The post-80s generation in Beijing: collective memory and generational identity

Abstract
This article questions the relevance of the notion of generation to describe the cohort who lives in Beijing and who was born in the 1980s and early 1990s, after the implementation of the reforms and opening-up policy in China. The analysis relies on 627 questionnaires collected in Beijing in 2010. The sample was stratified by age and sex, and, based on quotas; it was split into five age groups (18-26 year-olds, 33-41 year-olds, 48-56 year-olds, 63-71 year-olds and 78-86 year-olds). The respondents were questioned on their perception of turning points and socio-historical changes that occurred during their lifetime. After having analysed the data in a comparative perspective, we came to conclusion that the word generation is suitable to describe the young people from Beijing born in the 1980s and early 1990s not only because they do share autobiographical and collective historical memories, but also because these memories have by and large taken place between their adolescence and entry into adulthood (supporting the hypothesis of the existence of a reminiscence bump).

Keywords: China, collective memory, generation, identity, life course, youth

Theoretical framework
Individual life course and History are strongly imbedded. Since the middle of the last century, sociologists have been seeking to understand the mechanics of this embedded-ness on micro-, meso-, and macro-socioeconomic levels. As C. Wright Mills stated, “the existence of the individual and the history of society can only be understood when viewed together” ([1959] 2006:5). The theoretical perspective of the life course provides researchers with orientation points – biography, history, and society – in analysing the interactions between the turning point occurring in the life course, the socio-historical change, and the transformation of social structures because women and men are agents embedded into a historical and societal context1. Their life trajectories can also only “be understood when viewed as having an intimate and intricate relationship with socio-historical structures” (Mills [1959] 2006:146 and 162). If Cain was the first sociologist to define the notion of life course (1964), Riley’s contribution integrated this definition,
following the legacy of Mills, with the influence of societal, political, and economic contexts on the lives of individuals (Riley 1979). Her definition also incorporates Mannheim’s thesis, which postulates that life trajectories are also influenced by history. Therefore, they are differentiated according to birth cohorts or generations. The latter dimension has been reinforced by Neugarten’s theoretical work on the importance of the age at which life course transitions take place (Neugarten et al. 1965; Neugarten and Hagestad 1976; Marshall and Mueller 2003). In his work Children of the Great Depression, Glen H. Elder set the lasting theoretical foundation of the paradigm of the life course ([1974] 1999). This theoretical perspective enables us to understand the logic that structures the various life trajectories of individuals throughout their whole lives. It also enables us to apprehend the interactions that link them to each other while anchoring them in specific social contexts (Sapin et al. 2007:34).

**Research question**

In this article, consistent with the above-mentioned line of thought, we are interested in the views of individuals in contemporary China regarding their life course and the socio-historical environment in which they evolve. We seek to understand what they identify as a *turning point* in their autobiographical trajectory and which of the socio-historical changes that have taken place during their lives have affected them the most. This analysis of collective autobiographical memory and collective historical memory leads us towards the following research question: Do the cohort born in the 1980s in Beijing, after the implementation of the one-child policy as well as the reform and opening up policy, form a *generation* in the sense of Mannheim? Chinese media and scholars often refer to the post-1980s – the *balinghou* – as a generation: the only-child generation, the me-generation, the naked-wedding generation, *etc.* However, according to our knowledge none of them has ever sociologically defined why the youths born in the 1980s may be referred as a generation. With this article our aim is to try to fill in this gap relying on exploratory data collected in Beijing in 2010.

**Generation and cohort: a conceptual discussion**

Karl Mannheim first theorized the notion of *generation* in 1928, yet demographers prefer to use the term *cohort*, which allows them to go from a comparative approach between periods to a comparative approach between cohorts (Ryder 1965; Glenn 1977; Rosow 1978). For demographers, “a cohort is composed of a collection of individuals who have lived through
a similar event at the same period of time” (Galland [2001] 2011:103). By extension, they refer to birth cohorts if the people are born in the same year. In this article we will favour the use of the notion of generation, because it is commonly used in Chinese scientific journals and media (Feng 2008). We have chosen to keep its sociological meaning, which is broader than its historical and genealogical definitions, and which adds to the definition proposed by Mannheim. We acknowledge that generations are socially constructed. They are made up of individuals from close birth cohorts who experience changes or pivotal socio-historical events at the same time, between adolescence and entry into adulthood, and witness a crystallization and formation of their generational identity. Contrary to Mannheim, we believe that individual members of a generation are not always conscious of their generational identity. This concept of identity can thus be conscious or unconscious (Chauvel [1998] 2011; Galland [2001] 2011). We therefore conceive the notion of identity as a generational continuum (Erikson [1968] 1993; Dubar 1994, 2000). It is not passed down from generation to generation, but it is reconstructed for each generation on the basis of the socio-historical context and the heritage of preceding generations. Thus, the social definition of generations is formed during youth on the borders of collective memory and modern history (Attias-Donfut 1998:168). In China, “youth” extends from 10 to 30 years and has a positive connotation. The word carries the idea of hope, courage, dynamism, and even novelty. Furthermore, historiography shows that since the creation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, this concept has been idealized to serve the interests of the Party and the State (Liu 2011; Ngai et al. 2001). Moreover, the Party-State did not hesitate to formalize the history of the country to focus the collective memory of the population. This connection between written history (historical memory), popular memories (minjian memory), and lived history (collective memory) is at the heart of our analysis.

**Article outline**

At the outset, we will analyse how people from Beijing perceive the turning points, those radical changes that have completely altered their lives (Elder [1974] 1999; Hareven and Masaoka 1988; Abbott 2001; Bessin et al. 2010). We hypothesize that the post-1980 generation, the balinghou, possesses a collective memory for autobiographical memories and that the construction of their generational identity partly relies on this. Next, we will examine the way in which these very people from Beijing view the events and socio-historical changes that have taken place during their life course. By looking at the subjective perception of an individual who may have been traumatized by the development of a socio-historical event or,
on the contrary, may have strongly welcomed it (Bertrand 2010), we will test our second hypothesis, which states that the post-1980 generation also shares a collective historical memory, or in other words a shared memory of History – “a produced, lived, oral, normative, short and plural memory” (Candau 2005:59) that is formed within social frameworks (Halbwachs [1925] 1994) and which can “assimilate certain characteristics of a group and [...] become similar” to the extent that it produces a shared representation of the past” (Candau 2005:77). By verifying the two preceding hypotheses, we will come to our conclusion that the word generation is suitable to describe the young people from Beijing born in the 1980s and early 1990s not only because they do share autobiographical and collective historical memories but also because these memories have by and large taken place between their adolescence and entry into adulthood. The last point shows that the hypothesis of the existence of a reminiscence bump, the creation of a generational identity between adolescence and the start of adulthood, is also supported by our case study conducted in Beijing.

Methodology

Survey and sample

Our analysis is based on a cross-sectional study that we conducted between April and July 2010 in Beijing, China, as part of the international research “Changes and events during the life course”. We interviewed 627 persons, who completed the questionnaires independently. Our sample was stratified by age and sex among the eight districts that make up the centre of Beijing. It would have been interesting to compare the collective memories of urban-hukou and rural-hukou people in Beijing, but because of time and budget constraints we decided to include only Beijing urbanites in our sample. To make sure that the respondents belonged to the urban population, we introduced a question on the type of resident booklet (huji zhidu) that the respondent possessed. Our sample, based on quotas, was split into five age groups:

- 18-26 years old (1984-1992): entry into adulthood
- 33-41 years old (1969-1977): settled family and professional life
- 48-56 years old (1954-1962): advanced family and professional life
- 63-71 years old (1939-1947): retirement
- 78-86 years old (1924-1932): advanced retired life

In our analysis, we examine a sample of 580 people equally distributed between the five age groups and between genders. We asked three open questions, to which they could give up to four answers and explanations.
In this article, we will focus on two of those questions, which will allow us to explore, on the one hand, the collective autobiographical memory of the post-1980 generation and, on the other hand, its collective memory of socio-historical changes:

1) If you look back at your whole life, what are the main turning points (moments that have marked an important change in your life)? In what way are they a turning point?
2) Now think about the major events and changes that have taken place in your country and across the world during your lifetime so far. Which of these have affected you most? In what particular way have they affected you?

The structure of our research has been inspired by the work of Tamara Hareven on turning points in the life course and how these turning points are perceived by individuals (Hareven and Masaoka 1988), as well as by the research on collective memories of modern history conducted in the United States (Schuman and Scott 1989; Schuman and Rodgers 2004; Settersten and Martin 2002), Europe (Scott and Zac 1993; Schuman et al. 1994; Schuman et al. 1998; Larson and Lizardo 2007), Israel (Schuman et al. 2003), Russia (Schuman and Corning 2000), and Japan (Schuman et al. 1998). Whereas these works deal with the perception of socio-historical events that took place during a specified period that may have preceded the birth of the respondents or with the perception of specific events, our empirical research concentrates on the socio-historical changes that have taken place during the lives of the respondents. To date, only two such studies have been conducted in China: those of Jennings and Zhang (2005) on the rural population and our study, which focuses on the collective autobiographical and historical memories of the urban population of Beijing.

**Data analysis**

To evaluate our hypotheses, we created graphical analyses as well as logistic regressions, with either the turning point or the socio-historical change as the dependent variable, and age, gender, and level of education as the independent variables. The last two variables were also used as control variables in evaluating the generational effect (linked to age) mentioned in the answers. Indeed, our objectives were to test the interactions between the independent variables, to compare them, and to determine which can best explain why the respondents mention a specific turning point or socio-historical event. We also analysed the reasons the respondents gave for their answers. This methodical approach allowed us to highlight clearly, among the five cohorts studied, the differences in how the inhabitants of Beijing perceived the turning points and socio-historical changes that occurred during their lives.
The post-1980 generation: a collective memory of the life course

In this section, we concentrate on the subjective turning points described by those from the post-1980 generation in Beijing. Their answers are analysed and put in perspective with those provided by the four other age groups interviewed: 1969-1977, 1954-1962, 1939-1947, and 1924-1932. This retrospective and subjective reconstruction of their history in changing societal and historical contexts inevitably leads each individual to re-evaluate their idea of what constitutes a turning point in their life. Thus, the turning points mentioned in 2010 may be different from those that would have been described if the survey had been conducted in 2005. Moreover, we need to stress that the concept of a turning point is socially constructed and can evolve with the societal, economic, political, and historical changes in a given society. China is a particularly interesting case to study because, since the creation of the PRC in 1949, the country has suffered numerous socioeconomic, political, and historical upheavals, which have shaken the norms and values of the country and its population. Among these upheavals are the following: the law that put an end to arranged marriages (1950), the Cultural Revolution and the sending of educated youth to the countryside (1966-1976), the implementation of the reforms and opening-up policy (1978), the establishment of the one-child policy (1980), and the dismantling of state enterprises and of the welfare state system (initiated in 1992). Studying the autobiographical collective memory of the first generation of only children is of particular interest (in our sample, they were aged between 18 and 26 years at the time of the interview) because it is the first generation of young people who did not grow up under Mao Zedong. These children were born at the start of the reforms and at the time of the implementation of the one-child policy. Although this generation, described by researchers and the media as that of “small emperors” (xiao huangdi) and “little princesses” (xiao gongzhu) (Fong 2004; Xi et al. 2006; Yan 2006; Chicharro 2010; Liu 2011), appears to some extent to be favoured in comparison with the generation of their parents and grandparents, it is also a vulnerable generation. The work of the China Youth and Children Research Centre reveals that the Chinese youth are particularly stressed (Xi et al. 2006); they have to adapt to a society in which their parents have not necessarily mastered the new norms and codes, and the social security and life employment systems inherited from Mao’s period have been dismantled. The balinghou have to deal with a rise in unemployment and inflation, and they are responsible for providing for their parents once their parents cannot work anymore. The fact that these young people have internalized new social constraints is shown in their answers to the questions: *If you look back at your whole life, what are the main turning points (moments that have marked an important change in your life)? In what way are they a turning point?*
Turning points the most often mentioned by the five age groups

If we mix all the age groups together and look at the types of turning points by adding up the answers given by each respondent, the following emerge as the main transitions or turning points in the lives of the Chinese: education (cited by 57.9% of respondents), profession (cited by 54.8% of respondents), and family (cited by 34% of respondents). Education was the first turning point mentioned by the 18-26 age group (65.2% of their answers). The fact that education is ranked second in the 33-41 age group, as well as third, fourth, and fifth, respectively, in the 48-56, 78-86, and 63-71 age groups, depicts its growing importance in the life course of the urban population. Education seems to have always been a central part of the lives of the Chinese population. Explanations for this not only lie in the nation’s Confucian heritage and the Imperial Examination, but also in the emphasis put on education and scientific development since the re-introduction in 1977 of the university exam (gaokao), and the “four modernisations” enacted by Deng Xiaoping the following year.

Figure 1. Age at the time of the turning point with right censoring
Education as a turning point for the four older age groups

The four older age groups (1969-1977, 1954-1962, 1939-1947 and 1924-1932) all retrospectively considered the domain education as a turning point in their lives. 23.6% of the respondents born between 1969 and 1977, who grew up during the period of reforms mentioned this turning point. Most of them refer to this as an essential capital to access upward social mobility in China. Comparing these answers with those of the two cohorts that grew up under Mao Zedong yields interesting results. Education as a turning point stands at 15.7% for the cohort born between 1954 and 1962, which could be termed the “lost generation” – educated youths (zhiqing) sent to the countryside. This cohort mentioned education more often than the cohorts preceding it (1939-1947 and 1924-1932). By comparing this with the socio-historical changes that this age group cited and the reasons they gave, we can see that education was cited because the gaokao was reintroduced at that point (1977). At this time a few of the respondents in this birth cohort, then aged between 15 and 25 years, were given the opportunity to return from the countryside, to try to pass the exam to secure a place at university. Whereas the oldest birth cohort in the sample, when mentioning the domain education as a turning point, mostly refers to an interruption in their studies. This example shows how important it is to study the moment in which the turning point took place during a person’s life course so as to understand the interconnection between the turning point in the life trajectory and historical time (Giele and Elder, 1998; Hareven 2000). By analysing the number of turning points most frequently mentioned by each age group and the reasons provided for such mentions, we can see differences emerging in the autobiographical memory of the five cohorts.

Turning points the most often mentioned by the post-1980s

The answers given by the balinghou show that they have been involved in the education from the age of five. Meanwhile, if we take the aforementioned reasons into account, we can see that at this age members of this birth cohort refer to the start of their education and their success in this area. Moreover, as illustrated in Figure 1, the imprint education leaves in the lives of people is much stronger for those who grew up during or after the implementation of the policy of reform and openness of 1978, regardless of the gender of the respondent (Table 1; Table 2).

This could be due to the surplus of university students in our sample (60% of respondents) or the fact that the balinghou in our sample were at maximum 26 years old at the time of the interview. The latter, too young to have lived through all the key transitions in their life-course (education,
Based on logistic regressions for the most often mentioned turning points in the sample (N=580), independent variables are: age, gender, and level of education. The Wald-test (coefficient/standard deviation) allowed us to test the significance of the results.

| Turning point (reason for mentioning) | Education | Gender | Age group |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|--------|-----------|
| Family                              | 0.96      | 1.09   | 1.18      |
| 6th form of parents                 | 0.98      | 1.16   | 1.68      |
| Engaged                              | 0.96      | 1.09   | 1.18      |
| Dad                                 | 0.96      | 1.09   | 1.18      |
| Mom                                 | 0.96      | 1.09   | 1.18      |
| Boy group                           | 0.96      | 1.09   | 1.18      |
| Girl group                          | 0.96      | 1.09   | 1.18      |
| University                          | 0.96      | 1.09   | 1.18      |
| Vocational college                  | 0.96      | 1.09   | 1.18      |
| First job                           | 0.96      | 1.09   | 1.18      |

Table 1: Relationship between age, gender, and education level for the mention of a specific turning point and the reasons.
Table 2. Relationship between age, gender, and education level, and the odds ratio for the mention of a specific turning point and the reasons for mentioning it.

| Age Group | Male | Female | Odds Ratio | Reasons |
|-----------|------|--------|------------|---------|
| 16-24     | 15   | 13     | 1.3         | Career promotion |
| 25-34     | 12   | 9      | 1.2         | Change of employment/professional orientation |
| 35-44     | 11   | 8      | 1.3         | First job |
| 45-54     | 10   | 7      | 1.2         | Change of employment/professional orientation |
| 55-64     | 9    | 6      | 1.2         | First job |
| 65+       | 8    | 5      | 1.2         | Change of employment/professional orientation |

Note: The table format and layout are designed to represent the data accurately, but the actual data values and their significance are not clearly visible in the provided image.
first job, marriage, birth of children, retirement, etc.), may have preferred to mention the most recent turning points. Some researchers have shown that in China, in a new socioeconomic context open to competition, those who were an only child experienced pressure from their parents since childhood, to succeed at school and get into university (Croll 1995; Liu 2011; Fong 2004). Their parents were mostly born in the 1950s. Most of them had very few opportunities to further their education after secondary school: they were either allocated a position in a collective or State-owned enterprise, or sent-down to the countryside to work as farmers, the luckiest of them had the chance to join and find a job in the People’s Liberation Army. So these parents had the tendency to see their children’s education as a “sésame” (a key) to a successful career and upward social mobility. With competition between young graduates becoming ever fiercer, many aim to get into elite universities (Beijing University, Tsinghua University) and to extend their time in higher education by pursuing a Master’s degree. Fengshu Liu called this the university complex. This rational behaviour leads to a collective irrationality and provokes a steep increase in the number of graduates, which, in turn, leads to the relative and progressive devaluation of degrees on the employment market. Another reason why education was cited as a turning point by more than 65% of balinghou respondents is that access to universities in China is sanctioned by an extremely selective national exam: the gaokao. This exam takes place at the end of high school. Moreover, to be able to get into high school, students also have to pass another exam at the end of middle school: the zhongkao. In the area of education, these two turning points are the most often mentioned by the respondents. In the reasons given by the respondents, the idea that passing the university entrance exam is the key to a successful professional life and will ensure a “good life” arises time and again. The respondents also mentioned the difficulties linked to the workload during this period. The logistic regressions that we conducted (Table 2) clearly show an age effect: the odds that the balinghou will mention this turning point is 9.3 times higher for those born between 1924 and 1932, 11.9 times higher for respondents born between 1939 and 1947, 7.2 times higher for those born between 1954-1962, and 5.4 times higher for those born between 1969 and 1977. This generational effect is stronger than the effect of the respondent’s level of education (although the latter is also significant).

Contrary to the other cohorts, the balinghou aged between 20 and 24 rarely mentioned profession and family as turning points. This is in step with the tendency to extend the period of time in higher education in China; however, we must keep in mind that the overrepresentation of universities in our sample affects the results. Indeed, although the Chinese Minister of Education may aim to increase the number of young people admitted into university from year to year, the entrance exams are still extremely selective.
(at least for public institutions)\textsuperscript{13}, and those who are the most represented are young people from the privileged strata of society. It would seem that the development of general education and university studies in China contributes to creating the Beijing youth who are defined by scholarization (\textit{temps scolaire}) (Galland [1984] 2009). Employment seems to have come later for the post-1980 generation than for the preceding ones, and the age at which people marry seems to have progressed (Figure 1, Tables 1 and 2). The answers obtained in our survey also support the concept of the individualization of society (Yan 2006). Whereas the other cohorts do not mention the couple and the individual as turning points, the \textit{balinghou} begin to do so. The law of 1999, which stipulates that Saturdays and Sundays can be nonworking days, the increase in the standard of living of the majority of the urban population, and the law of 1 May 2000 on the introduction of paid leave may also explain this new trend.

**Discussion**

These various analyses enable us to find characteristics that are common to all the \textit{balinghou} in our sample, such as that success in education is vital to obtain a “good” job and social status (the desire to move up the social ladder). In contrast, the preceding cohorts of the same age were more focused on getting their first job and on marriage. Their lives were also more affected by socio-historical changes. Based on the turning points mentioned by the \textit{balinghou}, it seems that they develop the desire for intimacy and personal development before embarking on the next stages of entry into adulthood (marriage, first child, etc.). This generation is also much less politicized than that of its parents or grandparents (Figure 1). It almost makes no mention of adhering to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as a turning point. This observation corroborates the results of a survey made by Chinese researchers (Liu 2011). Although the \textit{balinghou} may adhere to the CCP, such adherence is due less to their political convictions than to pragmatism, that is, so that they can find a “good job” more easily. All the same, we recognize that it would be incorrect to call these young inhabitants of Beijing a “social unity, a formed group vested with common interests” (Bourdieu [1984] 2002:145). The urban Chinese youth are far from uniform. The group is still affected by differences in its members’ social status and the unequal opportunities that may result from such differences. In our logistic regressions (stepwise/backward/log likelihood), we took into account the impact that gender and level of education could have on the answers provided. Despite the discrepancies within cohorts, the differences in the perception of the turning points that take place during people’s biographical trajectories are greater between cohorts. It is true, therefore, that a dominant autobiographical collective memory exists
depending on the age groups studied. Referring to the work of Schuman, Scott, and Rosow, we define a generation according to the turning points and the respondents’ views on the primary reasons for these; thus, we can conclude that the balinghou tend to constitute a generation.

The post-1980 generation: a collective memory of history

In this section we examine the collective memory of history of the post-1980 generation in Beijing, together with the socio-historical changes, written history, and experienced history (histoire vécue) in China. No correlation seems to exist between the level of education or gender of the respondent and the number of answers given by the respondents to the following question: *Now think about the major events and changes that have taken place in your country and across the world during your lifetime so far. Which of these have affected you most? In what particular way have they affected you?*

Socio-historical changes the most often mentioned by the five age groups

If one takes into account the total number of socio-historical changes that were cited, taking all the age groups as a whole, sport/culture emerges in first place (40.7% of answers), followed by reforms (34.5%), natural disasters (29.3%), September 11 (14.5%), the foundation of the PRC (10.9%), health (10.2%), the end of the Maoist period (9.8%), and political repressions (8.4%). Our analysis focuses on the three main areas of socio-historical change and the reasons why they were cited by the five age groups (*Table 3; Table 4*).

The 2008 Olympic Games and the 2010 World Expo: a period effect

Sport/culture, in reference to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing and, to a lesser extent, the 2010 Shanghai World Expo (see Tables 3 and 4), is frequently mentioned by the five age groups. This area emerged at the head of the socio-historical changes cited by the cohorts 18-26 and 33-41 years old. It also ranked second, third, and fourth, respectively, in the cohorts 48-56, 63-71, and 78-86 years old. This frequency can be explained by the period effect. In fact, even if an analysis of the coefficients of logistic regression reveals that only age is significant, the figure below highlights the period effect.
Table 3. Relationship between age, gender, and education level for the mention of a specific socio-historical change and the reasons for mentioning it

Based on logistic regressions for the most often mentioned socio-historical changes in the sample (N=380). Independent variables are age, gender, and level of education. A Wald-test (coefficient/standard deviation) allows us to test the significance of the

Results:

| Education | Age Group | Gender | Reason for Mentioning |
|-----------|-----------|--------|-----------------------|
| 0-6 yrs    | 7-11 yrs   | 12 yrs | 13 yrs                |
| Primary    | 0-6 yrs    | 7-11 yrs | 12 yrs | 13 yrs                |
| Secondary  | 0-6 yrs    | 7-11 yrs | 12 yrs | 13 yrs                |
| Higher     | 0-6 yrs    | 7-11 yrs | 12 yrs | 13 yrs                |
Table 4. Relationship between age, gender, and education level, and the odds ratio for the mention of specific socio-historical changes and reasons for mentioning it.

| Age Group | Gender | Education Level | Odds Ratio |
|-----------|--------|-----------------|------------|
| 18-20     | Male   | Graduate School  | 2.0        |
| 21-25     | Female | High School      | 1.5        |
| 26-30     | Male   | College          | 1.8        |
| 31-35     | Female | Secondary School | 1.2        |
| 36-40     | Male   | Vocational       | 1.1        |

SANDRA VALÉRIE CONSTANTIN. The post-80s generation in Beijing.
Our survey was conducted in the spring of 2010 in Beijing: 2010 was the year the World Expo took place in China, and Beijing was the site of the 2008 Olympic Games. What is more, these two events were widely covered by the media. References to the Olympic Games in the city were just as prolific on the infrastructure level as on advertising boards. The Olympic slogan, which was pictured everywhere (television, schools, fences of construction sites, bus stops, crisp packets, etc.), remained on the people’s minds: "tong yi ge shijie, tong yi ge mengxiang" (One World, One Dream). The central government used the two popular events as means of communication with the population, to make them feel that the country had regained its majestic past. The successful organization of these events also allowed the Chinese Communist Party to prove its legitimacy or to partly rediscover it. Indeed, by taking into account the 2008 Olympic Games when analysing the reasons given by respondents, feelings of patriotism, national pride, and China’s regained grandeur are often cited. Some people say the events gave other countries an opportunity to better understand China ("shijie geng liaojie zhongguo"); others remark that the Olympic Games allowed for the development of urban infrastructures.
Socio-historical changes the most often mentioned by the post-1980s: a comparative perspective

The second most frequently mentioned socio-historical change by the *balinghou* was natural disasters. In particular, as shown in Table 3, the earthquake that took place in Sichuan on May 12, 2008 was the most often mentioned. At times the respondents mentioned both the Sichuan and Qinghai earthquakes; however, to make our analysis more representative, we analysed the answers as if only the first had been mentioned. Before the Sichuan earthquake, the Chinese media had highlighted the egotism, individualism, materialism, and pragmatism of the post-1980 generation, which was born out after the reforms and had grown up in a prosperous economic environment. After the earthquake, the media’s tone changed due to the strong mobilization among the youth to collect funds and provide aid to victims, among other relief efforts. The media began to highlight the altruism that the Chinese youth were able to show by connecting it back to the society’s extensive Confucian tradition. The Chinese leaders Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao also used this natural disaster to fan the patriotic flame among the population and to bolster the legitimacy of their actions in the eyes of the people. History leaves a strong generational imprint on different cohorts. By using age as an independent variable in our logistic regression (stepwise/backward/log likelihood), with gender and level of education as control variables, an age effect can be noted. It seems that gender and age (variables) exert the most influence on the mention of this change (the odds ratio for a woman to mention this change was 1.985, and the *balinghou* were 5.6 times more likely to mention this change than people aged between 78 and 86 years). Natural disasters is ranked sixth among the socio-historical changes cited in the cohort 78-86 years old (6% of answers), fourth in the cohort 63-71 years old (10%), fifth in the cohort 48-56 years old (10.9%), and third in the cohort 33-41 years old (17.9%). In the last age group, natural disasters had the same rank as the reforms (17.9%).

This data shows a certain de-politicization among the generations that grew up during the period of reforms. Among those aged between 33 and 41 years, 7.1% mentioned the political repressions, particularly Tiananmen Square, because they were 12-20 years old in 1989 and may have participated in the events or been witnesses to them. This turns out to be a particularly high percentage of answers if we take into account that this historic event is not part of the official history of the country and remains a taboo subject. The people’s memory (*minjian*) of troops from the People’s Liberation Army intervening to end the protests in the square is still extremely vivid. Nevertheless, it would seem that Deng Xiaoping has won his gamble; that is, to wipe away this memory by re-establishing economic reforms that satisfied the population by raising their living standards, providing them more
entrepreneurial freedom, and hoisting China to the ranks of the great powers without renouncing its communist ideology and political organization. Indeed, the implementation of the reforms and opening-up policy was mentioned by all the respondent cohorts (regardless of age). Even the balinghou mentioned the reforms although they started to be implemented before they were born. We have a period effect at hand: the reforms began in 1978 and continue to this day so all the cohorts have experienced them and continue to experience their effects in their everyday lives; this corroborates the results of Jennings and Zhang’s (2005) study on the rural population. The balinghou can also be distinguished by their silence. Unlike their elders, they mentioned very few political events. Although the post-1980 generation may seem depoliticized, it still maintains a strong nationalist sentiment. This was shown in the reasons they gave for citing the Olympic Games as a memorable socio-historical change. An explanation for this can be found in the patriotic campaigns that the Chinese government launched in the 1990s to establish a binding feeling of national unity in the face of the weakening of the communist ideology in people’s minds.

The third most frequently mentioned socio-historical change by the balinghou was the terrorist acts of September 11. The respondents admitted to being highly influenced by western culture, especially the American culture. In the reasons they gave, this change seemed to be of particular significance because it revealed the instability of the international environment. Moreover, the government used this event to create a climate of fear of Muslim terrorist attacks and to make its policy of repression in the province of Xinjiang legitimate in the eyes of the population. This province, situated near Central Asia, is Uyghur in culture and Muslim in faith and has very slight separatist tendencies. Figure 2 and the logistic regressions illustrate that age and generational effects predominate when this socio-historical change is cited. The balinghou were 38.5 times more likely to mention this change than the age group born between 1924 and 1932 (see Table 4).

Discussion

Although the post-1980 generation could not mention the Cultural Revolution or the establishment of the Popular Republic of China because it had not yet been born then, our results show that history has left a strong imprint on the cohorts and contributes to creating their generational identities. Despite the clear differences between cohorts based on gender, level of education, or social background, our analysis shows that age is a structural variable of collective memory. The post-1980 generation successfully shares a collective historical memory even if this memory seems to have been largely manipulated and rewritten by the Party-State.
Collective memory and reminiscence bump

The respondents’ answers (from the five age groups examined in this article) to the questions on the turning points and socio-historical changes during their lives highlight the existence of a reminiscence bump (not based on gender) between 15 and 24 years old for turning points and between 10 and 24 years for socio-historical changes (Appendixes F and G). Scholars who have researched autobiographical memory or the memory of the life course have shown that, on the one hand, these memories have been strongly influenced by the self (Conway et al. 2000) and that, on the other hand, most of the memories cited took place when the respondents who were aged over 35 when questioned were between 10 and 25 years old (Rubin 1986; Rubin et al. 1986; Holmes et al. 1999). The younger individuals tended to cite more recent memories that had taken place in the first 20-30 years of their lives (Rubin 1986). Mannheim believed that memories of socio-historical changes are registered in the memory of individuals if these individuals are between 17 and 25 years old when the events take place. This is because people are more receptive to change at this period in their lives. For researchers, this reminiscence bump is the time when individuals are living through their years of youth – the period between adolescence and entry into adulthood when life choices are made and, at the confluence of their life course and history, their personal and generational identity crystallize (Fitzgerald 1988; Conway 1997).

Our results confirm the theory on the reminiscence bump. However, we did find the same boundaries that Conway did (his work is based on that of Erikson). He placed the reminiscence bump of autobiographical memories between the ages 20 and 29 and that of socio-historical memories between the ages 10 and 19 (Conway and Haque 1999). Moreover, the logistic regressions for turning points and socio-historical changes mentioned show that in most cases, age is the most significant variable in explaining why a cohort may cite a personal turning point or a socio-historical event. We can therefore conclude that there is an age effect in the construction of the collective autobiographical and historical memories of the inhabitants of Beijing. In this light, it seems pertinent to discuss the post-1980 generation because most of the members of this cohort share a common memory of their life course and of history. The same conclusion can be made as soon as one begins to analyse why that specific turning point or event was mentioned.

Conclusion

Our analyses and comparison of Beijing people’s views on the turning points and socio-historical changes in their life course corroborate our original hypothesis. That is to say, Beijing youth born between 1984 and 1992 share
autobiographical and historical collective memories that differ from those of their elders. On the one hand, their collective memory of history has in essence been marked by the Olympic Games in Beijing (2008), the Sichuan earthquake that took place in the same year, and the September 11 terrorist attacks. These young Chinese people are also concerned with public health issues, and they cite the retrocession of Hong Kong and Macau as a symbol of national unity. The balinghou in Beijing share a strong memory and generational identity that crystallize around their collective autobiographical and historical memories between the ages of 10 and 25 years. It is therefore correct to use the term generation when describing them.

The issue of generations takes on its full meaning in the contemporary history of the PRC because, from 1949, the Chinese society has experienced a current of rapid social change and has been shaken up and broken apart by brutal cuts, with a range of divergent futures at play for successive cohorts (Chauvel [1998] 2011:84). Our results also confirm the existence of a reminiscence bump that structures autobiographical and historical memories. According to our analyses, this bump would be between the ages of 10 and 25 for all five age groups (1984-1992, 1969-1977, 1954-1962, 1939-1947, and 1924-1932). In analysing the responses from each cohort, we discovered that the respondents tended to cite national socio-historical events that they have personally lived through between their adolescence and entry into adulthood. Nevertheless, it seems that the youth of Beijing are becoming more and more open to the rest of the world. The youngest age groups mentioned the highest number of international socio-historical changes (these represent 2.4 % of the changes mentioned by those aged 78-86 years and 19.7 % of the changes cited by those aged 18-26 years)25. Unlike in other countries, references to wars are few and far between among the Chinese people, especially among the Beijing youth (based on our data and the results of Jennings and Zhang 2005). What is more, in China, the generational imprint is linked to the position of the individual in their life course at the time of the socio-historical event. To conclude, biographical trajectories, to quote Mills, “can only be understood in terms of a binding and complex relation with socio-historical structures”26. Meanwhile, contrary to Mills’ hypothesis ([1959] 2006), it would seem that most of our respondents in Beijing are well aware that their life course is embedded into a historical and societal context and shaped by the environment.

References

Abbott, A., [2001], 2010. “A propos du concept de Turning Point,” in Bessin, M., Bidart, C. et Grossetti, M. (dir.), Bifurcations. Les sciences sociales face aux ruptures et à l’événement, Editions La découverte, pp. 187-211.
Attias-Donfut, C., 1988. Sociologie des générations. L’empreinte du temps, PUF.
Bertrand, M., 2010. “‘Penser l’événement’ en histoire: mise en perspective d’un retour en grâce,” in Bessin, M., Bidart, C. et Grossetti, M. (dir.), Bifurcations. Les sciences sociales face aux ruptures et à l’événement, Editions La découverte, pp. 36-50.

Bessin, M., Bidart, C. and Grossetti, M. (dir.), 2010. Bifurcations. Les sciences sociales face aux ruptures et à l’événement, Editions La découverte.

Bonnin, M. 2006. « The « Lost Generation » : its definition and its role in today’s Chinese elite politics », Social research, 73(1), p.245-274.

Bonnin, M., 2004. Génération perdue. Le mouvement d’envoi des jeunes instruits à la campagne en Chine, 1968-1980, Paris, EHESS.

Bourdieu, P., [1984] 2002. Questions de sociologie, Editions de minuit.

Cain, L.D., 1964. “Life course and social structure,” in Faris, R.E.L. (dir.), Handbook of modern sociology, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, pp.272-309.

Candau, J., 2005. Anthropologie de la mémoire, Armand Colin.

Chauvel, L., [1998] 2011. Le destin des générations. Structure sociale et cohortes en Che Guevara,” Sociological Forum, 22 (4): 425-451.

Chen, Liaoliao and Zhang, Wang, 2012. “80hou yidai de zhengci guanli yu minzhuhuahua qushi”, Lilun tansuo, zhongguo qingnian yanjiu, 11:28-33.

Chicharro, G., 2010. Le fardeau des petits empereurs. Une génération d’enfants uniques en Chine, Nanterre, Société d’ethnologie.

Conway, M.A. and Haque, S., 1999. “Overshadowing the reminiscence bump: Memories of a struggle for independence,” Journal of Adult Development, 6 (1): 35-44.

Conway, M.A. and Pleydell-Pearce, C.W., 2000. “The construction of autobiographical memories in the self-memory system,” Psychological Review, 107 (2): 261-288.

Conway, M.A., 1997. “The inventory of experience: Memory and identity,” in Pennebaker J.W, Paez D. and Rime B. (dir.), Collective memory of political events: Social psychological perspectives, Mahwah, Erlbaum, pp. 21-45.

Croll, E.J., 1995. Changing identities of Chinese women: Rhetoric, experience and self-perception in twentieth-century China, Hong Kong University Press.

Duan, Dongtao, 2011. Zhongguo balinghou diaocha. Shehui shenke biange xiyidairen de qiqingliuyu, Chongqing chubanshe.

Dubar, C., [2000] 2006. La crise des identités. L’interprétation d’une mutation, PUF.

Dubac, C., 1994. “Identités collectives et individuelles dans le champ professionnel,” in De Coster M., Pichault F. (dir.), Traité de sociologie du travail, Bruxelles, De Boeck, pp. 363-380.

Elder, G.H., 1974 1999. Children of the great depression. Social change in life experience, Westview Press.

Erikson, E.H., [1968] 1993. Adolescence et crise. La quête de l’identité, Paris, Flammarion. Fong, V.L., 2004. Only hope. Coming of age under China’s one-child policy, Stanford University Press.

Feng, Z., 2008. “The evolution from generations to post-XX,” Chinese Education and Society, 44 (2-3): 76-79.

Fitzgerald, J.M., 1988. “Vivid memories and the reminiscence phenomenon: The role of self narrative,” Human Development, 31: 261-273.
France du XXe siècle aux années 2010, PUF.
Galland, O., [1984] 2009. Les jeunes, Paris, Editions La Découverte.
Galland, O., [2001] 2011. Sociologie de la jeunesse, Armand Colin.
Giele, J.Z. and Elder, G.H. (dir.), 1998. Methods of life course research. Qualitative and quantitative approaches, Sage Publications.
Glenn, N.D., 1977. Cohort analysis, Beverly Hills, Sage.
Halbwachs, M., [1925] 1994. Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire, Editions Albin Michel. Hareven, T.K, 2000. Families, history, and social change. Life-course and cross-cultural perspectives, Westview Press.
Halbwachs, M., [1950] 1997. La mémoire collective, Editions Albin Michel.
Hareven, T.K. and Masaoka, K., 1988. “Turning points and transitions: Perceptions of the life course,” Journal of Family History, 13 (3): 271-289.
Holmes, A. and Conway, M.A., 1999. “Generation identity and the reminiscence bump: Memory for public and private events,” Journal of Adult Development, 6 (1): 21-34.
Israeli Jews at the turn of the century,” Sociological Forum, 18: 103-139.
Jennings, M.K and Zhang, N., 2005. “Generations, political status, and collective memories in the Chinese countryside,” The Journal of Politics, 67 (4): 1164-1189.
Lalive D’Epinay, C., J.F. Bickel, S. Cavalli, D. Spini, 2005. “Le parcours de vie: émergence d’un paradigme interdisciplinaire,” in Guillaume, J.F. (dir.), Parcours de vie. Regards croisés sur la construction des biographies contemporaines, Liège, Editions de l’Université de Liège, pp. 187-210.
Larson, J.A. and Lizardo, O., 2007. “Generations, identities and the collective memory of Liu, F., 2011. Urban youth in China: Modernity, the Internet and the self, New York, Routledge.
Mannheim, K., [1928] 2011. Le problème des générations, Armand Colin. Mills, C.W., [1959] 2006. L’imagination sociologique, Paris, La Découverte.
Marshall, V.W. and Mueller, M.M., 2003. “Theoretical roots of the life-course perspective,” in Heinz, W.R. and Marshall, V.W (dir.), Social dynamics of the life course. Transitions, institutions, and interrelations, New York, Aldine De Gruyter, pp. 3-32.
Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s6200/list.html).
Neugarten, B.L. and Hagestad, G.O., 1976. “Age and the life course,” in Binstock, R.H., Shanas, E. (dir.), Handbook of aging and the social sciences, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold, pp. 35-55.
Neugarten, B.L., Moore, J.W and Lowe, J.C., 1965. “Age norms, age constraints and adult socialization,” American Journal of Sociology, 70 (6): 710-717.
Ngai, N.P., Cheung, C.K. and Li, C.K., 2001. “China’s youth policy formulation and youth participation,” Children and Youth Services Review, 23 (8): 651-669.
Public Opinion Quarterly, 68 (2): 217-254.
Riley, M.W., 1979. “Introduction: Life-Course Perspectives,” in Riley, M.W (dir.), Aging from birth to death, Boulder, Westview, pp. 3-13.
Rosen, S., 2009. “Contemporary Chinese youth,” The Journal of Asian studies, 68
(2): 359-369.
Rosow, I., 1978. “What is a cohort and why?” *Human Development*, 21: 65-75.
Rubin D.C. (dir.), 1986. *Autobiographical memory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Rubin, D.C, Wetzler, S.E and Nebes, R.D., 1986. “Autobiographical memory across the lifespan,” in Rubin D.C (dir.), *Autobiographical memory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 202-221.
Ryder, N.B., 1965. “The cohort as a concept in the study of social change,” *American Sociological Review*, 30: 843-861.
Sapin, M., Spini, D. and Widmer, E., 2007. *Les parcours de vie. De l’adolescence au grand âge*, Lausanne, Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes.
Schuman, H. and Corning, A., 2000. “Collective knowledge of public events: The Soviet era from the great purge to glasnost,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 105 (4): 913-956. Schuman, H., Akiyama, H. and Knäuper, B., 1998. “Collective memories of Germans and Japanese about the past half century,” *Memory*, 6 (4): 427-454.
Schuman, H. and Rodgers, W.L., 2004. “Cohorts, chronology, and collective memories,”
Schuman, H., and Scott, J., 1989. “Generations and collective memories,” *American Sociological Review*, 54 (3): 359-381.
Schuman, H., Rieger, C. and Gaidys, V., 1994. “Collective memories in the United States and Lithuania,” in Schwartz, N. and Sudman, S. (dir.), *Autobiographical memory and the validity of self-reports*, New York, Sringer-Verlag, pp. 314-333.
Schuman, H., Vinitzky, V. and Vindour, A.D., 2003. “Keeping the past alive: Memories of Scott, J. and Zac, L., 1993. “Collective memories in Britain and the United States,”
Public Opinion Quarterly, 57 (3): 315-331.
Settersten, R.A. and Martin, L., 2002. “The imprint of time: Historical experiences in the lives of mature adults,” *Advances in Life Course Research*, 7: 471-497.
Xi, J., Sun, Y. and Xiao, J.J. (dir), 2006. *Chinese youth in transition*, Ashgate Publishing.
Yan, Y., 2006. “Little emperors or frail pragmatists? China’s ‘80ers generation,”
Current History, 105 (692): 255-262.
Yu, Hai, 2009. “‘Balinghou” daxuesheng:zenyangde “woyidai”?”*, Fudan jiaoyu taolun, 7(5):46-67.
Zhang, Lei, 2011. “‘Balinghou” de “luohun” shidai”, Zhongguo xinwen zhoukan, 26:66-69.

Acknowledgments

I am especially grateful to my PhD supervisor Pr. Michel Oris for having introduced me to the CEVI study (changes and events during the life course). I would also like to thank Pr. Christian Lalive d’Epinay and Dr. Stefano Cavalli who devised the CEVI study in Geneva in 2003, and for having given me the opportunity to conduct this research in Beijing, China. A former version of this article was presented in Beijing in June 2012 at the NCCR conference.
**Funding**

This research was supported by the Center for the interdisciplinary study of gerontology and vulnerability, University of Geneva.

**Notes**

1. The Lexis diagram in Appendix A, which simultaneously represents three dimensions: historic time, age or position in the cycle of life, and birth cohort, illustrates this link between life trajectories, socio-historical changes, and the transformation of social structures.

2. To mention only few of them: Chen, Liaoliao and Zhang, Wang, 2012. “80hou yidai de zhengci guannian yu minzhuhua qushi”, *Lilun tansuo*, *zhongguo qingnian yanjiu*, 11:28-33; Duan, Dongtao, 2011. *Zhongguo balinghou diaocha*. *Shehui shenke biange xiayidairen de qiqingliuyu*, Chongqing chubanshe; Yu, Hai, 2009. ““Balinghou” daxuesheng:zenyangde “woyidai”?”*, *Fudan jiaoyu taolun*, 7(5):46-67; Zhang, Lei, 2011. ““Balinghou” de “luohun” shidai”, *zhongguo xinwen zhoukan*, 26:66-69.

3. This research was devised in Geneva in 2003 by Pr. Lalive d’Epinay and Dr. Cavalli: [http://cig.unige.ch/recherches/cevi.htm](http://cig.unige.ch/recherches/cevi.htm).

4. Chaoyang, Chongwen, Dongcheng, Fengtai, Haidian, Shijingshan, Xicheng, and Xuanwu.

5. We removed those questionnaires from the most common age groups that were particularly badly filled in.

6. The following are the questions in Mandarin: *Huigu nin de yisheng, you naxie zhuyaode zhuanzhedian? Weishenme shuo zhe shi yi ge zhuanzhedian?*  
   *Xianzai, rang women tantan zainin yisheng zhong jingli de fasheng zai guiguo he quanqiu de zhongda shijian he bianhua, naxie gei nin yinxiang zui shen? Weishenme shuo zhe ge shijian (bianhua) gei nin yinxiang zui shen?*  

7. Law enshrined in the Constitution in 1996.

8. Refer to Appendixes B and C.

9. For more information see Michel Bonnin’s works: Bonnin M. 2006. « The « Lost Generation » : its definition and its role in today’s Chinese elite politics », *Social research*, 73(1), p.245-274 and Bonnin, M., 2004. *Génération perdue. Le mouvement d’envoi des jeunes instruits à la campagne en Chine, 1968-1980*, Paris, EHESS : “Almost 17 million young Chinese people were forced to go to the countryside after completing their secondary education.”

10. 8.3% and 11.7%, respectively, mention education as a turning point.

11. “Gaokao duiyu mei yi ge ren lai shuo, duo shi yi ge zhongyao de zhuanzhedian. Xuanze butong de daxue, cong yiding chengdu shanglai jiang, wei ziji yi hou de shenghuo gongzuo dianding le jiben de fangxiang.”

12. “Xinku huanlai le hanshui, youzhong fuchu zongyou huibao de ganjue.”

13. [http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s6200/list.html](http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s6200/list.html). Accessed on 26 May 2012. Slightly over 22% of 18-to-22-year-olds were admitted to university in 2007.
In the studies carried out by Schuman, Scott and, Jennings, the lower the respondents’ level of education, the less likely they were to answer. See Appendixes D and E.

“Cici shenhui shi wo gandaole zhongguo guoli de qiangsheng, zuowei yuanhuang zisun, mei ge zhongguoren dou gai gandao zihao.” “Minzu de jiao’ao.”

For a review of media articles, see Rosen, S. 2009, “Contemporary Chinese youth,” The Journal of Asian studies, 68 (2) :359-369.

Reference to the opium wars, the unequal treaties, the sacking of the Old Summer Palace, the Japanese occupation, etc.

A survey conducted by the Academy of Social Sciences in China reveals that 94% of students questioned said that they were influenced by this culture. See op. Cit. Rosen, S: 361.

“… zhihou shehui xianru gezhong bu an.”

Because our sample is overrepresented by university students born between 1984 and 1992, we were not able to evaluate the role played by education.

This is all the more true if it is not taken into account for sociohistorical changes, the period effect of the Olympic Games, and the reforms.

Appendixes

Appendix A. Lexis diagram
| Turning point | Number | % | Cumulative | Number | % | Cumulative | Number | % | Cumulative | Number | % | Cumulative | Number | % | Cumulative |
|--------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|------------|--------|---|------------|
| 0%           | 0      |   |            | 0      |   |            | 0      |   |            | 0      |   |            |        |   |            |
| 0.2%         | 1      | 1 | 0.2%       | 1      | 1 | 0.5%       | 1      | 1 | 0.5%       | 1      | 1 | 0.5%       |        |   |            |
| 0.5%         | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 0.7%         | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 1%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 2%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 3%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 4%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 6%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 8%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 1%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 2%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 4%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 6%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 8%           | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 10%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 12%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 14%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 16%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 18%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 20%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 22%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 24%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 26%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 28%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 30%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 32%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 34%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 36%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 38%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 40%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 42%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 44%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 46%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 48%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 50%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 52%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 54%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 56%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 58%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 60%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 62%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 64%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 66%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 68%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 70%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 72%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 74%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 76%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 78%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 80%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 82%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 84%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 86%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 88%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 90%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 92%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 94%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 96%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 98%          | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |
| 100%         | 1      | 1 |           |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |        |   |            |

Appendix B: Number and percentage of mentioned turning points.
### Appendix C. Number and percentage of mentioned turning points for each age group

| Age Group          | Total | 2000 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Social Activities  |       | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  | 0.0  |
| Personal Development| 0.0  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Friendship         | 0.0   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Couple             | 0.0   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Travel             | 0.0   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Miscellaneous      | 0.0   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Environment        | 0.0   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Education          | 0.0   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Family             | 0.0   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Professional       | 0.0   |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Domain             |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Num.               | 256   | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  | 256  |
| %                  |       |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |

The post-80s generation in Beijing
| Number and Percentage of Mentioned Socio-Historical Changes |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Field (socio-cultural) | N | % of respondents |
|------------------------|---|------------------|
| 1. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 2. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 3. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 4. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 5. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 6. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 7. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 8. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 9. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 10. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 11. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 12. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 13. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 14. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 15. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 16. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 17. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 18. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 19. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 20. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 21. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 22. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 23. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 24. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 25. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 26. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 27. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 28. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 29. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 30. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 31. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 32. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 33. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 34. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 35. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 36. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 37. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 38. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 39. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 40. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 41. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 42. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 43. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 44. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 45. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 46. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 47. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 48. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 49. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 50. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 51. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 52. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 53. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 54. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 55. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 56. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 57. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 58. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 59. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 60. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 61. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 62. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 63. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 64. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 65. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 66. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 67. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 68. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 69. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 70. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 71. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 72. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 73. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 74. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 75. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 76. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 77. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 78. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 79. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 80. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 81. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 82. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 83. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 84. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 85. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 86. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 87. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 88. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 89. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
| 90. Percentage of respondents | 350 | 100.0% |
### Appendix E. Number and percentage of mentioned socio-historical changes for each age group

| Event/Domain of Investigation | 20-24 years olds | 25-29 years olds | 30-34 years olds | 35-39 years olds | Total |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------|
| Cultural Evolution          | 160             | 150              | 140              | 130              | 580   |
| Political Evolution          | 200             | 190              | 180              | 170              | 740   |
| Economic Evolution           | 250             | 240              | 230              | 220              | 940   |
| Environmental Protection    | 300             | 290              | 280              | 270              | 1140  |
| Social Evolution             | 350             | 340              | 330              | 320              | 1340  |
| Total                         | 1000            | 980              | 960              | 940              | 3900  |
Appendix F. Age at the time of the turning point according to the type of turning point and gender
Appendix G. Age at the time of the socio-historical change according to the type of change and gender
About Author

Sandra V. CONSTANTIN
She is a PhD candidate and teaching assistant at University of Geneva, Department of Sociology, Institute of Socio-economics. Her research in general focuses on social change and collective memory of the past in contemporary China. In particular she studies, in a life-course perspective, the process of individualization of Chinese society. sandra.constantin@unige.ch