red in Figure A.4(II).

**ii. Personal Characteristics I.** We extract four sets of variables from the cadets' biographies to measure their basic personal characteristics, as illustrated in Figure A.4(II). First, we code the cadet's birth year. Second, based on their educational background, we construct three dummy variables to indicate whether the cadet received middle school education or above, vocational education, and college education. Third, we list references from the cadet's application to the Whampoa, check the party status of the references, and then calculate how many CCP references the cadet had. Fourth, we code the team to which the cadet was assigned. The variables related to Xu Xiangqian are highlighted in blue in Figure A.4(II).

**iii. Personal Characteristics II.** We use the survey conducted by Whampoa to construct three additional sets of variables to further measure the personal characteristics of the cadets. First, we code the family background of the cadets. Specifically, we use two dummy variables to measure whether the cadet's family had an educational tradition and whether they ran a business. Another categorical variable is constructed to measure the cadet's family economic status, with categories 1 (poor), 2 (middle), and 3 (rich). Second, we collect more demographic information, including the number of siblings, whether the cadet was married, and whether the cadet had children. Third, we use two dummy variables to measure the cadet's religion and behavior traits, specifically, whether the cadet believed in any religion and whether the cadet had habits of drinking and smoking. The related coding for Xu Xiangqian is highlighted in blue in Figure A.4(III).

## **A.5 Coding Life History and Exposure to the *New Youth***

To determine whether an individual cadet was exposed to the *New Youth* and Communist ideology, we take three steps, as explained below.

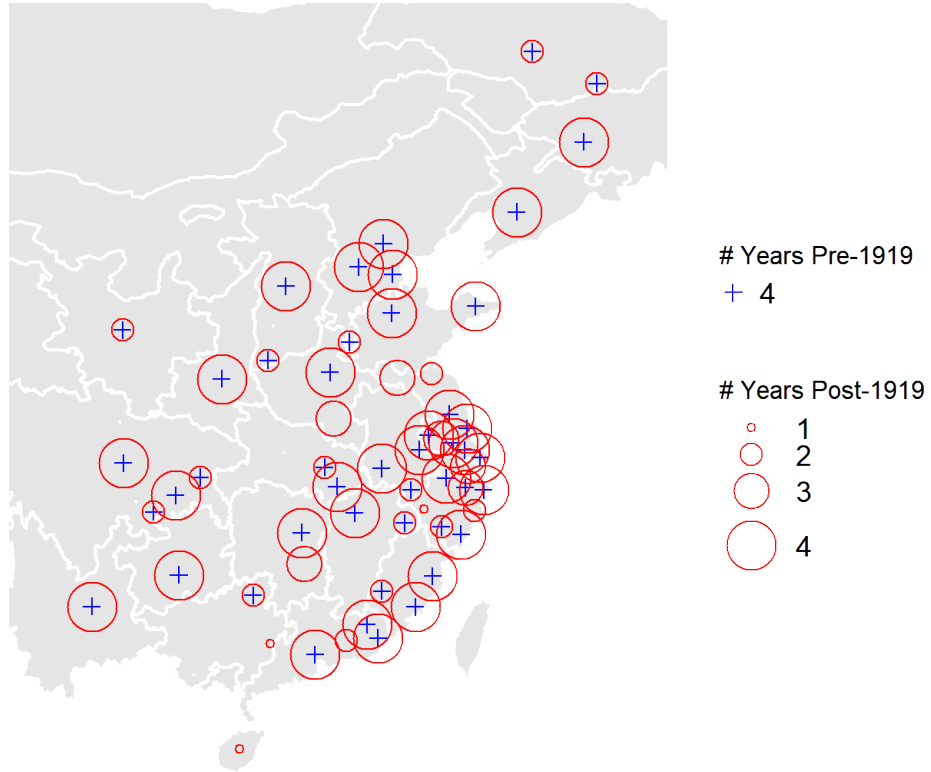
**Step 1. Coding the Circulation of the *New Youth* Over Time.** We first code the circulation locations of the *New Youth* magazine over time. Figure A.5(I) provides an example.

**Figure A.5. I.** An Example of the Circulation of the *New Youth*

各埠代派處																							
重慶	成都	成都	成都	蘭州	貴州	雲南	西安	西安	西安	運城	太原	煙台	濟南	濟南	大名	保定	保定	天津	天津	北京	北京	北京	
崇文書局	二酉書房	源記書莊	點石齋書局	崇文書局	正本房社	羣新明書社	維新書局	正誼公司	新智識圖書社	公益書局	交通義書社	晉新書局	教育圖書局	山東官書局	教育圖書局	大名官書局	翠玉山書房	直隸華書局	新華書局	直隸華書局	浚花書局	龍文書局	
蘇州	蘇州	坎市	廈門	福州	福州	屯溪	蕪湖	安慶	廣信府	南昌	南昌	武昌	漢口	漢口	長沙	嘉應州	汕頭	廣州	廣州	開封	開封	梁山	
瑪瑙房	振新書社	廣益書局	新民書社	陳壽書莊	宏文書莊	科學圖書社	科學圖書社	萬智書樓	益智書局	點石齋	開明書局	昌明書局	會文書局	昌明書局	學益圖書公司	啓新書局	石渠書局	共和編譯局	蒙學書局	共和編譯局	百城書館	文會書房	
新加坡	新加坡	哈爾濱	龍江	吉林	奉天	奉天	奉天	溫州	溫州	處州	紹興	甯波	甯波	杭州	常州	揚州	南通州	南通州	無錫	無錫	南京	南京	
普益印務公司	曹萬豐書莊	魁新書堂	永新書報社	關東書局	神州圖書局	會文書局	圖書發行所	維新書局	日新書社	悅興書社	教育書館	汲經書社	文明書社	問學書房	晉升書房	競存書局	聚生書局	導文書社	樂群書局	文華書局	新民圖書局	共和書局	
																						小怡福林	

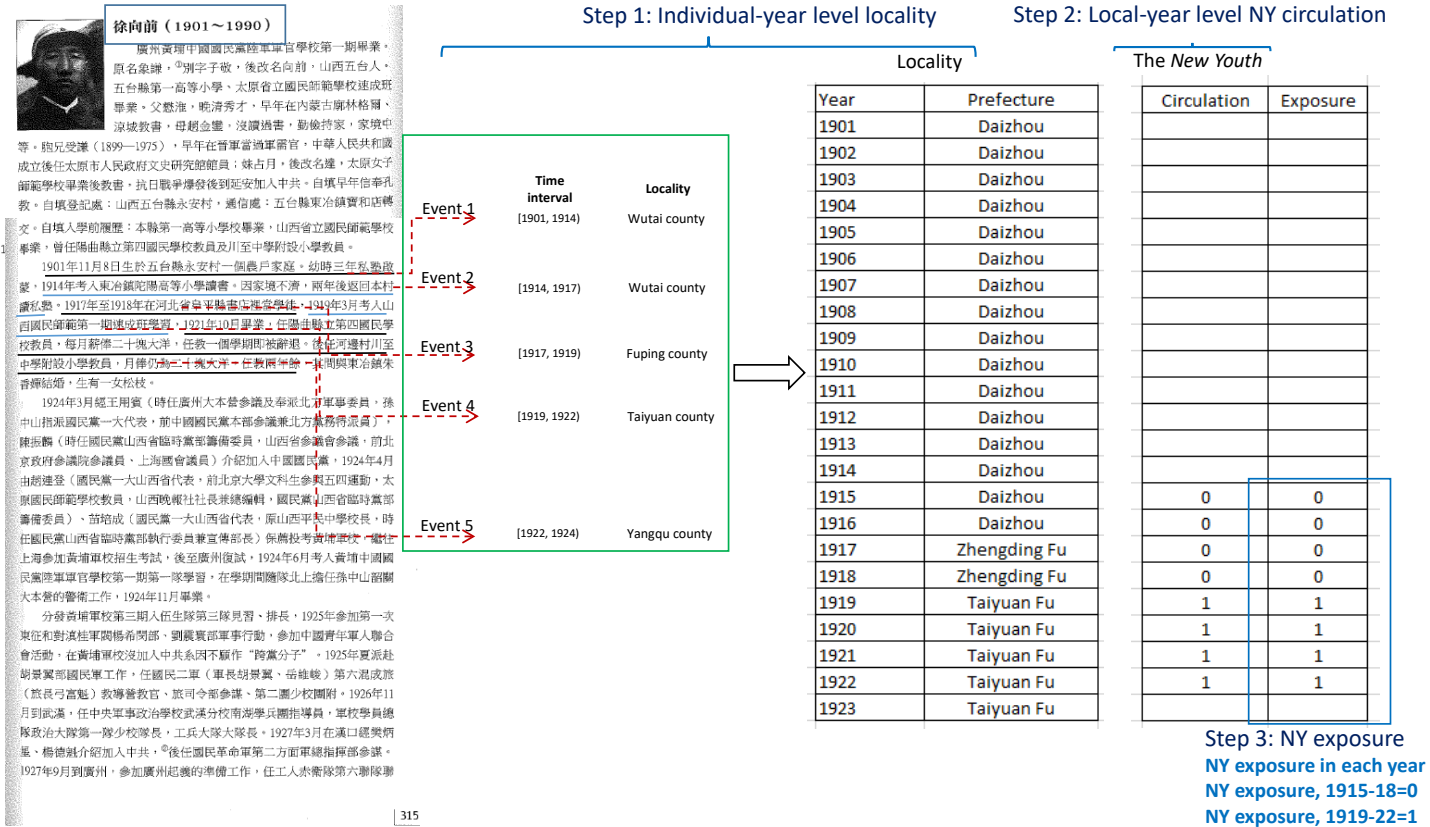
We code the circulation locations for all volumes during 1915–22. Figure A.5(II) presents the geographic circulation of the *New Youth* over time. As shown, the *New Youth* was consistently available in certain prefectures, while there were entry and exit points in other prefectures. Not surprisingly, the former group tends to include larger cities.

**Figure A.5. II. Circulation Locations of the New Youth**

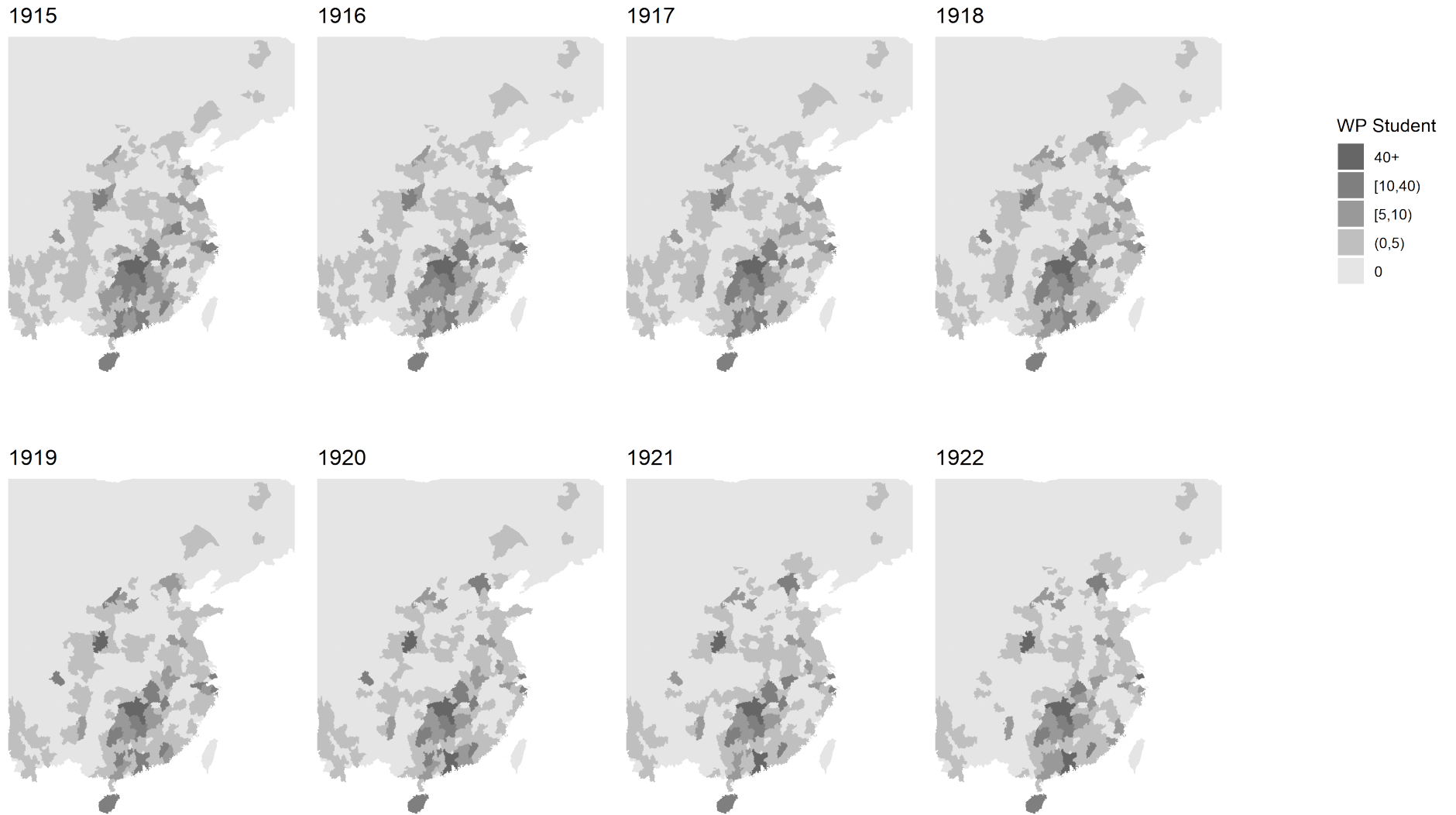


**Step 2. Coding the Locations of the Cadets Over Time.** To code the locations of the cadets over time, we use the information on their recorded life events from their biographies, focusing on time and location, as illustrated in Figure A.5(III). This allows us to construct an individual-year-level panel dataset with the cadets' location. Figure A.5(IV) presents the geographical distribution of all cadets in each year during 1915–22, showing that they were widely dispersed across China.

Figure A.5. III. Coding Life History

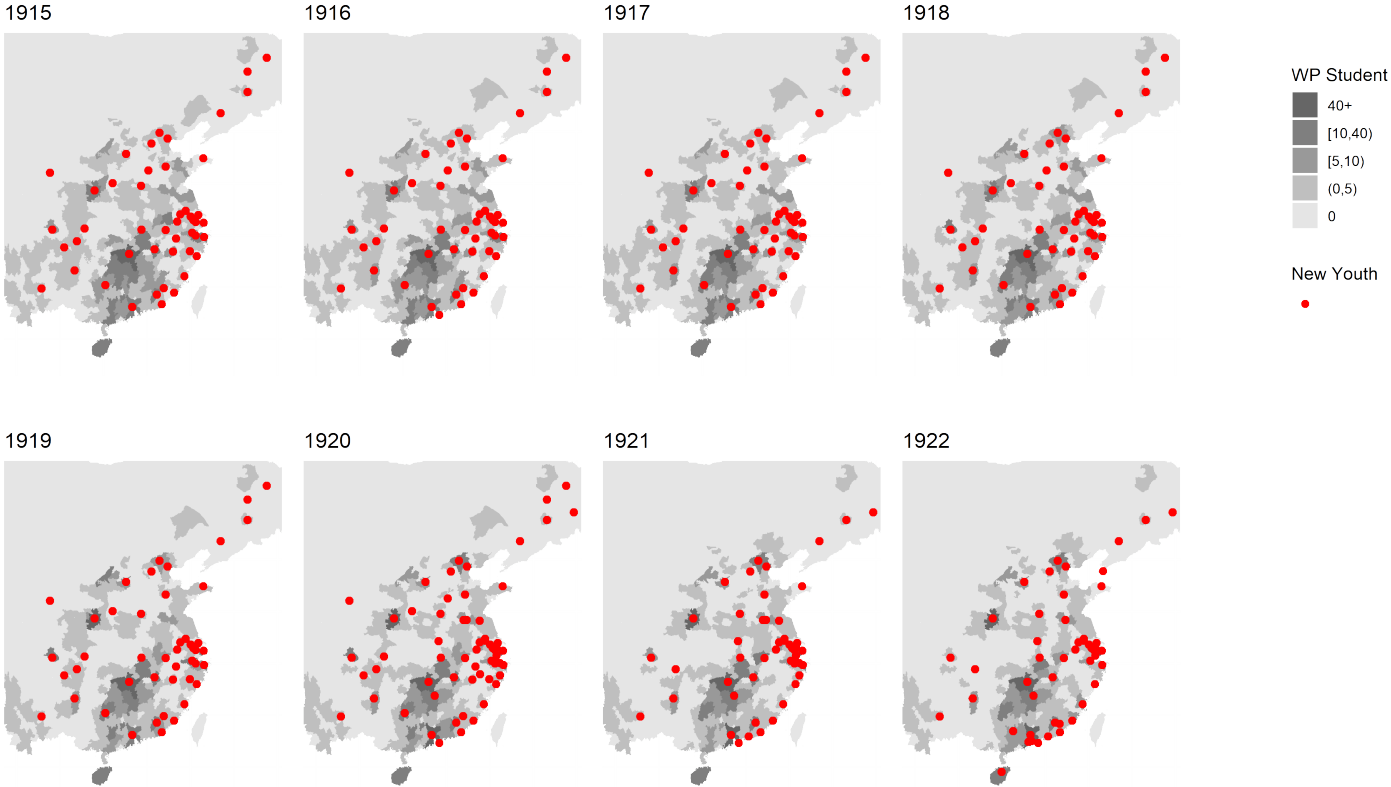


**Figure A.5.** IV. Cadet Location Year by Year



**Step 3. Defining Exposure to the *New Youth*.** To determine whether a cadet was exposed to the *New Youth* and Communist ideology, we combine information on the cadet’s location and the *New Youth*’s circulation as shown in Figure A.5(V). If a cadet lived in a locality with *New Youth* circulation during a particular year (represented by the gray background and red point respectively), then we consider the cadet to be exposed to the *New Youth*. For example, using Xu Xiangqian as an example, he lived in Taiyuan during 1919–22, and since the *New Youth* was available in this location during this time, Xu was exposed to the *New Youth*.

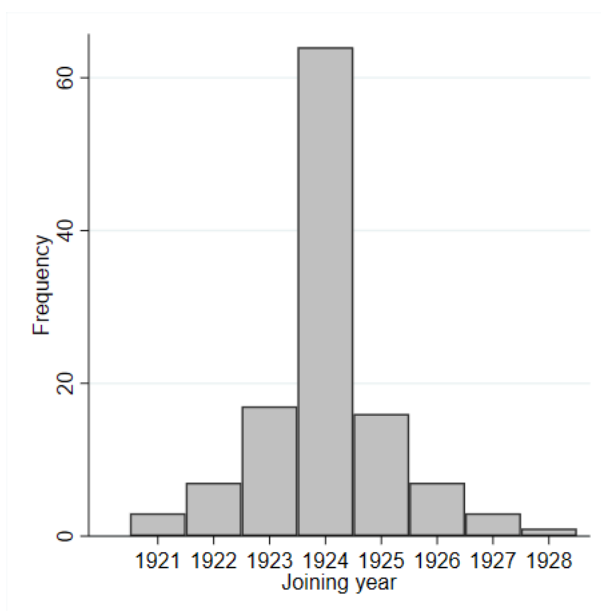
**Figure A.5.** V. Exposure to the *New Youth*



## A.6 Years of Joining the CCP

Figure A.6 illustrates the timeline of CCP membership among the participants in our study. The graph indicates that all participants joined the party during its early years, with 77% joining during or after the Whampoa period. Because of limited access to party organizations in the early 1920s, few participants joined the party before Whampoa.

**Figure A.6.** The Distribution of CCP Years



## A.7 The *New Youth* and Number of Whampoa Cadets

Our analysis aims to investigate the impact of *New Youth* exposure on Whampoa cadets' party choices. We also examine whether the *New Youth* exposure affects the inclusion of Whampoa cadets in our sample. To explore this relationship, we construct a prefecture-level panel for two periods (1915–1918 and 1919–1922), where each observation in the panel data indicates the number of Whampoa cadets who had been to a prefecture during that period. The results show a positive correlation between the *New Youth*'s exposure and the number of Whampoa cadets (Column (1) of Table A.7). However, this relationship appears to be driven by the size of a locality, and once we control for city size (i.e., the size of urban population in 1920), the positive correlation disappears (Column (2)). Moreover, when we control for prefecture fixed effects in Columns (3)–(4), we find that the change in *New Youth* exposure is not significantly correlated with the change in the number



of Whampoa cadets.

**Table A.7.** The Impacts of Ideology Exposure across Localities  
Dependent Var.: Number of Whampoa Cadets

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>New Youth</i> circulation	4.334*** (1.397)	0.863 (0.806)	0.119 (0.710)	-0.316 (0.774)
City population		0.011*** (0.003)		
City population*Post1919		0.011*** (0.002)		0.011*** (0.002)
Post1919	0.018 (0.183)	0.093 (0.127)	0.154 (0.194)	0.130 (0.126)
Prefecture FE			Y	Y
Observations	686	686	686	686
R-squared	0.141	0.294	0.0357	0.549

*Note.* Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the prefecture level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## B Additional Analyses

### B.1 Heterogeneous Effects across Personal Characteristics

Table B.1 presents the interaction effects between post-1919 *New Youth* exposure and various personal characteristics. While there seems to be some complementarity between social networks and ideology exposure, there are no strong heterogeneous patterns in general.

**Table B.1.** Impact of Post-1919 *New Youth*: Heterogeneous Effects. Dependent Variable: CCP=0/1

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
NY exposure, 1919-22	0.122** (0.055)	0.112* (0.058)	0.118** (0.055)	0.126** (0.055)	0.117** (0.056)	0.125** (0.056)	0.117** (0.058)	0.117** (0.056)	0.116** (0.056)	0.117** (0.056)	0.118** (0.055)	0.118** (0.056)
NY*1(Birth year>1900)	-0.116 (0.095)											
NY*Education: vocational		-0.075 (0.110)										
NY*Education: college			0.019 (0.132)									
NY*# CCP references				0.135* (0.076)								
NY*Family: gentry					0.049 (0.087)							
NY*Family: business						0.151* (0.091)						
NY*Family economic status							0.003 (0.085)					
NY*# siblings								0.000 (0.014)				
NY*Married									0.010 (0.090)			
NY*Having child										-0.022 (0.129)		
NY*Religious											0.044 (0.116)	
NY*Smoking and drinking												0.071 (0.146)
NY exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE, Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal charar. I, II	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530	530
R-squared	0.545	0.543	0.542	0.546	0.543	0.546	0.542	0.542	0.542	0.542	0.542	0.542

A-17

Note. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## B.2 Alternative Standard Errors

Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses, whereas two-way clustering standard errors at home county level and birth year level are presented in brackets. These standard errors are close to those clustered at the home county level.

**Table B.2.** Impact of Post-1919 *New Youth*: Various Standard Errors  
Dependent Variable: CCP=0/1

New Youth exposure defined at	Prefecture level						County level					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
					Teams 1-4						Teams 1-4	
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.109 (0.042)*** [0.046]**		0.128 (0.044)*** [0.048]**	0.127 (0.047)*** [0.050]**	0.127 (0.054)** [0.053]**	0.117 (0.053)** [0.051]**	0.153 (0.064)** [0.057]**		0.152 (0.064)** [0.057]**	0.181 (0.070)*** [0.053]***	0.162 (0.081)** [0.048]***	0.172 (0.083)** [0.046]***
New Youth exposure, 1915-18		-0.047 (0.046) [0.042]	-0.081 (0.048)* [0.040]*	-0.055 (0.051) [0.044]	-0.091 (0.059) [0.052]	-0.094 (0.061) [0.050]*		-0.044 (0.080) [0.106]	-0.038 (0.079) [0.107]	-0.006 (0.085) [0.102]	-0.103 (0.101) [0.110]	-0.104 (0.103) [0.109]
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
County FE							Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE				Y	Y	Y				Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics I				Y	Y	Y				Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics II						Y						Y
Observations	689	689	689	689	530	530	689	689	689	689	530	530
R-squared	0.386	0.381	0.389	0.443	0.534	0.542	0.560	0.552	0.560	0.603	0.747	0.750

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references; Personal characteristics II include family backgrounds (gentry, business), family economic status (1-3), number of siblings, marriage status, a dummy indicating whether they have children, religious belief, and smoking and drinking habit. Robust standard errors are presented in parentheses and two-way clustering standard errors at the hometown level and the birth year level in brackets. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

### B.3 A Continuous Measure of *New Youth* Exposure

Our finding is robust to using a continuous measure of *New Youth* exposure, where we calculate the exposure as the share of years being exposed. The results are presented in Table B.3.

**Table B.3.** A Continuous Measure of New Youth Exposure  
Dependent Variable: CCP=0/1

	(1)	(2)
	Teams 1-4	
Average New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.159*** (0.058)	0.161** (0.070)
Average New Youth exposure, 1915-18	-0.002 (0.069)	-0.068 (0.081)
Prefecture FE	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y
Personal characteristics I	Y	Y
Personal characteristics II		Y
Observations	689	530
R-squared	0.464	0.564

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references; Personal characteristics II include family backgrounds (gentry, business), family economic status (1-3), number of siblings, marriage status, a dummy indicating whether they have children, religious belief, and smoking and drinking habit. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

### B.4 Comparison Groups by Cohort

Our comparison group comprises of individuals who have resided in the prefectures ever with post-1919 *New Youth* exposure but missed it. We can divide the comparison group into (i) individuals who lived in these prefectures before 1919, and (ii) individuals who resided in the prefectures during the post-1919 period but narrowly missed the *New Youth* exposure. Within group (ii), we further separate those who arrived in a locality during 1919–22 and those who arrived in 1923, the latter of which missed the *New Youth* exposure due to national-level exit. As shown in Table B.4, when comparing with these different cohorts, our estimates are similar to our baseline one, suggesting that sorting of individuals is unlikely to be the driver of our main finding.

**Table B.4.** Comparing Groups by Cohort  
Dependent Variable: CCP=1/0

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.127** (0.052)	0.127** (0.052)	0.136** (0.068)	0.137** (0.067)
(1) Been in the pref. with Post-19 NY before 1919		-0.018 (0.089)		
(2) Been in the pref. with Post-19 NY after 1919, but just missed			0.016 (0.071)	
(2.1) Been in the pref. with Post-19 NY during 1919-22, but just missed				0.014 (0.095)
(2.2) Been in the pref. with Post-19 NY in 1923, and missed NY				0.017 (0.070)
New Youth exposure, 1919-22 vs. group (1)		0.145 (0.103)		
New Youth exposure, 1919-22 vs. group (2)			0.120** (0.059)	
New Youth exposure, 1919-22 vs. group (2.1)				0.123 (0.094)
New Youth exposure, 1919-22 vs. group (2.2)				0.120* (0.063)
New Youth Exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Other personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	689	689	689	689
R-squared	0.443	0.443	0.443	0.443

*Note.* This table compares those with exposure and those who had been to prefectures with post-1919 *New Youth* but missed it due to life events. Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## B.5 Measurement Error

We conduct three sets of analyses to make sure our findings are not driven by measurement error at the locality or individual levels.

**i. Dropping Metropolitan Cities.** Our estimates are similar or a bit larger than our baseline estimate if we drop the metropolitan cities from our sample.

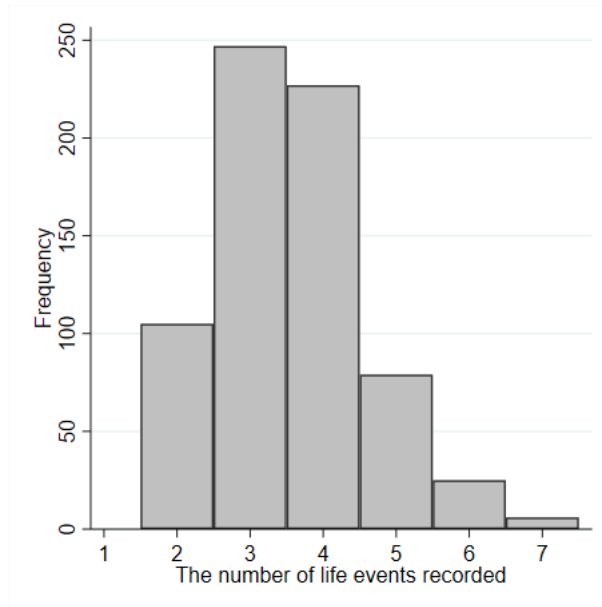
**Table B.5. I. Dropping Big Cities**  
Dependent Variable: CCP=0/1

	All cadets				Teams 1-4			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Excluding who had been CCP mean:	Beijing 0.163	Shanghai 0.163	Guangzhou 0.177	All three 0.172	Beijing 0.160	Shanghai 0.160	Guangzhou 0.179	All three 0.173
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.135*** (0.047)	0.133*** (0.045)	0.132** (0.066)	0.212** (0.088)	0.127** (0.058)	0.126** (0.054)	0.140** (0.069)	0.199** (0.088)
New Youth exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal char. I	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal char. II					Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	613	652	417	314	456	494	407	306
R-squared	0.438	0.445	0.592	0.563	0.547	0.558	0.602	0.577

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references; Personal characteristics II include family backgrounds (gentry, business), family economic status (1-3), number of siblings, marriage status, a dummy indicating whether they have children, religious belief, and smoking and drinking habit. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**ii. Precision of Life Event Records.** The major life events for our studied individuals—in their early 20s in 1924—are education and jobs. On average, each cadet has 3.6 recorded life event records. As Figure B.5 shows, the majority of the cadets (474 out of 689) have 3 or 4 recorded events. About 15% (105 out of 689) have 2 recorded events, and 16% (110 out of 689) have at least 5 recorded events.

**Figure B.5.** The Number of Life Events Recorded



To check whether our finding is affected by the number of events recorded, we examine whether our estimate varies by the number of records. This is not the case, as shown in Table B.5(II). Our finding also holds if we remove those who have few or many events recorded.

**Table B.5. II. Considering the Number of Recorded Life Events**  
 Dependent Var.: CCP=0/1

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
					Teams 1-4	
#Recorded events:	>2		<5		>2 <5	
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.127** (0.053)	0.165*** (0.060)	0.166*** (0.058)	0.112** (0.055)	0.135** (0.061)	0.153** (0.063)
#Recorded events * New Youth, 1919-22	0.011 (0.045)				-0.002 (0.049)	
#Recorded events:	0.052 (0.036)				0.065 (0.045)	
New Youth exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics II				Y	Y	Y
Observations	689	584	579	530	488	426
R-squared	0.455	0.489	0.448	0.554	0.574	0.599

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references; Personal characteristics II include family backgrounds (gentry, business), family economic status (1-3), number of siblings, marriage status, a dummy indicating whether they have children, religious belief, and smoking and drinking habit. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**iii. Missing Years of Recorded Events.** Some recorded events in the data did not include exact years, so we had to use assumptions to infer the missing years. Specifically, we used the beginning year of the next event or the school system to estimate the missing years. However, these assumptions may introduce some measurement error.

To check the validity of our method, we applied the same inference method to the entire sample by assuming that we only knew the birth year, end year, and life events for all individuals. We then compared the estimates from our original sample to the estimates from the sample with inferred years.

Table B.5 presents the results. Columns (1) and (3) show the original estimates, and Columns (2) and (4) show the estimates with inferred years. We found that the estimates were similar, which confirms that our findings are not driven by our inference method.



**Table B.5.** III. Validating the Inference Method  
Dependent Var.: CCP=0/1

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
			Teams 1-4	
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.127** (0.052)		0.117** (0.056)	
New Youth exposure, 1919-22 (Based on events only)		0.110** (0.056)		0.123** (0.058)
NY exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics II			Y	Y
Observations	689	689	530	530
R-squared	0.443	0.440	0.542	0.542

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references; Personal characteristics II include family backgrounds (gentry, business), family economic status (1-3), number of siblings, marriage status, a dummy indicating whether they have children, religious belief, and smoking and drinking habit. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## B.6 Heterogeneous Circulation Locations

To gauge the reading rate, we examine heterogeneity across circulation locations in three ways. First, we separate the prefecture-level post-1919 *New Youth* into a breakdown of within a county and outside the county. Columns (1)–(2) of Table B.6 show little impact if the post-1919 *New Youth* was available outside of a cadet’s located county.

Second, we separate the circulation county into small and big cities, defined by a threshold of urban population size of 100,000. Using the same specification as our baseline, we obtain estimates of 0.26 for small cities and 0.13 for big cities (Columns (3)–(4)).

Finally, a subsample of the circulation points were bookstores located in schools. Based on the life history of the cadets, we know whether a cadet was studying in those schools. When separating this very local exposure from others, we find that the coefficient of this very local exposure is 0.26 whereas that of the rest is 0.15 (Columns (5)–(6)).

**Table B.6.** The Impacts of Ideology Exposure across Localities  
Dependent Var.: CCP=0/1

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
New Youth (NY) exposure, 1919-22 (pref. level)						
different county with the NY	0.040 (0.050)	0.051 (0.054)	0.038 (0.049)	0.049 (0.054)	0.032 (0.050)	0.044 (0.054)
same county with the NY	0.160*** (0.056)	0.161*** (0.057)				
same county with the NY: small city			0.251*** (0.088)	0.260*** (0.080)		
same county with the NY: big city			0.135** (0.059)	0.131** (0.061)		
same county with the NY: same school					0.250* (0.149)	0.263* (0.155)
same county with the NY: others					0.151*** (0.058)	0.152*** (0.058)
NY Exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE		Y		Y		Y
Birth year FE		Y		Y		Y
Personal characteristics I		Y		Y		Y
Observations	689	689	689	689	689	689
R-squared	0.400	0.451	0.403	0.455	0.400	0.452

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## B.7 Possible Spillover Effects

We investigate potential spillover effects by examining two types of social connections among the cadets in our study. We observe some indications of spillover effects when cadets share the same reference, but we find that our primary result remains robust even when accounting for these possible effects.

**Table B.7.** Allowing for Spillover Effects  
Dependent Variable: CCP=0/1

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.125** (0.052)	0.133** (0.054)	0.125** (0.052)	0.131** (0.052)
Post-1919 NY exposure of hometown (county) fellows	0.002 (0.002)			
Post-1919 NY exposure of hometown (prefecture) fellows		0.002 (0.001)		
Post-1919 NY exposure of hometown (province) fellows			-0.001 (0.001)	
Post-1919 NY exposure of connected cadets (via references)				0.005* (0.003)
New Youth exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	689	689	689	689
R-squared	0.445	0.445	0.444	0.446

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## B.8 Results from Cohorts 2–4

Table B.8 indicates that a comparable pattern exists for 700 chosen cadets from the second through fourth cohorts of the Whamphoa. Since there are fewer personal characteristic variables available for these cadets than for those in the first cohort, we have included only the essential variables in the analysis, allowing us to compare the results with those for the first cohort.

**Table B.8.** Results for Other Cohorts  
Dependent Variable: CCP=0/1

Exposure defined at	Cohort 1				Cohorts 2-4			
	Prefecture level		County level		Prefecture level		County level	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.128** (0.050)	0.118** (0.052)	0.152** (0.077)	0.158** (0.073)	0.129*** (0.050)	0.128** (0.057)	0.173** (0.080)	0.240*** (0.088)
New Youth exposure, 1915-18	-0.081* (0.048)	-0.061 (0.049)	-0.038 (0.097)	-0.015 (0.093)	-0.005 (0.063)	-0.031 (0.069)	-0.089 (0.105)	-0.170 (0.111)
Education: vocational		0.014 (0.041)		-0.050 (0.062)		0.001 (0.075)		-0.115 (0.101)
Education: college		-0.029 (0.063)		0.035 (0.134)		-0.099 (0.081)		-0.232** (0.093)
#CCP references		0.178*** (0.046)		0.163** (0.069)		0.522*** (0.097)		0.637*** (0.108)
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		
County FE			Y	Y			Y	Y
Birth year FE		Y		Y		Y		Y
Cohort FE								Y
Observations	689	689	689	689	700	700	700	700
R-squared	0.389	0.442	0.560	0.601	0.383	0.452	0.587	0.664

*Note.* Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## B.9 Timing of Joining the CCP

Table B.9 investigates the year of CCP membership to aid in interpreting the impact of post-1919 *New Youth* exposure. The results indicate that the primary effect occurs during the period of 1924–1928, indicating that the influence of ideological exposure is not likely to be a result of local CCP recruitment.

**Table B.9.** Timing of Joining the CCP  
Dependent Var.: CCP=0/1

Time of Joining the CCP	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	1921–1923		1924–1928	
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.046*	0.030	0.092*	0.092*
	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.049)	(0.050)
#CCP references	0.135***	0.019	0.066	0.065
	(0.040)	(0.020)	(0.048)	(0.044)
NY exposure, 1919-22 × #CCP references		0.146***		0.001
		(0.043)		(0.073)
New Youth exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Other personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	689	689	662	662
R-squared	0.510	0.524	0.412	0.412

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## B.10 Potential Social Interactions

One alternative hypothesis is that post-1919 *New Youth* exposure primarily reflects social interactions independent of ideas. We examine this hypothesis as follows. For each cadet, we know who co-located with him before joining the Whampoa and calculate the average post-1919 *New Youth* exposure ratio among his co-locaters. If post-1919 *New Youth* captured primarily social interactions rather than ideas, we would expect a strong heterogeneous pattern: After arriving at Whampoa, those who were more likely to share experience with his exposed co-locaters would be more likely to join the CCP. As shown in Table B.10, this is not supported by the data.

**Table B.10.** Potential Social Interactions  
Dependent Var.: CCP=0/1

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ave. Post-19 NY exposure ratio within co-locators × New Youth exposure, 1919-22			-0.051 (0.300)
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.119*** (0.042)	0.136*** (0.051)	0.136*** (0.052)
Ave. Post-19 NY exposure ratio within co-locators	-0.105 (0.085)	-0.210 (0.157)	-0.191 (0.179)
Prefecture FE		Y	Y
New Youth exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y
Other personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y
Observations	689	689	689
R-squared	0.123	0.445	0.445

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

## B.11 Assignments in Whampoa and the National Revolutionary Army

To check whether our finding on political outcomes is primarily driven by assignment, we examine whether post-1919 *New Youth* exposure is associated with political assignments. First, we examine whether individuals who were exposed to post-1919 *New Youth* were more or less likely to hold leadership positions (captain or vice-captain) in the Whampoa Academy. In Column (1) of Table B.11(I), we observe no significant correlation between the two variables. We also analyze the post-graduation assignments of Whampoa cadets in the National Revolutionary Army. The First Army was under the strict control of Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the KMT, while the Fourth Army was more influenced by the CCP. Our findings indicate that post-1919 *New Youth* exposure is not correlated with these assignments either (Columns (2) and (3)).

When include these political assignments as control variables and find that our finding on sacrifice and quitting still holds, as shown in Table B.11(II).

**Table B.11. I. Political Assignments as the Outcome**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Leadership at Whampoa	Assignment in the National Revolutionary Army The 1st Army	The 4th Army
New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.003 (0.029)	-0.073 (0.069)	-0.024 (0.036)
New Youth exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y
Other personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y
Observations	689	689	689
R-squared	0.526	0.347	0.306

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table B.11. II. Controlling for Political Assignments**

	(1) 1924-1949		(2) 1927-1936	
	Quit	Sacrifice	Quit	Sacrifice
(1) KMT with New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.045 (0.044)	0.153*** (0.053)	-0.002 (0.025)	0.054 (0.038)
(2) CCP without New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.400*** (0.090)	0.317*** (0.106)	0.586*** (0.053)	0.253*** (0.081)
(3) CCP with New Youth exposure, 1919-22	0.146*** (0.055)	0.557*** (0.065)	0.335*** (0.033)	0.418*** (0.050)
Leadership at Whampoa	-0.090 (0.068)	0.172** (0.081)	-0.018 (0.039)	0.066 (0.059)
The First Army	0.185*** (0.028)	0.051 (0.033)	0.045*** (0.016)	-0.007 (0.025)
The Fourth Army	-0.005 (0.055)	0.066 (0.065)	-0.002 (0.032)	-0.028 (0.048)
(3)-(2)	-0.253*** (0.097)	0.239** (0.115)	-0.251*** (0.057)	0.165* (0.087)
New Youth exposure, 1915-18	Y	Y	Y	Y
Prefecture FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Team FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Personal characteristics I	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	689	689	594	594
R-squared	0.396	0.382	0.593	0.418

*Note.* Personal characteristics I include birth year fixed effects, vocational education, college, and number of CCP references. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered at the home county level; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.