COMING HOME: A STUDY OF VALUES CHANGE AMONG CHINESE POSTGRADUATES AND VISITING SCHOLARS WHO ENCOUNTERED CHRISTIANITY IN THE U.K.

ANDREA DEBORAH CLAIRE DICKSON, BA, MIS, MA

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

JULY 2013

Abstract

This thesis examines changes in core values held by postgraduate students and visiting scholars from China who professed belief in Christianity while studying in UK universities. It is the first study to ascertain whether changes remain after return to China. Employing a theoretical framework constructed from work by James Fowler, Charles Taylor, Yuting Wang and Fenggang Yang, it identifies both factors contributing to initial change in the UK and factors contributing to sustained change after return to China. It shows that lasting values change occurred. As a consequence, tensions were experienced at work, socially and in church. However, these were outweighed by benefits, including inner security, particularly after a distressed childhood. Benefits were also experienced in personal relationships and in belonging in a new community, the Church.

This was a qualitative, interpretive study employing ethnographic interviews with nineteen people, from eleven British universities, in seven Chinese cities. It was based on the hypotheses that Christian conversion leads to change in values and that evidence for values can be found in responses to major decisions and dilemmas, in saddest and happiest memories and in relationships. Conducted against a backdrop of transnational movement of people and ideas, including a recent increase in mainland Chinese studying abroad which has led to more Chinese in British churches, it contributes new insights into both *the contents of sustained Christian conversion* amongst Chinese abroad who have since returned to China and *factors contributing to it*. Bringing the afore-mentioned theories together for the first time it provides an illuminating, original lens for further study of conversion amongst returned Chinese. It also adds to knowledge of the effects of Chinese students' UK education experience on their values.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Tables and Figures

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CCC	Chinese Christian Council
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPA	Catholic Patriotic Association
CVS	Chinese Value Survey
FBO	Faith-based organization
HR	Human resources
IBM	International Business Machines
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PRC	People's Republic of China
PVQ	(Schwartz's) Portrait Values Questionnaire
RAB	Religious Affairs Bureau
RMB	*renminbi* (currency of the PRC)
RVS	Rokeach Value Survey
SARA	State Administration for Religious Affairs
SARS	Severe acute respiratory syndrome
SVS	Schwartz Value Survey
TSPM	Three Self Patriotic Movement
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organization
WVS	World Values Survey

Glossary of Chinese Terms

bao	reciprocity
danwei	work unit
haigui	returnee from study abroad
hanxu	implicit communication
keqi	politeness
mianzi	face-directed communication strategies
suzhi	(good) quality
ti–yong	essence–function

Preface

I cannot remember how my interest in China started but it goes back to the 1980s. My first contact with someone from China was in a seminar at Birmingham University, in 1991, whilst studying the international relations of East Asia. Then there were relatively few mainland Chinese students in the UK. When work as an NHS manager moved me to Nottingham in 1993 I joined a church very popular with international students. I started to meet socially with Chinese students and was asked to help respond to the increasing numbers who were asking for explanations of the *Bible* and Christianity. In 1999 I accepted the post of Nottingham Staff Worker for Friends International, a Christian organization which encourages British churches to welcome and befriend international students. I was also the International Students' Chaplain at the University of Nottingham.

My move to this role coincided with a dramatic increase in Chinese students coming to the UK, particularly to Nottingham. More and more came to social activities and day trips, attended church services and joined introductory *Bible* courses. As the numbers grew so did the minority who converted to Christianity. This also happened in other university cities. I made trips to China to see Chinese friends including some who had been baptized in the UK. Some were continuing happily in their faith but others were struggling with issues that had not arisen in the UK. I was curious to know what people were taking home from their cross-cultural religious experience and felt some responsibility to better understand the implications of returning to China as a Christian. That is partly why I embarked on this study.

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis focuses on people from China who expressed belief in Christianity whilst studying in British universities as postgraduates or visiting scholars. It examines the nature and personal implications of any changes in core values arising from such belief, and the factors and processes which contributed to such change continuing or declining after return to China. It makes an original contribution to knowledge as the only study I have identified which focuses on new Christians who have returned to China (since 1949). This chapter introduces the context and aims of the research and the structure of the thesis.

The context

China: modernization and values

The phenomenal change and economic growth in China over the last two decades is common knowledge. Modernization has been a key objective in China for over a century, from the shock of the Opium Wars (1840s) and Chinese defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1895), through the founding of the Republic (1912), the New Culture and May 4th Movement of 1919, the Great Leap Forward of 1958-60, the Open Door Policy of 1978 onwards, the democracy movement of the 1980s, to the 2001 entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Grasso, Corrin, & Kor, 2009). Today China is pursuing the First and Second Modernizations, the change to an industrialized urban society and the move to a knowledge and information-driven society (People's Daily Online, 2007).

Greater prosperity and freedom to enjoy life have been a joy to many but others, such as some from ethnic minorities, have not experienced this (Kleinman, 2011). Rural migrants have formed a new urban poor class (F. Guo & Cheng, 2010) and income disparity has increased (Zheng, 2010).

The one child policy, a pillar of the modernization drive, has been a mixed blessing, with its laudable emphasis on education, but arguably resulting in dangerously excessive expectations (Fong, 2004): young people having unrealistic expectations of the lifestyle their education will bring, and parents making huge sacrifices in anticipation that their child's success will secure their own old age, with state-funded care all but disappearing.

Evidence of governmental concern about selfishness, hedonism and consumerism can be seen in the change from the 'build a well-off society' slogan of Jiang Zemin to the 'build a harmonious society' slogan of his successor, President Hu Jintao (Zheng, 2006).

Moral values and how to build them are much discussed in scholarly circles (W. O. Lee & Ho, 2005; M. Li, 2011; Pan, 2009). Research amongst China's educational élite, asking why values education should be taught and what should be taught, highlighted a dilemma: the desire to strengthen values based on maintaining social harmony and being good citizens, whilst simultaneously increasing independence and autonomous thinking in children (Hawkins, Zhou, & Lee, 2001). Although national and collective values had not disappeared, the primary motivation for values education was to 'highlight individual responsibility' and the topic deemed most important to teach was 'creativity and individuality' (p. 204).

The form modernization should take, and the degree to which foreign practices, ideas and values should be adopted or resisted is hotly debated. (Leonard, 2008; Z. Li, 1999; Yu, 2008).

PRC students in the UK

Against this background numbers of mainland Chinese studying abroad have increased dramatically. In the academic year 2010-11, 67325 enrolled

in UK Higher Education institutions, an increase of 18.1% over 2009-10, making China by far the greatest source of non-UK students in the UK (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2012).

In June 2007, announcing a programme funding 5000 graduates to attend top universities abroad, Vice-Minister Yuan Guiren alluded to the state's interest in encouraging study abroad:

> The lack of first-class scientists and research pioneers is the main thing hindering China's innovation capability (see Ying Wang, 2007).

Fruit of the government's drive to develop creative entrepreneurs, scientists and academics, and bring about science and technology transfer, is apparent in contributions of returnees from study abroad to the following developments: Shanghai's *Zhangjiangyuan*, China's bio-pharmaceutical and telecommunications base; Beijing's *Zhongguancun*, which hosts seven "technopreneurship" parks, one with over 130 research institutions; the founding of top Internet search companies *Baidu* and *Sohu* (M. Yang & Tan, 2010); and the role of Qian Xuesen, a returnee from the US, as China's 'father of space technology' (Xinhua, 2009)

My conversations with Chinese students suggest they themselves have a variety of reasons for studying abroad. In China there is great competition for jobs amongst graduates (Bai, 2006). A master's degree is a basic requirement for many jobs and one from abroad is perceived to give an edge; doing an overseas degree is often perceived as an investment by both student and parents (Fong, 2011; S. Wang, 2010), despite recent reports that employers no longer regard foreign qualifications so highly (BBC, 2012) and overseas qualifications do not automatically fetch a good salary (China Daily, 2007). With the demise of universal free healthcare parents are increasingly dependent on, and keen to develop, their child's

earning capacity (and sense of filial obligation) (Fong, 2004). Some students wish to extend social networks and contacts and broaden their horizons by experiencing another culture; others come simply because they have the chance, because others are doing it or because they want to take a risk (Fong, 2011).

This study is interested in what returning students take back, beyond qualifications, skills, technical know-how and improved language ability. Learning and change happen in various ways, formally, non-formally and informally (Rogers, 2003), inside and outside the lecture theatre and the library: in streets and shops, in nightclubs and churches, in conversation with local people. Ideas, values and habits may be learned in seminars, but they will also be learned outside the formal university context. A host of impressions may confirm or contradict previously held assumptions and the student's own self-concept and values, as they come into contact with another culture, with people who share a different 'system of ideas, feelings and values and their associated patterns of behaviour' (Hiebert, 1985, p. 30), different goals and priorities. For example, they might experience: the possibility of a less pressured and competitive life; different concepts of who can be trusted and why; threatening behaviour and drunkenness (Philo, 2007); a sense of freedom from criticism; a new appreciation of their family.

Their ideas about the world outside China, and about China, may change. For some, their hopes, aspirations, and view of their own role and purpose, will be challenged, or even their entire value system be overturned (Isa, 1996). My own conversations with Chinese students over the past fifteen years, in the UK and after their return to China, as friend, university chaplain or researcher, tell me that they are often challenged or puzzled, or even changed, by their experiences here. Conversations with colleagues in

other cities confirm that this is not peculiar to Nottingham. Earlier pilot work about the values of students from China, undertaken in Nottingham in 2007, did not focus on whether values had changed but nonetheless participants said they thought they had (Dickson, 2007).

As members of economic and intellectual élites, such returnees have potential to wield influence in a variety of spheres. For some this will be in the family or workplace; for others it could be at provincial or national levels. They may make new contributions as Chinese citizens but they may also have new expectations which are not fulfilled, some even feeling marginalized, full members of neither Chinese society nor of the 'imagined global community of affluent, powerful and prestigious people' (Fong, 2006, p. 151) into which they hoped their overseas education would gain them entry. Any change in values and expectations, what matters to them most, has potential to affect not only returning Chinese scholars, but also family, friends, colleagues and, possibly, many more people.

Values and values change

Rokeach defines *values* as 'standards' that guide and determine:

> action, attitudes toward objects and situations, ideology, presentation of self to others, evaluations, judgements, justifications, comparisons of self with others, and attempts to influence others (1973, p. 25).

Our values are formed by the cultures and contexts within which we grow up (Feather, 1975; Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). If students abroad experience behaviour and situations which surprise or confuse them, the investigation of this strangeness may lead them to view their home circumstances differently. One example I have heard raised by Chinese students, and noted in the literature (Abel, 2006), is their experience of being offered help by strangers who have no apparent desire for anything in return. For some

this experience is of passing interest but for others it leads to a search for the underlying value which drives the other person. If we move to a different country, being confronted with difference may cause us to review our lives and re-assess our deepest assumptions and beliefs (Goodwin, Polek, & Bardi, 2012). *What* matters most in life and what we should aim for (what Rokeach calls 'terminal values' (1973)) and our beliefs about *how* we should achieve these ends, how we should live our lives (what Rokeach calls 'instrumental values') may change.

Christianity and values change

On Sundays students from China can be found in churches in many UK university cities[1]. They spend time with Christians, finding out what they believe, attending church and social activities or reading the *Bible*. Some come to improve their English, some to learn about British culture, some to make friends or contacts, some to pursue an interest in Christianity which started in China. Some are Christians; many are not. During their stay in the UK some express affiliation to the Christian faith to the extent that they are baptized. Contacting just four Protestant Christian churches and groups produced the following information: a British church in the north baptized twenty-eight mainland Chinese students and scholars between 2000 and July 2010; a British church in the Midlands baptized fifty in the same period; a Chinese church in the west baptized thirty-three between 2001

---

[1] These remarks are based on my experience working for Friends International, liaising with churches and international students, and discussing the significant role that students from China play in the work of staff in other cities. Friends International staff work in some thirty cities, in partnership with churches and university staff, offering friendship to international students. This varies but can include: airport assistance; trips; social events; introductions to local families; help understanding British culture; Bible courses.

and 2010; and a Chinese Christian group in the south baptized fourteen between 2007 and 2010[2].

The nature of Christian commitment, as defined in the *Bible*, is to be 'born again…of the Spirit' (John 3:7-8), including recognising a different authority (Colossians 1:16), and having different values (Romans 12:2), priorities (Matthew 6:21) and purpose in life (John 15:16). Conversion to Christianity involves a change in world-view, including who rules the world, how it works and the individual's identity and purpose in the world (Rambo, 1993); world-view is reflected in ideas, feelings and values (Hiebert, 1985). In theory, therefore, some students should be returning to China with radically changed values and allegiances. This could show itself in a variety of ways, for example, in changed family relationships, in decisions about jobs or how to spend time and money.

Potential challenges arising from change in values

Before embarking on this research I had already visited China several times and discussed their experiences informally with some forty returnees from study abroad. New Christians, and others, had experienced challenges as they attempted to live out new values or a revised lifestyle, after return to China. Three areas were often mentioned: family, workplace and church.

The family

Some Chinese new Christians, in the UK and after return to China, have told me that their parents object to them becoming Christians and therefore, they have deferred baptism, or reduced church attendance. This could potentially lead to reduced involvement in a Christian community and

---

[2] These four were chosen from different geographic areas, from both Chinese-led and British-led churches, to show that this is not something peculiar to one city or church. Lack of time precluded a more comprehensive survey.

a lack of encouragement to maintain and live out any new values. Explanations given for their parents' objections include fear that their child has been taken in by a dangerous cult (sometimes related to Chinese media reports about Falun Gong); concern that the child will be let down by their belief in the future, as the parents felt let down by communism; concern that religious involvement will lead to trouble with the authorities; concern that it will have negative financial consequences; a feeling that being Christian is not Chinese and therefore somewhat demeaning to child, parents and country. In this context they are faced with working out how to honour their parents (surely both traditionally a Chinese *and* a Christian value) *and* following their Christian convictions.

Marriage partners may also object; I know a Chinese woman who held back from baptism for several years because her husband said he would divorce her if she got baptised.

The workplace

Being involved in Christian activities takes up time. I have heard returnees complain of very long working hours which preclude anything else beyond essential household and family tasks. I was staying with one friend when the phone rang at 11.30 pm; it was her boss ringing to discuss the next day's programme and was clearly not an unusual occurrence. Another returnee told me he was required to stay at work late each night until after his boss left.

Stories abound of the power of the boss. One returnee, very capable and experienced in his work, described how he had hoped to go abroad to do a PhD, but his boss refused him, saying he would not even allow him to leave for another job, in China, until the boss himself retired. It was within the boss's power to do this.

I have heard returnees mention 'complicated' work relationships; one, about to return home and start his own business, was worried about how he would reconcile his Christian principles with the expectation in the business world to practise bribery to win contracts. Certain professions hold particular challenges. Some Christian lawyers, for example, may come under additional scrutiny from the authorities, possibly because of the high profile of certain other Christian lawyers who have taken sensitive human rights cases.[3] People moving into senior university or government posts may be expected to join the Communist Party, which involves denying religious belief (Zhu, 2010).

The church

Despite the increase in religious activity in mainland China, particularly in numbers of Christians (Yiyao Wu & Xiaohuo Cui, 2010; F. Yang, 2009)[4], there are still major challenges for returnees wishing to participate in a church community.

The first is the distinction between 'registered' and 'un-registered' churches, which leads many churches to be invisible to the person on the street. This warrants a brief explanation, to aid understanding of Chinese Christians' relations with the government: churches, ministers and meeting places are

---

[3] A Google search for 'Chinese Christian lawyers' on 7th August 2012 led to multiple reports of the arrest of Chinese lawyers, such as Gao Zhisheng, Jiang Tianyong and Fan Yafeng.

[4] The exact number is not known, but Lambert gave evidence pointing to over 50 million Protestants in 1999 (Lambert, 1999). In a letter to me and others in 2010 his estimate for the total number of Protestants and Roman Catholics was 80 million. His evidence included a *China Daily* report in December 2009 which quoted a Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) researcher who estimated 50 million believers in unregistered Protestant churches, an official figure of 20 to 21 million in registered Protestant churches, and Roman Catholic sources who say there are between 10 and 15 million Catholics (both registered and unregistered).

required to be registered or approved by bodies under the authority of the government's Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) (F. Yang, 2007). Such regulation also applies to other religions. Some churches prefer not to be registered with the government for theological reasons, and to avoid compromising church integrity (Kindopp, 2004).

Although it is tempting to categorize the Chinese Protestant church into two types, registered and unregistered (or as, somewhat unhelpfully, 'official' and 'underground'), the reality is more complex. Some unregistered churches are known by the authorities but not penalized, whilst leaders of others have been arrested (Kindopp, 2004); freedoms and restrictions experienced by Christians and churches vary from place to place and time to time. This variety is puzzling for returnees. I have heard Chinese Christians in one city saying that their minister is constrained not to preach on a certain subject, and heard that same subject preached in a registered church elsewhere. In one much publicized case, the Shouwang Church, a large unregistered church in Beijing, popular with university students and returnees, met openly in rented accommodation for some years; they even applied for registration, and were refused (F. Yang, 2011). However, in 2011 they were required to leave their accommodation. Their repeated attempts to meet in the open air have resulted in members of the congregation being placed under house arrest and suffering other penalties (BBC, 2011).

People about to return have told me they have heard that registered churches are too influenced by the government. One potential source of such concern is the debate over the promotion of 'theological reconstruction' by the Chinese Christian Council (CCC), the administrative body linking the government and the registered church (Dunch, 2008). Whilst there are Chinese Christian leaders who commend it for its emphasis

on love as the main attribute of God and on Biblical teachings that stress the importance of love for one's neighbour, there are others, within registered and unregistered churches, who reject it (Fallman, 2010; Kindopp, 2004), arguing that it is a call to put the church at the service of a nationalist, Marxist utopian vision, defined by the CCP, and is 'essentially opposed to the *Bible*' (Xinyuan Li, 2003).

The new Christian returning from study abroad encounters a church facing these issues and others, including the widespread presence of cults (Lambert, 1999). There is also a lack of resources, including trained ministers (Vala, 2009), and church buildings and activities are less visible than in the UK, because of restrictions on religious activities. Returnees are often initially unaware of such issues and restrictions. They may also find that parents and colleagues are critical or fearful about their involvement in Christianity, knowing that religious involvement can attract the attention of officials who regard it as political (S. Gao, 2000).

The need for this research

There is a considerable body of research on the acculturation of international students in the UK and elsewhere (see Chapter Two), but little on whether core values of international students have changed, and specifically not on changes to the values of students who have returned to China. The review of literature reveals that although we know about the contribution of Chinese returnees to academia and to technological advances (see page 41), we know little of their experience or behaviour outside the workplace. Also most research has been into the impact of aspects of formal education abroad, such as qualifications or scientific knowledge rather than into the impact of the wider experience, of informal and non-formal education. If students' values change they may meet new

challenges and opportunities when they return home. Earlier returnees experienced a variety of responses, from outright rejection and suspicion to unrealistic expectations and adulation; this is why Stacey Bieler called her study of the early history of American–educated Chinese students '*"Patriots" or "Traitors"?*' (2004).

There is a lack of research published in English about the effects of Christian conversion on people from China studying abroad in the post-1949 era, who returned to the country subsequently. For Christian converts, government restrictions pose limitations on living out their faith in China (Doyle, 2010). There is little knowledge about any struggles new Christian returnees experience as a result of such conflicts with their new values or of benefits they experience being a Christian in China. If more is known about such changes and experiences students can be better helped to prepare for return; they can better adjust their expectations and understand reactions of family, friends and others.

If Chinese students are deeply affected by their contact with, or conversion to, Christianity in the UK, it is important that those UK church leaders and advisers most involved should have access to information about the effects, both positive and negative, that returning students experience, so that they can ensure their practices are as helpful as possible for students. For example, in my former role I organized activities for local church members to learn about China. One such was a seminar, run with the help of Chinese friends, helping local people understand issues which returnees may face, particularly issues facing those who have become Christian abroad. My decision to do this was informed by conversations with many Chinese students over ten years, and by three trips to China where I met returned students and saw a little of their lives back home. Such informal research is limited in its usefulness. More is needed.

Research aims

This study focuses on the experience of Christian conversion and resultant changes in values, of Chinese postgraduate students and visiting scholars in the UK who returned to mainland China. In doing so it draws attention to a phenomenon not yet explored by British scholars: the presence in British university-city churches of significant numbers of students from China, a steady, gentle flow of whom choose to be baptized and proclaim themselves Christians. It aims to increase knowledge about what this means for them after they return to China, in terms of any changed values and consequences for their lives there. A particular changed value may result in different behaviour in one context from in another; a particular motivation (for example, for church involvement) may disappear in a home context where family provide emotional support, or, alternately, represent behavioural restriction. Of particular interest was whether certain beliefs and values central to Christianity changed (e.g. about life purpose; about key relationships and who, if anyone or anything, has authority over them; and about community). As the first identified study about Chinese students who have converted to Christianity abroad and returned to China, it seeks to provide knowledge about the nature, process and implications of any sustained values change arising from such conversion, for others to build on. The specific research questions are on page 83.

The structure of the thesis

The thesis comprises seven chapters, including this one. The next chapter recounts the findings from an extensive review of literature. There is an absence of literature about the exact topic (values change in new Christian returnees to China) and very little about the experiences of students returning to China, but a range of literature touches indirectly on the topic, so the literature review was broad. The areas were: values and values

change; study abroad and subsequent return home; conversion to Christianity, including amongst Chinese students and intellectuals abroad; and literature about Chinese values. Contributions from a range of disciplines were consulted. Gaps in existing knowledge were identified. The theoretical framework for this study and the research questions are then presented.

Chapter 3 describes and justifies the research methodology and methods. The relationship between research questions and data collection and analysis methods is explained, as is the piloting, preparation and conduct of the interviews and the analysis. The participants are introduced. Ethical and cross-cultural issues are considered, including steps taken to address these related issues, and to ensure quality and reliability of the study. The chapter concludes with discussion of limitations of the approach and lessons learned.

The following two chapters present the findings. Chapter Four, and the associated table in Appendix E, summarize what were found to be each participant's values before profession of Christian faith in the UK and, then, at the time of interview in China, together with comments on main bridges to belief in Christianity. To illustrate diversity in origins, degree and maintenance of Christian conversion and values change cameos of three participants are presented. Chapter Five presents a themed analysis of values shared by participants before profession of faith in the UK and, then, at time of interview in China; it also discusses tensions and benefits they experienced living out any changed values on return to China

Chapter Six discusses this study's findings about values change and Christian conversion, in a specific group and context (highly educated returnees from study abroad in early twenty-first century China), in the

light of a theoretical schema incorporating: Taylor's (1989) theory on the source and development of values; Fowler's (1981) theory of the contents of conversion; and Yang's and Wang's (Yuting Wang & Yang, 2006; F. Yang, 1998) arguments for the importance of socio-historic context and local church ecology in understanding conversion to Christianity of Chinese abroad. It illuminates similarities and variety in participants' experiences and processes of values change.

The final chapter provides answers to the research questions and summarizes the contribution to knowledge, taking account of limitations of the study. It closes with recommendations for further research. It is followed by the bibliography and appendices containing: questions which loosely guided the interviews; participant information and consent forms; extracts from interview transcripts; and a table summarizing individual participants' values.

Summary

Since the Deng era China has seen unparalleled modernization and economic growth. Many thousands of Chinese have studied abroad, including in the UK. Returnees have contributed new skills and ideas to China's development.

From the 1990s Christian churches in UK university cities have been visited by increasing numbers of mainland Chinese students. Some of these have returned to China professing Christian faith. Whilst the church in China has grown hugely since 1979, and religious behaviour is more accepted, believers still experience restraints on religious activities.

Although research has been done about the experiences of Chinese students abroad, and about conversion to Christianity among Chinese

students in the US, nothing has been published in English about the consequences of conversion for mainland Chinese who encountered Christianity whilst studying abroad and have returned to China in the post-1949 era. This study is about the experiences and values changes of such people. It contributes to knowledge in three areas: religious conversion amongst the Chinese diaspora, values change and effects of study abroad on returnees.

Chapter Two: The Review of Literature

Introduction

Purpose of review

This chapter reviews current knowledge about the subject of this thesis, analysing approaches, findings and theories. The thesis is about Chinese people who professed Christian faith while studying in the UK, and about what that meant for them on return to China, in terms of any changed values and related tensions and benefits. Therefore it explores research on values and values change, cross-cultural sojourning and study, and conversion to Christianity, focusing on literature relating to students returning to their home countries and specifically on the Chinese. Contributions from a range of disciplines are consulted: psychology, sociology, education and anthropology. Using this review, gaps in existing knowledge are identified, thus locating the study, and a theoretical framework (page 76) is built which informs the analysis and interpretation of data and the wider discussion of findings.

Structure

The literature reviewed is ordered by theme, with theories proposed, methodology and methods used, and findings discussed under each theme. The order is: values and values change; consequences of study abroad; conversion to Christianity; and Chinese values. The gap in current knowledge which this study aims to fill is then summarized. The resulting theoretical framework is described and the research questions presented.

Values and values change

What are values?

Chapter One referred to Rokeach's definition of value. Here is a longer quotation of it:

> To say that a person has a value is to say that he has an enduring prescriptive or proscriptive belief that a specific mode of behaviour or end-state of existence is preferred to an opposite mode... This belief transcends attitudes toward objects and towards situations; it is a standard that guides and determines action, attitudes toward objects and situations, ideology, presentation of self to others, evaluations, judgements, justifications, comparisons of self with others, and attempts to influence others (1973, p. 25).

Values are conceptions of the desirable which influence action. They are conceptions in the sense that they exist in the *mind* of the actor rather than in the physical nature of an object. They focus on the *desirable* in the sense that they look to that which should be rather than necessarily that which is i.e. normative standards which influence choices and behaviour. Values are ongoing rather than transitory, to be identified in the consistent behaviour of a person over a period of time rather than in one impulsive reaction (C. Kluckhohn, 1951).

The relationship of values to *needs* has been variously interpreted; for example, whilst Maslow uses the two words somewhat interchangeably, implying that at times certain needs can also be values, saying 'What I have called the basic needs are probably common to all mankind and are, therefore, shared values' (1968, p. 167), Feather states that 'values differ from needs in that values represent societal and institutional demands in addition to individuals' needs' (1975, p.10). Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) build on Feather, viewing 'values as cognitive representations of three universal requirements: (a) biological needs, (b) interactional requirements for interpersonal coordination, and (c) societal demands for group welfare

and survival' (p.550). The expression *cognitive representations* suggests that such *needs* or *requirements* may become *values* when they are mentally perceived by the holder. So, Rokeach's (1973) description of, for example, *security,* as a terminal value is not in conflict with Maslow's (1943) use of the term when discussing needs. One person may believe they need a certain amount of money saved up for future living requirements and put such thought and effort into achieving it that it becomes a dominant criterion, or value, in their decisions. But for someone else, with similar outgoings, dependents, etc., who could be viewed as having similar needs, money and financial security may not be prominent in their thinking or decision-making, because they do not value it as much as they value, for instance, expressing creativity or contributing to social justice. What is a need for one may be a value for another.

Value systems

Some scholars argue that there are a limited number of core values and that where people and societies differ is in the arrangement of these values (Rokeach, 1979a; R. M. Williams, 1979). Such orderings of values are variously referred to as hierarchies (Maslow, 1968), motivational domains (Schwartz, 1992), orientations (F. Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961) and systems (Feather, 1975).

In a series of survey studies carried out between 1983 and 2001 in more than twenty countries across six continents (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; Schwartz et al., 2001), psychologist Shalom Schwartz identified eleven motivational value domains: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism and spirituality (1992). He argued that ten are '…likely to be recognized within and across cultures and used to form value priorities' (p. 59). 'Spirituality' was the exception. His explanation for this is that the

Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) attributes a given set of values to particular domains, but that if 'spiritual' is taken to mean relating to the question of ultimate meaning of life then different people may find such meaning through the pursuit of different values, some, for example, in benevolence, others in tradition, others in detachment. This may reflect a weakness of surveys in identifying values.

Different people and societies hold values in different motivational domains and relate the domains in different ways. For example, maturity and restrictive conformity were seen as incompatible in Australia, the USA, Finland and Spain, but compatible in Hong Kong (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990).

Relationship between values and behaviour

Rokeach's definition, cited above, makes clear the significance of values for thought *and* behaviour. Bond (1996) and Schwartz recommended that more effort be expended in researching links between values and behaviour, the latter commenting that studies of values in the context of actual situations would probably produce different results from the abstraction of completing a survey (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). Schwartz then developed a less abstract tool, the *Portrait Values Questionnaire* (PVQ) (Schwartz, et al., 2001). However, his PVQ-based studies still fall short of his aim for a test of values in real situations. The danger exists that what is measured is what people wish their values to be (or be seen to be) rather than what they actually are in practice. This of course raises a question of definition: are values to be found in how people live or how they think they ought to live, or do they span the two? My research works from the hypothesis that although values are found in how people live and in the deepest satisfactions and tensions they experience, situations sometimes constrain people from expressing values openly.

Our values can cause us to put things and people into categories (Leach, 1976). For example, traditional Chinese religion requires the burning of paper money at funerals in order to ease the way of the deceased in the after-world, and to minimize the likelihood of them causing trouble for the living. The Christian view, however, is that the spirits of the dead are not to be feared and God cannot be bargained with. Therefore, for example, the Singaporean Chinese Christian eldest son of parents who are not Christians, who politely declines to burn paper money at his father's funeral, will be categorized by some as disrespectful, or even harmful, to his parents and family and by others as a good son, dependent upon their world-view (e.g. of the nature of death and of the supernatural) and the values, symbols and rituals arising from it.

How values are revealed and identified

To study values is to examine 'the management of life', in 'a scrutiny of ends and purposes' (L. Ward, 1935, pp. 3-4). Values are reflected in choices (Parsons and Shils, 1951) and often deal with 'prescriptions, permissions and prohibitions' (C. Kluckhohn, 1951, p. 415), taking 'their richness from the tension between each man and his society' (Bronowski, 1959, p. 63). They affect the way money, time and effort are habitually spent and where they are given sacrificially. To study values is to consider what matters most to people in the choices they make. Values can also be inferred from the stories people tell about themselves and others (Hofstede, 2001), especially where they express approval or disapproval, or in what frightens them or elicits other strong emotions (Kluckhohn, 1951).

Some argue that values are not directly observable (e.g. Kluckhohn, 1951) or that they cannot be known, but only inferred from behaviour (D. Lee, 1959). However, presumably some values can become known to a degree through discussion with the actor after observing behaviour. Indeed, whilst

some values may be explicit and describable by the actor, others may be more implicit and the actor may not be able to articulate the value until an observer has helped them by observing and questioning their behaviour (Kluckhohn, 1951).

Sources of values

Before considering how values change it is necessary to consider where they come from. A variety of sources has been identified. Feather describes values as products of 'forces acting upon the individual' (1975, p. 11), including universal biological needs and unique life experiences that an individual encounters. Fellow-psychologist Schwartz argues that values arise from biological needs, interactional requirements for interpersonal relations, and societal demands for group welfare and survival (Schwartz, 2009; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). He identifies some differences in values priorities between cultures, but warns that culture is complex and multi-dimensional and not to be viewed as a simple variable (1994).

Reviewing psychological and sociological research on values, Hitlin and Piliavin (2004) summarize sources of values as biology; ethnicity and gender; and social structure. Within social structure they mention: class, occupation and education; family characteristics; age cohort; cultural assimilation; religion; national and demographic context. Childhood and family are important, as early social interactions become associated with sanctions and rewards and ideas of good and bad (Feather, 1975; Parsons & Shils, 1951).

In another review Hechter and colleagues (Hechter, Nadel, & Michod, 1993) comment that values appear to arise from a large number of sources, including biological 'hard wiring', ecological and institutional conditions, and individual experience and history. However, social theorist Hans Joas

(2000) criticizes Hechter's 'utilitarian' perspective on values. Joas's historical survey of sociological theories of values leads him to the view that there is something lacking in both this utilitarian perspective and in the normativist perspective of Parsons. Joas talks of the 'creativity of human action' (p. 18), and claims that certain values arise in 'experiences of self-formation and self-transcendence' (p. 1).

Boudon (2006) too warns against an overly mechanistic view of humans and their values. Social environment and context may set conditions but not necessarily determine feelings and behaviour towards and in them. He claims that a neo-Darwinist mechanical adaptation explanation of values ignores the roles of contingency (e.g. of history), ideas and the rational, taking no account of human reflexivity and consciousness of dignity.

Drawing on Weber, Boudon distinguishes between axiological and instrumental forms of rationality (2001, 2003). He argues that there is a form of reason behind some values and values-based decisions, which is not consequentialist, i.e. that is not based on considerations of 'potential positive or negative effect on social systems..or on individuals' (p. 107). What Boudon calls axiological rationality is what Weber called *wertrationalität,* or value rationality. Value-rational means belief in the value for its own sake, 'independent of its prospects of success' (Weber, 1978, p. 25), for example in relation to some ethical or religious behaviour. Value-rational action always involves "commands" or "demands", which in the actor's opinion, are binding on him or her.

Weber claimed that *validity* comes from four sources (1978, p. 36)

a. *tradition*: valid is that which has always been;
b. *affectual*, especially emotional, *faith*: valid is that which is newly revealed or exemplary;
c. *value-rational* faith: valid is that which has been deduced as an absolute;
d. Positive enactment which is believed to be *legal*.

Others claim culture is a source of values (e.g. Kluckhohn, 1951). Research by Inglehart and colleagues using the *World Values Survey* (WVS) (Welzel, 2006), and by Bond and others using the *Chinese Value Survey* (CVS) (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987), across several countries, appears to support the claim that different cultures have different values. Several scholars have proposed different sets of value orientations which vary in emphasis between cultures; Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of culture, Parsons' and Shil's (1951) five pattern variables and Kluckhohn's and Strodtbeck's (1961) five values orientations are amongst them.

However, it should be noted that much of this research uses surveys, requiring people to choose from pre-defined lists. This approach has shortcomings, discussed in Chapter 3. Also many of the studies referred to simply refer to the countries in which people completed surveys. This implies the use of 'culture' and 'country' synonymously. Whilst this may have some relevance in countries with more homogenous populations such interchange of terms in a British setting, for example, where numbers of people coming from other countries has increased rapidly, is no longer appropriate. Home country and different national political and economic contexts affect values (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997). Exposure to people from different ethnic or social backgrounds and to mass media and religions also do.

World-view is another source of values. Worldview is that part of culture which structures the deep-lying presuppositions underlying external representations of that culture (Kraft, 1996) and comprises fundamental assumptions, about existence, the nature of ultimate reality, the meaning of human history and how we know (Sire, 2004). For example, the Protestant Christian belief that each person has been created in the image of the God who created them, has the opportunity to communicate with him

and will be held individually accountable to him can be traced as one source of the Western emphasis on individual liberty, autonomy and belief in the right to argue with authority (P. He, 2002). This is the antithesis of an apparently indifferent or stoical pragmatism which may trace its source to a world-view which has no such big picture, where the universe is unfathomable and any gods (should they exist) are unknowable and, at best, disinterested in human affairs.

Hofstede's (2001) analysis of the results of over one hundred studies by various researchers using various survey tools, provides an example of how fundamental questions of world-view can lead to differences in values. He points out that whilst the uncertainty avoidance dimension was apparent in many studies it was not revealed in the *Chinese Culture Connection* (1987) study which used the *Chinese Values Survey* (CVS) to investigate values in twenty-three countries. He attributes this difference to a Western association of uncertainty avoidance with humanity's search for truth and to a lack of strong perceived need to search for truth on the part of the Chinese minds which created the CVS. Earlier Bond and colleagues had questioned the validity of values lists developed solely by non-Chinese in a non-Chinese setting, for use in Chinese cultures. The CVS was therefore developed; in a study of Confucian-based countries the second dimension apparent from their results, which they called Confucian work dynamism, was unrelated to Hofstede's dimensions.

Ideology, 'a body of doctrine, a system of values and beliefs' (Gecas, 2000, p. 98) has also been identified as a source of values (Gecas, 2000; Maio, Olson, Bernard, & Luke, 2003; Rokeach, 1979b) and as contributing to the maintenance of value identities. Adoption of a group's values can have different reasons, including instrumental ones and affective bonds, through

a process of socialization, or 'identification with and persuasion by a charismatic leader' (Gecas, 2000, p. 101).

Charles Taylor and values

Joas (2000) argues that philosopher Charles Taylor contributes something new to understanding the genesis of values. Taylor claims that each person has a background structure, or 'inescapable framework' (1989, p. 3). Taylor's *framework* is related to the concept of *worldview*, although arguably more socially embodied. It is formed from values, concepts of the self, social bonds and identifications and a related personal story. This framework lies 'behind our moral and spiritual intuitions' (p.8). It helps us make sense of our lives, and sense comes through articulation.

Frameworks lie behind judgments, feelings and behaviour. They and values influence *identity*. To answer the question 'who am I?' we need an understanding of what matters most to us:

> To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 27).

From the framework arise distinctions: who we are and who we are not. 'To think, feel, judge within such a framework is to function with the sense that some action, or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparably higher than the others which are more readily available to us' (p19).

He stresses the importance of language communities in forming frameworks, self-concept and values. Living in communities of shared

language we learn to define and ascribe meaning. Values stem from and develop in the interplay of experience and articulation:

> I can only learn what anger, love, anxiety, the aspiration to wholeness etc., are through my and others' experience of these being objects for *us* in some common space. This is the truth behind Wittgenstein's dictum that agreement in meanings involves agreement in judgments (1989, p.35).

Because a person's self-concept develops in relation and conversation with others, so the 'full definition of someone's identity then usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to a defining community' (p.36).

A fourth element of the framework is the *personal narrative*, the sense of 'life as an unfolding story' (p.47). For Taylor, for us 'to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going' (p.47). His use of the expression the *best account* principle (p.58) links the personal story with 'worldview' and 'framework'. This is the account of life, and what matters most, that we use as a basis for evaluation; that which helps us make best sense of our life and of the actions and feelings of others.

Some people, Taylor argues, have *hypergoods*[5], values above other values. Using these as lenses we evaluate and rank other goods and values, and assess ourselves against them. As examples Taylor cites 'justice' and 'love of God'.

---

[5] Taylor defines the noun *good* as 'whatever is picked out as incomparably higher in a qualitative distinction. It can be some action, or motive, or style of life, which is seen as qualitatively superior. 'Good' is used here in a highly general sense, designating anything considered valuable, worthy, admirable, of whatever kind or category' (1989, p.92).

Later Taylor uses the term 'social imaginary':

> The ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations (2004, p. 23).

To summarize, Taylor proposes a number of interlinking concepts which influence each other and the individual's framework or background picture: values (and hypergoods), self-concepts, the narrative by which we make sense of our lives, and our ideas of society and social relationships. In this light we can imagine a Chinese student, whose self-concept, account of life and values, have developed from childhood, often within limited social bonds, possibly with little change and challenge, except for university in China, possibly not ever being consciously articulated, going abroad to study, to a new context removed from their usual relationships, roles and surroundings; they may be challenged to re-interpret language, culture *and* themselves in that context. If they meet people with very different belief-systems they may articulate or even re-interpret their own; new social bonds and self-concepts may develop, and if Taylor's linking of values with social bonds, self-concept and best account holds, values may change too.

How values change

To aid continuity, before discussing empirical research into how values change, this section considers Taylor's contribution to value change theory. His description of values developing in articulation of story and identity in conversation with others, and his exploration of the role of hypergoods are pointers to a potentially powerful explanation of value change.

He claims that different cultures can have different axes of what is modern moral life and that our language of good and right makes sense only against a background understanding of the forms of social interchange in a

given society and its perceptions of the good. New events or situations in our lives can challenge our felt position in relation to the good. Where a new hypergood becomes apparent, in an encounter with someone else's story, or in moving to a new socio-cultural context, this can be 'epistemologically unsettling' (p.69). The articulation of the good is crucial. If the speaker, the formulation and the mode of delivering the message are consistent with the good itself, this can be very influential, especially where it appears to make sense of our own narrative thus far. If it is so attractive as to supersede earlier core values, then we will re-evaluate what earlier seemed most important, in some cases to the point of rejection.

Such a deep change in perspective includes a change in personal narrative, producing what Taylor calls a new 'best account'. It also involves a process of 'practical reasoning' (p.72), which is a combination of rational logical argument and moral intuition. Finally, 'the acceptance of any hypergood is connected in a complex way with our being *moved* by it' (p.73).

As the deepest values and personal narrative change so does the self-concept, and as this takes place in personal relationships of language, so do social identifications. In all, the person's framework has changed. The Chinese student of our earlier example may see herself as a member of a new group, such as an alumna of a prestigious university, or as a Christian, as part of a worldwide church family which cuts across national and familial boundaries, even sharing its own terminology.

In comparison with research into what values people have there is a paucity of empirical research into how values change (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004). Looking at values as part of a wider cognitive system, of beliefs, attitudes and values, Rokeach argues that a change in one part of the system will affect other parts (1970) and that a change in values is particularly likely to

occur when there is inconsistency between two or more terminal[6] values. This is consistent with Taylor's thesis of relationship between different parts of the background framework and of the significance of clashes of hypergoods.

Rokeach (1970) refers to three main ways in which such inconsistency arises:

1. A person has to behave in a way incompatible with their values;

2. A person is exposed to new information from significant others, that is inconsistent with central values;

3. A person is exposed to information about existing inconsistencies in their values.

He also underscores the importance of the value's consistency with self-esteem and logic or reality (1970). So, self-dissatisfaction is a determinant of value change (Rokeach, 1973, 1979b).

Krishnan (2008) used the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) in two quantitative longitudinal studies with MBA students in an Indian business school. Echoing Rokeach, he stresses the importance of self-confrontation:

> Learning that there is a contradiction between one's value priorities and one's ideal self-conception as a moral or competent person gives rise to self-dissatisfaction with one's value rankings. The ideal self-conception is based on the value system of a positive reference group (p.236).

The importance of identification with reference groups is also mentioned by Bardi and Goodwin (2011) (see below).

Rokeach finds that values 'are capable of undergoing change as a result of changes in society, situation, self-conceptions and self-awareness' (1979b,

---

[6] Rokeach distinguishes between *instrumental* and *terminal* values, the former relating to values representing means and the latter values representing ends (1970).

pp. 2-3). Also, societal changes can lead to behavioural changes which in turn lead to a change in values (R. M. Williams, 1979). In survey research using the SVS with teachers and students from 21 European countries Schwartz and Bardi (1997) looked at the influence of adaptation to communist rule on value priorities in Eastern Europe. They concluded that both direct indoctrination and adapting to life circumstances influenced values, but that for change to remain, long term adaptation to life circumstances (or a change in behaviour) was central. This happened through 'acclimatisation and compensation'. As rewards were experienced for conforming to political demands for certain behaviour, so the behaviour became valued, rather than the ideological message which was originally used to justify it.

Reviewing psychological research on values stability and change over time, Bardi and Goodwin identify 'five facilitators of value change (priming, adaptation, identification, consistency maintenance, and direct persuasion)' (2011, p. 272). Priming occurs when a particular context or activity prompts a certain state, for example of thought or emotion. Some primers are cultural; use of a particular language can prime values associated with the culture or context in which that language was learned or used. A multiple-study mixed methods research programme with bi-cultural Hong Kong Chinese university students showed that being in a Cantonese-speaking environment increased tendencies to choose compromise options, to endorse decisions advising moderation or caution, and to defer making decisions in problems when they could be postponed (Briley, Morris, & Simonson, 2005). Presumably changes arising from environmental cues may not persist when the context (e.g. study abroad) is left.

Major role or life changes, such as parenthood or migration, can lead to change in values (Rohan, 2000; Schwartz, 2009). During such transitions

'people are more likely to re-assess their lives and the assumptions that guide them' (Goodwin, et al., 2012, p. 2). Different values may be encouraged in different cultures and contexts. People may downgrade values which are difficult to pursue and adopt values which are espoused by others in their social environment. However, some values, such as security values, are not likely to be downgraded when they are difficult to fulfil; rather they could become stronger (Schwartz & Bardi, 1997). Identification with a particular group, for example after joining a new work group or moving to a different area or country, may result in value change (Chatman, 1991).

Like Rokeach, Bardi and Goodwin (2011) cite the need to maintain consistency for values to change. They suggest that in more collectivistic cultures outward change in behaviour is less likely to correspond with an internal change of values.

Work mentioned above which particularly informed the present study included Taylor's theory on how values are formed. His concept of values being part of a personal framework, formed and articulated in relation with social bonds, self-concept and best account, which may be challenged, or even changed, when encountering very different hypergoods and best accounts, is particularly relevant when considering the experience of Chinese students abroad, away from their normal social bonds, who encounter holders of different (Christian, in this case) core values and master stories, and whose community offers some sense of a home away from home. His theory is consistent with Rokeach's claim that changes in self-concept affect values and that inconsistency between two terminal values can lead to change in values.

Bardi's and Goodwin's (2011) identification of priming, adaptation, identification, consistency maintenance, and direct persuasion as facilitators

of value change *and* their and Polek's (Goodwin, et al., 2012) reference to moving to a new culture as challenging values prompted the question for me as to what happens when these facilitators decrease because the person (such as a Chinese student) has moved back from the new culture to the old. The focus in this study on choices and decisions and on happy and unhappy experiences was informed by arguments of Kluckhohn (1951) and Parsons and Shils (1951) that these reveal values.

The consequences of study abroad

There is an extensive literature, from psychological, sociological and educational perspectives, on study abroad, including: experiences and problems encountered by international students; acculturation; effects on students of study abroad; and challenges students face when they return home. The volume of work is not, however, evenly spread across topics or geographic regions. For example, whilst there is a growing body of research on issues facing Japanese sojourners when they return home (Isa, 1996; Sasagawa, Toyoda, & Sakano, 2006; Takeuchi, Imahori, & Matsumoto, 2001), there is a relative lack of research, published in English, about return to China.

Experiences

Research into experiences of international students covers Australia (e.g. Grey, 2002; Matthews, 2004; Singh & Sproats, 2004), New Zealand (Butcher, 2003; C. Ward & Searle, 1991), the UK (e.g. Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Sovics, 2008) and the US (e.g. Chang, 1996). Students report loneliness and psychological stress (Ayano, 2006; Gu, 2005; Turner, 2006), express disappointment about not making friends with host country students (Sovics, 2008) and find difficulties with language and culture to be key factors (Singh & Sproats, 2004; Sovics, 2008). Some have experienced

an imbalance of power with members of the host society (K. A. Chang, 1996) or been victims of crime (Barnard & Owen, 2005). A variety of research approaches have been employed, including surveys, interviews and ethnography.

Acculturation

This study focuses on former student sojourners. 'Sojourners' refers to those who come for a period of between six months and five years, intending to return to their home country (C. Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001), rather than to migrants who intend to stay in the host country and therefore have different needs and experiences. There is a considerable body of research which has investigated the acculturation or 'culture shock' of sojourners and migrants. Research into acculturation amongst international students is generally about one period only of acculturation, that in the host country. Participants in the present study have experienced acculturation at least twice so their situation is somewhat different.

Three main approaches to acculturation have been developed by psychologists: the culture learning model, the stress, coping and adjustment model and social identification theories (C. Ward, et al., 2001). The *culture learning approach* assumes that aspects of the new culture need to be learned and skills acquired (e.g. language and etiquette) and that the quality and quantity of contact with three different groups of people (fellow compatriots, host nationals, and non-compatriot foreign students) are critical to successful adjustment. However, studies have generally focused on relationships with people on university campuses. There is a dearth of research, particularly in the UK, about the effects of relationships between international students and host nationals *outside* the university.

The *stress and coping approach* sees cross-cultural transition as a 'series of stress-provoking life changes that draw on adjustive resources and require coping responses' (C. Ward, et al., 2001, p. 37). Berry, particularly, has developed this theory (1997, 2005; 2006).

Social identification theories focus on how people think about themselves and others, what they perceive to be their in- and out-groups, and how group membership affects self-esteem. Ethnic and cultural identity is seen as core to such conceptual frameworks (C. Ward, et al., 2001). Religious conversion affords the possibility of a perceived change of in-group.

Kuah-Pearce (2006) talks of migrants having both communal and private selves. She posits the idea of a performing self and a social self which is dynamic, changing according to its own and communal needs, and the environment it is in. Here she sounds similar to psychologist Triandis. After reviewing the work of other scholars of the 'self' and conducting comparative quantitative research amongst students of different ethnic backgrounds Triandis introduced the notion of 'sampling' or accessing and using different parts of the self in different situations. He found that:

> Aspects of the self (private, public, and collective) are differently sampled in different cultures, depending on the complexity, level of individualism, and looseness of the culture (Triandis, 1989, p. 517).

It can be difficult for migrants to settle in a single identity. This is illustrated in Chin's ethnographic study of Chinese people who left Indonesia for the PRC in the 1960s and later settled in Hong Kong. Whether they think of themselves as Indonesian Chinese, Chinese, or Hong Kongese, may depend on the political and social context, and on whether they are thinking politically, culturally or about homeland (Chin, 2003).

The effects of study abroad

Within the wider literature about the international student experience there has been an emphasis on problems and needs. However there are also positive findings, such as students becoming more creative and more independent (Bai, 2008; Brown, 2009; Sovics, 2008), engaging in self-reflection and taking opportunities for personal growth (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006) and becoming more aware and understanding of others (Gill, 2007).

The experience of living in a different country can also lead to critical reflection on host and home cultures. In an interview-based study, Chinese students in the UK expressed appreciation for the more relaxed lifestyle, the degree of interpersonal trust, the rule of law, the degree of fairness and the welfare system in the UK, whilst being shocked at the degree of rudeness amongst UK youth (Philo, 2007). A questionnaire study with mainland Chinese students at a US university, looking at the influence of study in the US on attitudes towards the Chinese government, concluded that length of time in the US did not have a clear effect on attitudes towards Chinese communist ideology and that age and time spent reading the New York Times may have been stronger influences (Zhao & Xie, 1992). The findings of these two studies indicate that aspects of the wider social and political contexts of China and the host countries contribute to students from China having certain experiences unique to them as Chinese students.

Ryan and Viete (2010) provide evidence, from their experience working with Chinese students in Australia, that some Chinese have succeeded in inhabiting a *'third space'* (p.157), between that occupied by the new (host) culture and the culture they consider their own. This third space is somewhere that ideas and knowledge are shared and open up, resulting in new ways of interpreting and perceiving, new voices and identities. The authors observe that this is of benefit not only to overseas students

themselves but also to their host universities. Tian and Lowe (2009, 2010) also point out the potential benefits to all concerned where there is real communication between overseas students and their hosts. However their research in UK universities found that, despite Chinese students' efforts, few succeeded in building relationships deep enough with locals for real intercultural communication to occur; instead many encountered indifference or felt marginalized.

Learning and change in values

Learning is not restricted to the classroom or to a college reading list (Rogers & Horrocks, 2010). In his case studies of Australian social justice movements, Foley found that people learn as they live, 'informally and incidentally' (1999, p. 1), and that learning is affected by local politics and ideologies and by broader social forces. People acquired new knowledge and skills but also had their ideas about authority changed, and learned that their actions could affect things. This is the *conscientização* and perspective transformation to which Freire (1993) and Mezirow (2000) refer respectively. Whilst Chinese students in the UK are not usually struggling for social justice, they are struggling with a new culture, status and role. They are affected by the elements Foley cites: educational interventions, the political economy, discursive practice and micro politics.

Polanyi points out that 'we know more than we can tell' (1967, p. 4), that some knowledge is tacit and that learning happens through means other than the conscious mind. He proposes that knowledge emerges at/to different levels as we perceive more constituent parts which lead us to a new understanding of the whole; in turn leading to new understanding of the parts. So, for example, the Chinese student away from home, in a new environment, becomes aware of what they believe about how people should relate. Knowledge of the belief emerges from the hidden and tacit. This may

occur cognitively, through conversation; with the aid of the emotions, for example in response to music; or through an act of will in stepping out in action. Admitting her debt to Polanyi, Meek says 'Knowing is the responsible human struggle to rely on clues to focus on a coherent pattern and submit to its reality' (2003, p. 55). We come to know as we risk living what we perceive. We can imagine overseas students struggling seeking to make sense of what they hear in lecture or café, of people's reactions to them in library or supermarket, of the behaviour of people in seminar or church, and of their own feelings in all this. As they puzzle they may act on their conclusions, and learn as others respond to their changes.

Learning also comes from engaging with others on a common project, in 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1999), or in a volunteer group (Mundel & Schugurensky, 2008), not just from what is said or taught but from what is done and modelled. Chinese students exposed to a community of practice in a United States (US) Chinese Christian Church were shocked by the generosity and kindness of church members, because these people were going beyond the traditional Chinese practice of caring for family members to caring for them, complete strangers (Abel, 2006). Reflection on such experience and values could contribute to the perspective transformation Mezirow (2000) describes.

Some international students, although not Christians, see attending a church service as an opportunity to experience local culture and practise English. Others attend more regularly, because, away from family and friends, they experience an emotional gap. Church services and regular social activities organized for them by local Christians offer a group with which they develop at least some sense of belonging. Research in the US reflects this (K. Yan & Berliner, 2011; F. Yang, 1999) but there is an absence of comparable research in the UK. Local church communities offer

a chance for reflection and learning on cultural, social and spiritual levels. They may also offer the chance to step back from preoccupations of daily life and study, to consider questions about the world, our place in it and what matters most, our values.

Values change and study abroad

In a comparative analysis of questionnaires completed by students from China at US universities and students in China who had not studied abroad, Guan and Dodder found that values could both intensify and decrease (2001). They found that students in the US scored higher on ethnic group integration than those in China and this increased for those who had been in the US more than two years; this perhaps suggests that identification as Chinese increased rather than decreased as they stayed longer in the US.

A two year longitudinal study (Matthews, 2004) of 150 students, from China, Japan and Korea, at Australian universities, using the CVS and focus groups, found statistically significant changes in two value dimensions: loyalty to ideals (including filial piety, observation of rituals, patriotism) increased over time and Confucian ethos (incorporating loyalty to superiors, protecting your 'face', respect for tradition) decreased. These studies did not investigate whether changes remained once students returned home.

Some scholars refer to a change in attitudes towards career and material success. Bai (2008), who conducted large scale mixed method research with students from China in New Zealand, comments on how, whilst they were disappointed that New Zealand was not more 'modern' and that their New Zealand degrees were not valued highly in the Chinese job market, they still appreciated the teaching style and wanted to stay. This may be linked to the kind of changed priorities reported by international students in a UK-based ethnographic study who now valued having a happy life over

career success but were concerned whether they could live out this changed value on return home; these students had started to prioritize self-direction over public opinion (Brown, 2009).

Close relationships with people from other cultures has led to a transformed awareness of self and others (Gill, 2007; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003) and to increased cross-cultural understanding (C. Ward, et al., 2001). However, findings from one longitudinal, multiple-method study with international students at four UK universities (Gu, 2009) led the investigators to query the extent of growth in inter-culturality. They found this to be constrained by the availability of support for students and the conditions of their contacts with other nationalities.

With the exception of Murphy-Lejeune's (2002, 2003) interview exploration of European students studying in another European country, none of the studies mentioned in this section involved participants who had already returned home. Unfortunately, but understandably, because this was not her focus, it is not possible to tell from Murphy-Lejeune's accounts to what degree changes continued after people returned home.

Experience and values on return home

One review of repatriation literature referred to 'the near ubiquitous distress experienced during repatriation' (Sussman, 2000, p. 355). Indeed some recent studies about the experiences of returnees from study abroad do describe difficulties, for example in relations with parents (Y. Chang, 2009; Hua Yang, 2008), in a felt need to limit self-expression in favour of deference (Simpson, Sturges, & Weight, 2010; Hua Yang, 2008) and in feelings of not belonging (Patron, 2006). Some studies report that people who had more satisfying social engagement with host country nationals experienced less satisfaction with life than others on return home e.g.

(Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). However, for some younger returnees, less settled in an adult role, the international experience was perceived more positively, as part of growing up and 'achieving self-definition' (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1966).

A more recent interview and focus group study amongst people from China who had studied in the UK reported very positive findings about cultural capital gained and resulting career progression (Xue, 2008). However, only six of the participants had actually returned to China, and all were in one profession, academia. Findings might be different with a larger group in different professions.

Others report the increased contributions to universities and science made by scholars returning to China (Y. Guo, 1998; Hayhoe, 1990; C. Li, 2005 ; Xiaoxuan Li, 2004; Rosen & Zweig, 2005; Schnepp, 1989). *Haigui*[7] have made a major contribution to the technology industry, for example, setting up companies worth in excess of RMB10 billion (M. Yang & Tan, 2007).

The wider sojourner literature on diplomats, missionaries and businesspeople refers to the loss that some returnees experience (Austin, 1983; Storti, 2001), which may be so intense that it is like mourning the death of someone close (Butcher, 2002, 2003; Hunter, 1985). There can also be a sense of not belonging entirely in one place or the other (Hunter, 1985). Fong (2006, p. 156) writes of Chinese students being 'trapped in the liminal zone between their citizenship dreams and the realities of their marginality'. Informed by her earlier ethnographic study of the effect of the One Child Policy on Dalian school students and their parents (2004), Fong

---

[7] *Haigui* is a Chinese term for those who have returned from study abroad. It literally means 'sea turtle'.

asserts that Chinese students go abroad wanting to be part of an imagined 'global community of affluent, powerful and prestigious people' (p. 151). However, some become trapped abroad, unwilling to go home because they have not achieved the status they and their families had anticipated. They may have legal citizenship abroad, but not social or cultural belonging to accompany it. Others return home only to find their overseas experience and qualification do not buy them the prestige or security they had anticipated (Fong, 2011).

Butcher agrees that returnees seek belonging and struggle with disrupted 'self-narratives, self-identity, and ontological security' (2003, p. 142). Their idea of home is challenged; his interview-based study (2003) of thirty-six East Asian students returned from New Zealand found that home is no longer place-bound. He found that with appropriate pre-return preparation and support after return within transnational networks of returnees and friends in other countries, through computer-mediated communities, 'home can be reconfigured and a transnational identity, tied to relationships rather than geography, can be found' (p. 143). The same however might not apply to returnees to China, where government restrictions on access to international social networking sites limit such continuity of relationships developed abroad. Related to changes in the meaning of home were difficulties that Butcher's participants found in familial and other relationships. Those, particularly, who had changed religion whilst abroad, experienced tensions in the family.

Chinese returnees are not necessarily living in the world explored by Kim (2008). She considers the effects of inhabiting a more interdependent world where ease of communication and transportation bring together people of different nationalities, religions and cultures. Citing work by researchers in different countries, using various methods, including biographical

testimony, she claims that, through a continuing dynamic of stress, adaptation and growth, it is possible to develop 'an intercultural identity'. Aspects of cultures are both acquired and given up, or lost, as the person's individual identity evolves. This may, however, be less likely for people who return to China, unless they are amongst the few with jobs which enable continuing international travel.

Interviewing students who had returned from New Zealand to Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, McGrath found changes in the following: concepts of individuality and freedom; the nature and importance of relationships with peers and colleagues; views of family; values in areas of integrity, ethics, environment, materialism and relationships; religious beliefs; self-image; lifestyle beliefs (McGrath, 1998, cited in McGrath et al, 2007).

The question arises: if such changes in ideas and values happen, what do returnees do with them? Returnees to certain countries feel social tensions, such as the comparative limits on women's activities, or have problems in business when bribery is the norm instead of legal or commercial codes (Corey, 1979). To stand out against such activity can be perceived as betrayal of one's culture (Dickson, 2007). Attempts to wear masks of conformity in public but live out new values at home can result in serious problems, whilst for others 'the mask quickly became the true face of the man and they became obstacles to future returnees' (Corey, 1979, p. 48). That this has long been a potential issue for some returning Chinese students is highlighted in the title of Stacey Bieler's book *"Patriots" or "Traitors?" A History of American-educated Chinese Students* (2004).

Some Japanese returnees expect social rejection because of changes in their behaviour and therefore adapt their communication style to avoid rejection (Sasagawa, et al., 2006; Takeuchi, et al., 2001). These findings

are consistent with Feather's (1975) contention that reference groups (e.g. parents, peers) provide rewards and punishments relevant to the enforcement of norms and that individuals may reorganise their values system in order to be in line with key people.

Issues of empowerment and disempowerment were central to the findings of Isa's (1996) interview and questionnaire research about re-entry experiences of wives of returning Japanese businessmen. Women who had engaged in new activities and roles (e.g. volunteering in their child's school) felt empowered in the US. Returning home to an environment where such behaviour was deemed inappropriate was disempowering. Behavioural adjustment in the US, related to ways of expressing opinions, of using money and time and of raising children, and achievement oriented behaviour, effected a change in the women's values; the greater the change in values the more difficult the re-entry to Japanese society.

There is a lack of English-language research about students returning to China, other than that about scientific and academic achievements. A rare exception is a quantitative questionnaire study (Han & Zweig, 2010) which focused on values. This concluded that those who had studied abroad were more internationalist and less nationalistic than those who had not.

Many of the studies mentioned above identified relationship difficulties and a felt need to curb new behaviour to conform to family or societal expectations. However, Gill (2010) reports more positive findings. Hers is one of a few recent small-scale, in-depth interview studies about returnees from the UK to China. She describes people with a changed sense of identity which gave them an expansive intercultural self, able to take in a variety of influences and to 'internalise and transcend other cultural traditions' (p. 372). Like others (Simpson, et al., 2010) she found that

living abroad had led people to critical self-reflection and to a greater understanding of others' perspectives.

The research of Bieler (2004), Ye (2001) and Qian (2002), focused on students from China in the US. Bieler's historical research on people who studied in the US before 1945 employed student magazines, archives and interviews with past students or their family members. Her portraits of scholars in the first two waves of study in the US, who later served China with distinction (such as Yan Yangchu (James Yen), responsible for a mass education movement (Swope & Walsh, 1951) and rural reconstruction programme and Chen Hengzhe, the first female professor at Beijing University), include accounts of difficulties many suffered because of their US connections, some even experiencing exile.

Using similar methods, historian Ye Weili (2001) examines experiences of Chinese students returning from the US from 1900 to 1927. She considers work, recreational and political activities, involvement in professional associations, how women students struggled to negotiate lives which incorporated career and marriage and how male students resolved the tension between Confucian sexual mores and the more permissive atmosphere in the US. She claims these people introduced to China 'new social customs, new kinds of interpersonal relationships, and new ways of associating in groups' (p. 2).

Qian's (2002) interview-based study focuses on the period 1989 to 1995. He discusses culture shock experienced in the US, coping with: being comparatively poor in a very materialistic setting; the high value which Americans place on freedom; different teaching and learning styles; and different sexual behaviour. He describes 'confused men' (p. 141) and 'liberated women' (p. 147). Qian claims those who returned found life

difficult, feeling misunderstood, struggling with lower living standards, and finding limited place for ideas and knowledge acquired abroad. However, the Chinese social and economic environment has changed since Qian published; the study abroad environment has also changed, with many Chinese now finding themselves in large cohorts of Chinese students.

These three studies are notable in that each sets students' experiences in the broader context of the twentieth century history of China and its international relations.

Bieler's work and that of Carol Lee Hamrin (Hamrin & Bieler, 2009), discussed below, under 'Conversion', is the only work I have found which refers to Chinese Christian students, some already Christian before they left China and others who became Christians abroad. However it relates to study abroad in the period before the Communists came to power in 1949.

Conversion and Christian values

One potential source of change in values is change in faith. The term *conversion* is used here because it is widely adopted in the sociology of religion, referring both to leaving one religion for another and 'becoming engaged with religion for the first time' (Ladykowska, 2012). However, it is not necessarily a term widely used by Christians themselves, who may rather refer to when they 'became Christians'. In his study of faith development Fowler defines conversion thus:

> a significant re-centering of one's previous conscious or unconscious images of value and power, and the conscious adoption of a new set of master stories in the commitment to reshape one's life in a new community of interpretation and action (1981, pp. 281-282).

This definition extends beyond the purely religious, seeing conversion as a change in what or whom a person puts their trust and commitment in. It provides a base definition for this study.

In this study the key source of description of Christian values is the *Bible*. This was the key text referenced by participants[8]. Arguably the two main voices in *The New Testament* are those of Jesus and the Apostle Paul. At the heart of conversion to Christianity, as explained in *The Bible*, is Christ's call to a changed life (Matthew 4:17). He also talks of the necessity of being 'born of.. the Spirit' (John 3:5) and declares himself to be 'the way and the truth and the life' (John 14:6). These and other such statements suggest that following him involves adoption of values he teaches and embodies. When asked to state the most important commandment Jesus replies:

> 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' (Matthew 22:37-39).

He claims his mission is human salvation, saying 'I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved' (John 10:9), and tells his followers to 'seek first.. God's righteousness' (Matthew 6:33). These give us four central Christian values: loving, or serving, God; loving others; salvation; and righteousness in God's eyes.

Paul talks of Jesus' followers having a new life, directed by the Holy Spirit, with 'fruit' such as 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' (Galatians 5:22-23). Although Jesus and Paul both stress human perfection is not possible in this life there are grounds to expect that, if what they say is correct, there will be

---

[8] This thesis uses terminology from the Protestant evangelical Christian tradition because that was the church context experienced by the participants.

changes in the values, life purpose and behaviour of those who follow Christ. One of the earliest examples is the value of community, evident in Luke's description of the first Christians immediately after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:42-46). Every person is different and there is no expectation of such transformation usually happening overnight, but there is likelihood of some degree of early change. This study is based on that hypothesis.

Research into conversion

There is a substantial literature on the causes and process of religious conversion (e.g. James, 1958 (1902); Lofland & Skonovd, 1981; Lofland & Stark, 1965; Richardson, 1985; Snow & Machalek, 1984), which is beyond the present scope. This study seeks, rather, to understand a specific *effect* of conversion to Christianity, change in core values. Discussion here is therefore focussed on those who have made significant contributions to knowledge and understanding of the contents and effects of Christian conversion and especially those who have made a major contribution to understanding conversion amongst Chinese abroad. However, it is helpful first to note a recent review of literature on Christian conversion (Steigenga, 2010) which argues that a person's conversion takes place over time, is affected by a variety of contexts, and is not necessarily linear; the term 'conversion career' (Gooren, 2008) is illuminating because it implies changes, even ups and downs, rather than a one-off event or a smooth gradual movement from one state to another.

Research on conversion has been carried out from psychological, sociological, cultural and theological perspectives. The case has been made (Rambo 1993; G. T. Smith, 2001) that none of these is sufficient alone. The psychological approach, for example, risks missing the potential contribution of social institutions, culture change and divine intervention.

One of the most cited conversion theorists, Lewis Rambo, argues (1993) that conversion study should include at least four perspectives, the cultural, social, personal and religious systems, and possibly also political, economic and biological perspectives. The cultural system consists of the intellectual, moral and spiritual atmosphere and the myths, rituals and symbols which are its guidelines; the social includes social and institutional aspects of tradition, social conditions, and important relationships and institutions; an individual's thoughts, feelings, actions and history form the personal system; the religious consists of encounters with the holy, of the individual's religious expectations and experiences and their world-view.

Rambo's model consists of seven stages: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences. These stages are not purely linear but may overlap and spiral back and forth. Context, particularly important, is dynamic. It consists of macro-context (including political and economic systems, religious organizations, ecological considerations e.g. the Chinese Cultural Revolution or Britain in the 1960s), micro-context (the local setting e.g. family, friends, neighbourhood), and other cultural, social, personal and religious influences. Catalysts for crisis could include illness and healing, a sense of 'is that all there is' or a search for stability. Consequences, the stage most closely related to values change, could be personal and social. He underlines the varied nature of conversion. He stresses the importance of empathy and interpretation in research into conversion, and his main research tool is the interview.

From the analysis of 359 life narrative interviews conducted over ten years James Fowler, another psychologist and theologian, developed a stage theory of faith (Fowler, 1981). His work went beyond the religious, encompassing other beliefs and causes in which people place their faith, but do not necessarily consider divine. He argues that faith has both structure

(which develops through stages, during life) and content. Fowler's definition of conversion was cited on page 46. He argues that conversion 'has to do with changes in the *contents* of faith' (p. 281). Three major elements of the content are: centres of value, images of power and master stories. He describes centres of value thus:

> The causes, concerns or persons that consciously or unconsciously have the greatest worth to us. *Worship* and *worth* have etymological kinship. We attribute the kind of worth that calls for our loyalty and commitment to those centres of value that give our lives meaning (1981, p. 276).

Later, writing specifically of Christian vocation, he describes it as an outcome of developing faith, as 'a purpose for being in the world that is related to the purposes of God' (2000, p. 75). He differentiates between vocation and self-actualization, seeing the latter as implying individualism and the former community. The Christian who is mature in the faith will value partnership with God over self-fulfilment. Discussing 'Christian virtues', he refers to 'five qualities of Christian maturity' (p. 101) described in the *Sermon on the Mount*. These values are meekness, being a peacemaker, generosity, magnanimity and joyfulness.

Smith cites humility as the 'posture and fruit of conversion' (2001, p. 129). His research into conversion as presented in *The New Testament* identifies seven separate but related components. They are: belief in Christ; repentance; trust in Christ; transfer of allegiance; baptism; reception of the Holy Spirit; and incorporation into congregational life. The whole person is involved and the outcome is not only personal but corporate, in the sense that the person identifies with a new group. Transfer of allegiance can have consequences which Christians and those who know them may experience differently; what is positive to one may be perceived as a threat by another. An example is where one party views Christianity as a foreign

religion, particularly in a context, such as today's China, where nationalistic sentiment is prevalent.

One of the best known studies of religious conversion is that of William James (Snarey, 2003). For him:

> To say that a man is 'converted' means…that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy (James, 2002 (1902), p. 218).

For James, a formerly divided self is now unified, old ideas and systems of ideas are undermined and a new inner structure emerges. This structure is reminiscent of Taylor's 'framework'. James lists four features of the Christian convert:

> 1. A feeling of being in a wider life than that of this world's selfish little interests; and a conviction, not merely intellectual, but as it were sensible, of the existence of an Ideal Power…
>
> 2. A sense of the friendly continuity of the ideal power with our own life, and a willing self-surrender to its control.
>
> 3. An immense elation and freedom, as the outlines of the confining selfhood melt down.
>
> 4. A shifting of the emotional centre towards loving and harmonious affections (p. 300-1)

He sees obedience and poverty as results.

Another potential effect of Christian conversion is a stronger sense of self-esteem pursuant from a close personal relationship with God, as found by Krause (2009) who analysed data from 1500 interviews in a US nationwide survey.

Christian conversion amongst Chinese abroad

There is a growing body of US-based research about the high degree of interest in Christianity shown by Chinese in the US. Prominent is that of the mainland Chinese sociologist Yang Fenggang, Director of the Purdue

University Center on Religion and Chinese Society, whose work includes studies of religion amongst the Chinese in the US (2001a), conversion to Christianity by Chinese students in the US (Yuting Wang & Yang, 2006), the church in China (2006) and conversion to Christianity amongst young people in China (2005). Pointing to the insufficiency of psychological conversion theories, such as that of Lofland and Stark (1965), to explain the adoption of Christianity by large numbers of well-educated and relatively affluent mainland Chinese in the US, Yang claims that social, cultural, ecological and institutional factors all play a role (Yuting Wang & Yang, 2006; F. Yang, 1998, 1999). In doing so he is in agreement with Rambo (1993).

The number of Chinese Protestant churches in the US grew from sixty-six to 697 between 1952 and 1994 (F. Yang, 1999). In his ethnographic study of Chinese Christian churches in Washington DC, Yang hypothesises that the large number of Chinese conversions to Christianity in the US involves more than just individual personality, personal crisis and interpersonal bonds (1998, 1999). He dismisses the idea that these are 'rice Christians' looking for material support because most Chinese-American churches focus more on evangelism than on social service programmes and the majority of converts are educated people living in middle-class areas with no need of such material support. Nor can the reason be the need to be assimilated into mainstream US culture, because if it were they would not join ethnic Chinese churches, but other churches; and there are many other organizations to join to remain part of ethnic Chinese society in the US.

His interviews and analysis of documentation and church activities lead him to conclude that institutional factors are one key. These are: the activity of Christian mission organizations in China, the focus of the US Chinese Protestant Church on evangelism and the activity of Chinese Christian

organizations on US campuses. However, he argues (1999) that the socio-cultural situation in China is the most significant factor. Quoting Tu Wei-ming, Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy at Harvard University and Professor of Philosophy at Peking University, Yang points to the suffering and failed experimentation of past and more recent (i.e. 1989) Chinese history leading to disillusionment, trauma and a loss of tradition and identity, which mean that many are searching for alternate sources of meaning. Tu's words are worth repeating because the question arises as to whether they are still apposite in 2012:

> The untold suffering of the Chinese people – caused by Western imperialism, the Taiping Rebellion, the collapse of the Manchu Dynasty, the internecine struggle of the warlords, Japanese aggression, the conflict between nationalists and communists, and the misguided policies of the People's Republic of China – contextualised the meaning of Chineseness in a new symbolic structure. Marginality, rootlessness, amnesia, anger, frustration, alienation, and helplessness have gained much salience in characterizing the collective psyche of the modern Chinese (Tu 1994, p. vii).

Yang argues that in modern pluralist US society, and with challenges posed by modernization in both China and the US, many Chinese find in Christianity helpful absolutes which they perceive to be compatible with Confucian moral values.

Discussing another study about Chinese students' conversions at two US universities, Yang and Wang claim that although socio-cultural issues in China were still relevant, a socio-ecological factor was also important (2006). By 'ecology' here is meant the church context in the geographical area. In a town with no Chinese churches students went to non-Chinese churches of various denominations. The authors conclude that the local situation and local church activities are what attracted students to church, but that it was the socio-cultural context in China which contributed most to actual conversion amongst the older generation in the earlier study. The

younger students had not experienced the trauma and rootlessness of their elders, but had grown up in a China of increasing international cooperation and were thus more fluent in English and open to Western ideas (Yuting Wang, 2004). I suggest that the two groups' different status in the US may also have affected their actions and the degree of conversion. Many of Yang's earlier study had immigrated into the US, whereas the participants in the later study were younger students who were more likely to go home; whether they had actually become Christians might not be apparent until they returned home. Yan and Berliner's (2011) qualitative interview study into Chinese students' stress and coping processes at US universities revealed that regardless of whether they claimed Christian faith or not those attending church appreciated it as a source of emotional and practical support. By interviewing former students who have returned to China, the present study seeks to ascertain whether the attraction to Christianity was a temporary interest in something novel or helpful in a situation of need, in a foreign context, or a longer-term commitment to something perceived to have value across contexts.

Yang creates the concept of 'adhesive identities' (1999). This allows for the possibility of immigrants holding both Chinese and American identities, having neither to abandon Chinese ethnicity nor sacrifice assimilation into America. In another study of a Chinese Protestant Christian Church in the US, Ng (2002) finds evidence of such adhesive identities, noting that immigrant groups join certain host institutions to help them integrate into the new environment whilst retaining some of their old ways. This US Chinese church is somewhere people can celebrate traditional Chinese culture whilst also being American. Chinese festivals are celebrated and the church follows the Chinese custom of communal meals; also American festivals are celebrated and American cultural know-how developed.

However, Ng differs from Yang in seeing practical and material blessings as central to the church members' motivations for being Christians. He detects a difference between many congregation members' idea of God and the pastor's idea, members describing a 'tutelary God' who provides guidance and practical blessings, protecting them in a foreign country, and the pastor seeing God as a saviour cleansing him from sin and worthy of dedicated service. Ng contends that the members' Christianity is culturally embedded, in that their idea of God is a result of their traditional ideas of Chinese deities. However, although this study was carried out in a metropolitan area it is not clear whether the demographic of the church members he interviewed (e.g. educational level, Chinese ethnic background) was comparable to that of Yang's churches in Washington DC, thus making it impossible to judge the relevance of the findings of each case to the other.

Kindness of Christians is often cited as a factor initially attracting Chinese students in the US to learn more about Christianity (Abel, 2006; Chuang, 1995; Temple, 1999; Wong, 2006). In an ethnographic study of a US Chinese Christian church Abel (2006) observed host Christians going out of their way to help Chinese students with practical kindnesses and to organise welcoming social activities. This was striking to the new arrivals because, in contrast to Chinese norms of reciprocity (*bao)*, these Chinese Christians expected nothing in return and offered their help to complete strangers, outside their families. Here church growth was apparently fed by a turning upside down of certain Chinese conventions.

Values after conversion

In a questionnaire study amongst mainland Chinese students and scholars in the US (Chuang, 1995) respondents were asked to choose up to three life goals from a list of nine. The nine were 'enjoy life, have good friends, health, happy family, achievement in career, start own business, serve my

own country, peace and joy, accomplish God's will' (p. 81-2). Most of these are similar to items in Rokeach's list of eighteen terminal values (1973, p. 359), and so the question can be deemed to be about values. 234 of the 419 mainland Chinese respondents termed themselves Christians. Their answers to this question were different from answers of those who said they were not Christians. The top choices for the Christians were, in order, accomplish God's will, peace and joy, family and health, whilst those of the others were family, health, peace and joy, career success and serve the nation. There is of course the risk that wanting to say the right thing helped place 'accomplish God's will' in the top four, but its first position, together with the absence of 'serve China' in the Christians' top choices, suggests a difference between the two groups in views of purpose and authority.

In a qualitative, interview study Temple (1999) investigated mainland Chinese intellectuals' changes in perspective as a result of, first, their conversion to Christianity and, second, their cross-cultural experience in the United States. Conducting his research in the light of Mezirow's (2000) theory that learning can lead to perspective transformation, he found that all ten participants had experienced perspective transformation. They experienced improved relationships in marriages and with parents, increased emotional well-being and changed attitudes and values towards work, money and possessions. They had also experienced a shift in philosophical orientation from a naturalistic to a metaphysical view of reality. Participants saw themselves as children of God, with a connection to him as Father, and saw their church as a new family. This suggests that though they may well have held family and filial piety as core values before their conversion, and continued to do afterwards, the nature of the value changed. The church provided a family and community in a different sense from what they had experienced before. Like Yang, Temple found the

distant Chinese context and the immediate US context to be factors affecting conversion.

Another small scale study (Wong, 2006), using interviews and religious experience scale questionnaires with twelve people who had come from China to the US to study, identified post-conversion consequences as spiritual awakening (awareness of God and sensitivity to sin), change in life goals and values, personality change, behaviour change and relationships improvement. In terms of values people had become less self-interested, less concerned for family fame and more concerned to please God. The researcher followed Rambo and Yang in stressing the need for a combined approach: sociological, personal/psychological, cultural/anthropological and theological/spiritual.

Whilst the above studies provide insight into the effects of Christian conversion on Chinese in the US it should not be assumed that the same people would report and demonstrate the same changes after return to a very different context, China. Also, where values change has happened, people who have returned to the old home context with the new values should, in theory, have richer experience and reflection to offer research into the nature and implications of such change.

Christianity amongst young intellectuals in China

The growth of interest in Christianity in China is reflected in the recent establishment of Christian Studies centres in Chinese universities, in over thirty cities (Tang, 2008). There are also unregistered Christian fellowships on many university campuses (Tang, cited in Catholic News 2007). However there is a limited amount of English language literature on Christianity amongst young professionals and students.

Yang Huilin, Professor of Religious Studies at Beijing People's University, led a mixed methods (questionnaires and interviews) study about interest in Christianity amongst students at that university. He found a high degree of interest in Christianity, 185 questionnaire participants saying they were interested and only ninety-three saying they were not (2002). Participants had learned about Christianity not through contact with Christians but by reading and attending university lectures. They were interested in the *Bible*, but did not see church and other corporate Christian activities as relevant to them. Yang argues that this is because church evangelistic methods have become obsolete. However it is possible that additional factors play a part in this lack of interest in church in comparison to the *Bible*. One is a lack of corporate worship in the more traditional religions of China; this may colour expectations. Another is the post-modern 'bowling alone' phenomenon, the tendency in this technologically-driven age of consumer choice and immediate gratification for ongoing commitment to a regular group to be replaced, for example, by membership of 'virtual' on-line groups (Putnam, 1995). Yang's analysis is that the high level of interest in Christianity is explained not by students linking Christianity with successful market economies (in a Weberian sense) but by them seeing Christianity as a means to stem the tide of commercialism.

An interesting comparison with Yang Huilin's study is provided by Yang Fenggang's ethnography (2005), based on participant observation and interviews in churches in a number of Chinese cities between 2000 and 2003. He argues that the most important factor in the growth of Christianity amongst young professionals is the dramatic social change caused by rapid, forced modernization; that the emerging market economy is exciting but also threatening, and that in the light of increased perceived corruption people are looking to religion for stability. In saying that people are 'lost in

the market' he echoes Yang Huilin. He differs in what he says about the attraction of Christianity and churches' methods. The groups he observed met in McDonalds, up to a hundred people gathering round tables in small groups for *Bible* study. When moved on, for illegal religious gathering, they transferred to another McDonalds. Yang comments that McDonalds and Christianity are both perceived by young Chinese as modern and cosmopolitan, symbols of progress, freedom and efficiency.

The two studies also differ in that Yang Huilin's researchers met people outside the church context, in Beijing, whereas Yang Fenggang met people in church groups, registered and unregistered, and in cities other than Beijing. It should be noted too that Yang Fenggang was an employee of a US university. It may be that his knowledge of Chinese culture and language coupled with his *not* being perceived to be part of Chinese officialdom gave him access to people and information not so accessible to representatives of an official body such as People's University.

Values of Christians in China

Gao Shining, of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), says (2006, 2011) that her interviews, questionnaires and observation of Christians in Beijing, over a period of several years, suggest that, in differing degrees, their faith differentiates them from others, in terms of speech, behaviour and what matters to them. She claims that, although they live in tension with a materialistic world, Christians with strong faith are able to hold on to their ideals. They have an ultimate goal. They can make choices which differ from others' and are not ruled by materialism and self-centredness. Those younger in the faith are more easily influenced by their environment and this in turn weakens their faith.

Huang Jianbo (2004) uses surveys, interviews and observations of Christians in Beijing and Shanghai churches as the basis for his argument that Chinese intellectual Christians struggle with tensions in five areas: belief versus reason; Christian faith versus traditional Chinese culture; traditional values versus modern society; individual belief versus traditional church systems; and loyalty to the state versus loyalty to God. Huang's five issues are not peculiar to China, although number five, about loyalty to the state and to God has more resonance in China than in many countries. If his theory holds for returnees who participated in the present study then they can be expected to show some degree of confusion between competing values.

Identity

Several of the scholars mentioned above refer to *identity.* In the section on Values, Charles Taylor is shown to relate self-concept, part of identity, with values, social identification and personal narrative as part of the personal framework. 'Consequences of study abroad' includes reference to Kim's claims (2008) about the development of an intercultural identity and Butcher's description of some returnees struggling with disrupted self-identity and others finding a transnational identity in computer-mediated communities (Butcher, 2003). In the section on Conversion, I refer to Yang's use of the term 'adhesive identities', describing how joining a US Chinese church helped immigrant Chinese hold both Chinese and American identities (F. Yang, 1999). Temple (1999) describes participants seeing themselves as children of a Father God, identifying themselves as part of a new family.

In a study focused on change in identity as a result of Christian conversion a much wider review of the rich literature on identity would be necessary. However, this is not such a study. Instead, this study focuses on values, on

what matters to people most, rather than on whom they perceive themselves to be. To do justice to both values *and* identity would demand much more time and space than this thesis allows. That said, as Taylor points out, personal narratives, self-concepts and values influence each other. So, this study will focus on values, but in later chapters consideration is given to the close relationship between changed values and revised narratives and self-concepts.

What are Chinese values?

A study such as this, concerned with change in values of certain people from China, must pay heed to the different values and sources of values which scholars have identified as variously shaping mainland Chinese perspectives. However, the speed of change in China, and China's size, mean there are many potential, and changing, influences on values; Kleinman has referred to an increase in the 'divided self' in a 'divided state' (2011, p. 288). If culture is a key source of values (Hofstede, 2001; C. Kluckhohn, 1951), it is necessary to consider the culture (or cultures) from which mainland Chinese students come. However, this is a vast and complex topic. People come from a variety of backgrounds and will have experienced multiple overlaying cultures. This review can only raise a few issues arising in the discourse on Chinese values, and can only highlight key characteristics which have been often cited as Chinese values. The degree to which any of the values and issues discussed below applies to any individual Chinese person will vary greatly. But there is sufficient evidence to suggest that mixtures of some of these values will apply to some participants. Some may sit happily alongside new values, others may not; some may be strengthened in a context of Christian belief, others weakened. This review is limited to literature published in English.

It would be foolhardy to attempt to define a set of values which could apply to all current citizens of China. Within the population of 1.3 billion are people from a variety of ethnic groups, of different languages, from histories and landscapes as different as the nomadic people of Inner Mongolia and the coastal traders of Fujian, of the cosmopolitan cities of the east and of poorer rural areas of the west. China has seen so much change over the past seventy years that people of different ages will have radically different experiences and memories. They have been exposed to a range of ideologies, including Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Communism and, most recently, consumption-driven market economics (Kynge, 2006; Postiglione, 2004). This mixture has led to ideological and cultural tensions, variances and complexities (Hewitt, 2007; K. Liu, 2004). The divergence in responses to recent changes is one indicator of the divergence in values held within China[9].

Parents of today's undergraduates experienced the Cultural Revolution, whilst their children were born after Deng's 'opening up' and, until recently perhaps, may have experienced only economic growth and prosperity. Different generations are driven by different perspectives and concerns (F. Yang, 2001b). Writing about spiritual change in China, anthropologist Richard Madsen (2001) argues that economic and social change has affected different people differently, and there are growing contrasts between rural and urban dwellers, and between migrant workers and a university-educated professional and managerial élite. The participants in this study were arguably all members of that élite. Also many of them

---

[9] For example, Stanley Rosen has pointed out the differing responses to the best-selling book about the so-called 'Harvard Girl', Liu Yiting. Some have bought the book in order to copy Liu and her parents' methods for success; others have criticised the parents' materialistic values (Postiglione, 2004).

grew up after the introduction of the one child policy; that is likely to have affected their values.

Some have argued that there is a Chinese culture, or civilization, and set of values (across a number of countries with high percentages of ethnic Chinese), distinct from others (e.g. Huntington, 1996). Differences found between Chinese and other cultures include: a tendency in Western cultures to search for truth and in Eastern cultures to search for virtue (Matthews, 2000); and a much higher degree of long term orientation[10] in students in China than in students in twenty-two other countries (Britain was eighteenth) (Hofstede, 2001).

The survey Hofstede cites was, however, conducted in 1985. A similar survey today might see a different response from students born under the one child policy and brought up in the fast-changing cities of eastern China. Indeed, a 2008/9 survey using Hofstede's cultural dimensions with employees in two cities (Kwon, 2012) found that Shenzhen (China's first Special Economic Zone, in southern Guangdong province) scored much higher than Taiyuan (capital of northern, inland Shanxi province) in individualism and Taiyuan scored higher in long-term orientation.

The breakdown of communism and the development of the market have opened up a greater flux in values, indeed competition between value systems, particularly amongst the young (Faure & Fang, 2008). The growth of the private sector has contributed to an increase in social mobility and growing involvement of rural local entrepreneurs in politics (Pei, 1994). The 'self-liberalization' of the mass media and increased access to it by both

---

[10] Hofstede defines long term orientation as 'the fostering of virtues oriented towards future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift' (2001, p. 359).

receivers (e.g. television viewers) and communicators (intellectuals and entrepreneurs), which Pei referred to, have now been joined by the Internet as means to widespread high-speed exchange of ideas. However, scholars still talk of Chinese values (Kulich & Rui, 2010), and so, the following section discusses some of those values most often mentioned and which might therefore be expected to be held by some Chinese students to some degree.

Amongst those advocating certain values is Pan Wei, a political scientist at Beijing University, known in China for his influential advocacy of a distinctly Chinese consultative rule of law, quite distinct from that of Western liberal democracies (Leonard, 2008). He has proposed a system of core social values based on seven tiers of key relationships: 'self-other, man-nature, individual community, community-society, people-government, people-(state) nation and (state) nation–world' (2009, p. 57). Central to his system is patriotic nationalism, having a correct view of China's place amongst the nations. He claims that without this other key values and relationships fall apart. He also says that 'groups and group structure are more important than individuals' (p. 59). Although Pan says his proposed values 'mesh nicely with the Ten Commandments' (p. 72) there is no place for God in his system; he has not taken into account the first four commandments which all stress the supremacy of relationship with God.

An alternative voice is that of philosopher Tu Weiming, who champions a modern Confucian perspective, with the family as 'the locus from which the core values are transmitted' (2000, p. 262) and with education as the 'civil religion of society' (p. 263).

Others, some Christian and some not, recommend the *Bible* and Christianity as a source of values for China today. For example, Zhuo Xinping, Director

of the Christianity Research Centre of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and member of the National People's Congress, has written that Christianity has six unique principles to contribute to Chinese renewal: original sin, salvation, transcendence, ultimacy, ecumenism and love (2006). The case has also been argued (Wielander, 2011) that Christian terminology and concepts, particularly the idea of selfless, or agapé, love, have entered governmental discourse on the 'harmonious society'.

Those seeking to explain PRC values refer to a variety of sources. The most prevalent are discussed briefly below.

Confucian philosophy is identified as the source of the very deep commitment to family (Xing, 1995) and of the Chinese emphasis on social harmony (Peppas, 2004). It includes:

- obedience within a hierarchy of relationships, particularly within the family (Bond & Hwang, 1986; Fu, Watkins, & Hui, 2004);

- order, propriety and status (Bond & Hwang, 1986; P. He, 2002);

- value in relationships rather than intrinsically in the individual (Bond & Hwang, 1986; Fei, 1948);

- pragmatism (P. He, 2002; Z. Li, 1999); that is, morality as specific to the situation and the relationship with those involved (Fei, 1948);

- the importance of maintaining, or increasing '*face*', of others and self (G. Gao, Ting-Toomey, & Gudykunst, 1996; Jia, 2001)[11].

---

[11] The sociologist David Ho defines *face* as 'the respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself from others, by virtue of the relative position he occupies in his social network and the degree to which he is judged to have functioned adequately in that position as well as acceptably in his general conduct; the face extended to a person by others

In this context to be 'good' or 'moral' is to fit in with social obligations, the basic rule being 'honour the hierarchy first, your vision of truth second' (Bond, 1991, p. 151).

Zou Xingming (cited in Wielander, 2011) argues that this hierarchy includes a hierarchy of love which obstructs a truly 'harmonious society' by placing other allegiances and identities above identity with, and concern for, the unknown person in the street. There is a hierarchy of blood (which puts the family first), a hierarchy of place (related to place of birth), a hierarchy of identity which puts labels on 'others', such as, for example, migrants (see the section below on *suzhi)*, and lastly, a hierarchy which places private above public interests. This is at odds with the Christian concept of unconditional, agapé love.

A view of worth and self as found in relation to others, rather than in individual identity or absolute truth, means that behaviour can vary from situation to situation, depending on relationships and people involved. This suggests that though Chinese students may exhibit changes in behaviour whilst in the U.K. such changes may not persist on return to China.

Filial Piety[12]: Ho (1996, p. 156) claims filial piety is 'the basic ethic governing intergenerational and, by extension, interpersonal relationships in China'. The core is the relationship between child and parent, where the dutiful child should show the parents respect, care for them in old age, show gratitude towards them and generally behave in a way which brings credit to the family (Stevenson & Lee, 1996; Zhan & Ning, 2004). Ho

---

is a function of the degree of congruence between judgments of his total condition in life, including his actions as well as those of people closely associated with him, and the social expectations that others have placed upon him' (1976, p. 883).

[12] The paragraph on filial piety is largely taken from my M.A. dissertation (D. Dickson, 2007, p.15).

claims that filial piety is decreasing in China (1996). However the degree of change varies, with economic power houses such as Shanghai and Guangzhou changing faster than more conservative cities such as Beijing and Nanjing (Kwan, cited in R. Zhang, 2004). Indeed, interviewing young people in Shanghai in 2008, Yan (Y. Yan, 2011) encountered a new perspective on filial piety: money given to parents for the financial benefit of the giver and the claim that the child pursuing their own happiness was filial piety because it was their happiness that made their parents happy.

Individualism and collectivism: Certain groups of people, including, arguably, the Chinese, are more group oriented than others. This concept has various names: 'group orientation' (Xing, 1995), 'social orientation' (Bond, 1991); 'collectivism' (Bond, 1991; Hofstede, 2001; Leung, 1996; Salih, 1996; Triandis, 1989). Given the wide usage of the terms 'individualism' and 'collectivism' they will be used here, with the caveat that this is not intended to mean Maoist collectivism but a more widely found older collectivism.

Defining them as two poles of a dimension of national culture, Hofstede describes them thus:

> Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose. Everyone is expected to look after him/herself and her/his immediate family only. Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (2001, p. 225).

He claims that a culture's position on this spectrum affects people's behaviour not only in families but also at work, with friends, in public, in education and religion, in marriage and career choices. It affects the political, legal, health and welfare systems. Triandis' list of values held in

individualist and collectivist cultures gives an idea of just how wide-reaching the effects can be:

> The top collectivist values are: harmony, face saving, filial piety (duty towards parents), modesty, moderation, thrift, equality in the distribution of rewards among peers, and fulfilment of others' needs. The top individualist values are: freedom, honesty, social recognition, comfort, hedonism, and equity (to each according to his/her contribution to group performance) (cited in McLaren, 1998, p. 67).

Collectivism and individualism can, however, exist together. Educationalist Lee Wing On has argued that these values should not, and cannot, be dichotomized (2001). He proposes that the notion of *relation* is more helpful than 'the paradigm of collectivism and individualism for understanding the position of the individual in the collectivity' (2009, p. 7). The self is the starting point for social relations. Others too have criticised a polar view of individualism and collectivism (e.g. Kagitcibasi, 1994).

Research (Hawkins, et al., 2001) amongst China's educational élite, about values education, highlighted a dilemma: the desire to strengthen values based on maintaining social harmony whilst at the same time increasing independence and autonomous thinking. Whilst collective values had not disappeared, the primary motivation for values education was to 'highlight individual responsibility', and the theme deemed most important to teach was 'creativity and individuality' (p. 204). The intention is that this individual creativity be harnessed for the good of Chinese society.

Opinions of individualism vary. Pan (2009, p. 68) sees an increasing 'naked individualism' contributing to antisocial practices. He attributes this partly to Western influences corroding communal socialism. Discussing the 'Post-Communist Personality', Wang Xiaoying (2002), though also concerned about moral decline, attributes it to the adoption of the free market without the moral basis which underpins certain long-term capitalist societies.

Calling for an individualism of responsible moral agency, she echoes Christian teaching, which emphasises recognition of, and responsibility for, the dignity and worth of other individuals.

Anthropologist Yan Yunxiang argues that whilst 'the rise of the individual constitutes the most fundamental change in Chinese society' (Y. Yan, 2011, p. 69), with an 'ethical shift from responsibilities to rights' (p.54), it is important to consider positive effects alongside undoubted negative ones. Drawing on his own empirical research and a range of literature by others he points out that the situation is highly complex. Attitudes to altruism provide one example. Yan (2009) describes the rare, but increasing, incidence of 'Good Samaritans' being made subject to blame or extortion by strangers they have helped[13].   After interviewing people involved in incidents he concludes that changes in the moral landscape seem contradictory: whilst some people, often young and educated, exhibit a kind of individualism which steps out from the hierarchies of blood, place and identity mentioned above, to help strangers in trouble, some of these strangers exhibit a less responsible form of individualism, taking advantage of their helpers. The Sichuan earthquake revealed a real concern for strangers in trouble on the part of young people (Cha, 2008).

Buddhism and Daoism: Since the 1980s opening up period there has been a marked increase in China in expressed interest in philosophies and religions traditionally viewed as Chinese, including Daoism and Buddhism (Zhe, 2011). Indeed a range of religious practices have evolved and merged, for example, with various schools of qigong and even Maoist shamans (Chau, 2011). Also some hold the classic Buddhist view that life is full of suffering,

---

[13] On a 2012 trip to China two Chinese people separately, and without prompting from me, referred to this issue.

but that suffering can be avoided by attaining enlightenment through following the Eight-fold Path of right view, right thought or purpose, right speech, right behaviour, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration (Olson, 2005). Others are influenced by belief in reincarnation and that behaviour in this life affects their future lives.

Whilst Confucianism focuses on proper conduct in human relations, Daoism emphasises both human relationship with the cosmos and the individual's internal state. Simplicity, quietude and non-assertiveness are favoured. Morality is made light of and the imposition of constraints on others rejected (Lai, 2006). Spontaneity is valued, along with *wu-wei,* a sort of emptying of self, or non-action (D. Burnett, 2008). The 'let it be' attitude of the Daoist principle that planning ahead is self-defeating is very much at odds with 'the modern world of business plans and SMART goals' (D. Burnett, 2008, p. 64).

Communism and atheism: This is not the place for a detailed discussion of either Maoist or contemporary Chinese communism or their effects. However, one aspect, specifically related to this research, must be mentioned. The denial of God, the dismissal of all religion as superstition, the adoption of atheism as the official view of the CCP, the emphasis on what is perceived to be material and, particularly from the 1970s, on science and technology as the main means of modernization and national salvation, have affected Chinese world-views and values. An analysis of WVS data showed China amongst the very lowest of the 80 countries included, in terms of religious participation (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). However that did not include data from after 2000.

Concerning political education in the school classroom, in a study on Guangdong province, Lee and Ho argue that in the moral education

curriculum, heretofore the home of ideological and political education, since the eighties there has been a gradual 'reorientation for moral education to be disassociated from politics' (2005, p. 413). Li (2011), however, claims that the political and the moral are still combined in the classroom and there is still indoctrination, although the political content has changed somewhat. I have heard Chinese students in their mid-20s refer to the political education they received at school and university, which has been attacked as political utilitarianism (Xiao, 2003).

Consumerism and the market: With the collapse of the communist ideal and new opportunities of the free market, globalization, particularly through access to foreign media and the internet, is arguably the major factor in changing values in China, particularly encouraging consumerism. Yan Yunxiang has gone as far as saying that

> Consumerism now serves as the ideological backdrop for popular culture, and popular culture in turn encourages mass consumption (2002, p. 28).

Some argue that consumption is encouraged by the government, not merely to strengthen the economy, but to keep people docile and avert social unrest. After his ethnographic study of fandom, Fung concluded:

> Young people's preoccupation with consumption and addiction to idols is likely to divert them from the critical discourse of civic engagement that could undermine state legitimacy (2009, p. 290).

However, the growing desire to possess and tendency to compare self with others based on degree of consumption and ownership is having some deleterious effects. A quantitative analysis of WVS data suggested that happiness had reduced in China, between 1990 and 2000, despite an improvement in living standards (Brockmann, Delhey, Welzel, & Yuan, 2009). This applied to urban and rural people. The reason proffered was increase in income inequality; related to average income most people's

financial situation had worsened. People were 'frustrated achievers' (p. 387), disappointed that they were not as well off as others. Caution is needed in applying these findings, however, because only 375 urban people were included in the China sample for the 2000 WVS.

Suzhi: Anthropologists have written about increased striving for *suzhi* in China, and refer to a growth in emphasis on *suzhi* in governmental, scholarly and popular discourses (Anagnost, 2004; Jacka, 2009). Kipnis calls *suzhi* a 'keyword', a word 'central to contention over ideas and values in a given era' (2006, p. 295).

Suzhi is hard to translate, as no English term encompasses every nuance. "Quality" is used most often, as in the phrase 'becoming a person of high quality'. The concept has mixed origins, including Confucianism and Maoism, but has grown in use since the Deng era, when it was used in justification of the one child policy. That government usage reflected a desire to increase the quality of the population (by reducing its quantity), so that China could increase its international standing. "Raising the *suzhi* of the people" became the main goal of educational reform (Kipnis, 2006)[14].

At local government level emphasis on increasing citizens' *suzhi* is seen in the existence of bodies such as the Peking City Civilization Commission (Nyiri, 2006), in "How to be a lovely Shanghainese" booklets given to residents before the 2010 Shanghai Expo (Tomba, 2009) and in neighbourhood notices:

---

[14] Kipnis refers to evidence in specific 1980s Chinese government and academic publications about population and educational policy.

Figure 1: Hoardings on a Guangzhou street (Dickson, 2009)

The term was taken up by the media and has now mutated into popular parlance, reflected in urban people's descriptions of migrant workers as "low *suzhi"* (Jacka, 2009) and in middle-class parents' efforts to build *suzhi* into their child (Anagnost, 2004). The influence it has on the thinking and subjectivity of parents and young people is exemplified in the high sales of the book "Harvard Girl, Liu Yiting: A True Chronicle of Suzhi Cultivation", written by Liu's parents and used by many as a manual of how to invest in, and build, one's child's *suzhi* (Kipnis, 2006)*.* This book sat at the top of the Chinese best-sellers' list for sixteen months (Schauble, 2002).

Suzhi means different things to different people. For parents and children in an ethnographic study in Dalian (Fong, 2007) meanings concentrated around morality, cosmopolitanism and academic achievement and their perceived connection with affluence and a consuming lifestyle. Kipnis (2006) and Fong both point out that this has led to a dangerous linkage in some minds, between different characteristics which contribute to *suzhi*. For example, the logic could go like this: to be morally virtuous is to have *suzhi;* to achieve a well-paid white-collar job and the nice apartment which

that affords is also to have *suzhi*; therefore to have a nicer apartment than someone else is to be more moral than them. This is a potentially dangerous elision of ideas of character, intelligence and strength which could harm the reputation of certain people, for example those who choose, or need, to live a simpler lifestyle.

The discussion above is not exhaustive; it indicates the range of values and influences which affect individual Chinese and the degree of change in influences. As Tu Weiming has said, to be Chinese is not a static thing (W Tu, 1994).

What are the gaps in knowledge?

This review of literature reveals that change in values is under-researched in two fields of study, the international student experience and Christian conversion amongst the Chinese diaspora.

1. *The international student experience*

Whilst there is a considerable body of literature on the experience of international students abroad, particularly that of mainland Chinese, there is relatively little on the longer term effects of this experience, after return home. Research into the experiences of students who have returned to China has provided knowledge of their career progress and contribution to science, technology and industry (e.g. X. Li, 2004; C. Li, 2005; M. Yang & Tan, 2007), but only a few studies have investigated effects on values (e.g. Han and Zweig, 2010). The current study will contribute to knowledge about the lasting effect of the study abroad experience on Chinese returnees' values and about how they managed (or did not manage) the tensions of sustaining any 'new' values in their home contexts. The findings

will have implications for improving understanding of values change in the context of internationalization.

2. *Christian conversion amongst the Chinese diaspora*

The conversion to Christianity amongst mainland Chinese abroad is an important phenomenon, acknowledged and studied in the US but not in the UK. There is a growing literature within the sociology of religion about why certain mainland Chinese in the US are attracted to Christianity and what being a Christian means to those who have converted and remain in the US (e.g. Yang, 1998, 1999, Wang and Yang, 2006). Others (e.g. Temple, 1999; Wong, 2002) have provided evidence of values change amongst mainland Chinese students and professionals who converted to Christianity and remained in the US.

What we do not know is whether such change is sustained after people return to China, to a very different context. What little knowledge we have about new Christians returning to China relates to the period before Mao declared the People's Republic in 1949 (e.g. Bieler, 2004).

Following on from the lack of research and knowledge about whether Christian conversion and associated values change are sustained on return to China, to a different context, is a lack of knowledge, about *how* any such change is sustained or halted. The current research attends to factors and processes which contribute to conversion and values change and sustain them in differing socio-cultural contexts. The findings of this study will thus have the potential to enrich the knowledge base of internationalization and its impact on individuals in shorter and longer terms and in different contexts.

The findings will also have the potential to help UK Christian churches and organizations, British and Chinese, understand better the context to which new Chinese Christians return and adapt their practices accordingly.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study has three parts: values, Christian conversion and context. The first employs Rokeach's (1973) definition of a *value* and Taylor's (1989) theory on values development and change; the second is based on Fowler's (1981) theory about the contents of religious conversion and Biblical comments about effects of following Christ; the third acknowledges Yang's (1999) observations that multiple contexts need to be taken into account to understand conversion, particularly the mainland Chinese context, and literature about relational concepts in Chinese cultures, particularly filial piety, face and the importance of hierarchy.

Values and values change

The decision to focus on values necessitates a definition; several were considered, but this study takes Rokeach's definition of a *value* as*:*

> ..an enduring prescriptive or proscriptive belief that a specific mode of behaviour or end-state of existence is preferred to an opposite mode…a standard that guides and determines action, attitudes toward objects and situations, ideology, presentations of self to others, evaluations, judgements, justifications, comparisons of self with others, and attempts to influence others (Rokeach, 1973, p. 25).

This definition highlights several factors important to this study. First, a value is *enduring;* it operates across situations and contexts. Second, it is a *belief*, so it involves cognition and is not purely subconscious. Third, it can apply to either modes of behaviour or end-states; both are important in a Christian world-view, which encompasses both the current life and a life after death and therefore stresses both behaviour e.g. 'love your neighbour' and state i.e. being saved. Fourth, it is a *standard that guides,* so

theoretically lies behind decisions and behaviour, amongst other things, which may themselves differ between contexts.

So, this definition describes precisely the different aspects of thought and behaviour that I seek to understand as I investigate whether, and how, being a Christian has affected *what matters most* to the participants.

This study is about people who have moved from one personal and social context (their life in China) to a very different one (study in the UK) and who have encountered, maybe even developed ties with, people who hold very different beliefs from their own about the world and their role in it. Taylor (1989) provides a theory of how values develop and change which identifies connections between values (and 'hypergoods'), concepts of the self, social bonds, personal stories and 'best accounts' of life; he sees these as together forming background frameworks, which develop in community, through experience and articulation. Where a person encounters alternative values and best accounts, relating to people in a new community or socio-cultural context, potential exists for epistemology and ontology to be unsettled. When challenged to explore and articulate this experience in a non-native language, perspective may change and new best accounts of reality and personal story, and core values (or even hypergoods) be adopted. The whole background structure can shift.

I hypothesize that if Taylor's theory holds, then in a case when someone adopts Christianity, they adopt a new best account (the Christian worldview), have a revised concept of self (for example, as a child of God, made in his image), with new social bonds (the church) and revised values. However, whether any such revised values remain after return to China may also depend on whether the other elements of the structure remain on

return: social bonds may differ there, and the shared best account and self-concept be less prevalent.

Christian conversion

Fowler's (1981) research into faith development goes beyond Christianity to encompass faith in other religions and in none. His reminder of the etymological relationship between *worship* and *worth,* and therefore the relationship between worshipping and valuing, was a factor in the decision to focus on values in this study. His thesis that the contents of faith change at conversion and that there are three major elements of faith provides a focus for this study. In attempting to understand one of Fowler's elements, 'centres of values', it helps to investigate the other two, 'images of power' and 'master stories'.

Taylor's theory, although not specifically about religion or faith, complements Fowler's theory on the contents of faith and conversion. Taylor's *best account* overlaps with Fowler's *master story* and they both focus on *values*. Taylor's discussion of *social bonds* and *articulation* has aspects in common with Fowler's discussion of a *community of interpretation and action*. What Fowler offers this study, which is missing in Taylor, is the claim that a change in *images of power* is a central feature of conversion, and related to change in values. Taylor's concept of a value above other values, a *hypergood*, and particularly the idea of a *clash of hypergoods*, is missing in Fowler, but particularly pertinent in this study where, in theory, some participants will have encountered a hypergood (e.g. 'love God with all your heart') different to their own. Finally, Taylor stresses the relationship between values and *self-concept* whereas, for Fowler, this is more implicit, within his concept of master story.

The hypothetical relationship between conversion to Christianity and change in values and the emphasis in the *Bible* on certain values were discussed on pages 47-48. As the common text to which Christians turn for guidance, the *Bible* was referred to for indications about potential new values. Prioritizing following Jesus's commandment to 'love God with all your heart… and love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22:37-39), for instance, presumably involves different tensions, decisions and behaviour, for different people and in different contexts. For example, loving one's neighbour may be construed differently, and involve different challenges, in a context where charitable donations to unknown people is common and independence from parents is common, from in a context where financial responsibility for one's parents' future is strongly felt and charitable giving comparatively rare. This suggests research attention is necessary to not only decisions and behaviour but also the values, joys and tensions behind them, in order to understand the significance of being Christian in differing social contexts.

Contexts

The theories discussed in the preceding paragraphs mention a number of different factors contributing to change in values; the complexity starts to become apparent. Adding to this complexity are the multiple contexts which need to be taken into account. This study is about people who have experienced (at least) two different cultural contexts, in China and the UK. This research, therefore, takes particular note of Rambo's (1993) argument (discussed on page 49) that conversion study should include multiple perspectives, such as the cultural, social, personal, religious and political.

Some older Chinese studying abroad have experienced considerable political and economic change, living in China. Younger Chinese students may also be affected by such change in China; even if they have not lived through it themselves their parents' experience may affect them. Therefore,

the arguments that local church context affects initial attraction to church abroad (2006) *and* that the mainland Chinese socio-historic context must also be considered in understanding conversion amongst Chinese abroad (Yang 1999) inform this study. However, where Yang and Wang considered the US church context affecting Chinese students in the US, this study will explore both the UK and mainland Chinese church contexts, as factors in values change.

Finally, the section on Chinese values, earlier in this chapter, discussed a number of related behavioural and attitudinal concepts which, if held by individuals, have the potential to either support or clash with certain Christian values. Amongst these are relational values; Taylor's personal framework claims that values and social bonds are inter-related, that where one element changes the other will be affected. A particular hierarchy of relationships, and the related notion of filial piety, may be challenged where a returning new Christian chooses a course of action because they believe God is calling them to it, rather than another which is recommended by those more senior in the hierarchy e.g. parents. Again closely related is the importance of *face*. Such a decision may be perceived to damage the face of the actor and/or others in the hierarchy. Such tensions are particularly likely to arise in the family. On the other hand, it is also possible that Christian teaching on respect for parents and self-sacrificial love may benefit some family relationships. Given divergent views on the degree to which such values as maintaining face and filial piety are still held, and where (discussed on pages 63-67), this study recognizes the need to look out for such values but not assume their presence, and to expect them to be more and less important to different people.

These sources together form the theoretical underpinning to the research questions and methodology. They are summarized in diagram form on the following page.

Figure 2: Components of theoretical framework

Values:

Definition: 'a standard that guides… action, attitudes…, presentations of self… evaluations, judgements …'; Rokeach.

Theory of how values arise and change, as part of a framework also including personal narrative, self-concept and social bonds: Taylor.

Christian conversion:

Theories that Christian conversion includes values change: Fowler; the *Bible*.

Context:

Theories that context affects conversion: Rambo, Wang & Yang; specifically the Chinese context: Yang.

Chinese relational concepts and values: e.g. filial piety, face, hierarchy.

Subject: Values change arising from Christian conversion, amongst Chinese scholars who change contexts, returning to China.

Research questions

These are derived from the knowledge gaps and theoretical framework outlined above.

The main question the thesis asks is:

> 'Have the core values of postgraduate students from the People's Republic of China, who professed conversion to Jesus Christ whilst in the UK, changed as a result of that conversion?'

Subsidiary questions are:

1. What are the participants' core values?

2. Which core values have changed, if any, and why?

3. To what or to whom do research participants most attribute changes in core values?

4. Have certain values central to Christianity changed?

5. Have they experienced any tensions, or benefits, on return to China, in relationship to any changed values? If so, what were they?

Summary

Literature in four areas has been reviewed: values and change in values; the consequences of study abroad for values and return home, particularly for mainland Chinese; religious conversion, specifically interest in Christianity among educated mainland Chinese in the US and China; and the nature of contemporary mainland Chinese values.

Gaps in knowledge were identified: within literature on international students, about the nature of any longer term change in values experienced by mainland Chinese as a consequence of study abroad; and within

83

literature about Christian conversion amongst the Chinese diaspora, about resulting changed values and the factors and processes contributing to such conversion and values being sustained in differing socio-cultural contexts. Theories about values change, the nature of Christian conversion, the need for multiple contexts to be taken into account in understanding conversion, and relational aspects attributed to Chinese culture combined to provide the theoretical framework and research questions. The next chapter discusses the methodological framework.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

Previous chapters introduced the research subject, the reasons why it was selected and its position within a wider body of research. This chapter describes the research methodology and its philosophical and epistemological framework. It then introduces the research participants before describing the methods chosen to carry out the research and the rationale for doing so. My ontological and epistemological stance and assumptions, together with the research subject (human values), defined the wider research approach, or methodology, which, in turn, determined the methods, or tools, chosen to carry out the research. Ethical and cross-cultural issues are considered and efforts made to ensure the quality and reliability of findings discussed. The chapter concludes with comment on lessons learned about the research process, including limitations of this approach.

Philosophy and methodology

Bryman describes a research paradigm as

> a cluster of beliefs and dictates that for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted (2004, p. 542).[15]

Debate about the relative merits and limitations of different social research paradigms is centuries old, often contrasting positivist and interpretive paradigms. Before stating the philosophical stance of this research, I will summarize the main characteristics and limitations of positivist and

---

[15] The term 'paradigm' has become widely used in the social sciences since Thomas Kuhn applied it to the natural sciences in 1962 (Kuhn, 1962).

interpretive research. These two paradigms were chosen because they, and the debate about their respective merits, have been central to the discourse of social research for so long, and because they form a background to defining my own stance. Some (e.g. Guba, 1990) say that these two paradigms are incommensurable, with different purposes and results. However, Hammersley (1996) and Geertz (2000) caution against characterizing a great divide between them,

> one driven by the ideal of a disengaged consciousness looking out with cognitive assurance upon an absolute world of ascertainable fact, the other driven by that of an engaged self struggling uncertainly with signs and expressions to make readable sense of intentional action (Geertz, 2000, p. 150).

Some see them as complementary, and advocate mixed method approaches (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The latter recommend a third, pragmatic view, *mixed* or *integrative research,* which accepts that different kinds of research (i.e. quantitative, interpretivist/qualitative, mixed methods) are 'all superior under different circumstances' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 22). Although the explanation below is couched in somewhat black and white terms, I recognise that in practice today many researchers operate on a spectrum, somewhere between the two positions of purist positivism and purist interpretivism.

Positivism

Auguste Comte is credited with coining the term *positivisme.* The positivist view holds that the methods of natural science can and should be applied to social science, and that 'only phenomena and hence knowledge confirmed by the senses can genuinely be warranted as knowledge' (Bryman, 2004, p. 11). Purposes include the gathering of facts that allow generalizations to be made and tested, revealing laws which govern behaviour, so that such laws

can then be used to predict future behaviour. Positivist research relies on inferring general rules from observation of repetition, or common occurrence, 'from numbers of particular instances' (Potter, 2000, p. 23) and hence, quantitative methods are primary. Because positivist knowledge aims to be 'objective, value-free, generalizable and replicable' (Wellington, p. 15), it requires the researcher to 'systematically discard all preconceptions' (Durkheim, 1982 (1895), p. 72).

Criticism of positivism

Various criticisms have been levelled at positivism within social science, including the following. Human beings are different from other elements of the natural world. We are individuals with wills, minds and ability to choose and adapt our behaviour. We create meaning and so, for example, an act observed by a supposed objective observer on multiple occasions and believed to constitute a behavioural pattern may have a different stimulus or intent, on different occasions, in the mind of the actor. Although there may be cultural factors making certain behaviour common, the individual also has the potential to act counter-culturally.[16] Positivists have been criticised for not recognising the value judgements often intrinsic to their findings (e.g. Lincoln, 2010), by paying insufficient attention to their own assumptions and unconscious theories. Connections between observation and theory may therefore be made on grounds of unrecognised false assumptions about what is observed. Objectivity is a problematic concept, and the identification of 'facts' is itself theory laden (Potter, 2000).

---

[16] Problems inherent in relating observations and explanations were beautifully illustrated by Clifford Geertz in his description of the misunderstandings, deception and innocent actions misunderstood as deception, in his story of French soldiers' encounter with Jewish traders and Berber shepherds in early twentieth century Morocco (1973).

However, it would be simplistic to suggest that many positivists do not look on total objectivity as an ideal goal rather than a necessary standard (Potter, 2000).

Emphasis on finding patterns or commonalities can lead to apparent anomalies being controlled out, whereas they could be investigated to bring insight into differences (Holliday, 2002). It can also lead to a lack of recognition of people as individuals.

Limiting what can be known to that which is experienced by the observer's senses excludes the possibility of knowing about other peoples' feelings and emotions. Hiebert comments that although the positivist, naturalistic view is appropriate in the physical sciences..

> ..it faces a problem in studying humans. Either it must reduce them to material objects, like other objects, or it must admit their subjectivity, and therefore, an inability to truly know them. There is little room for intersubjective human communication or for people to reveal their inner beliefs and feelings (1999, p. 5).

It also excludes the possibility of exploring a spiritual or supernatural world, although the positivist distrust of metaphysics is in itself a metaphysical position (Potter, 2000).

These criticisms point to the inadequacy of a positivist approach in identifying the motives and meanings of human behaviour. An approach is needed which takes into account, and even values, the subjective.

Interpretivism

Interpretivism is predicated on the view that human beings and their relationships and institutions are different from the objects of the natural sciences. People have minds and feelings, and make choices about their behaviour. Therefore, a different approach is needed 'to grasp the

subjective meaning of social action' (Bryman, 2004, p. 13). The interpretive paradigm is characterised by a concern for understanding the individual (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), for seeing the world from their perspective. The German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey argued that the main difference between the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) and the human sciences *(Geisteswissenschaften)* was that the purpose of the former was to look from the outside, using general laws to provide causal explanations, whilst the latters' was to understand meaning (*verstehen)*[17] from the actor's perspective by 'grasping the subjective consciousness of action from the inside' (Schwandt, 2001, p. 273). If positivism seeks to explain *what* happens, interpretivism seeks to understand *why*, and to gain a deeper, though not necessarily broader, view of *what.*

Interpretivists believe that either all or some amount of reality is personally constructed, and seek for knowledge of meaning for individuals rather than knowledge that can be generalized across whole populations. In order to understand an actor's intent in a particular action it is necessary to understand something of the social and cultural contexts in which they act. Describing the significance of culture, Geertz refers to Weber's analogy of a spider's web:

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (1973, p. 5).

Whilst the positivist seeks total objectivity, the interpretivist recognises that the observer or researcher inevitably affects what they observe (Wellington,

---

[17] The term *verstehen* is particularly associated with Max Weber, who intended to encompass within it both 'the *direct* and *immediate (aktuell)* understanding of the intended meaning of an action' and contextual understanding of the underlying motivation (2004, p. 315).

2000) and that research is always to some degree subjective. Subjectivity is a potential benefit if it is used to bring researchers' own experience and insights to bear on the investigation of a situation, particularly in research where participants and researchers can exchange experience and meanings through dialogue. Conversations, interviews and, therefore, language are very important in this context.

Whilst within the positivist paradigm theory is devised prior to research, and then validated, or otherwise, through investigation, within the interpretive paradigm theory is seen as emerging from research findings in particular situations (Cohen, et al., 2007). One example of this is the *grounded theory* of Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Criticism of interpretivism

While positivists might be caricatured as being like Mr Gradgrind[18], enamoured of hard facts as all that matter in life, interpretivists have to overcome the challenge of being fanciful or not objective. As meanings are not visible positivist critics may deem them inaccessible, and any attempts at defining them as too subjective. Because interpretive work focuses on gaining the individual's perspective and on adapting approaches to the individual situation (for example, using flexible interview techniques), it is sometimes accused of not being generalizable to a larger number and, therefore, of little value. Because it relies on the subjective involvement of a particular researcher with a particular participant it is open to charges

---

[18] Mr Gradgrind is a character in Charles Dickens's '*Hard Times*'. He is a schoolmaster convinced that all his pupils need are 'facts', and that too much 'fancy', or imagination, is dangerous. He later learns the importance of emotions.

that it is not replicable by other researchers with other participants, or even by the same researcher with other participants.

Yvonna Lincoln, a long-time critic of positivism, has pointed out that positivist research also has limits in terms of generalizability, replicability and objectivity (2010). However, she also believes there is work still to be done to improve interpretive and other qualitative approaches. Reviewing twenty-five years of 'qualitative and new paradigm research', she argues the need for more work to be done on 'working the hyphen' (p. 5) and on cumulation. By 'working the hyphen' she means more attention to the 'Self-Other conjunction', to being very careful about claims to knowledge of other people particularly where what a researcher may see as empathy with a participant is actually a misunderstanding of them. She warns of the need to be alert to the possibility of difference and to beware that trying too hard to be empathetic can 'reduce difference to the same' (Jones & Jenkins, 2008, p. 480).

This concern is reminiscent of Buber's comment that too much empathy risks *Thou* being reduced to *It* (2000 (1958)). This is particularly relevant in studies such as this, where a researcher from one culture seeks to understand people from another. Lincoln also points out that some positivists are critical of interpretive work because they cannot see what it adds up to and claim that it is difficult to build the findings of multiple research projects into a clear direction or outcome. However, although the analysis and comparison of interpretive projects needs considerable care, and depends upon clear explanation of the reasoning behind claims on the part of researchers, if such work is to be seen as a cumulation of evidence for a particular outcome, such cumulation is possible. It may stand on ground as firm as, or firmer than, for example, a survey covering many

more people, but lacking in insight into the context and meaning of participants' answers.

Qualitative or quantitative research?

The previous sections discussed two research paradigms, or ways of thinking, about social research. This section discusses two different ways of doing research.

The most basic distinction applied between qualitative and quantitative approaches is that the former emphasises words and the latter numbers or quantification, in both data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2004). Quantitative research seeks to count or measure, and qualitative, often, to interpret and understand. Whilst quantitative research tends to ask questions such as 'how many people do this?', or 'is this theory valid?', qualitative tends to ask 'what did that experience mean to these people?' or 'what could be the reasons for this social phenomenon?' Uses of research findings differ too, with quantitative research seeking to identify causal relations and, sometimes, to predict behaviour and to provide justification for action which assumes the findings apply to a wider population. Qualitative research is often more exploratory and collaborative and may even sometimes be intended to give voice and recognition to the concerns of a particular group.

Surveys and experiments are often associated with quantitative research. Methods typically associated with qualitative research are: interviews which give participants some degree of control over the interview content (Wellington, 2000), including semi-structured, unstructured and life story interviews; case studies; and ethnographic observation. However, such methods could be used as a prelude to quantitative research, with, for example, semi-structured interviews being used to generate ideas or

theories to design a structured questionnaire for use with a wider population.

Whilst some class qualitative research and quantitative research as separate paradigms which determine not only *how* research is carried out, but also *what* should be researched, others see them as two methodologies, two theories and bodies of principles and procedures about how research should be carried out. I currently hold the position that the nature of the research problem should determine the methodology, and that it is permissible to be eclectic about the use of mixed methods within both qualitative and quantitative approaches. However I am cautious about both matters, heeding Hammersley's (1996) warning that the use to which research findings will be put should be borne in mind (e.g. whether qualitative research results might be used to justify causal inferences across a wider population) and that goals of research, and therefore appropriate approaches, can vary at different stages of multi-project research programmes.

This research: qualitative and interpretive

Ontogical and epistemological stance

Research paradigms relate to the researcher's ontological and epistemological stances, to their beliefs about reality, what exists, and about how it is possible to know. I take the view that there is a reality that exists independent of me and of other individual human beings, and that there is some reality which is personally perceived, and changeable, or developing, and some which is socially constructed. I take this to be a critical realist, or mediated realist position, and find Kraft's definition of the position helpful, where he uses a capital R for objective Reality and a small r for perceived reality:

> There is a REALITY "out there" – the world outside ourselves does exist, it is REAL. But there is also a reality inside our minds. That too is REAL. This position believes that *there is both an objective REALITY and a subjective reality* (1996, p. 18).

My view of reality includes a transcendent God, human beings and a created world. This stems from my Christian worldview, as does my belief that part of reality is knowable. Humans can know some things correctly and also, as fallible beings, get things wrong. Just because I think something is true does not necessarily mean that it is. As humans we have, particularly through language, the ability to communicate and to understand each other, to varying degrees. Culture has the potential to both obscure and aid mutual understanding. I, for example, share reference points and social experience with people brought up in the 1960s in the north east of England that are not immediately comprehensible to people brought up in the 1970s in, say, central China. The reverse applies too. Whilst I think I can know someone through communication, particularly through shared language and culture, I am conscious of the limits of my knowledge, and there are always at least two interpretive steps between what a person chooses to communicate about their thoughts and feelings and what I understand: their own choice of words and use of facial expression and body language, and my interpretation of these.

I also agree that:

> social phenomena exist not only in the mind but also in the objective world – and that some lawful and reasonably stable relationships are to be found among them (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 4).

I have the interpretivist's desire to share the perspective of research participants as much as possible, whilst admitting the human impossibility of totally shared perspectives.

This research is about *values*. If I am to understand something of a person's values, I believe I need to know something of the personal and moral decisions they have made, what led to them and how they feel about them; who are the people that have influenced them most; what negative and positive situations have they experienced; what takes up their time and thoughts; what are, and have been, their hopes and aspirations.

A person's feelings and thoughts on such matters, on their life journey and on how they have changed in life, are individual to them. For another to understand something of these matters requires them to endeavour to stand somewhat in the other's shoes, to try and see a little of what they see when they look out at the world, inside to their own feelings, back to the past and forward to the future. For a researcher to have any chance of doing this requires trust on the part of the person they seek to understand. Empathy is essential. However, this must be balanced with a reflexivity which accounts for the effects the researcher may bring to research relationships, process and outcomes. Both participants and researcher bring their own subjectivities to the process (Shah, 2004) and it is incumbent upon the researcher to have 'a heightened awareness of the self, acting in the social world' (Elliott, 2005, p. 153). Cross-cultural research particularly requires reflection about how ideological or cultural assumptions may influence researchers' own behaviour and interpretation, and thus the response of participants. This should include reflection on how the participant perceives the researcher.

Dialogue and a 'fusion of horizons'

Such reflexivity, with its reflection on one's own assumptions and awareness of the need to consider the 'full interaction between ourselves and our participants', (Etherington, 2004, p. 32) is consistent with the

concepts of *dialogue* and *hermeneutics* which inform this study. The word *dialogue* is used to refer to a literary genre and to a conversation between two people. However, it is also now often used to refer to particular kinds of conversation, where the aim is either to resolve conflict or to exchange ideas and opinions in an atmosphere of equality. Freire (1993) used the term in his discussion of education as a means to the liberation of the oppressed. He described it as an encounter between people, 'mediated by the world, in order to name the world' (p. 69) and said that it is dependent on love, humility, faith in humankind, and critical thinking on the part of those engaged in it. Prior to this Martin Buber stressed the importance of true dialogue in his educational philosophy and in his engagement with the idea of a bi-national Arab-Jewish state (Guilherme & Morgan, 2009).

For Buber, dialogue is essential for relationship. In his differentiation between the *I-Thou* relationship and the *I-It* relationship he stresses that true relationship, and true dialogue, require me (*I)* to recognize that the other person has being and individuality of their own (*Thou)* which is not there to be used or appropriated by me, and thus made into mere *It* (Buber, 2000 (1958)). Indeed *I* cannot know or become myself without a relationship with others which allows their *Thou* (or otherness) to challenge my ideas of them and of myself. He stresses the importance of openness in dialogue. I see his warning of how I-Thou encounters so easily deteriorate into I-It relations as a reminder to me, the researcher, to beware of too quickly making assumptions about the meaning of what people say, and too readily classifying them, or their experiences, into types.

However much a person chooses to reveal him- or herself we can never know them fully. Knowledge of others (and even of oneself) is always incomplete. We can hear what they say and see what they do, and offer an

informed, reasoned interpretation, but not a full explanation. This is not just because of the inadequacy of speaker and listener but also because of the limitation of human communication. As Lévinas (1985, p. 57) says:

> The fact of being is what is most private; existence is the sole thing I cannot communicate; I can tell about it, but cannot share my existence.

The cross-cultural context of this research increases the need to be wary of elevating interpretations of what I see and hear about values to statements of fact. I seek a balance between the two extremes of 'colonising the Other' (Levinas, 1985) by assuming I fully know them and thereby denying their individuality, and assuming I can understand nothing of value, which denies our common humanity and ability to communicate and learn together. Although I cannot hope to fully understand, especially in a short doctoral study, I do hope to understand enough to interpret some personal and cultural meanings and symbols. Geertz (1983, p. 70) says it is more like

> grasping a proverb, catching an allusion, seeing a joke – or, as I have suggested, reading a poem – than it is like achieving communion.

Buber, however, offers me more hope of having shared a degree of communion with some research participants, and not only arising from empathy. He writes:

> The true community does not arise through peoples having feelings for one another (though indeed not without it), but through, first, their taking stand in living mutual relation with a living Centre, and, second, their being in living mutual relation with one another. The second has its source in the first, but is not given when the first alone is given…..The community is built up out of living mutual relation, but the builder is the living effective Centre' (2000 (1958), pp. 53-54).

I believe that a number of the research participants and I did achieve some degree of communion, or deeper understanding and recognition, and that we were helped in that by our prior individual 'living mutual relation' with

Christ, and our shared membership of the worldwide Church. Examples of this were when Yun and Wanglin[19] each launched straight into excited descriptions of what they perceived God had done in their lives before we had chance to sit down. They seemed to assume that, because I was a Christian too (like them, in 'relation with a living Centre'), I would understand and accept them. That they behaved this way made it easy for me to ask more about personal matters.

This study also requires an *anthropological* perspective. I need to gain some idea of the culture(s) the participants inhabit, the social, religious, philosophical, historical and linguistic bases of the worldview which underlies the 'assumptions, values and allegiances in terms of which people interpret and behave' (Kraft, 1996, p. 11).

The ethnographic approach

This study is *ethnographic* in its intentions and methods. Ethnography has been described as 'the art and science of describing a group or culture… a small tribal group or a classroom' (Fetterman, 1989) and as

> ..the processes and products of research that document what people know, feel and do in a way that situates those phenomena at specific times in the history of individual lives, including pertinent global events and processes (Handwerker, 2001, p. 7).

Situation, or context, is stressed in two ways: an understanding of context is necessary for understanding the people and research needs to be conducted in that context (Brunt, 2001). Atkinson et al refer to ethnography as

> grounded in commitment to the first-hand experience and exploration of particular social or cultural setting on the

---

[19] All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity.

basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation
(P. Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001).

The main data sources of the ethnographer, other than observation and participation, are oral accounts, documents and artefacts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Ethnographic interviews, both pre-arranged and informally arising, differ from other qualitative interviews in that they are situated in the context of social activity being explored (P. Atkinson, et al., 2001).

Another frequent characteristic of ethnography is spending considerable time in a group's everyday context (the *field)* (Stewart, 1998), learning the language and taking part in the group's activities as a learner (Spradley, 1979). The aim is, to the degree possible, for the researcher to gain insider understanding of the culture (Aull Davies, 2008).

In projects where lack of time or language skills, or other factors, preclude a full ethnography, ethnographic interviewing may still be possible; this would be where a degree of contextual observation and a relationship with the interviewee can extend beyond the bounds of a single interview (Aull Davies, 2008).

An ethnographic approach is appropriate in the present study. As discussed in the theoretical framework in Chapter Two, premises of this research are that socio-cultural and religious context may affect behaviour and that values may be expressed differently in different contexts. It investigates the meanings, in terms of any changed values, of practising Christianity for nineteen citizens of the PRC who studied in the UK and returned to live in mainland China. The interpretive approach adopted here (discussed further in following pages) requires the researcher to enter the participants' worlds, to the degree possible. Going to China and talking to people where we could both relate what was being said in our conversations to the situations

in which they live, through me observing and participating in some people's lives, where possible, was essential. Because it would have been far too intrusive and inconvenient for them, I only had limited time in China and my Chinese language was very limited, I could not accompany participants through their daily lives, for example, observing them living out their values at work, to the degree necessary for full ethnography. However, I did conduct ethnographic interviews, observing some aspects of some people's lives, meeting some relatives and developing relationships with some participants outside the pre-arranged interviews. More detail is provided on pages 114 to 116.

Strengths of ethnography have been argued to include its ability to provide situated knowledge and to enable the researcher to obtain an insider's view of a society or group (S. Taylor, 2002). It allows people to be studied in their own habitual contexts rather than under conditions provided by the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) which might provoke uncharacteristic behaviour. For example, when I went to church with Enci and then joined her and her church friends for lunch afterwards, that provided context to help me understand things she told me later in interview; going out for the day with Mei and her husband allowed me to observe in action things she had said earlier about their relationship.

However, there is debate over the strengths and weaknesses of ethnography (e.g. Denzin, 1997; Hammersley, 1998) and certain issues of relevance to this research warrant mention. Situated personal experience could be said to be at the heart of ethnography: the experience of both the researched and the researcher. Despite efforts on the part of the researcher to keep things 'natural', there is always the possibility that the presence of the researcher changes the experience for the informant or participant. As

they consciously or unconsciously take into account the researcher's needs or perceived opinions the participant's own perception of a situation may change. From the researcher's side, as they stay longer in a situation, aiming to become an insider with insider knowledge, they may forget that they are still also an outsider, with a different background, experience and motives, and make incorrect assumptions that what they see is what the people they are studying see. These are just two examples of arguments against ethnography's capacity to represent reality (Hammersley, 1992).

Despite such problems Hammersley says that 'knowledge claims can be judged in terms of their likely truth' (1998, p.66). He and Atkinson (1997) and others (e.g. Aull Davies, 2008; Heyl, 2001) emphasize the need for a reflexive approach in ethnography. I say more about reflexivity in this research in the section below, *Why an interpretive approach?* In ethnographic research, the advice to 'make the strange familiar, so as to *understand* it, and to make the familiar strange, so as to avoid *misunderstanding* it' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) is apposite.

The ethnographer typically needs time in a situation to build relationships which foster openness in interviews (Heyl, 2001) and to observe people. I did not have much time in China (two months) but prior to the research I had spent much time with Chinese scholars in the UK informally and had made several visits to returnees in China; I had met some of the participants socially before I embarked on this research. From an ethnographic perspective this had both benefits and risks. It was beneficial in that I had an easy rapport with some people because we had met before; also I could refer them back to things I knew had happened to them in the UK and ask for their comments, thereby enriching the conversation. I had some experience of their contexts beyond the time spent interviewing. On

the other hand, our previous relationship meant that we had prior impressions of each other; that might mean, for example, that we might focus on events that we both knew about at the expense of other episodes in their life, or that they might omit to tell me about something because they thought I already knew. Thus I could get a distorted view of something's significance. I also had to discern whether their perception of my prior role (for example, as 'kind host') was preventing them being frank about a difficult UK experience. I endeavoured to be reflexive during the interviews and during analysis and writing.

An understanding of context is also important to *hermeneutics.* A *hermeneut* is an interpreter and hermeneutics is associated with the uncovering of real, yet hidden meanings. The German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004) builds on Heidegger's concept of an hermeneutical circle in his theory of how humans understand each other through dialogue. He writes of a 'fusion of horizons'. He claims that as we enter conversation with another in order to increase understanding we take our *prejudices*[20] or preconceptions with us. We need them as a starting point but should try to identify them and be prepared to adapt or even abandon them as we develop the conversation. Gradually horizons fuse as the participants bring their ideas and preconceptions to the conversation, then engage with each other, then go away to reflect on what they have learned and to adapt their preconceptions before returning to the dialogue. Thus, in the process of open, attentive dialogue the horizon of both people changes and moves closer together.

---

[20] Gadamer does not use the term *prejudice* in a pejorative sense, but meaning that before we investigate something we have certain pre-judgements that we bring to the investigation.

The need for understanding of the participants' cultural situations makes a hermeneutical approach to this study appropriate. Seo and Koro-Ljungberg's (2005) study of Korean graduate students' experience in the US was guided by the concept of the hermeneutic circle. I was attracted to that but, in practice, was only able to make limited use of it as I had limited time with participants and was not able to discuss my analysis with them later.

Tacit knowledge

Applying Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' to empirical research highlights the potential interventionist nature of such research, because it suggests that it is not only the researcher's preconceptions and horizon which change, but also those of the person or people they seek to understand. However, dialogue does not only have the capacity to change the existing idea, it can also bring to light the tacit, or what was previously unconscious or inexpressible[21]. For example, a returned student may not have considered that their values have changed until, say, a family member comments on an aspect of their behaviour, or an 'outsider', such as a researcher, asks them about the reasons for various decisions they have made. Indeed, some values may be tacit. Polanyi (1967) calls this 'emergence', and talks about knowing which arises from moving back and forth between looking at parts and at the whole.

James Fowler (1981), having interviewed hundreds of religious converts, emphasizes the importance of dialogue with a listening *Other*, in helping people define and express their own meaning. I hope that my questions to

---

[21] Tacit knowledge is knowledge we have but are unaware of, and therefore cannot immediately communicate; 'we know more than we can tell' (Polanyi, 1967, p.4).

research participants about certain details of their lives will have helped both of us to see the whole more clearly, and that getting this wider perspective will also bring to the surface tacit knowledge to help interpret individual incidents or decisions.

Why an interpretive approach?

To bring to light the personal and the particular in this way this study had to be qualitative. It needed an approach flexible enough to go into the specifics of an individual's life, and importantly, to allow them to bring their own flavour and emphases, not my preconceptions as researcher. As a researcher I bring all sorts of conscious and unconscious ideas: for example, about life in China, about being a Chinese post-graduate, and about being a Christian. I have mental images of, for example, participants' childhood homes and current workplaces, even though I have never visited them. They too will have a variety of ideas about me; impressions which may be accurate or inaccurate, but still influential. One may see me as the friend of a friend in the UK and want to be polite and kind to me because the UK friend was kind to them. Another may remember me in my role as a university international students' chaplain and seek my advice. Another may be concerned that I will be hurt or offended if they say something which goes against my religious beliefs. All this affects what is said. So it is essential for me to be reflexive, listening and identifying these perceptions, mine and theirs, during the research process.

This all makes an interpretive approach essential. The interpretive turn takes language seriously and focuses on the 'centrality of meaning in human life' (Yanow, 2005, p. xii) and has a 'reflexivity on scientific practices related to meaning making and knowledge claims' (p. xii). So I acknowledge that my interpretation represents my own *impression* of what

is, not necessarily what is. I am also conscious that as research participants told me about their lives they were, to varying degrees, constructing a selective history of the past, rather than necessarily describing 'how it really was' when it happened. At second remove I can only offer an interpretation of how they have changed. Nonetheless, giving participants the chance to reflect on their own experiences, with an attentive interlocutor who can offer them opportunities to reject, or identify with, potential meanings or effects of such experience, can throw light on those experiences.

Although I have found very little other research specifically about changed values of Chinese people who have returned home after study abroad, I have identified some which takes a qualitative, interpretive approach, using semi-structured interviews, to illuminate the experiences of returned international students to other East and South-East Asian countries (Burt, 2006; Butcher, 2003; Isa, 1996). They all offer insight into changed values, two of them including reference to students who have become Christians. However, possibly because their emphasis was more on the returnee experience than on change, their interviews did not focus to any great degree on participants' earlier lives, something essential to my research subject. Wong (2006) and Temple (1999) both carried out qualitative research about the process and consequences of conversion to Christianity amongst Chinese scholars and professionals still in the United States, but their semi-structured interviews did not start with a detailed discussion of earlier life in China. The extensive study of Christian conversion by James Fowler (1981), which includes 359 life narrative interviews over ten years, and Dan McAdams' (1993) life story approach to research on identity both influenced my decision to conduct semi-structured interviews, although use of the life story interview approach was not feasible in this context. This is discussed below, on page 125.

Critics of this qualitative interpretative approach might claim the superiority of quantitative research with a larger sample and rigorous attention to consistency in wording of data collection instruments. However that would not allow the flexibility and detailed investigation of participants' responses necessary for gaining understanding of their perspectives. Elliott (2005, pp. 117-118) claims that quantitative research risks neglecting the individual in several ways, 'as a unique and complex case', as 'active agent' with their own 'biographical trajectories', with their own 'conceptual schema' and 'individual work carried out…in establishing and revising' their own identity.

In investigating something as fundamental as changes in deepest values it is essential to identify previously held values, and therefore to help research participants to reflect back over their lives to what mattered to them in the past, and to help them compare with the present. In this context, where a past event (study, and also profession of Christian faith, whilst in the UK) is involved, the period after the event also needs reflection. Consideration must be given to formative early childhood years, and to years after first leaving the family home, in this study, typically, undergraduate years. A longitudinal study investigating values at such points is impossible in a three year PhD project. This study is interested in, and reliant on, the participants' backward reflections on their own lives, in order to discover things that reveal what matters to them most: what do they see as the big decisions in their lives and how were they made? What are their happiest memories? What were the hardest times? What were earlier hopes and plans in life? What are current hopes? Where do they experience most tension and most joy? The answers to such questions are central to understanding their values. Therefore a qualitative, interpretive approach was adopted, using semi-structured ethnographic interviews, conducted in China.

The participants

To identify long-term changes in values, as opposed to what might only be temporary changes of behaviour whilst abroad, I needed to talk to people who had been back in China for some time. I also wanted to meet them in China where they would not be influenced by the immediate UK context.

Postgraduates and visiting scholars were chosen rather than undergraduates because their increased life experience would have afforded them chance for richer reflection. Although Chinese students in the UK do visit Catholic churches this study is limited to people involved in Protestant churches. The only other criteria were that they should have lived in the UK for at least one year, have said they believed in Christ whilst in the UK and be willing to take part in two interviews. In practice, in six cases we did the two interviews concurrently, because of time constraints.

Fifteen of the participants are female and four male. Three other men, and two women, expressed an interest in taking part, but four were not available at the same time or place as me, and one had not become a Christian, although he did feel he had changed as a result of involvement with Christians in the UK. Everybody I invited to take part agreed. I turned down offers by participants to find more people, because of lack of time (I left China on the sixtieth day of a sixty day visa). I also had illuminating informal conversations with three others who fitted the criteria but had insufficient time. In short, there is scope for a bigger study. My hosts in Shanghai, a mainland Chinese friend I met in the UK and her British husband, suggested I interview her, and I did, although I have not included her as one of the nineteen, or included our conversations in the analysis, because her situation is different from the others, in that she is married to a foreign Christian, and therefore is influenced by his worldview. However,

she told me things about her family and childhood that resonate with things said by others and I refer to this when discussing research findings. I conducted an interview with a twentieth person but did not analyse it further, because when we met I found that, despite my efforts to check beforehand, he did not meet the criteria: he had only been in the UK for six months, and I believe this affected his experience in the UK and his linguistic ability to communicate what he wished during the interview; also, during the interview I became unsure that he actually professed faith in Christ whilst in the UK. However I found the time with him valuable and gained more insight into the background of visiting Chinese scholars coming to the UK, and into their experiences on returning home. He too seemed to value having someone to talk to about these things.

The participants lived, at that time, in seven cities, which included Beijing and Shanghai (the two cities most popular with returnees), two cities in the north, one in the south, one in the central south and one near Shanghai. They provide a variety of urban contexts.

Because of their educational level and their experience of life abroad they are not representative of the majority of people in China. Some were very comfortably off, by Chinese standards, but not all: at the time of meeting, Fuyin and her husband were struggling financially, as neither had worked for some time, whilst Lili, her husband and mother-in-law were living in two rooms, sharing kitchen facilities with several other families.

The table overleaf shows the range of people, in age and occupation. All names of participants and, later, of their friends and relatives, are pseudonyms.

Table 1: Participants

Alias	M/F	Age	Marital status	Occupation	UK study level
Caiyun	F	28	Married; expecting first child	HR manager in international firm	Masters
Changlan	M	29	Married	IT manager in international firm	Masters
Enci	F	29	Single	International trade	Masters
Fuyin	F	38	Married; one child	Seeking paid work	Masters
Hui	M	28	Single	Designer	Masters
Huanglin	F	44	Married; one child	University professor	Visiting scholar
Hunan	M	37	Married; one child	Economist	PhD
Jinglan	F	46	Married; one child	University lecturer	Visiting scholar
Lara	F	26	Single	Engineer	Masters
Lili	F	33	Married; expecting first child	HR consultant	Masters
Mei	F	46	Married	University professor	PhD
Wanglin	F	30	Married; one child	English teacher	Masters
Xiaohong	F	39	Married; one child	University lecturer	PhD
Xiaojia	F	26	Married	Financial services	Masters
Xiaoshi	F	33	Married	Part-time admin.	Masters
Xuejing	F	28	Single	Charity worker	Masters
Yang	M	33	Married; one child	Lawyer	Masters
Yue	F	34	Single	Government administrator	Masters
Yun	F	33	Married; with three children	Mother; part-time work	Masters

I knew seven participants in the UK and approached them directly, by email. Eight were introduced to me by Friends International staff in other cities. In these cases I provided my ex-colleagues with a letter of introduction and they emailed their Chinese friends asking them to contact me. Three were introduced by other participants. One was introduced by a British friend whilst I was in China.

Data collection methods

The main method of data collection was the semi-structured interview. This was supplemented by a limited amount of observation as I spent additional time with some participants outside the interviews, for example visiting their homes or accompanying them to church.

The conceptual framework

The research questions were about change (or not) in values after conversion to Christianity in the UK and therefore merited a data collection method that would enable a retrospective look at life before the UK, in particular at decisions, behaviour and feelings, in comparison to present life in China The main research question is:

> 'Have the core values of postgraduate students from the PRC, who professed conversion to Christ whilst in the UK, changed as a result of that conversion?'

The role and nature of values was discussed in depth in the previous chapter and the definition of 'value' used in this study is quoted on page 18. Another way of putting it, more simply, is 'what matters most'. The ideas about values which feed into the design of this research come from three sources: my prior experience and observations of Chinese postgraduates who have converted to Christianity and returned to China; the writing of

those who have studied values; the theories of those who have studied conversion to Christianity, particularly Rambo (1993) and Fowler (1981).

Values come into play at the meeting of an actor, a situation and choices (Parsons & Shils, 1951). Dilemmas and major decisions, therefore, are important sources of information about values, and potential indicators of them. Inkeles and Levinson (1969) echo this argument, claiming that a person's values can be found in the primary dilemmas and conflicts they experience and the ways they deal with them. They also include relations with authority and conceptions of self as important reflectors of values. Others stress the role childhood relationships, especially with parents, have in shaping values (e.g. Fowler, 1981; McAdams, 1993). Savage claims that 'focusing on relationships provides yet another angle on conversion' (2000, p. 16), whilst Fowler (1981) points to three central areas of change as a result of conversion: centres of value; images of power; and master stories. Taylor (1986) argues that values develop and change as part of a background structure which includes values, best account, self-concept and social bonds.

Anthropologists Lingenfelter and Mayers (2003) list six sources of tension experienced when Christians relate to people from different cultural, and presumably religious, backgrounds: tensions about time, regarding judgement, in handling crises, over goals, about self-worth and regarding vulnerability. According to Biblical principles the convert to Jesus Christ has been spiritually re-born: into a new reconciled relationship with God the Father; with a new purpose, to love and serve God and to love and serve others: and into a new state, of salvation or being saved. The premise behind this study is that according to these principles, Chinese students who have become Christians should experience change in the nature and

priority of their relationships, in their felt purpose and hopes or ambitions, and in their behaviour.

In my earlier role as a university international students' chaplain I met several hundred students from China over ten years, several dozen of whom made a profession of faith in Christ in the UK. Prior to starting this research I visited some of them in China. Some were involved in church; some were not. Some of those who were not still talked of themselves as Christians; others did not. They all commented on differences between churches in the UK and China, and in social and work conditions. Their lives as Christians could therefore be expected to take on a different expression from their own and other Christians' lives in the UK. I wanted to understand better what it meant for them to be a Christian in China and how Christian values express themselves in China. The areas that I chose to explore to answer the research questions are shown in the following table; items in the column entitled 'Focus' are potential indicators of values or sources of information about them:

Table 2: Linking research questions and interview topics

Research question	Focus
1 What are (or were) the participants' core values? 2. Which core values have changed?	Making big decisions, dilemmas. Life purpose, plans, ambitions, hopes. Attitudes to money; use of time. Most happy and sad memories. Tensions on return; others' reactions to them; positive and negative experiences as a Christian in China.
3. To what or whom do research participants most attribute changes in core values?	Effect of study abroad on behaviour, hopes, plans, relationships. How they feel they have changed. Others' views, e.g. family. Effect of being a Christian on behaviour, hopes, plans, relationships. How they feel they have changed. Others' views on this.
4. Have values central to Christianity changed?	Above plus: Who has authority; who influences behaviour? Why? Which relationships are most important? Involvement in, and experience, of church or a Christian group.
5. Have they experienced tensions, or benefits, on return to China, in relationship to any changed values? If so, what?	Relationships: family, friends, colleagues. Positive experiences and difficulties. Church involvement. Felt change in selves.

Family, social, cultural, religious, economic and political contexts had to be taken into account (Rambo, 1992), particularly, given the history of China, consequences of belief in a transcendental God in a setting influenced by a mixture of atheism, Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism.

I initially considered a longitudinal approach as this is a study of change over time. I could, for example, have interviewed people in the UK and then after their return to China, but I would have had no way of predicting which people would make a profession of faith and would therefore have been obliged to work with people who had already made that profession. This made such a 'before and after' comparison impossible. An alternative was to interview people after they converted to Christianity, but before they returned to China, and then again after they returned to China. However I had no way of knowing if and when they would return to China. Also, in considering whether people's values had actually changed whilst in the UK and remained changed after return I needed to talk to people who had returned home and had chance to settle into life in China. I estimated a minimum of one year to be necessary for this. The length of a three year PhD precluded this approach.

For these reasons I decided the most appropriate approach was to investigate the values of people who had already returned to China and their perceptions of how they and their core values had or had not changed as a result of studying in the UK, and particularly, of becoming a Christian. I chose to conduct semi-structured biographical interviews which would help them look back over their lives, from their memories of childhood, through to their present situation and hopes for the future. I aimed to elicit stories from them about happy and sad or difficult times, influential people, critical events, big decisions, about their experience of what happened when they became a Christian and what had been the tensions and joys of coming home and of living as a Christian in China.

Conscious that I was dependent on what they chose to tell me and how I interpreted this, I decided to take any opportunity I could to see them living

out any changed values in China. Time, lack of funds and lack of fluent Chinese precluded me carrying out a truly multi-method ethnographic study, but I was able to spend two months in China, interviewing twenty-one[22] people in their cities. To varying degrees, I was able to observe something of the nature of their lives in China and, in some cases, speak to members of their family. This included:

- visiting eleven participants in their homes;

- attending services at churches which seven participants either attended or had attended;

- meeting family members of eleven participants informally; holding an interview (on a boat!) with Lili's husband; Xiaojia's sister sitting in on an interview (at Xiaojia's request) and answering questions about whether Xiaojia had changed;

- eating meals with sixteen participants;

- visiting the workplace of one and spending a two day national holiday with another, together with her husband and mother-in-law;

- using shops and public transport systems used by many.

I talked with ten other people who met the research participant criteria but were not formal research participants, because either they or I had insufficient time for full interviews. I learned much from them on a variety of topics, including: family responsibilities and problems; the influence of faith on marriage; reactions to church in China; career and workplace

---

[22] My decision to conducted detailed analysis on interviews with only nineteen was explained on pages 107-8.

issues; the networked nature of Chinese society; and pressures to value material goods and status. With the exception of my host in Shanghai these additional conversations were informal and not recorded.

All this helped me flesh out the stories I was hearing, to empathize and to ask more informed questions. For example, travelling by bus to visit people in Beijing helped me appreciate why some people find travelling a long distance to church on their day off so exhausting. Visiting six churches, and accompanying a returnee on her first visit to church in her city, helped me appreciate some of the differences they note between churches in the UK and China. These 'connecting points between the field worker and the local context' (Saether, 2006, p. 53), also helped the interviewees by providing illustrations to make themselves understood.

The interview method

The interviews were structured in two parts. The topics covered can be seen in Appendix A. The first interview was biographical: I prompted participants to talk about their lives chronologically, starting with their childhood, parents and home settings, and working through to the present time, asking about highlights and disappointments, major decisions and important relationships. The second interview focused on whether, how and why they had changed. By doing this I intended to help participants reflect on how their lives and personal stories had developed. The questions encouraged them to tell stories (about events or people in their lives) that would reveal what mattered or mattered to them most. The contents of the first interview gave them food for reflection to feed the second interview.

Atkinson (1998) points out that:

> Personal meaning systems, and tendencies toward any profession or worldview, exist in a social, historical and cultural context (p. 17).

Such interviews are a good vehicle for understanding meaning making, and therefore, values, because they enable the story-teller to bring in social, historical and cultural context. In this study references, for example, to the 2002-2003 SARS epidemic, the 1989 democracy demonstrations, and the Cultural Revolution, were made to illustrate and make sense of personal experiences that people were trying to convey to me. This interview approach allowed me to explore the topics most relevant for answering the research questions (see Table 2, on page 113).

Preparation in the UK

I asked four people to be 'critical friends'. Three were mainland Chinese working in the UK, who had experienced life as a postgraduate student in the UK (two as doctoral researchers) and who converted to Christianity in the UK. One of these was an interviewee in the first of two sets of pilot interviews. The fourth was a Chinese-speaking Singaporean Chinese with experience in research, in helping mainland Chinese in the UK and in working in China. I consulted the three mainland Chinese on the suitability of my research questions and for insights into how I could build good relationships with interviewees I had not met before. They made little comment on the questions and topics for interview but had helpful suggestions for communication before the interview. The fourth friend recommended I avoid only interviewing people known to me in the UK, as there was a possibility that we had been friendly because like attracts like. I had met only seven of the eventual participants before, with varying degrees of contact, from saying hello a few times in church to staying in the same house for a while, with one.

Pilots

Two UK-based mainland Chinese people who had studied, and become Christians, in the UK took part in pilot interviews. One person was a single man in his twenties who did a master's degree in the UK. The other was a married woman who did a PhD in the UK. She worked for one or two years in China after her PhD but then moved back to the UK, though she spends several weeks each year in China. He had been on an extended visit to his parents in China before returning to work in the UK for two years with a Post-Study Work Visa.

In each case we had a break of a few days between the interviews to allow reflection and review of the audio recording by me. After the interviews and review with each of them I decided that the method and questions were appropriate and did not adjust them. The pilots helped me understand the need to provide the right level of visible or audible feedback to let interviewees know when they were giving too much or too little information. I had been happy with what they were doing but one person said she wondered if she was talking too much. This prompted me to think of ways to encourage interviewees whilst at the same time maintaining some control of timing. I also learned that the first interview led participants to consider how they had changed, indeed they wanted to tell me this, and that this formed a useful backdrop for the second interview which focused overtly on change. Whilst we all thought two interviews preferable we could see how a single interview could still work well, if participants in China did not have time for a second.

I found I had no need to refer constantly to the 'question script', as the earlier questions often prompted participants to also cover the other topics I needed. I found the break between interviews gave me chance to check

my understanding and interpretation at the second interview. The female participant commented that she found the resultant summary and checking I did at the beginning of the second interview aided her own reflections. She added that she enjoyed the whole process as she had never reflected on her whole life in this way before. This sentiment was echoed by participants in the main study.

Providing information before the interviews

Having been advised by one of my critical friends not to send too much information all at once, I first emailed participants basic information about myself, the research and what I needed from them; later I sent copies of the participant information and consent forms (see appendices), checked that they would be in their cities on the dates I planned to be there and checked they were willing for the conversations to be recorded. I then remained in touch by telephone and email whilst I was in China. Before leaving the UK I checked that participants in the first city, Shanghai, were still available and made my first appointments.

Preparations in China

As I travelled around China I kept future participants aware of my plans, and double-checked that each had received an information sheet and a consent form in advance. One of my Chinese critical friends agreed with me that some people might find being asked to sign a consent form either rude or disconcerting. I therefore included in the email a justification for the consent form which was based on protecting participants' interests. My last email to each participant included a request for them to imagine their life as a book, and to think what chapters it would be broken into. This was the first question in the interview and I felt people would appreciate some time to think about it. I brought small gifts for the participants, but generally,

was sensitive to, and very grateful for, the Chinese custom of offering hospitality, particularly meals, to visitors to China.

Interview location

Scheduling interviews and meals with the participants, and others helping me, was quite complex. I had to ensure weekends were kept free for participants who could meet me at no other time. Fortunately a sufficient number of people worked part-time or were available on weekday evenings. I was able to hold over half the meetings in the participant's home, or, in Shanghai, in the private home where I was staying. Three meetings were held in cafés and one on a park bench. The others, all with women, were held in my hotel room. However, I took advice on which hotels were likely to be more or less interested in, and concerned about, lone foreigners having visitors in their rooms, and was careful not to hold interviews in my room in two large hotels in Beijing. Those two hotels, though, were close to participants' homes. Particularly given the time I was in Beijing, around the 4th June, I did not want hotel staff to mistake me for a journalist with political motives. All the venues worked well. We could sit in comfort, hear each other, and there was not too much background noise to spoil the recording.

On six occasions I had a meal with a participant I had not previously met, before one of the interviews. This made us both more at ease because we could get to know each other a little, they could ask questions about me, and we quite often found that we had mutual friends in the UK.

Holding the interviews

At the beginning of each first interview I explained the purpose and procedure of research and interview, and what I would do after the interview. I then asked if they were comfortable with signing the consent

form. I then asked them to choose a pseudonym. Some found this quite difficult and needed to leave the decision until after the interview. Some quickly chose a common name. Others chose a name with a special meaning for them, for example, Fúyīn (Gospel).

During the interview

I have already mentioned the topics I encouraged people to talk about (e.g. key decisions, influential people, happy times and difficult times). Although I had a list of questions (Appendix A) I did not adhere to the sequence in the script, to the wording or even the topics, in every case. With a couple of exceptions I started with the same question, asking people to imagine their life as a story in book form, and to tell me what chapters they would break it into[23]. The sequence and wording of my questions then depended on what people told me. At the end of each interview I checked the topic list to see that nothing had been missed. On two occasions participants were so eager to start telling me their story (in one case of how she became a Christian in the UK, and in the other of how she came to have three children and how that related to her Christian faith), even before we sat down, that I decided to follow their lead and then come back to my starting question, later omitting questions about matters they had already covered. This flexibility contributed to an easy, informal atmosphere.

I hoped to meet each person twice, the first meeting looking at their life history, the second at change of values, comparing UK and China contexts. My intention was to give us both time to reflect on the first interview before going on to the second. I wished to have time to listen to the recording of the first interview on my own, to summarize, and in some cases interpret,

---

[23] The idea of chapters came from Fowler's *Faith Development Interview* (1981); McAdams (1993) also used it to open his life story interviews.

key elements of what I heard in order to be able to reflect this back to the interviewee at the second interview, to check whether they thought I had understood them. In thirteen cases I had at least one night between meetings and was able to do this. In two other cases I had a lunch break which gave me time to reflect but not to listen to the recording. In the other cases I just had a few minutes to collect my thoughts before pressing on, and merging the intended two interviews into one. Those people were either too busy to see me twice or the vagaries of email communication or changing schedules got in the way.

During interviews I tried to be reflexive but there were times when I was particularly conscious of either the influence of my own cultural assumptions on the interview or of trying to understand the influence of their assumptions about me on participants' behaviour. An example of the former occurred when after a few interviews it became apparent to me that my question about why people had chosen a particular university subject was coloured by my own experience of a more individualistic culture of choice: whilst I made my own choice about what I studied at school and university, influenced by my interests, most of the participants were directed in their choices at those points by parents and teachers. Listening to one participant whom I had known in the UK, I was conscious that she was probably being careful not to say things that might hurt my feelings or that might seem disrespectful to someone who she saw as a kind host in the UK and a guest to be honoured in China. She was also half my age. She did not tell me she was no longer attending church, but I picked up clues about this as we went along and was able to gently confirm that later in the interview.

In two instances, participants brought a relative to the interview. When Mei brought her husband she explained that he was semi-retired, in poor health and generally went with her wherever she went in her spare time. As his English was very limited I was concerned he would be bored. On the other hand he seemed to understand enough to make me wonder if his presence would constrain his wife. Considering the wider social context, I was very conscious that he might be concerned about my motives and about potential negative effects of his wife being interviewed by a foreigner. I kept thinking 'what does he think of me?' and 'what might be the effect on their relationship of how Mei responds to me?' I think it helped that I was a similar age to his wife and that she and I had a mutual British friend. Mei and I conducted the second interview alone and then all three of us enjoyed a day out together. I concluded that Mei's explanation was true but he probably was a little concerned at first too. Only after I returned to the UK, and read Molly Andrews' (2007) comments about the individualistic cultural assumptions underlying the practice of conducting interviews with individuals rather than with groups did I start to consider that it may simply have appeared perfectly natural for Mei and her husband for him to come along; 'after all', they may have thought, 'what affects one of us affects the other'.

After the interview

After the interviews I explained my immediate next steps and what they could expect of the second interview. We then scheduled the time for that. After the second interview I described briefly the procedure for transcription and analysis, asking if the participants had any questions. I offered to provide them with a summary of the findings after completion of the PhD. Several expressed interest in reading the whole thesis, and were also keen that their experiences and my findings be used to help other Chinese

students abroad. By way of returning a little of the kindness they had shown me in giving up two to three hours of their time (and more when travelling time and meals are included) I asked each person if there was anything they would like me to pray for them over the coming year. This was welcomed. Given the subject of the research and our shared faith I think many would have been surprised if I had not asked. The two interviews together generally lasted between two hours twenty minutes and two hours fifty minutes. One was only one and a half hours, because I suggested we stop when I realised that the participant was upset by issues he was describing. I felt I had to stop the formal interview, switch off the recorder and just offer a listening ear. (This interview has not been included in the analysis and findings because of this and because, as mentioned above, I found that he did not meet the research criteria).

A couple of days after each interview I emailed to thank them. Where I had time, between the two interviews, to listen to the recording I found this helpful because I realised that I was not asking certain questions clearly, and that occasionally I would miss something interesting that a person had said because I was thinking about the next subject. I therefore tried to concentrate better on the person, trying to catch myself making assumptions that I had 'got the idea' too early.

Other methods considered

Early on, before recognizing the need for an interpretive approach, I considered using Value Surveys, such as those developed by Rokeach, Bond and the Chinese Culture Connection, and Schwartz (discussed in Chapter 2). Such surveys often require participants to order or weight a pre-defined set of values according to the degree they are relevant to them. However, different people, particularly from different cultures, may attach different

meanings, for example to the word 'honesty', one of the values in the RVS (Hiebert, 1985). Also with a list there is a danger that something important to an individual is omitted. As Williams says, 'Survey research cannot usually provide the contextual detail necessary to interpret even its own results;' (2002, p. 126). A survey could be used in tandem with other methods, such as interviews, to allow participants to put their choices into the context of their own lives, but this still risks the values included in the survey influencing participant and researcher, rather than starting 'where the participant is at'.

A method more in tune with my desire to start from the participant's position is the diary. I could have asked people to keep diaries, to write about any big decisions they made, or any joys or tensions they experienced. However, I dismissed the idea quickly as too much to ask of the participants; it would be too time-consuming for them; writing in English would be onerous; and some would be understandably unwilling to commit themselves to paper, when talking about an issue as sensitive as religion.

I considered using a life-story interview approach, including presenting the story of each participant. This would have given the reader a clearer picture of each individual. However, ethical constraints precluded this. To do this well would have required an on-going conversation with participants, not possible in the time I had in China, moving from city to city. I did not want to send scripts electronically for review and contribution, as mention of religious matters might attract unwanted surveillance. Also I particularly wished to avoid the risk of disclosing the identity of any participants who might be involved in family church leadership; presenting their life stories could have contributed to that risk.

Data analysis

The interviews gave participants chance to reflect on their lives and to think about how they had, or had not, changed. They were prompted to talk about especially important memories, decisions, people and hopes; in short about what mattered to them most. In order to identify the core values underlying their stories I used thematic analysis.

The thematic analysis approach

In talking about memories, disappointments, highlights, major decisions etc. participants narrated stories. Polkinghorne (1995) distinguishes between analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. Analysis of narratives looks for themes and produces categories; narrative analysis produces stories. The former was chosen because it can 'uncover the commonalities that exist across the stories that make up a study's database' (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 14). I first looked for themes in each individual's interviews, to help me identify individuals' core values and then looked across these findings to see if any core values were shared. Another reason for not conducting narrative analysis was because ethical, high quality narrative analysis was precluded by my inability to check my analysis with participants or fully involve them in my writing (because of geographic distance and potential email surveillance).

Transcription

Each interview was typed up in full, including everything said by participant and researcher. On the odd occasion when a word or phrase was not audible or intelligible this was not guessed at but is identified in the script as 'inaudible'. To distinguish between momentary pauses, for example to identify a correct word in English, and longer, more reflective pauses, the convention was used to identify the former with dots (e.g. ..) and the latter

with the words 'pause' or 'long pause'. Occasionally a participant made a gesture to describe something, which was described to the recorder by the researcher and is included in the transcription. Laughter and weeping were also identified in transcription. Excerpts from two transcripts are included as Appendix D.

Data analysis process

Data analysis involved six phases: (1) identifying indicators of values, for each individual; (2) identifying individuals' values; (3) identifying shared values, tensions and benefits; (4) identifying factors contributing to sustained change, for individuals; (5) constructing cameos of each individual; (6) identifying factors contributing to sustained change, which were shared.

Phase 1: Identifying indicators of values, for individuals

The product of this phase was a summary of what each participant told me in relation to certain key indicators of values. These indicators were discussed in the conceptual framework (pages 110-113). They included, for example: religious background; major decisions; hopes and plans; tensions and benefits of being a Christian. A form was completed for each participant, as each interview transcript was analysed and incidences of key items noted under appropriate headings, with reference to the page and line number. This helped me become familiar with the data and later proved a useful cross-reference tool for checking my interpretation of each person's values.

Phase 2: Identifying values of individuals

This phase identified the values held strongly by each individual, before they professed belief in Christ and, separately, after return to China. I created a three-columned values table for each participant, with the

headings: 'Value', 'evidence' and 'source/cause?' I then went through each interview, looking for incidences of values in play, for example in opinions expressed, and in major decisions described. I decided on a name for the value, coding it next to a copy of the text which provided evidence for it, together with any additional comments, including about potential sources of new values. In identifying values I made some reference to the Rokeach list of terminal values (1973) and to the CVS list (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987), for ideas, but as I believe such lists too prescriptive I developed my own names for values to get a more exact representation. As I analysed each interview I referred back, comparing incidences of the same value within an interview, and between interviews, to question and check my interpretation. Values and evidence pertaining to the period after return were typed in a different colour to facilitate reference.

Each person's table was individually analysed for themes in the values and a count made of the number of times a value appeared, before conversion and after return. Where values appeared closely related I double-checked my interpretation as to whether they should be grouped separately or together. Values were then totalled and a summary made of the most frequent values, before and after, for each person. I made adjustments to allow for cases where I judged there was evidence that a value was deeply held, even though there were not so many references to it in the script. To decide whether a value was held strongly, I reviewed not only *how often* evidence appeared in the interview that a person drew on a particular value, but also checked the interviews for evidence that a particular value was help very deeply, for example, in making major, difficult decisions with significant consequences. I weighed both the frequency and apparent depth.

Phase 3: Identifying shared values

In addition to understanding whether and in what way each person's values had changed, I wished to identify whether any of the values held were shared by participants. To do so, I took all the individual summary sheets and copied the values for all participants onto a single large piece of paper so that I could identify, and colour code, shared values. This was done twice, once for 'before' and once for 'after' values. The same procedure was conducted with tensions and benefits.

I then looked at each shared value separately, referring back to each person's values' table and interview, documenting instances of the value. This comparison helped me judge whether these were really the same value, shared. I noted patterns in how values were reflected; for example, the importance of 'honouring God' (discussed in Chapter Five) was reflected in a number of ways.

When producing Tables 3 and 4 (page 178) I considered signifying by the use of one, two or three asterisks whether a person held a shared value quite deeply, deeply or very deeply. However, I decided that to do anything more than say whether the value was very important to someone (i.e. to allocate an asterisk or not) would be to lay claim to more exactness of insight than I really had.

Phase 4: Identifying factors in sustained change, for individuals

This was an iterative process, analysing each transcript for concepts from Taylor's and Fowler's theories, discussed in the theoretical framework. However, individual transcripts were first analysed to identify reasons or

situations which led each person, in the UK, to become Christian or believe in Christ. I called these 'bridges to conversion'[24].

Next a table with the following column headings was created for each person: values; concept of self; social bonds; best account/master story; challenged or developed in community; and centres of power and authority. Evidence from the interview, for each concept, was then noted under the appropriate heading

Then I identified evidence of the Christian master story held by each person. This first involved identifying eight core elements of what could be termed an evangelical protestant Christian master story, which I had heard mentioned by participants: the concepts of personal sin, forgiveness, salvation, Christ as Saviour, eternal life, God as Father, having purpose from God, and being loved by God. I then identified four areas prevalent in the interviews which could be interpreted as relating to community or changed social bonds: regular involvement in Church in China; talking of church as in familial terms; changed (blood) family relationships; and a more loving relationship with people outside the family. Likewise, four frequently mentioned sources of power or authority were noted: God, Jesus, the Bible and prayer. Each interview was analysed to identify any evidence of these sixteen elements.

Phase 5: Constructing cameos of each individual

After this I wrote a short cameo of each person. This included evidence of the main theoretical elements before professing faith and, separately, after return (i.e. values, self-concepts, master stories, social bonds and centres of power); and was my interpretation of the change process for each

---

[24] This term is defined on page 146.

person, viewed through the lens of this theoretical framework. Three cameos are included in Chapter 4.

Phase 6: identifying *shared* factors contributing to sustained change

First, major factors contributing to initial conversion were analysed for common themes; four were identified and are discussed in Chapter 4 as bridges to conversion. Then I constructed a cross-case matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) with participants on the vertical axis and the sixteen elements from phase 4 on the horizontal axis. This was then colour-coded to designate whether each element applied to each participant to a considerable degree, somewhat or not at all.

Individual cases were compared to identify participants who shared or did not share similar elements of a Christian master story, similar self-concepts, similar social bonds and sustained changed values. The matrix helped me consider the degree of relationship between values change sustained over time and a new Christian master story shared in community after return to China.

Attempting to identify types

More than once in the analytical process I attempted to identify types amongst the participants. I constructed another cross-case matrix, listing the participants down the vertical axis and the shared values (before and after) as the horizontal axis. I was looking for groups of people who shared the same before and after values, in order to explore possible types of values change. However, because of the high degree of shared later values and the lower degree of shared values, this did not reveal a small number of types with a few participants in each. It revealed twelve people who shared five or six of the six shared later values and seven others who shared fewer values with each other, and whose circumstances differed,

and could not therefore be grouped into types. I therefore discuss the twelve as a group and refer to the others individually (for example, on pages 165 to 169).

As analysis and writing progressed I asked many further questions of the data, making ad hoc tables and matrices as I went along, to help me consider and compare the participants. Examples of such questions are: 'who had contact with Chinese Christians in the UK?' and 'what was the gender and marital status of each participant, before and after study abroad, did their spouse accompany them, and did their spouse also convert to Christianity'? I also drew a graph, plotting participants' and their parents' estimated ages against key events in recent Chinese history such as the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 Tiananmen Incident. This was prompted by two participants' comments about the effects they believed certain periods or events had had on their parents and, therefore, on them.

What I have interpreted, understood and written is ultimately my creation, but I have endeavoured to make it one in which the participants would recognize themselves, in the sense that although they might not agree with every detail of interpretation, I hope they would say 'yes, there is much truth in that; it adds value to understanding me'.

Andrews (2007, p. 509) urges the researcher to 'resist the temptation to over-interpret those empty spaces that lie within our conversations'. I was much struck that seven participants described very unhappy childhoods and troubled or distant relationships with parents. Some linked this to a particular historic or social context. Others did not make that link themselves but I wondered during analysis whether there might be a connection. Xiaoshi, for example, described her father as physically and verbally abusive to her and her mother. She also mentioned her mother

telling her that her father was unhappy. It is possible that his behaviour was influenced by his experience, for example, in the Cultural Revolution, but I cannot be certain of that. When analysing and writing about the interviews I have tried to bear in mind that there are things I know and things I do not, and offer a balanced but thought-provoking view.

Ethical considerations

Care was taken to follow the University of Nottingham's research ethics procedure and the British Educational Research Association ethical guidelines. Each participant was told in advance, by email, of the purpose, nature and requirements of the study, including expectations of their involvement and the nature of potential publications. They were then asked for their consent. This was done in advance by email together with a request for them to confirm whether they were willing to be recorded. I took copies of the participants' information sheet (Appendix B) and the consent form (Appendix C) to the interviews, so that they could refresh their memories and check they were still in agreement. All nineteen signed the consent form. I was aware that asking participants in this research to sign a form was a sensitive issue, for two reasons. First, signing contracts is less prevalent in China than in the UK and might have overtones that I did not trust them. Second, religion is a sensitive issue in China. So I took care to explain that signing the form was more a check on me that I had discussed with them all they needed to know and was intended to protect them from careless or unscrupulous researchers.

I asked each person to choose a pseudonym, have omitted naming their cities of study, and have changed certain other personal information (e.g. names of British friends) to protect their anonymity. There was a risk that mention in emails of certain religious activities in China could be read by

email surveillance officers and lead to unwanted attention for participants. I therefore avoided use of words associated with religion in all emails and agreed with the participants that I would not send copies of interviewing transcripts for checking. All appeared happy with this.

I was very aware that because I am not Chinese and do not speak Chinese fluently (the interviews were held in English) I was at risk of misinterpreting people. I consider the need to minimise this risk an ethical matter but, to avoid duplication, discuss it more fully in the section on cross-cultural considerations below. Misrepresentation of their ideas could also arise during analysis and interpretation. Therefore I reminded myself constantly of the need for reflexivity, remembering Levinas's (1985) comments about not suppressing the *Other* and Holliday's advice to 'make the familiar strange' (2002, p. 93).

Because the research was about *values*, about what matters most to people, I was aware that present problems or difficult memories might arise which would upset a participant. I was prepared, if necessary, to stop the interview and do whatever I could to encourage or comfort them. In practice, on occasion, sad and difficult memories did arise and we paused for a while. Once I switched off the recorder and agreed not to transcribe or mention what I had just been told. However, people also seemed to value sharing these things with me. The interview where most tears were shed, including some by me, was the one at the end of which the participant said that I was the first person she had ever spoken to about certain things. She indicated that this was positive.

Twice a participant asked me for advice during the interview. I was conscious, as a researcher, of not wanting to impose my own ideas, but I did not want to hurt or offend, or indeed deny a potential benefit of

discussing an issue with an understanding outsider. On one occasion I suggested we discuss the matter after the interview, which we did. On the other I had to respond immediately as a delay was clearly not going to satisfy the participant. I had to balance their wishes to consult me for advice with my desire not to diverge from the role of researcher.

Rejection of the full life story interview approach, mainly in order to protect participants' anonymity, was discussed on page 125.

Cross-cultural considerations

As a non-Chinese British person researching Chinese people, I am conscious of the need for cultural validity (Cohen, et al., 2007), of ensuring that the research subject and methods are appropriate for the people and setting. To this end I consulted my Chinese critical friends (two with research experience) as to the suitability of the interview approach and questions for the people I sought to understand. More importantly, perhaps, I checked whether they felt the central research question and topic, 'core values', would be understandable and relevant to them. When I gave a definition of the term most participants seemed to understand and many commented that they thought the research was important. However, one other Chinese person did question the validity of the concept 'core values' in a mainland Chinese context. She supported her argument by saying that the key issue for Chinese people is whether something is useful for survival. However, I would consider that also to be a core value.

There was a risk, either during an interview or whilst interpreting data, that because of cultural differences, I would misinterpret something. This could happen in a number of ways: for example, by me missing a cultural cue (for example a gesture or phrase) (C. Burnett & Gardner, 2006); by me

applying my own cultural interpretation to a participant's comments or actions; and by me misinterpreting a participant because he or she is using their second or third language (English) and may articulate ideas with less nuance than they would wish. In order to combat this I listened to, and read, the interviews several times and discussed certain issues with an experienced Chinese researcher.

I was conscious that the value many Chinese people put on cordial relationships, on showing respect for authority figures (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973; C. Burnett & Gardner, 2006) and on being grateful to kind hosts, might make participants reluctant to say things which seemed critical of me, of their university or church in the UK, or of the UK or China. In practice, for some people (e.g. Fuyin) this appeared not to be an issue. Others (e.g. Hui) were at great pains to be polite but I felt able to probe gently. With everybody I had to listen attentively to the recordings with this in mind. For example, listening to Lara I heard us talking as if she were still attending church in China, but when I listened again I noted something she said later which suggests she no longer goes. She may have been avoiding telling me directly, either to avoid hurting my feelings, or because she was concerned this would make her look bad, whilst at the same time letting me know implicitly, rather than explicitly. This may have been an example of three of five characteristics of Chinese communication (G. Gao, et al., 1996): implicit communication (*hanxu)*, politeness (*keqi*) and face-directed communication strategies (*mianzi)*.

The anthropologist Kluckhohn tells of the US Declaration of Independence being translated into Japanese, and then back into English (1949, p. 154). In the process the English phrase 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' became 'licence to commit lustful pleasures'. Language, of course, was an

issue in this research, although people generally appeared to talk with a great deal of fluency and freedom. I may have had an advantage over some anthropologists in that the participants in my research had all lived in the UK and experienced the difficulties of communicating in a foreign language in an alien culture. I am sure that I benefitted from their experience in the way they took care how to express themselves. I am extremely grateful to them for being willing to speak in English for so long, especially to those who have not used English since they left the UK. The person I expected to find conversing in English most demanding was the visiting scholar who was not an English major, Huanglin. She expressed concern about her English by email before we met. In the event she seemed to speak easily and with occasional reference to our dictionaries we seemed to understand each other well. She is the person who said she told me things she has never told anyone else. However, I am conscious that I do not quite understand one point she was making, about how her belief in Christianity relates to her opinions about Buddhism, and so I have avoided making inferences from this. Although my Chinese is inadequate for conversational purposes, I know enough to find my way around a Chinese-English dictionary, and enough, in some instances, to be able to shortcut the translation process.

Of course, it is not just a matter of translating words between languages. There are cultural references, for example historic or symbolic, which I must simply have missed and I am aware that that is a limitation of this research. However, my reading about China and friendships with Chinese people over the past twenty years helped. For example, I had read enough about the Cultural Revolution to know that it was likely to have had a considerable impact on the parents of participants and on some participants, but also that experience was not uniform across China. I knew enough to know that I needed to ask about it, but not to assume a common

experience of it or its effects. In analysing the interviews I had to be careful not to make too many assumptions and to ask myself lots of questions about possible meanings.

Quality and reliability

'Validity' and 'reliability' have been described as contentious terms in the context of qualitative research (e.g. Wellington, 2000), largely because they sit within a positivist outlook which sees the object of research as measurable, and the purpose of research as identifying causes and effects which would be found to exist if the same research methods were used in a wider setting. However, they can be used as a useful starting point for a discussion of what criteria can be used to judge the quality of qualitative research, and of what measures have been taken to ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of this research (Bush, 2002).

Asking if research is valid is to ask whether the instrument used measures what it purports to measure (Wellington, 2000). I am seeking to understand what people's values are and whether they have changed and why. Values cannot be measured but they can be identified. They are also too bound up with individual circumstances to be measured in the same way. A research instrument was necessary which was flexible enough to allow values to come into play and be recognised in different ways for different people. That is one reason why I chose the semi-structured interview, including questions about happy and difficult times, about influential people and about why participants made particular decisions. As I analysed the interviews, looking for examples of values, values change and causes of value change, I also sought evidence for claiming the existence of such changes and causes, and then sought to make the evidence clear in

the discussion of findings, so that readers can make their own judgement about the trustworthiness of my argument.

'External validity' is concerned with

> whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context in which it was conducted (Bryman, 2004, p. 539).

The context of my research was somewhat different for every participant, because each brought their own experiences and concerns to it, and my experience connected, or not, with theirs in different ways. However, these experiences (for example, study in the UK and professing faith in Christ), whilst different and personal for each one, share some common elements. Just as precise findings in this study varied between individuals, but some similarities in changes were found between participants, so it seems reasonable to expect that some similarities in values and changes might be found between some of these people and other people fitting the same research criteria.

This study does not attempt to identify and describe a typical UK-based mainland Chinese postgraduate convert to Christianity. That would be a denial of the variety and individuality in human character and experience. It considers the stories of nineteen people and highlights differences and similarities in any change in values, and in ways such changes are expressed. By doing so it offers a credible explanation, supported by evidence, of a current social phenomenon. Whilst qualitative research can bring out the particular by focussing on individuals, this does not limit the value of findings to the individual case. I agree with Chase, who says:

> Understanding general social processes *requires* a focus on their embodiment in actual practice, that is, in actual narratives (1995, p. 20).

Admittedly, a different researcher, with a different personality and different experience, would conduct the same kind of interview in a different way and bring different interpretations and insights to the analysis. So my approach was not replicable in the positivist sense. But if our work was conducted with reflexivity, attention to our own assumptions, and by clearly 'showing our workings' in writing (Holliday, 2002), we, our readers and our participants, should they wish, would be in a position to judge the value of considering our findings when making decisions about, for example, future research, policy or action.

The above all relates to the need to demonstrate reliability or trustworthiness. I bring these two terms together to show my understanding that I need to show that my research can be trusted. One way of doing this is to acknowledge potential limitations, as I have done when talking about the interpretive approach and about cross-cultural considerations. The research process itself influences findings: for example, the very process of discussing their experiences may lead some participants to see these experiences differently. However, this is only natural. I listened carefully for this happening, and where possible checked with the participant whether this was the case, asking questions like 'did you actually think that before or is that how you see it now, after reflection?'

I have attempted to limit error in my interpretation of participants' stories and comments by following Alvesson and Skoldberg's advice,

> interpreting one's own interpretations, looking at one's own perspectives, and turning a self-critical eye onto one's own authority as interpreter and author (cited in Etherington, 2004, p. 32).

I also took to heart Rodney Needham's (1972) warning, in the context of research about belief, not to describe what people say as what they believe,

without demonstrating, with evidence, that it is. This is not to suggest that I think participants lied. I do not. It is, rather, to acknowledge that there is difference between saying something and living it out.

Lessons learned

The process of planning, conducting and writing about this research taught me much. Here I consider just a few main lessons.

It was a privilege to carry out interviews where people shared their experiences, feelings, hopes and disappointments with me. It was an approach which generated rich data. Hearing about childhood and adolescence was particularly illuminating, as it both shed light on individuals' later behaviour and also revealed some shared experiences with others. The conceptual framework, created by bringing together comments from Rokeach, Inkeles and Levinson, and Parsons and Shils, about where values come into play, helped me identify helpful topics for further discussion during the interviews. If I was to carry out the project again I would not change this part of the approach.

In an ideal world I would have spent more time with participants, after transcribing the interviews, to pursue potentially significant comments which triggered questions as a result of listening to interviews and comparing them with others. For example, comments by participants about difficult relationships with their fathers raised for me a question about the possible influence of the Cultural Revolution on participants' parents. However, distance and concerns about the suitability of email for such communication precluded me following this up with participants.

Conducting this research in China, as opposed to in the UK, was invaluable. It was expensive, and by the end I was very tired, having spent two

months moving from city to city organising all travel, accommodation, food etc. with limited Chinese, but it really helped me understand the social and cultural context. As I mentioned earlier, visiting eleven participants in their homes and observing different living environments, for example, helped me understand their comments better.

Involving people in, and from, different cities in different parts of China, of varying ages, marital status and professions enabled a richer enquiry because it raised questions about the significance of historical and cultural context. In hindsight, it would have been interesting to interview more men to see if they had experienced the same degree of childhood unhappiness as some of the women in this study.

Some had reflected on, and could discuss, abstract concepts like 'my life purpose'; others struggled to do so. I do not know if this was co-incidental, was related to degree of conversion, to age or to cultural differences between me, the researcher, and some of the participants. Before conducting any future cross-cultural research I will investigate this.

I was both outsider and insider. For example, I have not experienced the stressful life of a Chinese teenager preparing for the university entrance exam, but I do know people and organizations that the participants encountered in the UK: I know about the Christian 'camps' run by the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission and have attended services, and have friends in, a number of the UK churches attended by the participants. I know, for example about the network of house churches, in which one participant had participated whilst living in a northern UK city, which is not dissimilar to some Chinese house churches. At times I felt my status as a Christian or with links to participants' UK friends led them to be very open with me; on one or two occasions, though, I wondered if my position as a

representative of their host country led a person to give me answers they thought I wanted to hear. I have allowed for this in my analysis.

Limitations

The findings below are presented with a note of caution, because of certain limitations of the research and analysis. There are five main limitations.

The most obvious limitation was my inability to speak Chinese enough to conduct interviews in Chinese, coupled with my limited understanding of the culture and context. I have read widely about China, made several trips there and met many Chinese people but I have never lived there. This had advantages too though, such as when I asked one person how she chose her university subject; if I had simply assumed that her parents decided for her, which they did, I doubt she would have revealed the frustration she felt about that. I have almost certainly missed some implications of issues which were raised by participants, for example relating to the family or to the church in China. However, I reduced this risk somewhat by trying to expose myself to the context: I met members of eleven participants' families, had meals with sixteen participants, visited eleven in their homes and visited eight churches. Time spent with other returnees on this and on previous trips also helped make me more aware of cultural differences.

Ideally I would have liked the study to be more ethnographic; for example, although I saw something of home, church and leisure settings I only had one experience of a participant's workplace. So, this study is not full ethnography but it employs ethnographic interviews.

Second, conclusions about participants' prior values are based very largely on their memories, and memory can be selective. However, the use of checking questions in the interviews, asking about multiple factors (for

example decisions and difficulties or unhappy times) and checking for values themes throughout individual interviews should have reduced the risk of faulty memory affecting identification of prior values.

Third, with the exception of seven people whom I had met in the UK, our relationship was developed over a very short time and is limited to my interpretation. This was compounded by my decision not to email interview transcripts or detailed questions about my interpretation to the participants, because of concern for their security. Greater mutual understanding and greater 'fusion of horizons', to use Gadamer's (2004) phrase, may have developed if I had been able to spend longer in China and meet participants more often. Where I was able to have two meetings, with thirteen people, I alleviated this difficulty a little by reviewing the recording between interviews and checking my initial interpretation with the participant.

The fourth limitation arises from a risk posed in all qualitative research but particularly in a Chinese context: that people would give me the 'right answer', or something they thought I wanted to hear, in order to protect their face or mine. I tried to listen for this and, where I thought it might be happening, to probe further. Further communication from one participant, after the interviews, provided evidence that this kind of well-intended but potentially misleading politeness was not happening as much as I suspected in her case. I believe the participants were generally very open with me and I am grateful to them for that.

The fifth area of caution relates to an imbalance in the numbers of female and male participants. Had there been equal numbers of men and women, rather than four men and fifteen women, different values, changes, tensions and benefits may have appeared more significant.

Even with these shortcomings I believe the study to have been worthwhile.

Summary

The nature of the research question and the subject matter (values), and my own philosophical stance, led me to take a qualitative, interpretive approach to this research. Gadamer's idea of a potential, although incomplete, fusion of horizons, and Buber's and Lévinas's writing about relating to 'the Other' influenced my attitude and approach to participants. The semi-structured ethographic interview, focusing on highlights, struggles and decisions in different life stages, was the chosen method because it complemented the methodology and was a vehicle for participants to reflect back on their lives, to tell stories and reveal what mattered to them. It proved highly appropriate for a study about values. A limited amount of observation helped.

Interviews with nineteen people who had studied in the UK were conducted, transcribed and analysed. Care was taken to uphold ethical guidelines, particularly the anonymity of participants. Particular attention was paid to the cross-cultural nature of the research, to ensuring that methods were appropriate for the cultural context and to checking my own understanding of what happened and was said, or not said, in interviews.

The study was qualitative, interpretive and small-scale and I do not, therefore, claim that the findings presented in the following chapters are representative of the values of all, or even most, mainland Chinese postgraduates and visiting scholars who convert to Christianity in the UK. However, these findings are unlikely to be relevant to only these nineteen, and they are worthy of consideration in the construction of other related projects.

Chapter Four: Individuals – conversion and values

Introduction

In order to answer the main research question, about whether core values had changed, and to show both the variety *and* certain similarities amongst participants, in terms of conversion experience and values, the findings are presented in two chapters. This thesis is primarily concerned with the *consequences* of conversion to Christianity rather than with why or how people converted. However, to illuminate factors contributing to values change, the process of conversion is discussed. This chapter presents three participant cameos to illustrate the diversity in origins, degree and maintenance of conversion and values change and to provide examples of the relevance of concepts from the theoretical framework (pages 76 to 80) to the study. Participants whose cameos are not included are then discussed briefly, with particular attention given to those who are exceptions to conversion in the sense adopted. Finally, four bridges to conversion[25] described by participants are discussed.

Appendix E is a table showing findings about each individual. It summarizes what was found in terms of: the values they portrayed as being most important before conversion or expression of faith; what formed the bridge to initial conversion; the values identified as most important at the time of interviews; tensions and benefits experienced as a Christian in China. It

---

[25] I use the term *bridge* to conversion, to represent key factors contributing to openness to conversion; it suggests something stronger and more facilitative than an *influence* and, unlike the term *critical incident*, includes gradual processes in addition to specific events.

shows that whilst each participant was different, some shared certain characteristics, values and experiences.

Chapter 5 then presents a thematic analysis of values *shared* by participants before profession of faith in the UK and at the time of interviews.

Conversion

As discussed in Chapter 2, Fowler defines conversion thus:

> a significant recentering of one's previous conscious or unconscious images of value and power, and the conscious adoption of a new set of master stories in the commitment to reshape one's life in a new community of interpretation and action (1981, pp. 281-282).

The background structure that Taylor (1989) claims each person has develops in a community of experience and articulation, and consists of a personal narrative, a self-concept, social bonds and values, with, in some cases, a hypergood dominating those values. The two scholars' constructs have clear parallels. The three cameos, below, view the participants' accounts through the lens of the theoretical framework constructed from Fowler's and Taylor's theories, using their terminology to shed light.

Cameos

Cameos of three participants are included. They serve as examples to show origins and processes of conversion, how these relate to any change in values, and factors contributing to sustained change. Each considers a participant's life and values before they professed faith in the UK, the main reason or bridge leading to that decision, their life after return to China, values identified at time of interview, and any tensions and benefits living out any changed values in China. Each participant recounted different experiences of life and conversion. Also, the degree of change in values

varied; this variance suggests a corresponding variance in the degree to which conversion was sustained after return to China. The three participants were chosen for cameos to illustrate some of this variety. Space limitations preclude including more cameos and confidentiality issues (discussed on page 125) preclude providing cameos for certain participants.

Participants experienced one or more of four main bridges to conversion, discussed further on pages 170 to 175. Changlan provides an example of someone who experienced the first bridge: he received information not available to him in China, assessed it and found it credible as an account of life. His Christian faith deepened after return. Fuyin's faith also deepened after return, but she is one of the people for whom crisis formed the bridge to conversion. Changlan and Fuyin were two of twelve who attributed great importance to being part of a church in China; they also shared with eleven others experience of improved family relationships, which they related to their Christian faith. Fuyin differed from other participants in that whilst they described enjoying the warmth of a UK Christian community, she described disappointment at UK Christians' lack of support for her. Lara is included because her faith appeared to have declined after return and her values to have changed less than others'.

Changlan: new best account and values, sustained on return

This cameo illustrates someone whose encounter with a new 'best account', (a way of making sense of his life, judged worth pursuing), was the bridge to Christian belief. This was experienced and articulated in community in the UK, and led to a changed self-concept and values. These changes deepened after return to China, in a community of shared best account and values, in church and in marriage.

When we met, five years after his return, Changlan, 31, lived with his wife in a large coastal city in Southern China, and worked as a manager in a multinational company.

Life and values before conversion

When asked to imagine his life as a book he specified only four chapters but dedicated one to his life before school. He explained by saying he had warm memories of the attention and love he received from the adults around him which contrasted sharply with his experience after starting school. At the heart of the change were his parents' demands for good results in a school system which Changlan found restrictive and uninteresting. At primary school, bored by requirements to repeat political propaganda, he would fall asleep or talk to friends; this led to beatings from his father and a growing resentment against his father. From these early days developed two of Changlan's core values: having intellectual stimuli and freedom to explore ideas, and having a good relationship with his parents.

Disappointment with formal education continued during his undergraduate finance degree; he spent most time on his own curriculum, reading widely in literature, history, politics and natural science, watching foreign films and meeting foreign students studying at his university.

> I was very interested in the world outside China. I don't know why... You know, when I was very little I felt I was different from others because my eyes were always looking ahead, not around the city or not even in China. I want to know what in the world is actually happening.

At that point his experience of religion was limited to his grandmother's ancestor worship and kowtowing to Buddhist idols, and school teaching about atheism and evolution. He had 'a very clear mind that… there was no God or any kind of religious stuff, never' and that he should rely only on

himself. He saw the brief extracts of the *Bible* that he encountered in English language textbooks as 'like some legend or fairy tale in China' and paid them little attention.

During university Changlan lived with his parents; tensions eased somewhat. With his parents' encouragement and financial support he pursued his desire to explore the wider world by going to the UK for master's study.

The UK: new community and new best account

Living in university accommodation with British students younger than him, who seemed preoccupied with drinking and parties, he made friends with East Asian classmates. They introduced him to a discussion group of British and East Asians who were reading the Biblical book of John. The subjects raised interested him; this led him to attend a British church and then a Chinese church. Here, with people who spoke his own language, he acquired a circle of friends and a previously lonely life took on colour. After about fifteen months abroad he 'committed' himself to following Christ. Changlan describes this decision as seeming entirely natural, not an intellectual or emotional struggle, more a sense of recognising God:

> I believe that when people believe, not because they are convinced to, it's because it's the right thing to do, just like looking for your father. It's not that you are told 'this is your father', it's that you believe he is and 'it's true!' That's it. I never test my brother that I am the son of my father, but I believe he is, that's it, simple as that. You don't have to do the gene test.

To use Taylor's term, Changlan had a new *best account*: a new explanation of human life and his role in it, in particular of himself in relation to God. His decision brought him immediately into conflict with his father who feared that his son's religious status could lead to problems. With hindsight and through reading books in England that were unavailable to him in

China, Changlan understood that, as someone who suffered during the Cultural Revolution, lost faith in Mao and communism, but who currently had the benefits of Party membership, his father was anxious about what would happen to a family with a Christian son, should another period of social turmoil arise. Their relationship eased when Changlan returned home and his father observed him behaving normally.

Return to China: new values and account sustained in community

Changlan's decision to continue in his new faith, despite his father's early opposition, and a later disagreement when Changlan chose Christian principals over parental help, point to a change in Changlan's values and in his view of where ultimate authority lies. These stemmed from the new account he had formed of life.

The Biblical narrative that he heard first in the UK was reflected in the language he used in interview. That he inhabited this story is reflected in his decision about which church to attend. Every Sunday he and his wife attended a registered church. They referred to other members as their 'brothers and sisters'. They also participated in a Friday evening marriage group and Changlan commented on the earlier role members of this church played in keeping him and his then fiancée together during a difficult period. However his concern that ministers of registered churches are compromised in their ability to preach from the whole *Bible* led him to attend both this registered church and another, unregistered one, well-known for its comprehensive *Bible* coverage:

> It's because in X church and other family churches, seems the topics are more open. Yeah. And the message I can get in there is a little bit different from what I can get in the government churches.

The importance Changlan placed on living life in tune with the *Bible* was underlined by the time he spent reading it, and his familiarity with the

contents, revealed in his quotation of the *Bible* in our conversations. He was also helping run a Sunday afternoon *Bible* study group for returnees from study abroad.

His revised best account originated in a context where ideas where articulated and challenged, developed in a community which shared a common master story and language (his UK church) and was sustained and deepened in his Christian church community, and his marriage, after return to China. His best account now included a Father God who created the world, is personally interested in individuals, and has provided a set of standards in the *Bible* (these include respecting and caring for parents); and an account of life and direction for life in the *Bible* that is to be understood and followed in its whole. This affected Changlan's beliefs about the nature of marriage. It also led him to see his work and social environment as an opportunity to help others. Authority in his life was no longer vested in his father or in his own strength, but in God. His decision to be baptised because the *Bible* says baptism was commanded by Christ is a reflection of this authority.

A new self-concept stemming from the best account

Changlan's self-concept included a personal Son-Father relationship with a God who has a 'perfect plan' for his life, and who assigns him tasks each day. His conviction that his life has purpose helped him overcome problems and mundanities. More than once he referred to the Holy Spirit keeping him out of trouble or reminding him to guard his tongue. An example of this is his rejection of his father's attempts to find him a stable government job because that would eventually require him to join the CCP and deny the existence of God.

Discussing his changed view of himself and others, particularly his prior tendency to criticize others to the extent of speaking hurtfully, he quoted scripture from memory:

> I think from Psalm 39 that I have to control my mouth with the – what word is that? With the muzzle? Yeah. And Jesus said 'the things you eat cannot do any harm to you'.

Even when hurt by colleagues' mockery of his 'foreign' beliefs he would resist the urge to jibe back. He claimed the habit of muzzling his mouth helped him control his mind.

Changed values and changed relationships

Changlan met his wife just before they went to the same UK university. They became Christians at about the same time and married four years after return to China. His marriage was deeply affected by his belief in the existence of God and the authority of the *Bible*. He described his view that the marriage partner is sent by God, and therefore not to be treated lightly:

> Divorce is very common in China, you know. ..My father has six brothers and sisters; two of them divorced already. And even carry on a relationship in China people tend to think, 'oh, it is easy come and easy go' and 'why bother?' Yeah, because they do not believe there is a God overhead. They do not believe someone will be getting married with them is the one sent by God. So who cares, it just happens like (clicks fingers)… so it can happen again.'

He attributed the continuance of his marriage to their mutual acceptance of Biblical teaching and Christian example that marriage is a sacrifice and commitment rather than his prior notion of it as a trade, 'Ok you love me, and I will love you. And I deserve to be loved if I love you'. Indeed being in church helped him develop these ideas in the period when he was geographically separated from his then fiancée after return to China.

Changlan's new values of obeying God and respecting others were reflected in the way he put obeying God above pleasing his father, but still sought to understand and care for his parents, seeing them regularly. He attributed

153

this to maturity and his Christian conversion. It is also likely that his reading of Chinese history gave him some understanding of the punishment he received as a child: his father, whose education ceased at age 11, when schools closed during the Cultural Revolution, and as a result worked in restaurants the rest of his life, was desperate that his only child should have the education and advantages he had missed.

Changlan's view of life was first challenged in discussion with British Christians, then changed in a community of his language, a UK Chinese church. His faith had deepened in strong bonds with his church in China and in his marriage.

He saw himself in a Trinitarian Christian narrative, as a sinner, saved by Christ, with a good future:

> In terms of the commitment to Christ, I would say now I can see my life has a purpose, so whenever I face difficulties, or unexpected changes in my life, I'm not afraid. And I won't be disappointed by the challenges I would face tomorrow or in the future, because I believe that God has a perfect plan in my life, even though sometimes I may be in the troughs and sometimes I may be in the peaks…. and I can see my mind will not be easily influenced by society because there's always the Holy Spirit reminding us what is right and wrong.'

He saw God as the source of power in his life and the Bible as having God's authority. Faithfulness to God was a hypergood for Changlan.

Fuyin: from crisis to new values, deepened after return

This cameo illustrates someone for whom personal crisis led to a changed self-concept and openness to adopt a Christian best account. Changed values and changed self-concept deepened after return to China, where they were sustained in a community of shared master story, in marriage, in church and through the Internet.

Immediately we started our conversation 38 year old Fuyin declared two things that were very important to her: she chose 'Fuyin' (Chinese for 'gospel') as her alias, and she said her parents had dramatically affected her life.

Home background and prior values

She grew up in a household where both parents were highly competitive and quick to anger. Fuyin attributed her father's temper to his joining the army at 14 and fighting in the war against Japan and in the civil war (1945-49). She recalled waiting in fear for her parents to return from work, knowing that if they had had a bad day the children could be in for a beating. Even her efforts to please her parents, by being top at school, did not seem to help. Her father's disappointment at having no son (Fuyin was the youngest of three daughters) compounded Fuyin's feeling of being unloved. Academic success at primary school, teachers' praises and a position as monitor provided a little relief.

With a breaking voice, Fuyin described her teenage years as a lonely time when she was not understood. In her isolation she turned to writing; the only happy memory of those years was having an article published. At 17 she met the boy who later became her husband. Although it was a relief to have someone reliable caring for her, she claimed the distraction of this relationship caused her to fail the all-important university entrance exam.

Like most schoolchildren of her era Fuyin had followed her parents' direction; they sent her to banking school, despite her love of language and literature. This led to a well-paid but stressful job in an insurance company. In her spare time she studied for a degree in English literature, as a degree was required for better paid, more senior jobs. During this period she lived with her parents, where the tense atmosphere was not helped because by

failing to get into a 'proper' university she had failed in her filial responsibility to give her parents face. At 24 she married and was able to leave the parents she 'hated'.

At work Fuyin despised practices which included bribing the boss rather than being rewarded for ability or good work. She placed high value on achieving her full potential on her own merit. She credited her father's teaching with her aversion to flattering or bribing the boss. Despite having just been promoted to a managerial position, Fuyin left for the UK because she believed study abroad would provide the knowledge and qualification to get a better job in China, which would 'release' her 'potential', or abroad, where she believed work relationships were 'easier' and the work environment more 'pure'. The importance she attached to working hard to achieve potential was reflected in her frustration with her husband in the UK, who lacked confidence, language or energy to find a job:

> I made up my mind twice to divorce him. I can't live with that kind of man: no responsibility, just wait, wait, wait.. very reactive, not proactive. I'm very proactive.

It was also important to her to be *seen* to have achieved. She believed that if she could get a job in the UK before returning to China this would give her face on return; not succeeding in this aim was 'a great blow'.

The UK: crisis and exploration of a new best account

After a setback and a visit home to see her son, Fuyin eventually started her course two years late. During those years she met a British Chinese lady who invited her home. There she met British Christians who were studying the *Bible*. Although she was not that interested in the *Bible* she was lonely and the people were kind, so she continued going, joining them at church, until her family arrived, her course started and she became busy.

In the UK marital tension developed to the extent that Fuyin seriously considered divorcing her husband. She said he had never had a stable job and she had always been the main breadwinner. Meanwhile, intermittent contact with Christian friends continued. However, misunderstanding developed when they thought Fuyin had become a Christian and she had not: they were advising her from a Christian perspective, suggesting she pray for God's guidance when she was deciding whether to look for work in the UK or China after graduation. At that time, relating Christian belief to getting a job seemed nonsensical to her.

Fuyin's failure to get a job, combined with financial worries and disappointment in her marriage, led to crisis and the turning point in her conversion story. She no longer felt able to control her own life. She quoted a Chinese Christian saying: 'the end of a human being is the start of God'.

> Oh (sigh), that was another hit, a blow.. so, at that time, September, I remember very clearly, just right in that month I believed in God. I just.. I found I was making effort towards *that* direction (indicating left), but God…just, not God (laughs)..I didn't believe in him at that time. There is an invisible power just lead me to *that* direction (indicating right), just completely different. And also that power is much, much, much higher than mine, so I just felt I was useless, I don't know what to do. I was full of energy, but suddenly, I was just completely empty and very, very tired. I don't know where to go and how I should do the next step in my life.

Then she and her husband watched a Christian DVD sent by a Chinese friend. They were shocked by how reasonable the arguments sounded, and both then believed in God. Suddenly they felt at peace and agreed that if the next job interview failed they would return to China, as that would mean God wanted them to return. At that point, she said, they did not understand about Jesus and salvation, just believed in the existence of God.

Just before this, Fuyin had been meeting a Jehovah's Witness, whom she challenged to justify her belief in an invisible God and her faith in the *Bible.*

The Witness gave her a book describing archaeological evidence for the historicity of the *Bible*. This contributed to her positive reaction to the DVD. From that point she started reading the *Bible* closely, stopped meeting the Witness and started attending Christian churches. Shortly afterwards, on return to China, listening to online sermons and consulting Christians, her belief in God developed to include belief in salvation through Christ.

Return to China: changed values and a bond with God

Fuyin's new personal narrative, including a God who intervenes personally in her life, was illustrated in her comments that God 'led' her back to Beijing rather than Shanghai and that she received 'reassurance from God' when she read Christian literature. She frequently referred to God speaking to her personally, during church sermons, after praying or when reading the *Bible*. Her descriptions of two decisions not to divorce her husband provide vivid examples. She described an incident in the UK when after praying, she heard a voice, which she believed to be God's, saying 'love your husband'. The second was after return to China, with her husband still unemployed: he was giving her a lift on his bicycle:

> One day I sat behind him and suddenly I realised I was only focusing on his..negative side. I didn't realise how good he was treating me and my family and my son, all sorts of things, and suddenly I, just in tears (her voice breaks), said to him 'God gave you to me and I didn't realise how good you are, always just, yeah, found your negative side'.

Back in China she worked for another insurance company but this time found she could not promote products as persuasively as before. Talking about the Christian gospel came naturally but talking about insurance she felt 'disappointed'. Conveying Christianity to others was so important to her that she carried leaflets to give to people who might be interested.

Several times she mentioned expecting God to 'use' her, once quoting from Mother Teresa about being a pencil in God's hand. She referred to sections of the *Bible* when describing seeking to find out what God wants her to do, or waiting to see what God is doing. She referred to the book of Romans in one of several instances of saying that God had given her peace: she claimed that despite having had 'great hatred' for her parents, God's love for her and the peace he gave her enabled her to forgive them for beating her as a child. The verses she chose were examples of people trusting God in times of difficulty, waiting for God to act rather than depending on their own actions. This was so prevalent in the interviews that the importance to her of trusting the Christian God and doing what he wants can be said to be her hypergood. Describing her reaction to a sermon about Christ's crucifixion, she said:

> I was in tears seven days. After that I felt.. yes, I was completely transformed by God. Completely it's a new me. And the, the old me just, yeah, simply gone and I felt I am a servant for him, not me. I couldn't not care about others, always doing things for others, just very naturally. It's nothing from my side, my side. And I decided, I prayed to God, decided to live a holy life. Because in Hebrews it says if we are not holy we won't see God. Yeah, and it's grace that we believe in God but if we want to see him, to go to heaven in the future, we have to make an effort. So I decided, I promised to God I will live a holy life and live for him, do anything, everything for him.

Trusting God to look after her and the family during unemployment and other difficulties was a source of both comfort and tension. She articulated a marked sense of identity as someone given a purpose by God and having her marriage saved by God. At the same time she faced criticisms from her parents about her beliefs. Her idea that she could enjoy running her own business teaching children English and thereby serve God by getting to know the parents and gradually telling them about Christianity gave her comfort that she would have both an income and a way of serving God.

However, it was in tension with her and her husband's comments that she could do something more prestigious.

Her values had changed from being respected for being best, maximising her career potential and protecting her and her family's face, to patiently trusting God, telling others the Christian gospel and appreciating her family. For Fuyin it was the crisis that shattered her self-concept as strong provider and made her open to a new master story and values, which led her into new social bonds, with God, with the church in China and in a changed relationship with her husband and son.

Lara: little change in values

This cameo illustrates someone, originally drawn to faith by relationship with Christians and the Christian account of life, who still claimed Christian faith, but articulated less of the Christian master story than others and showed only slight change in values. She lacked a supportive community of shared best account and values, having not settled in a church after return to China.

Lara was 26, single and had been back in China three years when we met.

Growing up in China: valuing smooth relationships

She described her school years as being about 'study, study', with middle school as being particularly hard work, with strict, unhelpful teachers. Relief came in the form of close relationships with cousins and friends. Trips to other cities with her grandparents, and her father's praise for Canada, gave her an interest in studying abroad.

As a child Lara did not believe in the supernatural. Although her grandparents, whom she lived with until she was 6, believed in ghosts and provided food for their dead ancestors at the Qing Ming festival, Lara's CCP

member mother told her 'it's all imagination'. Despite having a boyfriend with Catholic parents, Lara never thought deeply about religion until she was in the UK.

At 18 Lara went to study engineering at a university just two hours from her home city. She enjoyed the independence. Good relationships with friends were particularly important to her. She liked the way they looked after each other. She said her undergraduate university highlight was the 2003 SARS epidemic. Classes stopped and students were not permitted to leave the campus. Sporting activities were organised. Lara enjoyed the closer friendships which arose from the enforced enclosure. Her saddest memory of university also related to a friendship, with her room-mate: they lost their former closeness when Lara started spending time with a boyfriend the room-mate did not like.

The UK: challenged by a different self-concept

Because of her father's wish that she do so and her interest in travel, Lara applied for master's study abroad. In the UK she again enjoyed the friendship of other students, particularly Chinese; they encouraged each other, cooking together and providing academic support. Life in the UK was generally enjoyable, except when the International Office informed her father she had failed an exam; Lara had planned to re-sit and pass without him knowing.

Lara's first encounter with Christians in the UK was when a Malaysian Chinese course-mate invited her to a student Christian meeting. She was surprised to find that most of the people there were ethnically Chinese. This challenged her unarticulated idea that Christianity and being Chinese did not go together:

> I never imagined I would meet a Christian like him,
> because he is Chinese Malaysian. His grandparents are
> Chinese, and his parents are Chinese. Just their nationality
> is Malaysian. So I didn't know, I didn't know that, because
> everyone around me.. all didn't believe any religious thing,
> or they believed in Buddha. So I thought it was very far
> from me.

After this she met more Christians at regular social activities. She thought they were happy and kind, and became curious about what they believed. Her English and Chinese Christian friends had a different worldview and account of life from her, which included things she had previously thought untrue; she felt the need 'to know if it's true, or like…it's imagined, if it didn't exist at all'. Eventually, after attending a weekly course introducing Christianity, attending church, reading books and questioning friends, she believed the Bible and decided to become a Christian. She was also touched to the point of tears when friends prayed for her.

Describing the time before she decided to believe, Lara said that she was afraid that if she found she could not believe she would hate Christians. This highlights one of her core values: it was, and remains, extremely important to Lara to maintain harmonious, respectful relationships and to fit in with others.

Lara was baptised in the UK. The account of her journey to faith, written before the baptism, includes a description of her sins being 'washed out' because of faith in Jesus's death and of God as a father. She also wrote

> It is wonderful to think that God is with us, always, though
> I am not used to it now. I think I will soon get used to it
> through God's guide and other friends' help.

This may indicate there was a doubt about God in Lara's master story at that point. After she returned to China this story and self-concept was not consolidated within a Christian church community. Her interviews are full of reference to Christian friends in the UK that she liked. When asked to

define her relationship with God she described him as an invisible father and very good friend, always present to her, but references to an active God, prevalent in some other participants' interviews, are few in hers.

Return home: a clash of hypergoods

On return to her home city she quickly found a job. The search for a church was problematic. Wary of both restrictions on the registered church in China and the danger of cults within the unregistered church, after some months she found an unregistered church which taught the Bible accurately. However, attending church brought conflict with her parents and with her own sense of what is seemly. Her parents objected to her attending church; at the same time she was uncomfortable with the church's need to hide:

> They are … moving from here to there..they don't want to be discovered. I don't understand that because I think 'we are Christians and it's really not a thing to be ashamed of, but we are doing things..like we are thieves. We can't let other people know what we are doing here'. I don't like the feeling.

This church experience, others' critical reactions when she said she was a Christian, the idea that as a Christian she should marry only a Christian and her parents' objections all combined to lead her to stop attending church. However, she still claimed in interview that becoming a Christian had been the biggest change in her life. It is hard to know whether being a Christian was part of her continued daily thinking or whether the context of the interview led to her say that; she may have wanted to avoid disturbing our friendly relationship. Comments she made suggest that since her experience in the UK Lara put a high value on being generous to others and on being content with what she had rather than striving for more money and material possessions. Indeed Lara commented that this was a benefit: her life was easier than others' because she was not worrying about money

and achieving higher position. This may have resulted either from witnessing a less driven lifestyle in the UK or from her Christian beliefs.

She said:

> When I first came back the change was obvious. But now it's.. I think.. I'm affected by other people.

Although she said she differed from others in having less desire for money and status symbols, without continued close friendships with Christians or a church, Lara's self-concept did not seem to have changed much from what it was before she went to the UK. She still wanted to be a good daughter, have a happy, peaceful family life and get on well with those around her. Her personal narrative and self-concept were certainly challenged when she went abroad and met Christians, but sustained change may not have occurred. Her strongest value, or hypergood, (being in warm, mutually supportive community and having unruffled, respectful relationships with those closest) remained unchanged. For some participants being part of a UK Christian community was a step to a radically changed master story, self-concept, values and social bonds, continued in a Christian community on return to China; for Lara it was not. Perhaps it was the happy community she 'believed in' rather than the Christian gospel.

Reflections on the cameos

Viewed together, these cameos indicate some of the variety in the faith trajectories of the participants; however, similarities appear too. In terms of which values individuals held, all three had previously placed great importance on their relationship with parents and continued to do so; however, since becoming Christian, the nature of this relationship had changed more for Changlan and Fuyin than for Lara. That Changlan is a man, and both he and Fuyin have Christian marriage partners, arguably gives them more freedom than Lara to choose pleasing God over pleasing

parents where they experience a conflict between the two; as a single woman Lara has less support to do so. For the former two their Christian faith and value of pleasing God is encouraged and sustained in church and in their marriages. They also share a revised view of marriage, and value of their spouse, which they attribute to Biblical teaching and God's intervention.

The three illustrate variety in the process of conversion and related values change. For example, although Changlan and Lara were both initially drawn to church in the UK by the friendliness of Christians and what they perceived to be the reasonableness of the Christian account of life they heard, Changlan has continued in church in China, and changed much more than Lara, who does not go to church; Fuyin, however, who did not really bond with Christians or enjoy church in the UK, now stresses the importance of church and has values in common with Changlan.

What they all illustrate is the importance to sustained change of regular close contact with others, who share similar values and self-concepts and interpret life in terms of a shared Christian story. Lara's cameo, in particular, illustrates the role local church ecology and politico-religious context can play in an individual's ability to live out a new faith and values.

Other participants

All participants claimed to have changed as a consequence of their time in the UK. Clear evidence was found that the values of twelve had changed, and remained so after return to China, to include values related to their Christian faith. These twelve shared markedly similar values after conversion; this is discussed in subsequent chapters. They were Changlan, Enci, Fuyin, Hui, Lili, Wanglin, Xiaohong, Xiaojia, Xiaoshi, Xuejing, Yue and Yun. There was evidence that all twelve had converted to Christianity in this

sense: they not only believed in the existence of God and his coming to Earth in the human form of Jesus, but also in Protestant evangelical teaching that Christ's death on the cross had saved them from future punishment for personal sin, and that his resurrection was assurance for their own future resurrection and eternal life with God. The evidence suggested that they believed this in their minds and were also living, to varying degrees, as if they trusted it to be true.

Two others, Mei and Yang, expressed similar beliefs to these twelve verbally but there was less evidence of their values having been affected by their faith to the same degree as the twelve.

The remaining five, Caiyun, Huanglin, Jinglan, Hunan and Lara, verbalized fewer elements of Christian belief, provided less evidence of it and their values had not changed to the same degree as the twelve. They were not in a 'new community of interpretation and action', with close 'social bonds' with Christians, and although their best accounts may have changed, the conversation of four contained little or no reference to the Protestant master story mentioned above. Lara was considered in the cameo starting on page 160. I discuss the other four briefly here.

Caiyun, who had been elected a Young Communist at school, went through a period at university in China and then in the UK where encountering Christians led to the collapse of her belief in communism. She attended courses about the *Bible*, questioned Christians strongly and came to believe that God loved her and that she was his 'daughter' when she felt him

166

'hugging' her at an Alpha course[26]. She said this experience was still vivid after four years. However, she had not joined a church in China, did not read the *Bible* regularly and her experience of conversion into the Christian community was not as strong as others'. Although she identified herself as a Christian, and referred to God as 'Father' she did not refer to Christ in interviews, whereas others did. She did not refer to herself as a 'sinner', or 'saved' or mention a decision to follow Christ or God (Smith's (2001) transfer of allegiance, see page 50). She mentioned God's love but not his authority.

Huanglin and Jinglan had not joined churches in China either. Their cases are different from each other. Huanglin told how before she went to the UK, although she had no contact with Christianity, she pondered the number of idols in Buddhism and traditional Chinese religions, and had concluded that there must be one god or 'great person' over them all. Her study of the *Bible*, attendance at church, and discussions with Christians in the UK, led her to the conclusion that Jesus was this person. This had seemed quite natural to her. On return she refrained from worshipping idols, for example not burning incense on trips to Buddhist temples with colleagues. However I do not know if she is aware of the Christian doctrine of salvation, for example as described in the Nicene Creed. She did not share all the elements of the master story shared by other participants and therefore her self-concept and values had not shifted to the same degree; so she had not persisted in searching out a community of believers.

---

[26] 'Alpha' is a course run by many UK churches. It claims to offer the 'opportunity to explore the Christian faith in a relaxed setting over ten thought-provoking weekly sessions' ("The Alpha Course," 2010).

Nor do I know what Jinglan really knows or thinks about salvation. In the UK she originally thought of the biblical God as being only for (and interested in) the Jews and some other people, but not concerned for all nationalities, including the Chinese. After discussing this with British church ministers she had believed that Christianity could be for Chinese people too. However, back in China, where the only church she knew was an hour away, Sundays were taken up with work or family activities, and she did not know Christians, she had started to question this again. Nevertheless, although she might not regularly think of herself as a Christian, there was evidence that she still attached importance to the *Bible*: she had developed a university course about the cultural influence of the *Bible,* and showed pleasure when talking about students asking where they could get a *Bible*. This suggested she might still be in a process of conversion. The *Bible* was for her clearly an image of power and authority, in Fowler's sense, but there was no evidence suggesting she had adopted Christianity as her master story. She therefore lacked the incentive to overcome barriers to finding a church community. Consequently she lacked the social bonds, or community, to sustain a Chinese Christian self-concept and story.

Another possible example of conversion in progress was Hunan. Unlike any of the others, he conveyed to me that he was feeling lost and had felt spiritually lost since his return. He had not done more than visit a church occasionally in the three years since return, although he was baptized[27] into the Christian faith in the UK and said he had hope because of God. I learned at our meeting that he and his wife were thinking of starting a

---

[27] The expression 'baptism', as used by participants in this study, refers to their individual participation in the public Christian rite of baptism, as an expression of personal faith in Christ.

home meeting for *Bible* study and prayer with another Christian couple.[28] Hunan told me that he had never liked attending church, even in the UK, because he felt he did not get anything from it. Where he felt he really did gain was in a small *Bible* study and prayer group in the UK, led by a Hong Kong Chinese lady, who had conducted research in China and was an effective cross-cultural religious guide. Hunan's comments about her, about being a 'follower' of the Christian economist Yang Xiaokai, and about the colour his life acquired when he and his wife started making friends with local Christians, suggested that Christian companionship and gaining a good understanding of the *Bible* were as important to him as to most other participants. In the UK he met Christians he could engage with at a deep intellectual level; in China he was wary of constraints on Christian activity, and did not know where to go to find Christians with a similar background and perspective.

These and other returnees have told me that attending church in China can be very different from in the UK. It is not as easy. Restrictions on church building and registration mean they are not as physically obvious as in the UK. In some cities, without contacts it is difficult to find a church within reasonable distance. Also the people attending church may be from a different social milieu. Whereas in Oxford or Nottingham, even Beijing or Shanghai, a university lecturer can find a church attended by other academics or people from a similar background, in some large Chinese cities it is not easy. The only apparent (usually registered) church may have a predominantly older, female and less educated congregation, even

---

[28] I think this was not triggered by his participation in this research, because we were introduced only days before the interview, and the idea of the group had clearly been under discussion for longer. Whilst I was with them a friend visited, bringing possible study materials.

perhaps using a local dialect[29]. The style of music and preaching, and the nature of social contact inside and outside church services, may also be different. Very low ratios of ministers and seminarians to believers (Vala, 2009), and a history of restrictions placed on intellectuals attending church, give rise to variability in the intellectual and spiritual depth of preaching. Simply because someone does not attend church in China does not necessarily mean that they are not a Christian, but it might do; at the very least it makes it harder to persevere and grow in one's faith.

Bridges facilitating the process of conversion

Four main reasons for, or bridges to, conversion were described by participants: access to information which, after reflection and consideration of the lives of Christians, seemed to the participant to be true and desirable to follow, in Taylor's terms, a new best account; experiencing a crisis; finding life purpose and answers to questions they had been asking before they came to the UK; and finding love and security which was hitherto lacking in their lives. The majority had more than one of these bridges or reasons.

Generally, reasons for accepting conversion (I use this phrase advisedly; see below) were consistent with pre-conversion values. Changlan, for example, from primary school onwards, valued exploring ideas and disliked being forced to study or write things he did not believe to be true. At university his teenage appetite for reading widely grew into an interest in the world beyond China, encouraged by watching foreign films and attending activities organised by the university international office to

---

[29] The situation is changing somewhat as increasing numbers of middle-class and younger people attend church (Tang, 2008) but the experience of feeling socially very different has recently been described to me by returnees visiting churches in some cities.

encourage contact between Chinese home students and international students. Contact with Christians in the UK was a continuation of his interest in engaging with philosophical and intercultural ideas.

Xiaoshi, on the other hand, had been seeking safety since childhood, when she lived in fear of her father and felt worthless because of him. She described her drive to be 'top student' at school and successful at work as a desperate bid for self-esteem and also as the only route to eventual geographic and financial freedom from him. Her initial attraction to Christians and church in China was also as an escape from the effects of her past. However she described her life in the UK, and her close friendship with a British Christian couple and a male Malaysian Christian student as 'real life' and 'real family'. She found love and security with them and in church, which remained after she returned to China. She described this as all being 'from God'. In a way her core value had not changed; being valued and safe were still central, but she no longer had to strive for them, because she now felt she *was* valued, loved and safe. Her focus had changed from how to achieve this state to what to do with it now that she had it, or to put it as she might, how to live in a way that thanks God for it.

Intrinsic to Xiaoshi's story is the idea of another party, God, involved in their conversions. Thirteen others referred to God acting in their lives, to turn them to him, rather than it being simply a matter of them making a decision to believe something and change their lifestyle accordingly. Two more implied that God was involved, in their descriptions of being 'touched', another referred to a 'sunset' in her head when she believed, and an eighteenth referred to God's overall 'perfect plan' in his life. Only one, Jinglan, made no such reference. This is consistent with accounts in the Bible about God intervening. Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus (in

Acts 9:1-19) is one of the most dramatic Biblical examples of divine intervention completely changing what someone saw to be their work and purpose (in Saul's case the elimination of Christian influence). Another example, more akin to participants in this study, is Lydia, the cloth-trader. She is described as listening to the Apostle Paul speaking about Christ, whilst she was visiting Philippi on business. The writer, Luke, describes God acting in a way that enabled her to respond: 'The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message' (Acts 16:14).

Each of the nineteen participants gave reasons of the four kinds listed above, for their belief in Christianity in the UK. For some there was one reason; for others a mixture of two or three. The reasons, or bridges, for each participant are shown in the table in Appendix E.

First bridge: a new best account

The most prevalent reason was receiving information not available to them in China, assessing it and finding it credible. They met Christians socially through university contacts and subsequently attended church or a course or discussion group about the *Bible*, run by local Christians or Christian students. The initial reason for attending was a mixture of cultural interest, relief from boredom or loneliness, a desire to improve spoken English or an attraction to the kindness of Christians. Some met ethnic Chinese Christians who introduced them to a Chinese church; others met British Christians. They then became more interested in both the content of what was studied and in the lives and motivations of the Christians. After investigating and questioning they decided that they believed what they heard. This was consistent with Taylor's account of background structures (of best accounts, self-concepts, social bonds and values) being formed, or challenged and re-formed, in communities where understanding and experience is articulated.

They had what Taylor calls a new 'best account' and Fowler a revised 'master story'. I place Changlan, Hui, Lara, Mei, Xiaojia, Xuejing and Yang in this category. The other participants also went through a process of analysis, but had additional reasons for being drawn to Christianity.

Second bridge: crisis

The second main bridge to Christian conversion was an experience of crisis[30], where the person perceived God intervening to provide a solution. This coincided with experiencing welcome and friendship from Christians. The crisis was greatest for Yun, Lili, Fuyin and Xiaohong, but was also experienced to a degree by Wanglin, Hunan and Jinglan. Yun, for example, found that she was pregnant shortly after arriving in the UK, and therefore had to defer study. This was a period of financial difficulty and great anxiety for her and her husband. The friendship of a British Christian, who helped her throughout her UK stay, together with having the time to explore Christian beliefs, appears to have combined with a growing belief that the Christian God had the answers to her problems and could provide the protection she needed. She experienced a crisis where her old methods of coping were inadequate. The same happened in different ways to Fuyin, Xiaohong and Lili. Fuyin and Xiaohong described experiencing great difficulties in the UK and encountering God in the process; they both used a Chinese Christian saying encapsulating their experience: 'the end of a human being is the beginning of God'. In other words they were at the end of their own resources, but perceived God acting to show that the way forward was to rely on him. Lili recalled the time in the UK when her boyfriend in China broke up with her and, consequently, she had no money to complete her studies, because he was her sponsor. At that time she had

---

[30] The role of crisis in some conversion has been argued by Rambo (1993).

also been struggling with the knowledge that her brother had terminal cancer. She remarked that in the crisis she believed God was calling her to him, giving her a 'second chance'.[31] For these women the crises induced a sense of helplessness and belief that their own abilities were insufficient to cope. With this came a new openness to turning to God.

Third bridge: the search for meaning and purpose

The third main reason for believing is characterized by Yue, Caiyun and Huanglin. They were already, to varying degrees, asking questions about the existence of God before they came to the UK. Yue had attended talks about philosophy and religion in China, came to the UK with the express written intention of seeking the purpose of her life and commented that she was unlike other Chinese students in her UK *Bible* course, because they asked questions relating to the existence of God whereas she already believed in a single God. Caiyun had met foreign and Chinese Christians at university in China and had found that Chinese communism no longer seemed credible or acceptable, and that the beliefs of Christians resounded more with her. Huanglin did not initially seek for answers like the other two, but her earlier feeling that there must be one supreme God over many smaller gods drew her into deeper discussion with Christians.

Fourth bridge: love

Finding love and security within the Christian 'family' was the fourth main reason for conversion. Lili, Enci and Xiaoshi had been attracted to Christians in China because of their sincerity and kindness. All three also told of growing up in families where they did not feel loved by their father and

---

[31] When she said this she unknowingly echoed a sentiment expressed by C.S. Lewis: 'God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.' (1977 (1940), p. 74).

where quarrels between the parents were common. Lili described a father who was absent and did not provide financially for his family and a mother who constantly complained about the father and the lack of money. As a teenager Lili's main aim was to succeed in order to earn money to provide for her family and stop her mother's complaints. Her desires to be loved and to be financially secure were related.

Xiaoshi's home life sounded even worse. Her aim in doing well at school was to escape her father's violence and verbal abuse, to be independent, trusting no-one except her mother. She described her involvement with the church in China, before coming to the UK, as a desire to be with good people, to escape from her past, rather than as the outcome of a real understanding of the Christian faith. She said that understanding came later, in the UK. But again, what initially drew her to regular involvement with church in the UK was the love expressed by Christians, who were 'like a family', with whom she first experienced 'real life'. The Christian account she believed, she also experienced, because it was lived out by the British couple who welcomed her and a Malaysian 'brother' into their home and family. This is consistent with Taylor's argument that the articulation of a good, in this case God's love, is crucial. The characters and behaviour of the people were consistent with the message that their community was declaring.

Summary

Smith (2001) argues that Christian conversion has seven components: intellectual (belief in Christ); penitential (repentance), affective (trust in Christ), volitional (transfer of allegiance); sacramental (baptism), charismatic (reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit); and corporate (incorporation into congregational life). This list of components reflects the

multi-faceted nature of conversion found in this study and the variety of levels of conversion.

The nature, degree and continuance of participants' conversion to Christianity varied. Four main bridges to initial conversion were identified: a new best account of life which seemed credible and desirable to follow; experience of crisis; finding purpose and answers to questions of life meaning; finding love and security hitherto lacking. Some participants had more than one bridge. Where values remained changed after profession of Christian faith, this stemmed from changes in master stories and self-concept, initiated in a community of shared master story such as a church (e.g. Changlan) or after crisis whilst on the edge of such a community (e.g. Fuyin).

All participants claimed change. Clear evidence of core values change, which had remained or deepened since they returned to China, was found in twelve of the nineteen. There was evidence that these twelve continued to pursue a Protestant evangelical Christian faith; two more spoke of having such a faith but provided less evidence of it affecting their values; with the remaining five it was not clear that they had the same faith as the twelve or that their core values had changed to the same degree.

Chapter Five: Shared values

Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed individual participants' values. Although each participant had different values, certain values were shared by multiple participants. This chapter presents findings of a thematic analysis of, first, values shared most widely before professed conversion to Christianity in the UK, and then those shared most widely in China at the time of interviews. It starts with tables indicating how many participants shared which values and continues with a discussion of each value.

To aid understanding of the implications of changes consideration is then given to any resulting benefits or tensions experienced by participants after return to China. They were then in a very different context from when studying in the UK. The majority experienced some tensions as a result of living out their new values, with the few exceptions being those who were not apparently acknowledging their Christian faith by attending church or other changed behaviour.

The definition of value used in this study is cited on page 18. The discussion about the relationship between values and needs on pages 18 to 19 argues that on occasion a value is also a need; also, what is a need for one person in one context may be a value for another person in another context.

The two tables below show which values were strongly held by which participant, earlier and at the time of interview respectively. The absence of an asterisk means that the person did not hold the values as one of their strongest, not necessarily that they did not hold it at all.

Table 3: Values held strongly by four or more participants - before

VALUE	Achievement	Admiration & respect	Feeling loved	Belonging & camaraderie	Filial piety	New experiences	Finding purpose
Caiyun	*	*				*	*
Changlan			*		*	*	
Enci	*	*	*				
Fuyin	*	*	*		*		
Huanglin	*	*		*	*		
Hui					*	*	
Hunan				*		*	*
Jinglan	*		*			*	
Lara				*	*		
Lili	*		*				
Mei				*		*	
Wanglin	*		*	*			
Xiaohong	*	*				*	
Xiaojia	*	*		*			*
Xiaoshi	*	*					
Xuejing	*	*	*		*		
Yang	*	*		*			
Yue			*	*	*		*
Yun	*	*	*				
TOTAL	13	10	9	8	7	7	4

Table 4: Values held strongly by multiple participants – at time of interview

VALUE	Caring for family	Salvation, closeness to God	Caring for others	Honouring God	A good church	Gratitude & contentment
Caiyun	*	*				*
Changlan	*	*	*	*	*	
Enci	*	*	*	*	*	
Fuyin	*	*	*	*	*	
Huanglin	*		*			*
Hui	*	*	*	*	*	*
Hunan	*					
Jinglan	*		*			*
Lara	*		*			*
Lili	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mei	*					*
Wanglin	*	*		*	*	*
Xiaohong	*	*	*	*	*	*
Xiaojia	*	*	*	*	*	
Xiaoshi	*	*	*	*	*	
Xuejing	*	*	*	*	*	
Yang	*	*				
Yue	*	*	*	*	*	
Yun	*	*		*	*	*
TOTAL	19	14	13	12	12	10

Values before conversion

It is important to bear in mind a number of contextual factors that can be expected to have affected the values of those brought up in sixties, seventies and eighties China. First, all the participants were brought up in an environment of radical secularization where atheism was promoted throughout the education system and religion has only fairly recently come to be tolerated again. Also, the years following Deng Xiaoping's rise to power have led to a rise in wealth (for some) and in intensely competitive acquisitiveness. However, despite the challenges of the Mao era, particularly the Cultural Revolution, to the nature of the Chinese family, the concept of filial piety, with its central emphasis on deference to parents, still exerts influence. All three factors affected the values of participants in this research. The values discussed below are those shared by four or more people.

Academic and career achievement

Studying hard at school to get into a good university was mentioned by all participants. They strived to do well at the three key, highly competitive middle school, high school and university entrance exams. Yang, for example, described the drive to compete to get into the best school as early as primary school, and involving sometimes eighteen hours study a day. He perceived his experience as common amongst Chinese people his age (33), saying 'the only purpose of our life [was] to pass the national test, and also to get higher mark in the test. That [was] only, only purpose.'

Thirteen had placed a particularly strong emphasis on high academic and career achievement. Wanglin described the pride she had felt in always being top student in her class; she remembered going to the Buddhist temple with her mother and praying for good grades, as a teenager. Yun

mentioned her former pride at being a top student and then becoming a lawyer; she said progressing up the career ladder was her sole reason for deciding to do master's study abroad. She chose the UK versus the US or Japan because she already spoke Japanese and wanted to add English to her skills, and because the shorter UK course would enable her to get back to the Chinese career ladder quicker. Six of these shared memories of financial hardship as children; three mentioned very driven parents. Jinglan studied for her undergraduate degree and then, later, a master's degree, while continuing full-time work as a teacher. She did the second degree out of necessity, to equip herself to stay in employment.

However, whilst Jinglan described a happy home life, five other women, Lili, Enci, Yun, Xiaoshi and Fuyin, directly related their former determined focus on academic and career success to very unhappy childhoods. I discuss this background to the value here because it is an explanatory factor in their conversion stories and informs the discussion in Chapter 6. For example, when Lili was eleven her father lost his job, stopped providing financially for the family and was increasingly absent from home. This drove her to do well academically in order to gain some degree of early financial independence, to find relief from her mother's constant complaining about money, and to avoid the shame of being unable to fulfil her teachers' demands for payment of fees. She said her desire to do well in the university entrance exam stressed her so much she was sick and failed it, despite being an 'excellent student'. She re-sat the following year, obtained a small scholarship and supplemented her income with part-time English teaching. Following graduation she had a full-time job and an additional part-time job. She later decided to acquire a master's in occupational psychology because she thought her degree in English and Education would not lead to a 'very higher position'.

Xiaoshi also sought escape from an unhappy home environment by doing well at school. She and her mother were subject to physical and verbal abuse from her father. She lived a life of fear, only relieved by praise she received from teachers for doing well academically, and the hope of escape to university. She also became top student at high school, and described her success as giving her 'confidence'. Again a top student at university, she described valuing the praise of her lecturers. This led to a job in a top hospital.

For Enci and Fuyin, too, academic success at school offered some stability when encouragement and love were lacking at home, and the atmosphere was volatile. Fuyin described waiting for her parents to arrive home from work, looking to see if their faces were angry or happy as they came through the door. She claimed to have inherited her 'competitive' desire to 'be the best' from her father, and that even at the time of interview she was still driven 'to pay double efforts'. She studied for her undergraduate degree in the evenings, whilst working full-time.

Enci volunteered the connection between her drive to achieve and her parents' fights. She was brought up in a part of China where the drive to constantly earn more money is said to be particularly strong. Enci made it clear that she thought her father saw her, and her education, as an investment from which he would gain financial return. This wider social context, together with her unhappiness at home and her father's constant undermining of her achievements, led the teenage Enci to decide that her security lay in career success rather than in the family. Describing her earlier desire to become a businesswoman, 'shining in that area', she said she studied two majors at college, one a full-time degree in business English and another part-time in international trade.

From the age of two until seven, Yun lived apart from her parents, with her grandmother. Her parents

> had to work, so they had no other choice….So before seven years old, I don't know what my parents look like….At that time... I was born in 76, and you know, then China is very poor. So they can't visit us regularly, maybe twice or once a year.

When she moved to live with her parents she felt like a stranger in the house, especially because her younger sister had lived with their parents from birth. After completing her degree she embarked on a fiercely competitive career in law to gain more money, status and influence. Yun referred to herself repeatedly as having been 'a controller'. She linked her former intense drive to achieve with insecurity arising from having been removed from her grandmother at the age of seven, to live with parents whom she barely knew.

Being admired and respected

Ten people had set particular store on the admiration of others. Nine women mentioned enjoying the recognition that came with 'being top student' or getting the highest scores, as a strong or happy memory. Five people (Caiyun, Fuyin, Huanglin, Xiaohong and Yang) commented on their pride and pleasure at being nominated by teachers or classmates to be class monitor or president. Caiyun mentioned the admiration she enjoyed at school when her history as a top student led to her election as a young Communist Party member. Indeed the majority stressed the importance of being admired by others, or by being liked by teachers, for their academic prowess.

Desire for respect, and the status which can lead to it, was reflected in decisions made and attitudes held after leaving home, often in regard to jobs. This included Fuyin's hunt for a job in the UK, in order to have face on

return to China, and Huanglin's comment that being a university teacher was something to be respected, as teaching students was a sign of being able oneself.

Yang's happiest childhood memories were associated with being area table tennis champion, and being chosen to be chairman of the school students' committee. He said his happiest time at university was being captain of the football team. The selection of these memories and his choice of university degree and profession, law, are consistent with someone who placed great importance on being admired or respected. His comments about why he chose law reveal enjoyment in engaging in intellectually challenging discussion and in working out solutions to problems, but they also suggest a possible desire to impress and influence others with his intellectual abilities. Even after his return to China, when he worked for a Hong Kong law firm on the mainland, he compared himself with his peers working in (mainland-owned) Chinese law firms and said that his was 'a good job in their eyes, so I feel [felt] happy about this'.

For Huanglin the desire to be respected for proper behaviour, was at least as strong as the desire to be respected for position and ability. In her case this seemed very strongly attached to filial piety and the memory of her late parents and was discussed in the earlier section on 'filial piety'. Being strong, physically, emotionally and intellectually, had been very important to her. As a master's student she enjoyed representing her university at long jump. As she advanced in her career this wish to be seen as strong showed itself in the huge workload she took on. As a busy professor running a key laboratory, with many students, she took on her husband's students and laboratory as he travelled to represent the university, and his country, internationally.

Describing the period from high school through to her late 20s, 33 year old Xiaoshi repeatedly gave examples of the importance she had placed on winning the admiration of others for her academic then work success. At high school she loved teachers setting her as a shining example to others, saying she was 'living life for others to see'. When I asked her about any big disappointments during her undergraduate years she mentioned her failure to be elected class president, citing her selfish desire for personal glory as the reason her peers did not vote for her. The adjustment from university to her first job had been hard; used to the admiration accorded a 'top student' she now found she was just one of the 'common people'. She gradually lost her faith in the value of competing and achieving glory and status:

> This society is really ruthless…so even if I win. It's unworthy for me, because even if I become very wealthy, become very successful, but no love, you know, because these people are not good enough for me to spend my whole life… like..I'm very successful but you are not worth it for me to show you.

After her return from the UK, as a young Christian, she initially continued to value status and respect very highly. She took a job as HR manager in a hospital and did her best to serve the staff, using 'Christian ways to manage them, with love'. Working very hard she stopped going to church and started to argue with her Christian boyfriend, who lived in another city. In retrospect she said she had become like God herself, thinking:

> 'I can depend on myself, because look, I'm so successful.'
> So many people trusted me. Look, I was like a god, because they do trust me at that time.

She began to see the ugly side of having power and work politics, so left the job and returned to her old friends and church. Later, after marrying, she took a part-time job as a secretary in a church. Moving her hands to indicate a drop in status, she said it had been 'a big change, HR manager to

..that' and involved 'a lot of struggling at the beginning', but at the time of interview she was very happy in the role. Admiration was no longer important. Fowler's and Taylor's theories may throw light onto why this change in values did not take place earlier: in the UK she was with Christians, a community with a shared master story; working in the hospital she was distant from Christian friends, stopped going to church and in her words became 'distant' from God. The shares story, values and identity were not there to sustain her.

Feeling loved

Love is different from respect or admiration. There were many examples of people's decisions, memories and behaviour reflecting the great significance of feeling, or not feeling, loved. This had particular importance for nine participants.

Feeling loved had been a guiding factor, or core value, in a variety of ways. For six women intimacy with a boyfriend had been significant in their younger lives. Lili fell in love with a boyfriend, and within two months left her job and went to Beijing to live with him. She had several relationships with boyfriends where she equated being loved with being provided for financially. This can be seen in the one million yuan target she set one boyfriend before she would marry him. In our second interview when I asked her if she had been seeking to be self-reliant she corrected me:

> also I think..I think it's a kind of love-seeking, because I think the family, my parents, they don't show much love on the children. So we just tried to find another way to get it.

Her search for love and financial security had become combined after experiencing an absence of love in her childhood home and her father's absence and lack of provision for the family. With hindsight she attributed

the failure of the relationships with her boyfriends to her own selfishness; it was a desire to feel loved rather than a concern for the men themselves.

At university Wanglin went out with a boyfriend for two years. Initially she was with him each day, her parents even attributing her failure in the Chinese master's entrance exam to the relationship; but gradually they grew apart. Later, as a very new Christian, in the UK, she went out with a Muslim, but then gave up the relationship because she felt this conflicted with 'her love for God, Jesus'.

Sadly, one participant went to the extent of harming herself, cutting her arms when her mother persisted in telling her to end her relationship with her boyfriend at university. She wanted to be with the long-standing boyfriend she loved but could not do that without severe distress in the relationship with the mother she loved.

The importance of feeling loved came over in a more positive way when I asked Jinglan about her happiest childhood memories. She spoke vividly of a kind father who told her stories on summer nights and waited by the gate for her after school in the cold winter. She grew up during the Cultural Revolution and her father told her stories about Mao Zedong, but she now realises he also told her *Bible* stories.

Sometimes something is particularly valued when it is in short supply. Four women (Yue, Lili, Fuyin and Enci) conveyed their prior desire for love as stemming from a deep experience of not feeling loved or valued by one or more parents, as a child. Yue's father's emotional reserve and lack of shown appreciation of her, together with other family members' comments that she was plain and different, even led Yue to have wondered whether she was adopted and to feel as if she was from another planet. When asked what her childhood was like she replied 'I should say loneliness'; this

illustrates the significance of (the lack of) love to her. To say that this might relate purely to her being an only child is too simplistic, given her other comments. Also, of the six other only children amongst the participants only one talked of being lonely as a child (Lara).

It was not only women who valued love. Changlan's emphasis on the contrast between feeling loved by adults before starting school and the lack of felt love afterwards was mentioned in his cameo.

Belonging and camaraderie

These had been extremely important to eight people. Lara, in particular, often referred to relationships, both the camaraderie of a group and the significance of a particular person.

The importance that Xiaojia placed on close relationships with family and friends was apparent in her behaviour as an undergraduate in China. At home she had been the oldest of five children and at university she missed family enormously. Instead of spending her money on clothes she saved it, to telephone her parents and school friends. In five months she wrote 160 letters to family, friends and boyfriend.

One of Huanglin's happiest memories was with classmates at primary school, moving piles of bricks to help build a school. Yue, however, said she always thought she was 'from another planet' when young. She said this in the context of commenting about her interest in spiritual matters when young, going on to say she used to talk to the stars. However, given her other comments about having wondered if she was adopted, about feeling she did not belong in her job, about having a childhood dream to serve a great king, and about initially being concerned, when she was exploring Christianity, that God might not have 'chosen' her, it appears that the need to feel real belonging was crucial to her.

Study abroad can be isolating. Mei, Yang and Hunan all talked of loneliness in the UK. Yang admitted to crying when he first arrived, because he missed his family so much. The newly-wed Hunan missed his wife. He divided his time in the UK into two chapters, the time before she joined him and after. The difference in his feelings was not only linked to her presence but to a whole 'new world' of friends, and a feeling of family, which opened up to him when they started getting to know local Christians, some of whom even had them to live in their home whilst they awaited the birth of their son:

> the city was different, the same city…was different for me since my wife came there, and we did some different things, like meeting C and D and going to church and some friends' home to share our thinking and the life..which is a great experience.

Later he came back to this extraordinary experience of newness, associated with belonging:

> I think I.. we got in a new world, which is in the same city, but in a different... like.. like..you know…dimension, yes. And everything, every view is changed to me.

The importance to Hunan of belonging and friendship was also reflected in his memory of undergraduate university life in China being happy because he was in a small institution where they all knew each other and were 'like older brothers and sisters'.

Mei tried to get to know visiting scholars and people in her UK office but felt distant from them. She started to meet with three other Chinese ladies and they attended a *Bible* study group, but it was not until she started to attend a local church regularly that she began to feel close to any local people.

Demonstrating filial piety

Central to the Chinese notion of filial piety (introduced on page 66) is the relationship between child and parents. A dutiful child is expected to behave in a way which brings credit to the family, particularly by showing respect to parents through obedience and gratitude and by caring for them in their

old age. However the effects of this value go beyond relationships in the family and between the generations, affecting interpersonal relationships more generally (Ho, 1996).

There was evidence that filial piety had been particularly important to seven people, although it was most dramatically expressed, in very different ways, by Huanglin and the person who self-harmed during quarrels with her parents over her boyfriend. What made the latter's pain even more intense when having to choose between rejecting the love of her boyfriend and that of her mother, was her very strong sense of duty to her parents. Not surprisingly she included this as one of three major points in her life, dividing her life to date into three chapters based on those points. The others were at high school when she failed the university entrance exam and had to re-sit the year rather than allow her parents to borrow money to pay to get her into university, and when she became a Christian in the UK. The latter was an extremely happy time but the former provides another example of the importance of filial piety. What drove her to re-sit the year and to study hard was not just concern about her parents' finances but about their relationships with other people and their standing in others' eyes:

> I want[ed] them to be proud of me. I don't want when people talk about me in front of other people, they feel ashamed or disappointed.

> And:

> It was my responsibility to glorify them… to, you know, make them look good in front of other people.

Huanglin, 44, provides a very different example of someone for whom filial piety was central. The oldest of four children, growing up when life was very hard in China, at twelve she took on responsibility for looking after her siblings, whilst her mother stayed with Huanglin's father, who was

hospitalized after a stroke. She spoke glowingly of her mother's sacrifice for the family and then described her own role in looking after the family after her parents' early deaths. Her mother died at 53, when Huanglin was 21. Huanglin had been very conscious of the great effort made by her mother, despite poor health, to allow Huanglin to continue to master's level whilst her younger siblings still needed funding through their education. She told me how she helped her mother have the best possible treatment, and then went on, after her mother's death, to support her siblings financially. She clearly took, and takes, her role as the senior woman in the extended family very seriously. Part of what drives her to do this is her desire to honour the memory of her mother. Amongst the many things she said which revealed an intense desire to be respected for doing the right thing and for succeeding was her description of not getting into one of the very top universities in China as the big disappointment of her teenage life. Illness for several months before the university entrance examination meant that she did not study medicine at Beijing University or Qinghua, which she described as the 'right' destination for her academic level. This and many examples of supporting extended family and students, financially and with time or advice, could well stem from a strong sense of duty to fulfil family and other relationships in a way befitting her place as eldest child and university professor. Filial piety can extend beyond the direct relationship with parents to seeing 'one's life as an extension of one's parents' lives' (Hwang & Han, 2010), so one indirectly honours the family through one's social position and behaviour. It is hard in Huanglin's case to distinguish how much of her earlier behaviour and reactions was attributable to valuing filial piety, in honouring the memory of her parents, and how much to valuing social standing and respect for herself.

Lara provided a very different example of filial piety. Talking about how she had changed as a result of studying in the UK, she smiled at the memory that before she left China her ambition had been to get a good job, earning lots of money so that she could buy her father a Mercedes Benz, the ultimate status symbol.

Although only three people explicitly mentioned a need to please parents or to give them *face*[32] as a significant drive in the desire to do well academically, obeying parents was an assumption in most participants' youths. At school Fuyin wanted to be a teacher but her parents decided she should go to banking school. She explained that there was no question of choice. One did what one's parents' decided:

> at that time..you know, in our culture, our future normally is decided by parents..... So you can't have your own opinion. 'I want to be': no, no. So we don't have the right to decide our future. Always have to follow what parents ask you to do. Otherwise, you're not a good child.

Changlan, Fuyin and Xuejing all talked of the tensions involved in the need to fulfil parents' expectations, and to give them face (to make their parents look good in front of others because of the things their children had done). Fuyin spoke of her failure to get into university because she was too focused on her boyfriend:

> We both paid a big price. I should have.. gone to… yeah, a proper university, full-time, cos give my parents' face.

Having new experiences

Experiencing new ideas, activities, people and cultures was essential to seven participants. In a group who had all studied abroad this might be

---

[32] In the Chinese context the concept of *face* and of fulfilling expectations is highly developed. A definition is given on page 65.

expected to be important for all. However others' reasons for studying abroad were more related to parental suggestion, seeing others going abroad or the quest for career advantage. These seven valued finding out about the world outside China: five of them read foreign novels or watched foreign films. For five this related to a strong importance attached to experiencing new challenges, especially intellectual ones.

Caiyun attributed her happiness at university in China to studying English. Her facility in the language led her to read English language novels voraciously and to study American and English culture and history through the medium of film. For her the language was 'a gate or a door to another world' and the course 'a visible way to, a picture, to see the lives, to see the history' of 'Western people'.

Jinglan started reading stories secretly, as a child during the Cultural Revolution, then expanded her reading, including romantic novels, after the Open Door Policy led her to dream of going abroad. This and her job as an English teacher were what led her to the UK in her forties as a visiting scholar, where what she enjoyed most was learning about the culture and travelling around the country.

Hunan's decision to study at Oxbridge and the way he went about getting married both reflected a strong desire for new experiences. Having read about Oxbridge when young, he was impressed by the long history of the universities. He did not want to go there so he could get a better job afterwards. He just wanted to *be* there, studying and living in Oxbridge. This was consistent with his schoolboy wish to be a scientist, which was not fulfilled because his father said economics was a more sensible option. More romantic was his decision, against the advice of parents and friends, to marry someone from a different ethnic background, whom he had never

met and who lived in a distant part of China. He had met her father whilst away from Beijing travelling on business. What people said about the man's daughters intrigued him because it went against his preconceptions of what people in remote provinces were like:

> I think, 'ah, in this place like a desert, there are still some girls have a similar.. dreams, like city girls in Beijing'....I was very shocked because I thought this place was so rough, and the people here so remote… and they share the same feelings with us!

At school Hui helped publish a children's newspaper and at university won a job as a radio disc jockey. When I asked why he resigned after two years he replied:

> it's just, you know, if I'm spending all my life in here... it's just like I can see it, I can see all my future. But I don't want that. I don't want something you can predict. You know I'm still 24, 25, but I already know all my life is, going to spend? No, I'm not going to do that.

He didn't want all his life mapped out in front of him, but wanted surprises and fresh experiences. Xiaohong, whose desire for something more in life took her to study in both Singapore and the UK, expressed something similar, when telling me why she decided to leave her secure engineering job, against the advice of her parents, to take up graduate study in China:

> I want[ed] something more challenging. I cannot even ...if I keep that kind of life, I can easily think about the time I retire.

With the exception of Changlan, the seven who were particularly driven by a desire to have new experiences or engage with different cultures had not mentioned serious problems in their childhood relationships with parents. They had a secure platform to adventure into the unknown. As Changlan had experienced a warm, secure home until he went to school he had probably developed the personal confidence which appears, in this study, to accompany the strong desire to try new things and see the world.

Finding purpose

Four people, Yue, Caiyun, Xiaojia and Hunan, had set very high store on finding purpose. They had been looking for something that explained the world and their place in it, something to believe in that would give them direction. Yue described attending lectures about religion and philosophy at university and sending off to Germany for some books about religion. When I asked if there were any special people in her younger life she mentioned the father of a schoolmate, with whom she discussed 'only .. deep topics, like philosophy or life, you know.. literature'. In China she had looked for people going to church at Christmas but when they had described it she decided it was not what she sought. It was 'crowded [with] people and they just want blessings'. Before she left for England she wrote on a piece of paper: 'what I will do in England: I will find the purpose of my life'. When she arrived in the UK she was already seeking ultimate truth and meaning. Therefore, when invited to join a group reading and discussing the *Bible* it was quite a natural thing to do. However, she became frustrated because her interests were different from other Chinese students in the group. She was not just seeking intellectual debate but spiritual meaning for her life. She already believed in the existence of a single God.

Caiyun's interest in matters of meaning and truth deepened after studying Mao Zedong thought as a junior Communist Party member. She started to think about what she believed and was attracted by 'the power that this religion [communism] gives to you, that you are passionate for'. She felt that now she had a direction to 'believe in' or a 'road' to follow. However, at university in China, she started to have doubts about communism, especially when she met a foreign Christian teacher whose beliefs were very different. She described this period as being both very unhappy and, then, happy. At first she felt lost as she started to question what she believed.

She had met someone she respected who had beliefs contrary to the communism she had taken as her faith. She approached the teacher for help and rather than trying to persuade her by discrediting her beliefs he gave her material about Christianity to read. She described this period as a time of being 'cleaned' and 'worked out'. After gaining a basic knowledge of the *Bible* she was introduced to Chinese Christians and participated in a *Bible* study and discussion group, but described herself as still at 'that time just a listener or just one knocking on the door'.

As a child Xiaojia had pondered her place and purpose in the world:

> I thought about these questions frequently….it's not really clear, like a God or something like that..I just think about ..what was the earth like, also what is my position in this?

This concern was eclipsed after the age of twelve when pressures to succeed at school took over, but came back at university, where she felt 'lost', with her heart 'like an empty box'. She was still living in memories of her past, home life, until a crisis in her third year. A famous singer, Leslie Cheung, committed suicide, jumping from the top floor of a Hong Kong hotel (BBC, 2003). After this Xiaojia started to worry about having an accident and had 'many illusions' or ideas about whether the same thing could happen to her. She read many books about such stories, which served to deepen her depressed state, until after several months she went home for the university vacation. It is possible that the singer's suicide coincided with Xiaojia having an undiagnosed case of clinical depression. Whether or not this was the case, this incident and her other comments about feeling lost suggest she was beset by a strong fear and sense of pointlessness. The gap may have arisen because she needed a new sense of purpose and meaning after losing her role as big sister to four siblings and after achieving her prior goal of being top in everything in order to get into university.

In the UK, struggling with his PhD studies and missing his wife, Hunan found a spiritual guide in the life and writing of the eminent Chinese Australian economist Yang Xiaokai. Before becoming an economist Yang became famous as a young man during the Cultural Revolution, when he published an article entitled 'Whither China' and was imprisoned for ten years (X. Yang, 1997). Hunan thought Yang's economic theory 'noble' and thought 'this is what I believe'. He was also attracted by Yang's life: his heroism in writing an article so critical of Mao's regime, his subsequent journey through severe hardship, his later academic success, and then his conversion to Christianity. He drew parallels between his own and Yang's life as young academics, and their initial involvement with Christians, saying 'I was his follower'.

Values at time of interview

This section discusses the core values of participants at the time of the interviews. Again the values are presented in the order of the number of participants who shared the value, with the highest number first. Of the nineteen, one had been in China one year, twelve had been back between two and three and a half years, five from four to five and a half years and one had been back seven years. The length of time they had been back did not seem to have any particular relationship with the degree of values change or with continuing in the Christian faith.

Caring for family

Relationships with husband or wife, or with parents, were very important to everyone. However, the family values expressed after conversion were, in general, different from the filial piety valued before. There had been a move from a passive acceptance that apparent obedience and accession to parental directives was the appropriate norm to a more active engagement

with parents, which stressed gratitude and care over obedience. Attitudes to marriage had also changed.

Of the seven for whom filial piety had been particularly significant before belief in Christ, four (Changlan, Fuyin, Yue and Xuejing) had actively gone against their parents' wishes since professing faith, in matters related to job decisions, religious activity or marriage. However, they were all in close contact with their parents and actively concerned for their well-being. A hierarchy of authority was in place: where parents' wishes conflicted with Biblical teaching, or what they believed to be God's wishes, God would prevail. Xiaojia too perceived this changed hierarchy. Lara was an exception to this change. For her, having a peaceful relationship with her parents over-rode going to church.

Fuyin, who had previously been concerned that to return to China having been unable to get a job in the UK would mean that her parents would lose face, was now unemployed, for reasons not unconnected with her faith, but no longer seemed concerned about the effect on her parents' face. However, she and others were concerned that their parents should experience the same faith in Christ.

Thirteen talked about positive differences their faith in God had made to family relationships, despite tensions experienced by seven of them. Fuyin specifically said that through becoming a Christian she had been able to forgive her father for his beating and lack of care for her as a child. The mothers of Enci and Lili had both followed their daughters in becoming Christians. Enci, who had previously struggled to communicate with her mother, was now able to support her mother in withstanding the criticisms of Enci's father. In a sense she is a spiritual adviser to her mother.

Seven had married since study in the UK, and since becoming Christians, so naturally marriage relationships were more important than before. For the four single women in the group the main authority figures in their lives before conversion were their parents. For Lara this was still so. For Enci, Xuejing and Yue God was now the highest authority. These three described incidents where they had behaved in a way suggesting they valued divine approval more than parental. Yue had spent her whole life with her father making big decisions for her, and he was still doing so: at the time of our meetings he had just committed Yue, without consulting her, to pay the mortgage on a larger apartment he had arranged for her. However, since making what she considered the biggest decision of her life without him (and in opposition to what she knew would be his wishes), to become a Christian, she now had a different attitude. She submitted to her father in the apartment matter because it did not endanger her relationship with God, whom she views as her heavenly Father[33]. However, in the matter of choosing a husband she is determined only to marry a Christian, despite the fact that this annoys her parents.

Living abroad had given both Changlan and Hui a new appreciation of their parents, as had, probably, the process of ageing and acquiring more responsibilities. These two men placed great value on honouring and caring for their parents. Hui repeatedly mentioned his gratefulness to them and his admiration for them. I could not tell whether this increased appreciation was simply a result of maturity and the opportunity for reflection that distance from them (in the UK) had provided, or whether his Christian faith contributed to it. However, in Changlan's case his faith, his interpretation of Christian scripture, and his commitment to fulfilling the commandments in

_____

[33] In the New Testament Christ frequently refers to God as his Father and as the 'Father in heaven' of Christ's followers.

it, had definitely contributed to him valuing family very highly. He criticized his former attitude. For instance, when asked about any difficulties he experienced as a teenager, he responded:

> I started to have my own mind, and I felt my attitude towards the world is quite different from theirs, because I thought they were confined in a little well [world?], and their sky is only that big. It was bad actually.. yeah. After I became a Christian I thought that kind of thought was not good. Yeah, it was not out of love.

Despite his father's initial anger and worry about his son becoming a Christian, Changlan continued in his faith and is very active in church. Now, Changlan says, his father has stopped worrying about his son's faith and their relationship is better than ever before. As they have both got older there has been a shift in the relationship to Changlan caring for his parents, rather than vice versa. He said he counts this a privilege and again referred to the *Bible*, this time to the commandment to honour one's parents. His comments, decisions and actions support his claim, that the most important thing to him, second only to his commitment to honour God, is his relationship with his family.

Changlan's faith also affected his marriage (discussed in his cameo, from page 148). This was also the case for at least eight of the other thirteen married participants. Fuyin was not the only wife who attributed the survival of her marriage to divine intervention (see her cameo, page 158). Lili said that if she had still been the old self-centred, bad-tempered impatient person that she was before being converted, arguments would have led to divorce. I had a separate conversation with her husband and he confirmed this without me raising the issue.

Six of the eleven married women (Xiaohong, Xiaoshi, Yun, Wanglin, Mei and Lili) specifically mentioned that, in their marriages, part of the wife's role was to support the husband. They mentioned this as something specifically

Christian. Xiaohong, for example, had found that following her church's teaching about the wife submitting to the husband's headship had led to a reduction in quarrels in their home. (She said that her husband was not always right but that if left alone, rather than argued with, he eventually found out that he was wrong.) Explaining her changed priorities since becoming a Christian, Xiaohong said she now thought of herself as a woman, and therefore as having a changed prime role, to care for her family. She no longer put work first:

> In the past, I think this is the top, but now I think, probably ..yes, first is my family role, and then the job. Job is just the kind of way to support my life. I need to make a sacrifice for the family. Although I still sometimes got ambition to have a good position or this kind.... sometimes I think I need to make a sacrifice.

Lili said that before, she 'was always just interested in myself, my ideas or my feelings, caring about my own feelings, so I would just prefer, or want, my husband to follow me'. She had thought she should be 'the centre' and her husband 'should take care of all of my feelings, my concerns'. Now she believed the husband to be head of the marriage and that she should 'consider his feelings, his problems'. Yun was trying to trust her husband more rather than to control him. She referred to the comments of St Paul (Ephesians 5:25) that the husband needs to love the wife in the same way that Christ loved the church, that is sacrificially, so the submission was two way. Changlan too stressed his responsibility to serve and respect his wife.

Mei, who had stayed away from church[34] in response to her CCP member husband's concerns about possible repercussions, lives in the same city as Lara, who had felt uncomfortable in a church which had to keep changing

---

[34] Seven months after we met I heard that Mei was regularly attending church. This may have been connected to the fact that her husband had by then retired and would be less concerned about his wife being known to attend church.

location. This may be a coincidence or it may be that something has happened in that city which makes church attendance more contentious. What seems more likely is that Mei was extremely concerned about her husband's poor health and did not want to do anything to make him more anxious than he was already. It is possible that her agreement to his wishes is not a sign of putting him in a position of either higher authority than God, or of subservience to him, but rather an example of adopting Christ's command to love others as yourself. Xiaoshi talked of her desire to serve God by supporting her husband in his medical work and Christian ministry.

Only eight participants had children, but four more were either pregnant or hoping to become pregnant, at the time of our interviews. Two others talked of their hopes for children and how they would bring them up. Four pointed out problems with the Chinese education system, particularly its intensely competitive nature and the burden it places on children, and their own consequent intention to avoid placing extra stress on their children. This was not connected with their faith. However, their Christian faith did affect the hopes of five for their children, who specifically said they hope their children will 'be Christian' and 'have knowledge of the truth, study the *Bible* from small' (Xiaohong). One prays with her five year old daughter and says her daughter knows the whole *Bible* story and has talked about it with a friend at nursery. One of Yang's reasons for becoming self-employed was to manage his time to spend more time with his son as he grows up. He said 'parents are the first teacher in front of their children. So also I plan to teach him *Bible*, to teach him what is the real meaning of life'. Following Biblical teaching affected parenting: for example Xiaohong's determination to be home from work by five to be with her son and Yun's sacrifice of a legal career to care personally for her children. These findings echoed Wong (2006), who also found that parents' conversion to Christianity led to a

change in values and priorities, resulting in spending time with family taking primacy over work and career.

Concern for family members to become Christians extended to parents, siblings and beyond. Relatives of six participants had already done so. Yun and Xiaojia each had a younger sister who had been baptized. Lili talked of being encouraged to hear her husband (to whom she explained the Christian gospel before they were married) talking to his family and friends about Christianity. Lili's late brother became a Christian before Lili. Their mother had followed Lili and Lili was now hoping her sister would follow suit. She had enjoyed her young nieces coming to join her when she was praying.

When speaking in English about unregistered churches in China it has become normal to call them 'house churches'. The actual Chinese expression is *jiating jiaohui*, literally 'family church'. For more than half of the participants church had a definite sense of family, sufficient to raise the question whether their notion of family had changed since they became Christians. Several of their comments were reminiscent of Christ's embracing of a wider group as his family when he described his disciples as 'my mother and my brothers' (Matthew 12:49).

Although identification with church as family or home appeared strongest for those who described painful childhood relationships with parents, such as Xiaoshi, Lili, Yue, Enci and Xuejing, it was not limited to them. Of the former group Enci's own analysis of the reasons she initially started going to church in China, before she went to the UK, was that she was looking for the 'true love' that was lacking in her own family. Yue said the people in the church where she is a leader are 'like my family'. As one of the oldest in her church (at 34), and as a leader, she has a role nurturing others, and

therefore a sense of value and emotional closeness which she has lacked in her family life. Similarly Xiaoshi has clearly found the purpose, value and love which she lacked as a child, when her only desire was to escape from the unhappiness of her home and her abusive father. Now she and her husband run a Christian group for students and young professionals. She talks of 'looking after' young people and models this new 'family' on the family life she experienced in the UK when an older Christian couple befriended and cared for her and another student. She referred to the time with them as 'real life', contrasting it with her earlier desire to escape in China, saying 'this is so beautiful, living with, in such a harmonious family, it is so beautiful'. Xuejing, who was looking for a church within travelling distance of her apartment referred to it as 'trying to find home'.

Along with identification of church as family, and brothers and sisters, went a very strong sense of God as a Father who cared for them as his children. For two women it was possible that they occasionally projected their earthly father's characteristics (or shortcomings) onto their ideas of God. Yue pointed this out about herself, saying that whilst she *knew* that God, as father, was not like her earthly father she sometimes got confused and *felt* that he was, thinking of him as being harsh when he was not. Xuejing, on the other hand, did not appear to have acknowledged this potential confusion. Although her descriptions of the many conversational prayers she has with God indicated a felt closeness to God, some things she said about her attitude to God sounded very similar to things she said about her earlier relationship with her parents. She talked of being 'disobedient' when she wanted to be obedient, of getting 'angry' and 'impatient' with God, of feeling 'disturbed' when the relationship was bad and 'peaceful' when she came back to him, and:

> realized that this relationship is really important- yeah-
> keeping the relationship a close relationship. Yeah, so I
> really want to be a good child.

She says she has found that, although she can do little to keep the
relationship close, God always draws her back to him.

Salvation and closeness to God

This was particularly important to fourteen people and related to their belief
that God actively cares for them. It was shown in people talking about
feeling safe because of God, saved by him, loved by him or close to him,
when they were talking about decisions they had made, about the benefits
of being a Christian, and about experiences of difficulty or danger. Only
Jinglan did not mention the importance of being in such a state, or
relationship, with God. She had been impressed by the caring attitude of a
Christian UK professor towards his students and attributed this to love
coming from God and the *Bible* to him, and from him to his students. She
also believed the *Bible's* message about the need for people to love each
other was important enough for her to develop an undergraduate course
about the *Bible*, but her comments made it clear that she did not believe
God was interested in her currently. Four others provided little evidence of
experiencing this closeness to God.

The belief that they were loved by God was particularly apparent in those
who had grown up feeling unvalued by their fathers. Describing her
relationship with God as like that of 'father and daughter' Enci said God
filled the gap her human father had left:

> I want a father who really cares, supports and understands
> me. Even though I choose the wrong way to go, he was
> patient enough to wait for my return or remind me, not in
> a passive way. So every time I pray I call him 'Dad'.

Yue and Fuyin both referred to now seeing themselves differently; believing that God loved them helped them know they were of value, despite their parents not having appeared to value them.

For Yue, Enci, Xiaoshi and Yun the significance of God's love was closely related to being safe because of God. Yue's reaction to her earthly father's continuing insistence on making major decisions for her (e.g. choice of university and subject; finding her a job; and taking out a mortgage on a flat, for her to pay), was a mixture of frustration and gratitude. Before becoming a Christian she had sometimes worried about what she would do if her father was ever not there to make decisions for her. Her reference to it reveals the significance to her, of having God as her eternal father:

> I never tried to live without him, so I was always worrying about him, but now I think, 'no, God's in control, and God also has control over him'.

A sense of security in God, and the importance of being close to God, was shown in two of Enci's decisions. Despite her father pressing her to find a job in the UK and get married there, and her own desire to stay and enjoy a more relaxed life, in a familiar church, Enci returned to China because she felt God wanted her there.

> I suddenly got peace in heart, because.. I got many encouragements from the brothers and sisters, I got encouragement from God, from his verses…. wherever I go, he will be with me.

Quoting the Old Testament book of Jeremiah she said God's plan was 'to prosper' her, not 'to harm' her.

Later, after she had returned to China and had been working until nine or ten every night, in order to do her job well, she decided to change and work only until 6.30pm. She did this because she was feeling remote from God:

> this is not good for the relationship between me and God.
> I didn't have time for him. Even though I prayed wherever
> I am, or I pray whenever I want, but it's just lacking of
> something.

When I asked them about any 'benefits' of being a Christian some mentioned being 'saved' and having the hope of eternal life. Laughing at her choice of expression, Enci referred to it as 'the sure ticket of entering the Kingdom'. She added that, also, even in difficulties in this life, she has joy and peace that is given to her by God. I had asked participants to divide their lives into chapters and Wanglin actually called one of hers 'Saved'.

Woven through Wanglin's story was the theme of the importance of her being close to God. She spoke of herself as being in a cycle of closeness and distance:

> it's like you get closer to him and you leave him and you
> get closer to him and then leave him. But the degree is
> different, every time you leave him and you come back
> again, you will get closer.

There was a sense of God being the constant, faithful partner in the relationship:

> it is like God has guided me all the time, although I'm not
> a good child. But he is loving me all the time.

The importance of God's closeness was not limited to the women. It was clearly very important for Hui that he be a decent, good person, indeed a better person. He hoped later to marry and have children and said that being a good model for his children was his biggest hope. However, he felt he could not do this, or respond well to future difficulties, without God giving him the strength to do so. As with Wanglin, there was a sense of an invisible loose rein or cord between him and God:

> I just don't want to be lost again, or de-connected,
> detached from him again.

A new master story is clearly behind the strength of these two last-mentioned core values in the majority of the participants. The experience of trusting and obeying God, and feeling safe because of him, cannot be explained simply by a lack of a secure, loving relationship with a parent. Fowler's (1981) contention that religious conversion results in three kinds of change is illuminating here. He writes of changes in: centres of value, images of power and master stories. Most participants have a new master story, at its centre a new authority figure, God, who cares for them. They also see themselves as part of a different story from that which they imagined before they left China (if they imagined a story consciously then). Their mental story includes a powerful and loving God who has a purpose and plan, and who has chosen them to be part of his plan; the belief that he has a plan for them as an individual is part of their new master story.

Caring for others

Caring for others, beyond the family, and particularly the need to understand others' perspectives and take their feelings into account, was particularly important for thirteen participants. On page 47 I quoted Christ's statement that the 'most important' commandments were to love God and to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22:37-39). A concern to trust and obey God would logically lead to a concern to fulfil his second commandment, to love others. Belief in God's care and closeness could instil the confidence, and arguably, the ability, to be more concerned about others' well-being. An increased awareness of one's own shortcomings is consistent with the Christian concept that awareness of one's own sin is part of the conversion process.

There were five main elements to this new focus on others: an increased understanding of others' perspectives and desire to take them into account; increased tolerance and forgiveness; greater focus on helping or serving

others, including those outside the family and the church; serving within the church; and wanting to tell others about Christ. There was also a significant emphasis on relationships within participants' families and marriage. Filial piety was one of the original strong core values of the group, but with conversion, although the family remained hugely important, the nature of relationships changed. The changes were such as to warrant discussion in a separate section, below.

Xiaoshi, Yue, Changlan and Fuyin exhibited all five elements of this value. Xiaoshi had grown up scared of her father and desperate to get away from home, seeking academic and career success as her means to independence and a sense of worth. Her distrust of others and need to put herself forward for 'glory' affected her relationships with other students and contributed at university to her failure to be voted class president, and subsequent disappointment. Later, after several years working, her loneliness and lack of sense of worth led her to despair. At this point she met Chinese Christians who cared for her and encouraged her to study abroad. In her desire to belong, she even went through the ritual of baptism in China but, with hindsight, commented that she did not really understand Christianity until she was in the UK. In China, before going abroad, she viewed being a Christian as an escape from the difficulties of life to a place of safety. In the UK new Christian friends demonstrated a family life she had never seen before, and she started to reflect on what she could do for God, and therefore for others, rather than on escaping:

> So I started to think about 'okay, I should, Lord, I should do something for you, you know, because ..my life is so happy. I enjoy it. Lord, you saved me from such a terrible surrounding to here. You purified me. You know, I was a sinner before because I was so disobedient, but you select me…. I never think, like I never expect I should get so many beautiful things.... It's so beautiful, it's so happy, it's so peaceful…I never realised I can get it so easily, so it's from you, so I should do something for you.

Asked whether she had changed, she said that she had 'calmed down', and whereas before going abroad she had categorized people immediately, she was now more open:

> When I view the people, I will use the different perspective, like I try to understand why he does this, why she does this.

She had given earlier evidence of trying to understand others' perspectives when I asked about any current difficulties. Describing a difficult relationship with her supervisor at work, she said that the woman's harshness with staff was because she had an unhappy marriage, and that they were cooperating to resolve the work issue. Her cousin and former workmates say she is less nervous, more confident, and less fixated on one thing than before she went abroad. She refuted my suggestion that her increased tolerance could be simply a result of maturity and of the experience of living in another culture, saying that the calmness, ability to understand others and ability to forgive came from God. She explained that the forgiveness was real, not something she was pretending; people were not fools; if the forgiveness or love she was offering was not real they would reject it.

However, she was finding forgiveness of her father a continuing process. In response to my question about what mattered most to her now, she talked about the importance of giving out, as well as receiving, and Christ's command to love. She asked rhetorically 'How can I love people who steal from me on the street? How can I love my father?' She said she knows she needs to forgive him, and she does forgive him, but still sometimes has bad thoughts about him.

An example of the importance to Xiaoshi of serving others was mentioned in the section on trusting God, where her efforts, as a manager, to provide

extra benefits for staff were discussed. Now working in a less demanding, and less well-paid, part-time administrative job, she was able to spend more time supporting her husband in his roles as doctor and mentor for medical students. Xiaoshi's life had changed from one of seeking to escape other people, to engaging with them, to help them and to show gratitude to God, whom she believes has given her new life.

Xiaohong claimed that the biggest change in her life was her belief 'in Father, Son and Holy Spirit' and that God had taught her how to live and have hope, 'how to get along with other people, how to work, to have the right attitude towards your life, your work with other people'. Throughout our conversations she referred to herself as previously not thinking about other people and not knowing how to get along with others. She also referred to herself several times as having been lonely, at primary school, as a teenager and at university. She now connects her former loneliness with having the wrong 'attitude to life', by which she appeared to mean spending all her time and effort, like everybody else, on study and getting to the next stage of life, the best high school and best university etc., rather than on building relationships. For her the greatest earthly benefit of knowing God was learning to think from other people's perspectives.

Xiaohong has learned not to think of others as her enemies or competitors, because she now sees her own selfishness. This became apparent as she described her relationship with her former supervisor and employer. In the UK she had become very distressed and angry at what she saw as her supervisor's unreasonable behaviour. Now, however, she sees that she herself had been greedy and irresponsible in taking on a job which she was not really able to complete. She listed ways in which she now understood her former supervisor's point of view. I suggested that maybe she could do this because she herself now had experience of supervising students and

running projects. She agreed that this was the case but also felt that the Holy Spirit now enabled her to understand her supervisor better. This new ability and concern to think from others' perspectives was having a positive effect in relationships with current colleagues and with her husband. She related this to a reversal in her values:

> Something is important that I thought before is not so important. Something I thought is not so important, now I think is very important. To have harmony with other people is very important. [What is not very important is] to have a very good position.

Forgiveness was an issue for some people who had suffered because of the abuse or neglect of a parent. Fuyin said she had forgiven her parents:

> ever since I believed in God I forgive my parents..because we were beaten when we were young, so I still had great hatred inside me, so just nearly at the same time, like the [letter of the Apostle Paul to the] Romans said, when you believe in God the love from heaven pour on us, and ever since then...

When I asked Xiaojia's sister if Xiaojia had changed since she went abroad she replied that she had changed *more* after returning to China: her temper had improved and she had developed a more mature and broader range of ways of thinking about problems and solutions. Increased patience with others and better tempers were mentioned by five participants, who claimed friends or relatives had also remarked on this change.

Xiaoshi was not the only person whose concern to help others rather than earn a high salary was reflected in job choices since return: Lili had chosen work as a human resources consultant to try to influence the implementation of standards in employment practices, so that the well-being of employees was taken into account; Xuejing was working for an NGO helping migrants, rather than in a better-paid job teaching English, which her parents would have preferred.

A strong commitment to explain to others the significance of Christ was revealed by seven participants. Three others expressed a strong desire for their behaviour to reflect well on their faith and attract others to Christianity. An eleventh, Jinglan explained her motivation in devising an undergraduate module about the *Bible*:

> I want them to understand the people, there's another people's life like that....I think maybe one of the main ideas or main....theme....the theme of the *Bible*, or what I learned in church, is 'love'. If all the people love each other, just like sisters and brothers, and there is no war, and no, no terrible things that happened in the world and made the world peaceful. I think it is a good thing, it's good for everyone.

Although this may indicate a lack of comprehensive understanding of the Christian doctrine of salvation (which the other ten had), it implies a strong belief in the significance of the *Bible*.

Xiaoshi and her husband had started a group for people who were interested in learning about Christianity. She said their thoughts about the longer term future include the possibility of going abroad as medical missionaries. Enci, who also saw missionary work as a probable part of her future, expressed her current purpose by comparing it with her teenage years when she sought to earn money to bring security. She referred to the *Bible* when she said 'If I earn the whole world, and lost my life, what is the benefit of it?' Now she wanted to use the experience and abilities she had been given to help others:

> The most important thing is that I want to live life for Jesus. I want to..if I have the chance I want to share them with Jesus. I can see so many people are living in despair, living in disappointment. They need Jesus. They do need him.

A concern that others who are hurt or 'in despair' needed to hear about Christ was shared by Yun. It was apparent in her answer when I asked her if there was any advice she would like to give to Christians in the UK who

212

meet international students. Her advice reflected her belief that telling people about Christ was crucial. She said 'most of Chinese students, they have a broken heart, like me, like us… so give them time. Reach their hearts. Spend time to them'.

Honouring God

Within honouring God I include faithfulness, obedience and serving God, wanting to behave in a way which reflects well on God, wanting to fulfil God's plan for one's life, and wanting to do things God's way rather than depending on other means. The twelve for whom this was of prime importance revealed it in a variety of ways: in how they talked about relationships, hopes, plans, tensions, joys and in how they spent time or made major decisions. Eleven of these were attending church regularly and the twelfth was employed by a Christian organization and seeking a church near home. Their involvement in church accompanied a desire to learn from the *Bible* and have the encouragement of other Christians to help them be faithful to God.

The significance of obeying specific Biblical commands was highlighted by Changlan, who connected the improvement in his relationship with his father to his need, as a Christian, to obey the commandment to 'honour' his parents. He linked his late decision to be baptized to a late understanding that Jesus commanded his disciples to be baptized. He, Enci and Lili had all taken career decisions to reject jobs which could put them either in the position of being expected to lie to customers or of being required to deny their belief in God. Enci had still encountered a culture of dishonesty to customers in her foreign-owned firm, but had challenged her boss over this and held the view that God's opinion was more important than that of her boss, who thought her naïve. In taking these career decisions she and Changlan also placed fulfilling God's wishes above fulfilling their fathers'

wishes. In both cases the father had proposed to use his connections to help them into a secure government job, but Enci and Changlan declined the help. Despite her worries about the consequences, Yue acknowledged her Christian faith on a registration form for her government job and refused a request to falsify a tax claim.

The *Bible's* encouragement to marry a Christian had influenced Lili, Wanglin, Xiaojia, Hui and Yue. Wanglin explained her break up with a Muslim boyfriend in the UK thus:

> I know I hurt God, I know it's wrong, I can't hurt Jesus like that, so I decided to give up that relationship and then..also ...that was very painful but I know that was right, that was the right thing to do ...so I did that and came back to China. I think the love for God, Jesus, helped me to do that. That was the main thing…. it's like I'm practising Christianity. It's helped me.

Yue, who would love to be married, but to someone she can help 'serve in the church', described how she handles her parents' efforts to find her a husband: she accepts all the dates they arrange and then tries to interest the man in the message of the *Bible*. Her approach, which they think unsuccessful, makes her parents furious.

The most dramatic example of someone trying to honour the commandments of God, at the expense of her own wishes and in the face of social opprobrium, was provided by Yun. The continuing significance of her two decisions not to abort unexpected, unwanted pregnancies (she now has three daughters) was underlined by her eagerness to start telling me this story even before she sat down to start our interview. In China, with certain exceptions, couples are allowed to have only one child. Abortion is common. The penalty for contravening this regulation can be high, with large fines and considerable social stigma. Also, Yun explained, even if a

hospital agrees to deliver such a child, the child will not be officially recognized as a Chinese citizen.

Yun had her first child in the UK and therefore had to defer her master's study. She now sees this as part of God's plan for her and her husband, so that they would stay longer in the UK and become Christians. Having completed her degree, being completely broke, but with the offer of a well-paid job back in China, she found herself pregnant again. She describes the struggle whether to have an abortion (the expected route in China) and take the job, or to have the baby (referred to as 'God's blessing') and give up the job:

> a lot of friends who are not Christians will suggest. 'You have a baby? You already have one!'…We're quite struggling.. I think that's also God's plan. God takes my direction, takes our direction, through give us a baby. We can't see blessing at the time, we struggle, we have the financial problem. We need to go back to have money very soon..and my husband, he needs to start from the beginning because he gave up all the clients to go to UK.

Her answer to my question why she chose to keep the baby rather than accept the high-status, well-paying job, reveals the degree to which she sees God as the ultimate authority in her life:

> I didn't think too much. We just fear God, we fear God. We don't dare to do that, not we don't want. We don't dare do the abortion.. At first it is the fear. And then.. like.. technically, we know that's the blessing. It must be something in the future.

When Yun's second child was a year old she felt ready to go back to her career, only to find she was pregnant again. This was very serious, because in China it is acceptable for a couple who have studied abroad and given birth to a child abroad to have a second child, but not a third. In order for her child to have identity papers, Yun flew to a distant country which would accept the child as a national, and gave birth there. She was initially angry

with God, and described having to tell the doctor that she wanted to keep the baby, whilst feeling inside that she did not want her:

> Do you know that, the struggling inside? I know I can't have an abortion, but I really don't want this baby.

She recounted how foreign friends had told her that to have a child was a 'blessing' and to have three even more, whilst all she was feeling was 'a lot of pressure'. Now she says she sees the blessing, believing that by giving them the children God changed their direction and led them to 'see what's the better life' for them.

Yun gave her story a theme, of God teaching her to allow him to control her life, in order to bless her, and characterized herself as a 'controller' because of her unhappy childhood. She also said her marriage and family life had improved since she started to implement Biblical principles of marriage, and trusted her husband with more control in the family.

Others too expressed seeking to do things God's way as a struggle resulting in peace. Fuyin, Xiaoshi and Enci all described unhappy childhoods and the need to get out and control their own lives. Xiaoshi's description of her first job after return to China, as a manager, reveals a distinction between simply adopting outward Christian behaviour and actually depending on God. She comments that she was 'very successful because I used Christian way to manage people'. Recognising her employees' struggles, caused by lack of education, she arranged courses for them. Soon many were coming to her with their problems, and she devoted herself to trying to 'manage them with love', whilst telling them she was a Christian. However the heavy workload and distance to church caused Xiaoshi to stop attending church, and to be away from Christian teaching and encouragement. She started to

argue with her Christian boyfriend who lived in another city. Her assessment of what had happened is that she had come to think:

> 'I can depend on myself, because, look, I'm so successful'.
> So many people, they trusted me. Look, I was like a god, because they do trust me at that time.

Eventually she experienced the ugly side of work politics and the fickle nature of the popularity that accompanies power. She said she also felt weak because God was 'a bit disappeared' in her life. All this led her to resign and join her boyfriend and Christian friends in Shanghai.

On pages 173 to 174 Lili was discussed as someone who started to trust God in a crisis (her loss of boyfriend and financial support, and her brother's cancer). Later in her UK stay, she was also mugged outside her house, and her brother died before she could get home to see him. However, she also experienced happiness and encouragement at that time, including when her mother started to believe in Christ:

> I think it probably started from the bad news I got...the financial thing. I split with my former boyfriend but God just lead me up. And I feel okay, there's no worry about it. So then I got my brother's health thing. I just feel very sad, but I know, whatever happens, I should accept it and he is a Christian, and also God is there. So then I just come up. And then I would feel very calm life there….God was doing his work through different people in different ways.

Many stressed the importance of prayer, but Xuejing's praying seemed more constant, more an on-going conversation with God. Describing how she came to work for a Christian NGO she interspersed comments about what had happened with things she had said to God, thus showing her belief that God was instrumental in her getting the job:

> So I sent out my CV and- the next day and- I was so looking forward to having this job so, I pray and- at night, yeah, when I was in bed, I said 'God, I really want to do this job, I think because the job description- yeah, it's like kind of job you prepare for me….so I prayed 'Father please

> help me, because I have been waiting this long, you know how many months, – I'm anxious and you know how anxious I am, how- how much I want a job', so I pray, I prayed a lot, and the next day, in the afternoon, I got this interview call… And after the call, you know, I felt, you know, the spirit is, you know- is cheering inside, so I can't help, and I pray a prayer, I give my thanks to God, 'Oh, thank you, thank you so much'.

Considering God's expectations and Biblical principles were also crucial in job choices. Xuejing described how a change from honouring her parents first, to honouring God first, led her to join a charitable organization helping migrants. Before going to the UK she had intended to return and find a job to 'earn a lot of money' and 'make my parents proud'. She had seen it as her 'responsibility to glorify them'. However, after becoming a Christian she gradually decided that she wanted to 'put God first' because:

> I realised my life is not only about job, about money, about making my parents proud- look good in front of other people- I mean- there is meaning in your life. Now I've found it. It's- it's- it's Jesus. It's like you've finally found your creator. You've finally found out why you are living in this world…..Being loved by God and close to him I became- I became that I want to work in a charity organization.

The seven who did not reflect 'trusting and obeying God' so strongly were not in regular membership of a church at the time of interview, although two (Yang and Lara) had been involved for some time after returning to the UK. Yang had been very active in Christian circles, helping to lead a group for non-Christians who wanted to explore Christianity, but had not been for about a year, since his wife's pregnancy and the birth of his son. He spoke of his trust and hope in God and his plans to go back to the group, but his over-riding current concern seemed to be the harmony and well-being (financially, emotionally and health-wise) of his immediate family. Lara and Mei described enjoying the company of Christians, but had close relatives who actively disliked them attending church. Hunan said that although he had an underlying trust in God and, therefore, hope for the future, at times

he felt lost and unlike other Christians. However, at the time we met he and his wife were considering starting a small group with some Christian friends, to read the *Bible*, pray and encourage each other; I later heard they did so.

Unlike the majority, Jinglan and Huanglin showed little sign of thinking that God had a plan for them, to be sought and fulfilled. Since coming back, Huanglin had declined to burn incense or carry out other worship activities in temples, when asked by peers or superiors at work, and talked of her desire to do later postgraduate study in theology, and of her awareness of God with her. However, she said her busy work schedule and supporting her husband's career made attending church and *Bible* reading difficult. Huanglin referred to herself as a Christian, but Jinglan did not refer to herself as such. Jinglan was not currently involved with church and her conversation revealed that she is not fully aware of certain central Christian doctrine. However, her belief that the Bible is a powerful source of love and harmony has inspired a project which she clearly enjoys: she developed and teaches a course for undergraduate students, on the significance of the *Bible* to Western culture.

Being part of a good church

Twelve people set great store on regular (at least weekly) meetings with other Christians, and on pursuing a good understanding of Christian teaching. For them a 'good' church was one where they could have close friendships with other Christians and where the whole of the *Bible* is taught accurately, in ways which help them in their daily lives. This was reflected by eleven people in their regular attendance at church services and the time they put in church activities. A twelfth was seeking for a suitable, accessible church.

Earlier I discussed the church's role as 'family'. The 'family' aspect of church which made it so crucial was having close relationships with like-minded people, who shared the same core views on the purpose of life, and who were a source of emotional and spiritual support. Intimacy arose from shared identity, values and purpose. As one of the men, Hui, described it: 'We're sharing. We're emotionally connected.'

The other aspect was participants' desire to have access to sermons on the *Bible* which they considered aided a sound understanding of *Bible* contents, and which they could apply in daily life, at home, at work and with friends. The importance of these aspects of church were reflected in the amount of time they spent in church activities, in the fact that five were in positions of leadership within churches (and two more had been), in comments they made about why they had chosen to be part of a particular church and in comments about how church people or Christian preaching affected their lives.

Evidence of the importance of the *Bible* to participants was also demonstrated in their familiarity with its contents. For example, Changlan, Enci and Fuyin each referred regularly to specific parts of the *Bible* in order to illustrate points they were making.

Xiaojia's story illustrated the coming together of the desires to have close relationships with other Christians, to understand the *Bible* and to serve others. When I met her this 26 year old married woman was working for an investment company and also spending much of each weekend and several evenings a week in church activities. On Tuesday evening she met with others to pray and study the *Bible*; another evening she conducted a *Bible* study with someone new to the faith; on Saturday evenings she and her husband joined the church prayer meeting, staying overnight with the other

church members, in order to rise early for prayer before the Sunday morning service, which was followed by lunch; once a month she took part in an event inviting others to find out about Christianity.

It was clear that serving in church energizes Xiaojia. She loves helping people and leading the church in song. When I asked about her hopes for the future she said she wanted to be a wife and mother, to serve in church and to help her husband in evangelistic activities, maybe even hosting a church. When we met she had been trying to help a distressed younger woman who had become pregnant by a man Xiaojia described as a 'bad person' who 'has other girls'. She had been searching the *Bible* for guidance on how to advise the girl, because she wanted to know 'God's opinion about this question.' She had also asked a church leader for advice. Talking about what mattered most in life to her, she said the first priority was to do what God wants. She described a hierarchy of those whose wishes she accorded priority in her decisions: God; her Christian husband and her church leaders; and her own wishes. In response to my question about where her parents fitted in, she said she cared about their feelings, but implied that, as they were not Christians, they had different values and therefore their advice ranked lower.

Xiaojia was not the only person so dedicated to church service. Another, a single woman, helped lead a 200-strong church. In addition to teaching, pastoral and organizational activities within her church she was taking a Christian counselling course and editing Christian books. She also had a full-time secular job.

Yue's criteria for deciding whether a church was good was that they be 'faithful to the *Bible* and God is with them'. On her initial return to China she attended a church for a short while, before deciding it was not for her

and moving to join a Christian group for returnees from study abroad. She described the first church:

> [They were] not very educated and they don't have a pastor and they're just sharing their experience on Sunday, you know, someone gets something and they think it's from God and they're talking about it. But in that church there's a good thing: they think everyone should serve. No one should just sit down, everyone should clean.. or washing up, something.. Yes, everyone should serve, that's very good. They really have a good heart to serve, but they don't have a lot of knowledge.

Seven of the eleven participants who attended church regularly were involved in house churches, rather than registered churches, although two others went to both. People gave the same reason for deciding to attend unregistered churches, and this was indicative of the importance they placed on understanding scripture in order to live well. Despite being initially concerned at the possible risk, one person said they attended a house church because they had learned that government rules prevent pastors of registered churches teaching certain parts of the *Bible*[35]. They wanted 'to go to some place they could freely speak God's word'. Another said that if she went to a registered church she would not receive 'real meat'[36]. A third was a regular member of a registered church, attended a small home-based group for returned students and also went to an unregistered church because the *Bible* interpretation was more

---

[35] Their concern that the whole Bible be discussed can be better understood by considering the example of the second coming of Jesus Christ. In the *Bible* Christ claims that he will return to raise the dead and reign over a new, perfect earth. In a parable (Matthew 25:31-46) he describes two groups, one living eternally in the presence of God and one eternally separated from God and all goodness. Two implications of this not being taught in churches are that a major source of hope is removed and the need to confront and find a solution to the problem of human sin is much less apparent; the whole Church purpose and nature, and the outlook and daily lives of individual believers could therefore change.

[36] She was probably alluding to the Apostle Paul's reference to the contrast between preaching which contains spiritual 'milk' as opposed to 'solid food' (1 Corinthians 3:2).

'sophisticated' and all parts of the *Bible* were taught. She said registered churches were unable to teach the resurrection and second coming of Christ adequately and, because of such limitations, were narrowly focused on teaching people to be 'good' and 'not to make any trouble'.[37]

One person did not want to be identified as either a 'house church Christian' or a 'registered church Christian', but as a Christian. He saw a particular registered church as 'his' church, where he goes every Sunday and for a fortnightly meeting of Christian young married couples, and where his wife is in the choir. He contributes, has close friendships there and has been helped by the church, for example, with advice and encouragement when he and his wife were living in separate cities prior to their marriage. In addition he goes to a well-known house church whose minister is renowned for his teaching skills, because in the 'family churches, seems the topics are more open. And the message I can get in there is a little bit different from what I can get in the government churches'.

Being part of a good church was not important for everyone. Three people, Jinglan, Huanglin and Caiyun, appeared never to have had a strong drive to join a church. Jinglan had not been at all, giving the distance to the only church she knew and family and work commitments as reasons. Huanglin had visited a church, only to find it locked; she had emailed contacts given her by another Chinese returnee but these people had not replied. At least two other factors were probably at play. Both ladies live in cities where church buildings are less obvious than in some cities and neither city is

---

[37] These may or may not represent the experiences and opinions of others, not involved in this study. Church practice varies in China. I have heard the Second Coming mentioned in a registered church sermon.

known to have numbers of intellectuals interested in Christianity[38]. Therefore the opportunities for them to find people with a similar background who share their religious interests would be more limited. Also, both ladies were in the UK for only one year, and it appeared in the conversations that they had a more limited understanding of the Christian faith than other participants. Although they may be undergoing a *process* of Christian conversion, their lack of reference to Christ's role in their lives suggested that at the time of our conversations they were not in a *state* of being converted to belief in Christ as one who had 'saved' them or governed their lives. With the possible exception of Caiyun, all the other participants perceive Jesus in these roles of 'Saviour' and 'Lord'. This, and having had time in the UK after conversion to understand the purpose of church membership, will have led the others to attach much greater importance to finding a church on their return home. Caiyun had visited a Christian group for returnees in China a few times and attended a *Bible* study at her workplace a couple of times but felt 'sometimes I feel ..to be with him, not necessary to be with a group'.

Of the four others, Yang had been very involved in Christian activities for six years after return, until his son was born in 2008. He was hoping to return to regular involvement when his son was a little older. Lara too had found a church after return, but by the time of our meetings she had stopped going. Hunan's lack of church involvement was discussed on pages 168 to 169.

---

[38] Beijing and Shanghai, in particular, are known to have considerable numbers of university students and staff attending churches. These and other cities (e.g. Hangzhou and Xi'an) have universities with research centres focusing on the study of Christianity.

In the section on 'family' above I mentioned that Mei did not attend church because of her husband's concern about possible repercussions. Although Mei said how much she missed being with Christian 'brothers and sisters' in the UK, I was initially unable to determine whether she really missed being in church per se, or whether my presence, as someone from the UK, evoked a temporary nostalgia for life there. Given that I heard several months after my return to the UK that she had started attending church regularly it seems likely this was not mere nostalgia.

Gratitude and contentment

Feeling safe with God, and having hope in eternal life with him, was often accompanied by gratitude. Twelve said that since going to the UK they had ceased to strive as much for material success and for the status symbols money can buy. There was evidence that ten actively valued being content with what they had. They attributed this to both a diminished desire for such things since becoming Christians and to seeing a life in the UK which seemed happier and more relaxed than in China.

Jinglan was at pains to help me understand the driven nature of life in China. Explaining her efforts to get her husband to work less hard, she likened him to Scarlett O'Hara in 'Gone with the Wind', who always wanted more than she had because she came from a very hard background. Jinglan's observations of UK life and her study of the *Bible* had caused her to reflect; using another literary allusion, she described how she now disliked the constant striving after more in modern Chinese life:

> In Chinese 'fu hua'[39].. just like.. just like the story's name, 'Vanity Fair'. So yes, for example, just strive for money, power.

---

[39] One dictionary translated this as 'vanity'; another translated it as 'showy, flashy, ostentatious'. 'Vanity Fair' is a novel by William Thackeray.

She thought this led to conflict and the best response was to 'just worship God, do your own work well, help each other, try your best to make the harmony environment'.

Wanglin had rejected working on Sundays in favour of attending church. This was despite the financial rewards of Sunday work and her mother's desire that she focus on earning to afford a larger apartment.

Both religion and experience of the UK had led Caiyun to place less emphasis on getting a highly paid job that could bring status and material possessions:

> Yes, the country influenced me. As a religion, it doesn't matter what you will do, what is – how high your job is. It matters that you do what you want to do, and you do it well, to be yourself and to be helpful and influential to others.

This comment may result from a mixture of Biblical principles and experience of life in a more individualistic culture. She explained that she felt God had 'released' her from her former desire to be perfect to please others.

The expression of gratitude was particularly true of Hui, who had a refrain, 'I'm a lucky guy', and repeatedly voiced his appreciation of his parents and of God.

Even Huanglin, whose life focused on hard work and sacrificing herself for others, was starting to think that maybe there was greater significance in being loved *by* God than in doing things *for* him. She said that before coming to the UK one factor driving her to work so hard was that it would please the 'great man' and that therefore he would love her: if 'I work hard, I spend every minute to work, work, work, to help the society, help our

country, so I think the great man, the God, the great man, will love me'. However, mulling over the words of a Chinese Christian in the UK, who said that hard work does not necessarily lead to God's love, she was now thinking that might be right and that she should enjoy what God had given her and enjoy life.

Tensions and benefits

This and the preceding chapter include many examples of how changes in values affected participants' feelings, behaviour and relationships in a mainland Chinese context. They had both positive and negative experiences. The benefits and tensions which participants experienced, living in China, as a result of their Christian conversion and core values changes fall into three categories: those which were specifically related to being Christians in the mainland Chinese context, those which were not particularly related to that context and those which could have been experienced in other cultural contexts but which were particularly strong or took on a distinctive hue in that context.

Tensions related to changed values

Some of the tensions experienced living out their Christian values could be experienced by Christians in other cultures and were not particularly related to being in China. These included strong feelings of unease when they did not feel close to God and a feeling of heightened responsibility to think and behave gently and non-judgementally. Some tensions were described which are experienced in other settings but might be stronger in the current Chinese context: for example, the desire to stop oneself being drawn back into thinking with the pervasive atheistic, materialistic attitude rather than one adopting a Christian theistic worldview.

Tensions most related to the Chinese context were found: in family relationships; in the nature of the church and its relationship to the state; in conflicts between Chinese law, or social norms, and Biblical teaching; in conflicts between certain workplace customs and Christian morality; and in a culture which prizes material status very highly.

Within the family six people had challenged the authority of parents and thereby caused at least some concern to parents, by refusing to follow parents' wishes related to what sort of jobs to take, what sort of person to marry, and indeed, the act of baptism, a step which many parents would see as at least an adoption of foreign customs, and possibly involvement with a dangerous cult, and in a few cases, as betrayal of Chinese identity. For Lara, the amount of time church required will have exacerbated her parents' concern at her involvement in 'undesirable' activities. The difficulty she felt, wanting to attend an unregistered church in order to ensure access to sound *Bible* exposition was compounded by her parents' concern and lack of understanding about this and their desire that she spend Sundays with them.

The lack of visible, registered churches, the very low ratio of qualified church personnel to churchgoers, and concerns that government policy can have a detrimental effect on what is preached in registered churches all combined to make it hard for returnees to know where they could go to find like-minded people and teachers or mentors like those they had in the UK. Some had overcome this through being introduced to churches by other Christians, or by meeting with other returnees, but others were struggling. Some appeared at ease being part of an unregistered church but others commented how they disliked not being able to worship openly.

A new conflict between different types of authority is reflected in Yun's case. In order to obey Chinese law, in the form of the one child policy, and at the same time obey Christian teaching against abortion (specifically the Biblical commandment not to kill), she went to a distant country to give birth to her third child. Although by doing so she managed not to flout either law, she did break an unwritten social law and incurred social stigma, for both her and her parents.

Another case of going against the social norm, though less dramatically, was exemplified by Wanglin. She had given up accountancy training, and a lucrative career, to be an English teacher, and she and her husband (whose family are Christians) were content with a rented apartment, smaller than those of their peers. This lack of social achievement and associated status symbols caused conflict with her mother. She was not the only participant to reduce her working hours to allow time for church or prayer and *Bible* reading, and to go against parental and societal expectations in doing so.

The workplace was also a source of tension. Enci and Yue referred to invoking colleagues' mockery or anger when refusing to be involved in practices they considered dishonest. Two others related experiences with colleagues that echoed findings of other studies about returnees to China (e.g. Gill, 2010; Hua Yang, 2008): Fuyin mentioned jealousy of her overseas qualification. Hunan found on return to his former government employer, that those who had not gone abroad had been promoted to more senior positions than the one he took up with a PhD from a famous UK university. He felt resented and pushed aside, as a *haigui*. They and others claimed that their Christian beliefs helped them cope with such matters.

Benefits experienced related to changed values

Benefits described included: salvation; hope; purpose in life; inner peace; feeling loved; a sense of belonging; more harmonious marriages; being able to forgive; having protection and strength from God; and the relief of no longer needing to follow the crowd striving for more money and more status. None of these benefits is confined to the Chinese context. However, some acquire particular significance within the context of early 21st century urban China. This discussion will focus on those, but in doing so in no way intends to suggest that the other benefits are of any less significance to the individuals concerned.

Having deep peace, even in the face of difficulties, and strong hope that that peace would remain because God was in control of their lives, was mentioned by seven people and could be interpreted from the stories of others. Amongst these seven were four women with very unhappy childhood family experiences. It is possible that the anger, discord (and even violence for one) that three experienced, and the extended separation from parents that another experienced, were the results of a particular set of historical and social circumstances affecting their parents at that time.

Economic upheaval and hardship following the Cultural Revolution, the past policy of sending young intellectuals, or the children of certain classes, to work in distant places, and the tradition of grandparents being very involved in bringing up children could have combined to separate Yun from her parents for five years. Things they had experienced in the Cultural Revolution or their inability to provide for the family because of the economic and educational effects of the Cultural Revolution (and earlier in the case of Fuyin's father who had also experienced the war against Japanese occupation) could have led to the angry behaviour of the fathers. Enci's father, in a southern coastal province, seems to have been heavily

influenced by a mercantilist, fiercely money-driven culture which has held sway in that area for some time. This complex historical context is peculiar to the late twentieth century China in which the participants were brought up and makes the peace they found in Christianity particularly significant.

Inner calm and security in the belief that God is in control was also of great benefit to those who had and continued to have very good relationships with their parents, but live in big eastern cities of China which continue to change very fast, with work, consumerism and educational competition all making increasing demands on families. Such calm was often related to reduction in materialism or in the felt need to have the same status symbols that old university friends had acquired, such as a bigger car. People said they now had courage to stop working so much over-time, or to take jobs with fewer demands on their time, because having lots of money and financial security was now less important to them. They said they could enjoy life more.

The quality of relationships, with colleagues, parents and, particularly, with wives and husbands, had improved. Marital arguments had decreased as people became more aware of their own shortcomings, more understanding of others' perspectives, and as couples shared principles and access to prayer to help iron out differences.

Somewhat counter-culturally, three women had given up high-flying professional roles, or held back on academic success, in favour of following Biblical teaching which stresses the woman's role in caring for the family and supporting the man in his work. They evinced a sense of fulfilment in this, not regret. Improved relationships are picked out here as of particular relevance in China because of the aforementioned childhood problems, the

increase in the divorce rate (Xinhua, 2008) and the prevalence of complex work relationships, which involve the use of gifts, flattery and nepotism.

Only eight participants had children at the time of the interviews, only three had children aged over five, and two of those three were women whose conversion to Christianity was less apparent. However there is potential for the children of those participants who were married to Christians to benefit from their parents' changed attitudes to marriage, childhood and work. Fuyin commented that her son had said how much she had changed and that he was benefitting from her more 'reasonable' behaviour. Yun said that her less controlling and more trusting relationship with her husband, for example allowing him a greater share in childcare, had benefitted her children, making them more secure. Another Chinese Christian returnee from the UK, who was not one of the nineteen, but with whom I stayed, talked to me at length about her childhood and troubled relationship with her parents and the influence Biblical ideas and child psychology books containing Christian ideas had on her relationship with her five year old son and her plans for his education. Indeed, I observed her putting these ideas into action.

Summary

Analysis of the interviews identified a number of core values shared by several participants. The values most commonly held after profession of belief in Christianity and expressed at the time of interviews were different from those held before. The interviews and analysis paid particular attention to decisions and dilemmas, happiest and most difficult times, important relationships, strong memories, occupations and use of time, and tensions and benefits experienced since becoming a Christian.

The values held most widely and most strongly before study abroad and conversion were: achievement; admiration and respect; being loved; camaraderie and belonging; filial piety; having new experiences; and finding purpose. The values held most widely and strongly afterwards were: salvation and closeness to God; honouring God; caring for others; caring for family; being part of a good church; and gratitude and contentment.

Chapter Six: Discussion - Values, conversion and contexts

Introduction

In a review of religious conversion literature the political scientist Timothy Steigenga concluded that:
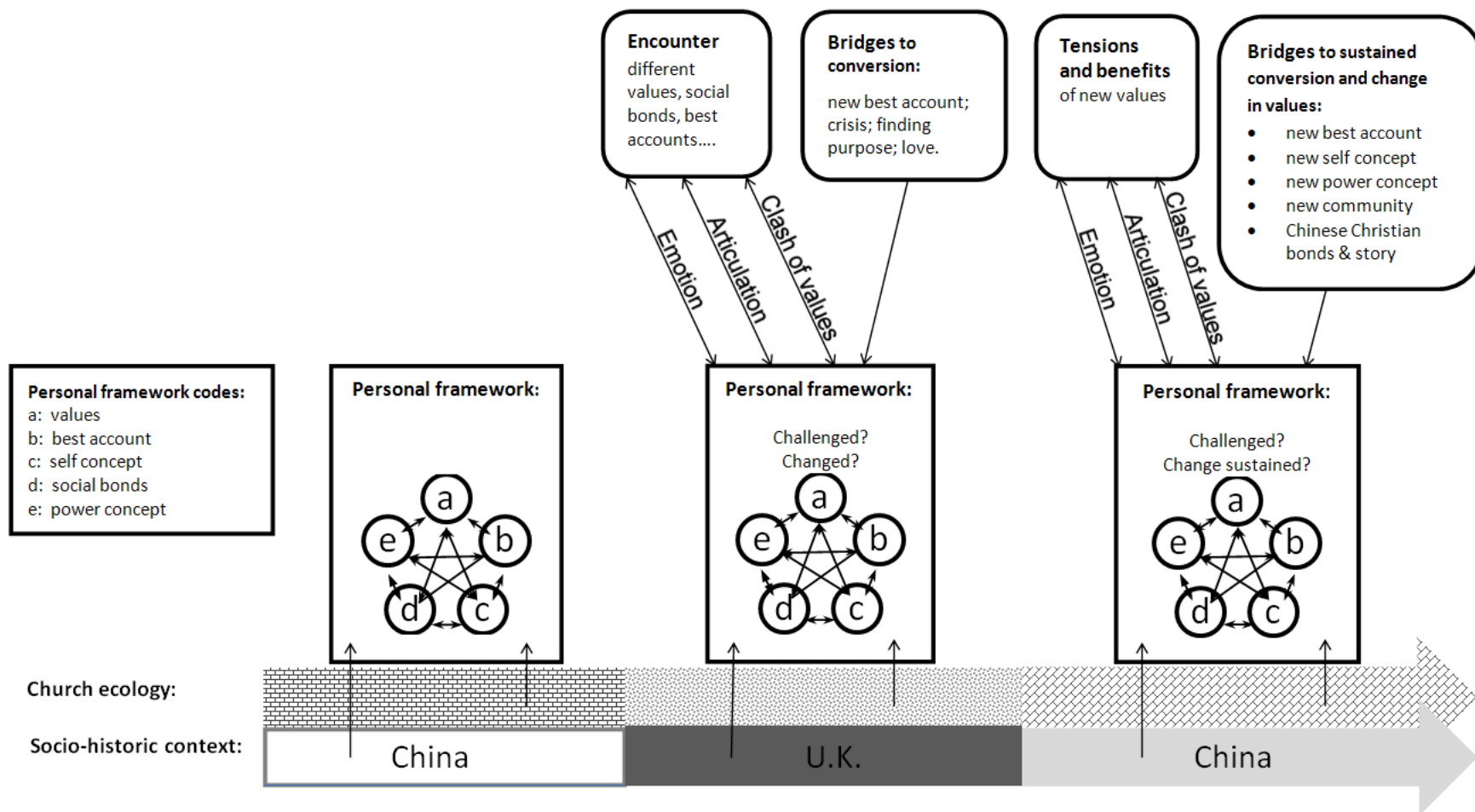
> Conversion is a process that takes place over time; interacts with institutional religion, networks, and cultural contexts; and does not necessarily proceed in a linear or chronological fashion (2010, p. 82).

The findings of this study are consistent with Steigenga's comment, which illuminates the process captured in the following diagram, 'Conversion and change in values, across contexts'. The diagram brings together elements of the theoretical framework (discussed on pages 76 to 82), (theories of Fowler (1981), Taylor (1989), Yang (1999) and Wang and Yang (2006)) with my own concepts of bridges to conversion, and tensions and benefits arising from values change; it reflects the process that participants went through, arriving in the UK, encountering Christianity, returning to China and continuing their lives there. This process and diagram anchor this chapter.

Explanation of the diagram is followed by a three stage discussion. First, participants are considered arriving in the UK, bringing with them a personal framework, in Taylor's terminology, which includes values and a best account or story affected by the social and church contexts to which Yang and Wang draw attention. The UK experience and context they encounter, together with bridges to belief in Christianity, is considered. Second, the process and theories in the diagram are used to consider the personal, social and church context experienced by returnees in China and the challenges that poses to possible changes in values. Third, elements

from Taylor's and Fowler's theories form the basis for discussion of how and why values change was sustained, or developed, in some cases more than in others. Through the chapter comparative reference is made to studies of Chinese students converting to Christianity in the US.

Figure 3: Conversion and change in values, across contexts

Personal framework codes:
a: values
b: best account
c: self concept
d: social bonds
e: power concept

Encounter
different values, social bonds, best accounts….

Bridges to conversion:
new best account; crisis; finding purpose; love.

Tensions and benefits of new values

Bridges to sustained conversion and change in values:
- new best account
- new self concept
- new power concept
- new community
- Chinese Christian bonds & story

Emotion
Articulation
Clash of values

Personal framework:

Personal framework:
Challenged?
Changed?

Personal framework:
Challenged?
Change sustained?

Church ecology:

Socio-historic context: China   U.K.   China

Introducing the diagram

The diagram should be viewed from left to right. Across the middle of the page are three boxes which represent a person's personal framework at three different times, before leaving China, in the UK after encountering Christians, and after return to China. According to Taylor (1989), people have values as part of their personal framework, which also includes a best account (or personal narrative), concepts of the self and social bonds. This framework has developed from childhood. According to Fowler (1981), in addition to having a master story[40] and centres of value, each person perceives centres of power, where they believe power and authority to lie. Depending on their individual histories these frameworks and elements may or may not have been identified by the individuals; they may be conscious or tacit. In the diagram each element of the framework is identified by a letter, which is explained in the smaller box to the left. The small arrows between elements of the framework indicate the influence of the elements on each other: for example, new social bonds can influence self-concept and a new best account may change the person's concept of where power lies; both these may influence values.

Across the bottom of the diagram Yang's (1999) socio-historical and Wang's and Yang's (2006) church ecological contexts have been added. Yang (1999) argues that China's twentieth century history, with its social and political upheaval, was a contributory factor to the conversions of older Chinese in the US. He and Wang (2006) point to the local US church context, the local church ecology, as a factor in the attraction of Christian activities for Chinese students in the US. Here I use these terms as an

---

[40] Taylor's use of the term 'best account' and Fowler's of 'master story' are used co-terminously here. The best account is the explanation that helps a person make sense of life in general as it affects them and others.

indicator that their family experiences of Chinese history affected participants' lives and their interactions with Christianity; the situation of the church in China, particularly its relatively low profile, because of political constraints, contributed to participants' openness to attending UK church activities, as something novel or perceived to be part of British culture. As the person moved from China to the UK and back to China their socio-historic and church contexts changed; this is represented by a change in shade or pattern of the right-pointing arrows which represent these contexts. The 'after' China context and church ecology have deliberately not been shaded exactly the same as the 'before' China context and church ecology; this is because these may have changed when people returned, and also because their perception of them may have changed.

The left-hand framework box represents the person leaving China, the arrows up into it indicating contextual influences on that framework. The middle box represents the person encountering Christianity in the UK. Here the person's framework is potentially challenged by the new context: distanced from people with whom they share social bonds, values and a master story; with language difficulties, the need to cope with different academic approaches, and social and cultural challenges, such as running a home or even finding a job. There may also be time and opportunity, away from demands of the home environment, to explore new places, ideas and behaviour. This is the social context. The church ecology also needs to be taken into account: local churches may or may not provide social activities, English lessons, or invitations to homes for international students; there may be a Chinese church near the university or Chinese Christian students involved in university Christian societies.

Meeting Christians (Chinese, British or of other nationalities), brings them into contact with a community of people who share a master story different

from their own. For many, the friendliness of church people or Christian students attracts them to attend more activities, to build relationships and to find out more. As questions are asked, ideas exchanged and, to varying degrees, lives shared, the Christians' story, or best account, is analysed and tested. Beliefs, assumptions, personal stories are articulated, in conversation with others or with oneself, sometimes for the first time. This can be emotionally and intellectually challenging to the extent that a clash of values is experienced. These interchanges and experiences are represented in the diagram by the 'encounter' box (top row, left) and the arrows between that box and the framework box.

As discussed in Chapter Four, people may experience one or more bridges to conversion (the second box in the top row). Then, as new Christians identify more with the shared story and see themselves differently, values may change and new social bonds be forged. From all this develops a revised framework: a new shared story including new self-concepts, new social bonds and new values. The exact nature and degree of the change varies by person but there are common features. For some there is major change, even a clash of hypergoods, in the UK.

The next stage in the process, on the right of the diagram, is what happens after return to China. Again the context changes: for example, family, with associated joys, tensions and responsibilities, is much closer; the UK university environment is exchanged for the Chinese workplace; the church ecology is different. New values and framework lead to tensions and benefits (third box from the left, at the top) and are challenged or confirmed. Some people experience bridges (right-hand box, top row), this time to sustained conversion and values change; in other cases the distance from social bonds with a shared story and self-concepts leads to re-adopting the old framework, or at least revising the new one.

Since the interviews the people will have moved on with their lives; also, no doubt, their faith stories will move on over time.

The following discussion is based on the processes and concepts described above and summarized in the diagram.

Coming to the UK

Brought from China: personal framework and social context

People brought with them from China their own individual personal framework; individuals' earlier values are summarized in the table in Appendix E. As discussed in Chapter 5, values most widely shared amongst them were: achieving, academically and in career; being admired; being loved; camaraderie; filial piety, experiencing the new and finding purpose.

All had been through the intensely competitive education system, studying hard at each level in order to enter a good university; some went to universities of their choice; others failed the entrance examination and had to re-sit. Seven said they or their families experienced financial hardship when they were young; they linked this either with the wider economic situation of China at that time or to events relating to the Cultural Revolution: for example, Caiyun said her father's family had been branded a land-owners and therefore her father was only allocated a menial building job; three said their father had no education after primary level because schools closed at the onset of the Cultural Revolution. Two of those three were amongst the eight who described unhappy childhoods and poor relationships with parents, especially with fathers. Another, Yun, described the lasting hurt of living apart from her parents for five of her early years because they were obliged to work elsewhere. Fuyin attributed her father's anger, and his beating her, to his army experience during two wars.

A relationship could also be seen between these participants' attraction to Christianity and their family relationships. Yang (1999) argues that the political and social turmoil of twentieth century China is crucial for understanding conversion to Christianity amongst Chinese abroad. That research was carried out in the 1990s and his participants included people of an age range whose experiences ranged from the Communist takeover, through the Cultural Revolution, to the 1989 Tiananmen Incident. In a later study, with younger participants, Yang's colleague Wang points out that their 'life courses' were 'less disturbed than those of the earlier immigrants' (2004, p. 3) but that they experienced other dramatic changes related to the Deng era economic and social reforms. Findings of the present study lead me to suggest that some born after the Cultural Revolution may still be suffering from effects of Chinese social and political turmoil because of the impact *their parents'* earlier experiences had on their own childhoods. However, further research into parental experiences would be necessary to identify any actual relationship between the parents' experiences of social upheaval and the child's conversion to Christianity: such a relationship would suggest that Yang's thesis has relevance to a second generation.

In the UK: Personal and social context

In the UK participants' personal situations were different from in China. With the exception of two women whose husbands came with them as students, and two other people whose spouse joined them later, all were away from family and closest friends. Some were lonely (Changlan, Caiyun, Hunan, Mei, Yang), whilst another, Yue, revelled in the freedom to explore new ideas, away from parental constraints; some enjoyed the more relaxed lifestyle (Jinglan, Lara, Xiaohong, Yue) whilst Caiyun found it boring. Enci, Changlan, Yang and Yun struggled with the language and Caiyun found that she was no longer the 'top student' she had been in China. Money became a

concern (Enci, Fuyin, Hunan, Lili, Xiaoshi). Changlan felt alienated from heavy-drinking British students in his residence, whilst Wanglin initially tried joining in with a 'wild' lifestyle she had never encountered before, only to regret it later. Changlan, Lara, Xiaoshi and Jinglan enjoyed travelling to historic places and beautiful countryside and Hui loved experiencing UK culture. Xiaohong loved the UK weather whilst it made Caiyun miserable. Huanglin, Jinglan, Lili and Xuejing were victims of crime. Yun became unexpectedly pregnant. All were in a context different from the home context, where things happened in different ways and for different reasons; needing to translate or interpret words, actions and events could be 'epistemologically unsettling' (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 69) and contribute to openness to discuss and re-consider previously held beliefs.

UK church ecology

Studying conversion amongst Chinese students in the US Wang and Yang (2006) found that the nature and range of Christian churches and activities (what they call 'the religious organizational ecology' (p. 180)) influenced reasons for church involvement and types of churches students joined. Like them I found that local church ecology played a major part in initially attracting people to church. It also provided a community or social bonds to stand in for those which were missing now that participants were away from home.

In their various new situations they encountered the church. From the information participants gave, the following picture of UK church ecology emerges. First, Chinese Christians (students or resident in Britain) were active in inviting Chinese students to church activities (nine participants); churches (Chinese and British) provided activities in seven participants' own first language (Mandarin or Cantonese); churches were perceived as welcoming and offering opportunities to practise English or learn about

British culture (five participants were first introduced to such activities organized by British Christians by other Chinese students who were not Christians); churches or Christian student groups in seven participants' cities provided regular social activities where they enjoyed a friendly, safe atmosphere and the chance to make friends; church members or Christian students invited eleven participants to weekly Bible courses tailored for international students. At the national level, the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission (COCM) ran weekend camps or retreats, in Chinese, for Chinese students to come from around the UK, to find out more about Christianity. Eighteen participants commented on the kindness or friendliness of Christians, Xiaoshi even describing a British couple and a Malaysian student she spent time with, as her 'real' family.

Challenges to the framework: bridges to change

The church context described above (particularly the presence of Chinese Christians, kindness and friendship experienced, regular social activities and Bible courses tailored for people without any Christian background) provided the backdrop for the four bridges to conversion discussed in Chapter Four: access to new information which seemed to the participant to be true and desirable to follow, (in Taylor's (1989) terms, a new best account); experiencing a crisis; finding life purpose and answers to questions they had been asking before they came to the UK; and finding love and security which was hitherto lacking.

In this overall context, (prior values and history, the situational change described in 'personal and social context', and the above bridges to conversion) participants encountered a community with a best account, or master story, which was discussed in Bible study groups and shared in sermons, songs and prayers in church services. Investigating this account, and the associated shared self-concept of being 'Christian', challenged their

frameworks. Lara's first meeting with a group of ethnically Chinese Christian students provides an example. She had not previously associated being Chinese with Christianity.

Spending weekends at Chinese Christian conferences and hearing Bible lectures and discussions by Chinese Christians in the Chinese language, was significant for Wanglin and Xiaojia. Xiaojia, Mei and Fuyin all described how important it had been for them to hear talks showing that Christianity and science are not in opposition; this had challenged their preconceptions about Christianity such that they were open to consider more.

Taylor uses the term 'hypergood' (1989, p.63), a value above other values. Applied in the context of this research, we can imagine participants meeting Christians at church in the UK and encountering a community with strong bonds, shared best account of the meaning and nature of life, shared self-concept as Christians or children of God, and a language including unfamiliar terminology. The people there interpret and articulate their experiences in terms of this terminology and a Christian master story. The shared emphasis on pleasing or knowing God, held as a hypergood, would be striking.

Four women experienced a crisis in the UK, where their former self-concept as a successful provider and solver of problems, or as in a relationship with a provider, collapsed. One, Fuyin, claimed a direct encounter with God when she failed to get a job and had marital and financial problems: watching a Christian DVD which convinced her to believe in God coincided with hearing God speaking to her. For Yun, Xiaohong and Lili the crisis coincided with contact with Christians who provided emotional and practical support during the crisis, consistent with the Christian story they and their churches were proclaiming. What the visitors were hearing in church, or

reading in the Bible, fitted with their sense of their own situation, and Christian friends' behaviour was consistent with their message. Talk of God's love was reinforced by experience of kindness. The message and the support offered security. This fits with Taylor's (1989) claim that if the way a good, or core value, is articulated is consistent with the good itself it can be very influential, especially if we perceive it to make sense of our own story so far. For them, the Christian account of life they were hearing seemed to make better sense of their situation than their earlier ideas and values; and strong new social bonds, with Christians, and arguably, with God himself, were developing.

Another bridge was hearing, assessing and believing new information. For the seven for whom this was the prime bridge, friendship with Christians was also important. They formed new social bonds at regular social activities or Bible courses; in Fowler's words they encountered a 'new community of interpretation and action' (1981, p.282). In addition to hearing Christians interpret the Bible, they also heard them relate God, the Christian story and Bible contents to their own lives. Xuejing, for example, mentioned hearing Chinese Christian students 'giving their testimonies', or talking about what they believed to be evidence of God in their lives. Changlan went from attending a student Bible course out of loneliness and curiosity, to regular attendance at a Chinese church; there, he met this new best account expressed and lived out in his own language and experienced a real sense of belonging. He said it had not been difficult, the account made sense and he just 'recognised' God as his 'father'. His self-concept changed, and with it his values, together with the new social bonds and shared best account.

Yue experienced the third bridge. She said she came to the UK with the express intent of finding her life purpose. She also said that as a child she

dreamed of serving a great king. Group discussion or social events did not attract her; it was through one to one discussion and Bible reading with a Christian where she could pose her own questions, and by seeing her prayers answered, that she developed a Christian best account which included a role for her. With these in place, her values changed; she moved on later to form new social bonds in church in China.

Xiaoshi experienced the fourth bridge to conversion, finding love and security within the Christian community. She had already experienced kindness from Christians in China, even been baptised there, but claimed not to have understood Christianity fully. She had a very unhappy childhood, frightened of her father. In the UK home of a Christian couple, together with a Malaysian Christian student, she said she experienced 'real family', 'real life' and 'real love'. She started to see herself as someone lovable and wanted to love others. The master story, self-concept, sense of purpose and values all started to change in this new community, where the lives of the believers were consistent with their message.

The main discussion of actual change (as opposed to challenge) is included below, in the section 'Returning to China', where I differentiate between people for whom changes in elements of the framework were sustained after return to China and those for whom they were not, and the relationship between this and any change in values.

Returning to China

Personal and social context

In addition to studying and living abroad, and becoming involved with Christianity, participants had other experiences which meant that their

personal situation was different when I met them from when they went to the UK, notably within the family. Seven had married since returning to China; five had become parents abroad or after return and two more were pregnant. Five returned to parents who were critical of their new faith. Yue also found her parents were too interfering, arranging dates for her with eligible bachelors and even buying her a flat with her own money. Others described how happy they felt to be near family again; Hui was enjoying decorating his new flat, bought by his parents.

Huanglin had been promoted to a professorship since return. Yang had become a self-employed lawyer and Lili was working in a small HR consultancy company, options which might not have been open to them in the China of the years before they went to the UK. Two, however, related negative experiences with colleagues that echoed findings of other studies about returnees to China (e.g. Gill, 2010; Hua Yang, 2008): Fuyin mentioned jealousy of her overseas qualification; Hunan found on return to his former government employer, that those who had not gone abroad had been promoted to more senior positions than the one he took up with a PhD from a famous UK university. He felt resented as a returnee and pushed aside. Both these people and others claimed that their Christian beliefs helped them cope with such matters.

Other aspects of the Chinese social context particularly affected parents amongst them. Xiaohong regretted not being able to have a second child as a result of the one child policy; Yun had given birth to her third child abroad to ensure her daughter had identity papers[41]. Huanglin was hoping to send her son abroad to complete his secondary education, to remove him from a

[41] It should be noted that since the interviews one participant has had two children, both now with Chinese papers, so there do seem to be loopholes.

system she described as too burdensome for children. One person hoped to emigrate so that their child would not have to experience what they considered an unequal education system, where children of party members had advantages.

Party membership was only mentioned by three people, one expressing relief that she was not nominated to membership as an undergraduate, another who had declined help to get a government job because it would lead to a requirement to join the Party and a third who had become a member as a schoolgirl. In the UK, on first becoming a Christian, she had considered leaving the Party as too detrimental to be contemplated: it would be visible in her record and perceived as shameful. On return she dealt with the issue by ignoring invitations to Party meetings until calls ceased; she had not resigned, but considered herself no longer a member.

The other issue which participants highlighted as being particularly prevalent in current China, was a pressure to earn to enable conspicuous consumption (see also Faure & Fang, 2008), where self-worth was linked to material ownership (see also L. Zhang, 2010). This was discussed in the section on 'Gratitude and contentment' on page 225. Twelve people provided evidence of a reduced desire for money or material possessions. In the 1930s the Chinese Christian writer Lao She (1946) criticized what he saw as an excessive enthusiasm for all things foreign. He drew an ironic picture of a returned Chinese student[42], enamoured of the material goods and consumerist ways he had seen in the US. What some students take back today may be somewhat different. Students from the wealthy cities of China's east coast have been known to find life abroad rather less

---

[42] Lao She (the pen name of Shu Qingchun, 1899 – 1966) spent over a decade outside China, in England, continental Western Europe, Singapore, the United States and Japan (A. C. Y. Huang, 2008).

materially 'advanced' than they expected, for example, perceiving the lack of high-rise buildings in New Zealand as a sign of backwardness (Bai, 2008) or finding some UK people still watching 14" televisions and interpreting this as rusticity (Hua Yang, 2008). However, for the new Christians, a reverse process to that mocked by Lao She seems to have taken place, with interest in material goods and status symbols having reduced.

Appreciation of a slower-paced life-style, and a suggestion, for example Jinglan's comment about her husband, that Chinese people would benefit if they learned to relax and enjoy life more, rather than continually pursuing material wealth, does not necessarily purely stem from a Biblical perspective that values God over mammon; such a change in attitude has been mentioned by other researchers of study abroad (e.g. Hua Yang, 2008)

Chinese church ecology

The relevance to this study of Yang's argument that local church ecology was a factor in Chinese students' initial attraction to Christianity abroad was discussed above. In considering whether and how Christian involvement and values continued after return it is important also to consider the church context that participants encountered in China.

The nature of the church in China is affected by its relationship with the government (Kindopp, 2004; Yang, 2006) and this was reflected in participants' church experience. At the time of interview two were attending registered churches, two were attending both a registered and an unregistered church, seven were in unregistered churches, and eight were not then attending church.

Lili took me to the large registered church she attended; I noted that at service end most of the thousand or so people left quickly without stopping

to chat. I observed this in other churches and Chinese Christians have also commented on this, suggesting two reasons to me: it is the habit to leave fast, and there is a lack of trust between strangers, attributable to the historico-political context. Lili missed the church friendships she had in the UK; she has since left that church for a smaller, unregistered church where people also meet together midweek, in homes. However, the registered church that two others attended, in a large southern coastal city, seemed to me much more sociable; Changlan commented on the help that the young marrieds group in that church had been to him and his wife.

Chinese Christians have informed me that because of the requirement for churches to register, unregistered churches are less visible and in order to attend one a contact is usually needed; one cannot spot one on a street and just go in. This lack of church visibility had affected Jinglan and Huanglin, who lived in cities which were provincial capitals but not international mega-cities. One reason Jinglan cited for not attending church was the distance from home to the only church she knew of; Huanglin travelled a long distance to get to one, but found it closed.

The significance to Christian returnees of attending a church where the *Bible* is discussed in its entirety was mentioned in Chapter Five. This was one factor which made some wary of registered churches, where ministers might feel constrained to limit what they preach. Others were understandably wary of attending unregistered churches which do not have governmental blessing. Lara and Mei mentioned a concern that some unregistered churches might be affected by unorthodox teaching or even infiltrated by dangerous cults.

There are unregistered churches operating more openly, with the knowledge of officials; they have experienced mixed fortunes (Kindopp,

2004). One such is Shouwang Church, Beijing, which includes many students and young professionals, including returnees from study abroad. In 2006 their application for registration was denied because they refused to join the TSPM (F. Yang, 2011). Despite that they managed to continue meeting until April 2011. China Daily even published a positive article about the church (Yiyao Wu & Xiaohuo Cui, 2010). However in 2011 they were required to leave their rented accommodation and when they tried to meet outside were moved on by police. Since, some members have been placed under Sunday house arrest (BBC, 2011), some have experienced other problems including eviction from their homes (G. He, 2011) and as of August 2012 the church was still unable to meet without arrests (China Aid, 2012). No participant in this research was a member of that church but another returnee, landlady to a Shouwang member, told me she was asked by public security officers to evict her tenant. This account illustrates the fluidity of the church situation. This can be confusing for returnees who have become Christians whilst studying abroad, as they may know little about the Chinese church; I have been told many times that China has freedom of religion, by scholars from China who have little idea of the restraints on religious practice.

Another possible explanation for some not attending church is that people have different *modalities* of 'doing religion'. Adam Chau (2010) perceives five such modalities in approaches to religion in China: the scriptural/discursive, the self-cultivational, the liturgical, the immediate-practical and the social-relational. Listening to two male participants, Hunan and Yang, who were not at that time attending church, I detected that they had particularly valued small group discussions in the UK, where the *Bible* was read, discussed and applied to personal or theoretical situations. It may be that they responded better to the context of a *debate* (the

scriptural/discursive modality) than to, for example, the singing and preaching (the liturgical modality) they would find in many churches.

Chau describes behaviour in a range of religions, including the individual, rather than corporate, activity of burning incense and praying for health or financial prosperity at Buddhist temples. It could be that for some intellectuals, brought up in late 20th century Beijing (as Yang and Hunan were), modalities other than the scriptural/discursive are unfamiliar or resound of superstition, whereas to read and discuss the written word is a procedure validated in the context of education at prestigious Beijing universities.

Lara's discomfort, feeling like a thief because her church had to move from venue to venue to avoid discovery, was mentioned in her cameo. Five others expressed dislike of being unable to meet openly for worship. One said a relative was being monitored by public security officials who knew about his Christian faith.

Xiaoshi and Yun had both worked part-time for a registered international church, but were unable to worship there because it was under foreign leadership. Viewing the websites of international churches led by expatriates in China provides confirmation that the Chinese government requires them to restrict services to holders of foreign passports.

There is a comparatively low ratio of trained church ministers to church members (Vala, 2009); Changlan, Lara, Yue, Hunan and Yun all referred to being affected by this. Fuyin supplemented what she heard at church with sermons on Chinese Christian websites sourced outside the PRC.

However, these difficulties had not prevented ten participants finding and settling in churches where they had made good friends and received

teaching they found helpful to their faith and lives. Xiaohong and Hui, in particular, commented that their faith had deepened in their Chinese church, in shared language, culture and context. Four others had settled to the extent that they were helping to lead churches.

One issue affecting the church to which new Christians return is the promotion of 'theological reconstruction'. This was mentioned in Chapter One. Certain scholars argue that whilst theological reconstruction has opened up dialogue between state and (registered) church it has done so at the cost of downplaying, even criticizing, fundamental Christian doctrines (Xinyuan Li, 2003). Some people have left the registered church for this reason (Kindopp, 2004). I do not know whether participants were aware of this theology and government efforts to promote it or of concern about it amongst church leaders, but some were wary of efforts to use church teaching and activities for political ends. One participant commented that in some registered churches the pulpit was used for homily about being good citizens, rather than for its full potential:

> the topic they're talking about… the teaching.. is not so.. deep… because it's abandoned to talk about.. like Jesus Christ's second coming, resurrection, not to emphasize on those like death, hell, the devil…..So… it's just encouraging the people to do good things, to be a good person, to be positive.. yes, to be good people, person…..Not to make any trouble, not to oppose the government[43].

Other returnees have told me they were disconcerted to find church different from in the UK. Songs were more old-fashioned or the language and behaviour more formal. In other cases prayers and preaching were *less* formal and more ad-hoc than those to which they were accustomed. I asked the minister of a large church in a North Chinese city how the

---

[43] I have heard the Second Coming mentioned in a registered church sermon; restrictions are, presumably, experienced and managed differently by different ministers.

newcomer could make friends and have close Christian companionship in a quite formal setting where few hovered to chat after the service. Having worked in the UK, he understood my question and answered, 'tell them to join the choir!' Another possibility is to join a group of returnees, who pray and read the *Bible* together in Chinese and help to introduce newcomers to Chinese churches. Five participants had been introduced by UK friends to such groups; two others had set up a returnee *Bible* study group, to share experiences and support each other, supplementing their church involvement.

The participants in this research were highly intelligent, able people, capable of making a significant contribution in home, workplace *and* church. In the UK they had access to a range of Christian literature, sermons, conferences and mentoring that was not easily available to them in China.

On return to China new Christians need to be able to identify good churches, to understand opportunities and constraints, and to understand some of the context, including the huge growth in church numbers, the nuances of 'theological reconstruction' and the existence of heretical sects (Lambert, 1999). Whereas Wang and Yang (2006) found that the local church ecology in the US contributed to Chinese students' attraction to Christianity, this study found the local church ecology in China more complex in its effects: whilst ten had settled well into churches, the participants in general faced challenges doing so.

Challenges to new values

The church context posed one potential challenge to participants wishing to live out their new Christian values. New family situations, mentioned above, also provided both constraints and opportunities: new father Yang, for example, had not been to Christian meetings since his wife became

pregnant and family responsibilities took more of his time; Yun, on the other hand, had two children since return to China and she described her initial struggles with that situation as bringing her to a more intimate experience of God and closer involvement in church. These two reflected another contrast in changed relationships: of the seven who had married since return to China, the five who had married people who were Christians were all involved in church and reflected more changed values than the other two, Caiyun and Yang, who had married people who were not Christians (although Yang's wife converted later) and were not in churches at the time of interview. The three married women whose husbands had not accompanied them to the UK and experienced Christianity with them, were not in churches in China, whereas the three whose husbands had gone to the UK with them and also converted to Christianity, were involved in churches. This suggests that both members of couples being Christians helped in living out the revised master story and values.

Other felt pressures mentioned were from parents who did not approve of church involvement and from parents or peers who regarded time spent in church as a distraction from the more important job of increasing earnings. H. Yang (2008) refers to Chinese returnees experiencing difficulties with their parents. He claims that the main concern of most parents of returnees is that their child gets a stable, well-paid job and that parents favour jobs with welfare benefits, 'like government officers, teachers, accountants, and engineers' (p. 181). This was what Enci and Changlan found. They both experienced initial conflict with parents when declining parental help to a government sector job in favour of jobs with foreign companies where there would be less expectation to conform to business practices which, as Christians, they deemed wrong. The friction between Wanglin and her mother because of their differing views about the importance of material

possessions is another example. In general, after a period of resettlement, the participants in this study seemed to have relationships with their parents that were as good as, or better than, before they went abroad.

Scholars (Briley, et al., 2005; Hua Yang, 2008) have noted that people who have become attuned to life in more than one culture can develop a chameleon-like quality where they dip in and out of certain behaviour, and even thinking, depending on the social situation. Lara did this to a degree, for example gradually learning to keep quiet about her dislike of astrology when friends at work starting discussing horoscopes. However, Enci and Changlan made determined efforts to maintain a consistent identity as Christians at work, Changlan not taking part in work social activities that could endanger his marital fidelity and Enci refusing to lie to customers whilst at the same time remaining gracious to colleagues. They gently made their Christian values known to colleagues.

Certain work contexts constrained Christian practice more than others. Of the six people holding university or government-related posts, the two who attended church regularly were in relatively junior positions, one having deliberately chosen not to pursue promotion in order to maintain a strong family and church life. She was married to a Christian. The three oldest women all worked in universities, two as professors and one as a senior lecturer; they and Hunan, who held a central government job, were not attending church. The type of work unit may affect willingness to admit religious adherence: Chinese friends working in university and government posts tell me that progression to senior posts, with associated benefits, can be dependent upon joining the CCP.

Factors contributing to sustained change in values

Having discussed challenges to any new values I go on to consider factors which helped sustain any new values, particularly having a changed best account of life and a new self-concept, perceiving a different locus of power and sharing these changes with others, in revised social bonds.

The previous chapter identified an increase in the number of participants sharing core values after conversion to Christianity, reflected in the tables on page 178. I argue that this is because twelve people now held a common Christian master story as their best account, perceived power and authority to be located in God and had changed values related to that story. This was a story including the following elements: they saw themselves as a sinner, saved by Christ, living under the authority of a God who was active in their lives, and with whom they experienced a personal relationship, lived out in prayer and in reference to the Bible as a source of guidance and authority. It also included emphasis on: the importance of being in church, changed family relationships and a new concern for people outside the family. Evidence of these elements was found, in a dedicated review of the interview transcripts, in stories people told about decisions, relationships, joys and difficulties, and in allusions to Bible passages and conversations with God. Seven (Caiyun, Huanglin, Hunan, Jinglan, Lara, Mei and Yang) gave less evidence of sharing all these elements. A comparison of the before and after values of these seven shows that six (the exception is Caiyun) also experienced less change in values than others. This is consistent with Taylor's (1989) theory that values and best account change together. Every participant showed evidence of having been affected by their experience of Christianity and eighteen referred to themselves as Christians (Jinglan said she did not currently think she was a 'real Christian').

Caiyun, whilst not referring to Christ or salvation and feeling no need of church or regular contact with Christians, did provide evidence of a changed self-concept and best account which included some elements of the Christian story: she repeatedly referred to God as 'Father' and had a changed view of what happened after death. But I could not tell whether her revised values were attributable to her faith or to her current situation, in a happy marriage, expecting her first child, in a comfortable apartment, with an interesting, secure job.

One can be a Christian without attending church, particularly in China where open involvement with church may have negative repercussions for some people, including university staff (such as Mei, Huanglin and Jinglan) and government workers (such as Hunan). However, not meeting at all with other Christians may indicate a lower importance attached to progressing in faith and worshipping God; indeed, Fowler's definition of conversion includes a 'commitment to reshape one's life in a new community of interpretation and action' (1981, p.2). The seven who did not share all elements of the best account held by the others were not members of a church when I met them. Without such a community they lacked the stimuli, language and relating of faith to life which encouraged the others to pray, seek guidance in the Bible and see God as active in situations. Whilst Xuejing described how talking and praying with other Christians helped her feel close to God, Caiyun made no mention of Christ or salvation and saw no need to be in a group with other Christians; whilst Hui and Xiaohong talked of how their Christian faith had grown in their Chinese churches, Jinglan, who had never been to church since returning to China, had now returned to her pre-UK position of thinking that Christianity was not for the Chinese, and that God was not currently interested in her. Caiyun, Huanglin and Jinglan had not been baptised, so were less likely to have been through

a thought process leading to a 'commitment to reshape' their lives; Changlan and Yue, however, thought very hard before being baptised, not least because they expected their parents to disapprove.

The following discussion will apply the elements of Taylor's (1989) background framework (best account, self-concept, social bonds and identification, values and hypergood), together with Fowler's (1981) centres of power, to illuminate the relationship between Christian conversion and sustained values change found in this study. The other elements of Fowler's (1981) contents of conversion are changed master story and centres of value, which overlap with Taylor's (1989) best account and values. I shall bring Fowler's (1981) 'community of interpretation and action' into the discussion of revised social bonds and shared story.

A new best account

At the heart of the Christian story (which contained the elements listed on page 257), presented strongly by twelve participants as their story, was God, described as father (by eleven participants), with Christ as saviour (by fifteen). Characteristics of God referred to included love, protection, power and authority. God was not only referred to as a concept; he was described acting in participants' lives: for example, Wanglin described a to and fro relationship with God where each time she became distant from him he would draw her back, closer; Caiyun described God hugging her; Fuyin said she heard God speaking to her, telling her to love her husband. The idea of themselves in a personal relationship with God was prevalent. Xiaohong referred to God the Holy Spirit prompting her to check something in the Bible and Xuejing to the Holy Spirit moving her to apologize when she had been angry with God.

Participants referred to themselves as 'child' or 'daughter' of God, as 'committing' to Christ, as forgiven, loved and saved by God, and as wanting to 'serve' God (Yue, Xiaoshi). God was referred to as having a plan for them (e.g. Yun, Xiaojia). Fuyin said God had told her he had not 'used' her yet (she referred to Mother Teresa's illustration of being a pen in God's hand).

This was a time-bound story with a past and a future, with references, for example, to creation (Yun), archaeological evidence for Old Testament history (Fuyin), the second coming (Enci), hell (Xuejing), paradise (Yang) and eternal life (Caiyun).

The account included a corporate aspect: other Christians were referred to as brothers and sisters. The *Bible* was referred to as providing advice, even models, for human relationships e.g. in marriage (Changlan, Lili) and in self-sacrifice or forgiveness (Fuyin, Xiaoshi).

Three of the seven who showed less change in values spent only one year in the UK. They had less time to understand Christian belief and, in the cases of Jinglan and Huanglin, showed little indication of believing much more than that God exists, is the God of the *Bible* and, in Huanglin's case, is personified in Jesus. There was no indication, in conversation with them and with Caiyun, of a sense of personal sinfulness or of a felt need for the forgiveness and reconciliation with God that is at the heart of the Christian faith. They lacked this element of the master story shared by the others.

Ng (2002) discerned two distinct conceptions of the relationship with God within one US Chinese church: some saw 'a convert as a sinner saved from the eternal damnation that his or her own sins would have brought and who should now lead a new life for God' (p. 204), whereas others 'saw a convert as a beneficiary of divine tutelage, someone who is saved from daily misfortunes and should now lead a dutiful life for the well-being of his

beloved family and friends' (pp. 204-205). Ng connects the latter perspective with aspects of Chinese culture, including 'imageries of deities' and 'emphasis on practical blessings'. The twelve who exhibited the greatest change adhered to an understanding of Christianity closer to Ng's first group. Perhaps some of the others simply did not have enough time in the UK to register the difference. It seems that Jinglan, Huanglin and Caiyun believed in a single God who had some attributes of the Christian God, but were less familiar with the Christian concept of God being triune: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This raises the question whether they were actually converts to Christianity. They had certainly changed and therefore perhaps adapted their views about the world and themselves, and it may be that they are in a process of conversion, but to say that they had converted to Christianity is too strong. Gooren (2008) uses the phrase *conversion career* and describes different levels of religious participation: pre-affiliation, affiliation, conversion, confession and disaffiliation. Perhaps what these three experienced and expressed in the UK was *affiliation* to a group or to an idea, but not *conversion.* It is also possible that the career is not over. As Brian Stanley has pointed out, 'not all conversions to Christianity represent conversions to Christ' (2003, p. 326); a person may feel strong identification with a group of people and a set of practices which they see as Christianity or church (especially when away from home), without adopting a Christian master story including concepts such as repentance and salvation.

A new self-concept: a 'new creation'

Having a new best account which included a God who loved them, had saved them, was powerful and had purposes for them was related to a changed self-concept, most notably the idea of self as being a loved child of God, which was mentioned in the section on a 'new best account'. The

261

change in the women who earlier had a very low sense of their own worth, as a result of childhood experiences, echoes Krause's (2009) findings that having a close personal relationship with God is associated with a stronger sense of self-worth. They had taken to heart scriptural assertions that each person is an individual known and loved by God, with a part to play in his world.

Three people, Xuejing, Xiaojia and Yue, expressed these attitudes and a deep closeness to God but also described occasional unease at their felt inability to be good enough and near enough to God. Yue recognised these opposing feelings and provided a reason: she said that sometimes her idea of God is confused by her experience of her blood father. She portrayed her father as emotionally inexpressive, but controlling. There was evidence that two women in the present study moved between two modes: at times simply inserting another level into the inherited hierarchy of duty and obedience, putting God at the top, above parents; at other times feeling a sense of freedom and specialness, as an individual, valued child of God.

The Bible describes salvation as requiring a form of rebirth, being 'born again' (John 3:7) into new life in the Holy Spirit: the idea is that not only is the person's perception of their identity changed, but also their actual identity, for example, as a new child of God (Galatians 3:26). The Apostle Paul described this as being a 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus described new birth as including being part of the 'kingdom of God' (John 3:3). The apostle Peter described Christians as having a 'living hope' (1 Peter 1:3-4).

According to this view, values can be expected to change, with people holding one revised set of consistent values rather than two sets, one for the UK and one for China. This study has revealed differences in behaviour,

decisions and relationships sustained after return to China. It shows that such linked changed self-concept and values change can be long-term, not merely short-term for the UK.

Religious conversion is not the only source of change in self-concept. The process of re-socialization or adjustment through difficulties, in another country, can lead to personal growth and perspective transformation (Gill, 2007; Temple, 1999) or even to feeling 'reborn' through the transcultural experience (Anderson, 1994, p. 321). Gu (2009) points out that because of the nature of intercultural experience, lived in the constant crossing of cultural boundaries, a key area of personal growth is interculturality, and that this is part of a change in whom people perceive themselves to be.

A new locus of power, authority and security

The new master story and self-concept prevalent amongst the participants, specifically the idea of God as loving and powerful and themselves as saved, affected concepts of security. Some earlier values were rooted in a lack of security. Xiaoshi, Enci and Lili all had unhappy childhoods, lacking paternal love and support. All three sought financial independence as a way of escape from home pressures. One reason Xiaoshi sought high academic achievement at school was in order to have the best chance of getting into a university away from her home city, away from the threat posed by her father. Lili was seeking to escape from the constant fear of being unable to pay her education fees and the ensuing loss of face, and from her mother's constant complaints. She was looking for a well-paying job and a man who would provide her with both financial security and the love and emotional security she had never experienced at home. Enci was looking for career success and money, and the ensuing admiration, to fill the gap left by her father's lack of encouragement.

These three and Fuyin all mentioned anger and arguments, or even fights, in the home. Yun did not mention arguments but did describe being sent away to live with her grandmother when her sister was born, from the age of two to seven, only seeing her parents once or twice a year. When she returned to live with her parents and sister she was very unsure of herself. She assessed her earlier life, through school, university, and early career, as very driven, and her former self as a 'controller', who sought career success and respect to make her feel secure.

Others described happy childhoods and loving parents, but experienced the pressures of the education system and the all-important university entrance examination. These interviews and other more extensive research into the teenage education experience in China (Fong, 2004) reveal a climate of intense competition to get into the best possible school and university, a climate emphasizing gaining security through 'coming top'.

Sources of security changed after conversion. None of the women mentioned above was still seeking security through career or financial success. One was unemployed, one was a full-time mother (rather than a lawyer), one was working part-time as a church administrator, one had curtailed over-time in order to spend more time on spiritual disciplines and the fifth had a very responsible, but not particularly well-paid, job and lived in a tiny apartment which reflected her income. They found their security in a God they believed provided what they needed materially and loved them in ways their earthly parents had or could not. Four of them appeared to have secure, happy marriages with Christian men, and the fifth was single, but with a network of Christian friends. They received support in relationships of shared values and purpose.

For Yue, a single woman, having God in her account of life gave her security in the context of a difficult relationship with her father. Whilst her refusal to marry a man who was not a Christian annoyed her father, her confidence that God was her ultimate father had eased her felt tension with her blood father: although she was sometimes frustrated that he made important decisions for her, she had also sometimes wondered how she would cope if he were not there to help her; believing that God was looking after her, and was also in control of her father, lessened that concern.

Wong's study of Chinese intellectuals who converted to Christianity in the US (2006) also identified values changes. She described participants as having had a 'personality change' which led them to be calm in face of uncertainty, with an attitude of 'let go and let God' (p. 126). This echoed the importance my participants placed on finding security in God, believing that he had a good plan for their lives and allowing him to have control.

Chapter Five discussed the importance attributed to being close to God and honouring him. Before conversion the main locus of authority was perceived to be parents, the social hierarchy or themselves. After conversion authority over them was seen to lie in God and the Bible. God was seen as commanding obedience and reverence, and his guidance followed, because they believed he had their interests at heart. Formerly, strength was perceived to come from one's own hard work, career achievement and position; it needed to be internal. After conversion, twelve saw reliance on God, even giving up control to him, as essential for their well-being. The prevalence of pleasing God over pleasing parents revealed this. The findings of this study support Fowler's argument that conversion leads to changes in centres of power.

Xiaojia, for example, talked about how she made important decisions: although she was concerned about her parents' feelings, their advice came lower in the pecking order than previously. She now sought advice first from the Bible and in prayer to God, then from her (Christian) husband and church leaders.

Seeing God as the ultimate authority came across most vividly in Yun's explanation that fear of God led her not to abort her third pregnancy, despite abortion being socially expected in China in that situation and also her own initial wish. However, her image of God was not simply of a figure to be feared; she referred repeatedly to his blessings and how she now saw a reason for her earlier difficulty. This example is an indication that Yun now had a hypergood, in Taylor's sense, a value which is 'not only .. incomparably more important than others but provide(s) the standpoint from which these must be weighed, judged, decided about' (1989, p. 63). Being in line with God's wishes and plan for her took precedence over her own career aspirations, financial situation and others' opinion of her.

The place of God as ultimate authority in eleven participants' lives was underlined by their commitment to church and the amount of time they spent in church and outside, in prayer and *Bible* study, alone or with other Christians. They attended church to worship God, to receive *Bible* teaching to help them follow God in their daily lives and to be with others who shared their beliefs. A twelfth was seeking a church for these reasons.

Belief in, and reliance on, God's power was also revealed in references to answered prayer, and in illustrations of failure when relying on their own resources instead of depending on God. Xiaoshi's story of allowing herself to become like a god to staff in the hospital she managed, and subsequently falling foul of internal politics, was one such example.

Changed relationships and a new community

A common change reported in this study was an increased ability to see things from others' perspectives. Xiaohong and Hui, for example, claimed they were learning to stop making snap judgements of people. This change, and the pursuant improvements in personal relationships, has been identified by others researching study abroad. Gill (2010) found that Chinese returnees were able to move between different ways of thinking and behaving and were thus willing 'to engage with difference' (p. 373). Murphy-Lejeune's comment that 'tolerance occurs when your fear of others has been mastered and you are ready to launch into adventure' (2003, p. 110), tallies with remarks made by participants of the present study, for example, Xiaohong. Her new desire and ability to get along well with colleagues was linked with a new belief that other people are not 'enemies' to be overcome and with understanding of the pressures they face, arising from her own increased life and work experience.

Xiaohong clearly had a changed self-concept and this had much to do with her experience abroad of managing 'language mastery, social interaction, personal development and academic outcomes' (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010, p. 7). However, she also believed that God was the prime mover behind her change, interpreting her increased tolerance of others as related to her new sense of her own sin, selfishness and limitations. Reading the Bible encouraged her to think like this and to learn to love others rather than think of them as competitors. It seemed that both being a Christian and her experience abroad influenced the way she saw herself and others. Her church experience in China helped her maintain this confident outlook towards others by reinforcing her identity as a child of God. Chinese Christian converts in Wong's US study also claimed to have become more 'empathetic' (2006, p. 129).

In fourteen cases family relationships had changed. Sometimes this was related to a new tendency to focus on others and not just on oneself, as described above. In two cases, Caiyun and Yang, this may come from marrying and becoming parents. However, in the other cases, there was now another factor in family dynamics: Christian principles being applied. This was discussed in 'caring family relationships' (Chapter 5) and there are examples in Changlan's and Fuyin's cameos (Chapter 4). Accounts given by Enci, Lili, Xiaoshi and Yue of close church relationships contrasted with their stories of unhappy childhoods. These new social bonds and community provided secure family relationship for those whose childhood family relationships were broken or distant.

Xiaoshi's discovery in the UK of what family life could be like was still vivid to her. She had brought this experience back to China where she and her husband were attempting to reproduce this loving Christian family as they welcomed students to their home and church. The new social bonds she acquired in the UK were extending in China as she and her husband built a new church family.

Participants in Temple's (1999) US study of conversion to Christianity by mainland Chinese also reported improved family relationships. People in both studies saw themselves as children of God, with him as Father and the church as a new family. The present study brought to light more about the nature of the changed significance of 'Father' and 'family' for the participants, because it was set in the context of their childhood experiences, specifically discussed in interviews. Unlike Temple's study, carried out whilst participants were still in the US, this study indicates that such change has withstood time and change in context, as the interviews took place after return to China.

The effect of Christian faith on participants as parents was discussed in Chapter Five. It would be interesting to visit these families in some years' time, to see whether the parents' faith continues to influence their parenting. Chen's (2006) ethnographic study of Taiwanese evangelical Christian converts in California suggests it could. She found that parents had changed, now seeing Christ as head of the family, and themselves as stewards of the gifts God had given them in their children, charged with the responsibility of caring for them to bring out their individual God-given personalities, interests and abilities. She cited one father describing his new belief that God is both just *and* loving, whereas he had previously been following the Confucian model of fatherhood, emphasising justice, the child's obedience and filial piety, but not showing his children enough love. The family relationships in her study had become more like friendships than based on hierarchy because the parents recognised their children as 'separate and autonomous individuals who belong to God' (p.593). Christian teaching democratized family relationships, 'consecrating the individuality and autonomy of children' (p. 573). The nature of the family bond changed.

The divorce rate in China has increased greatly since 1980, exceeding 1.4 million in 2007 (Xinhua, 2008). Reasons suggested include: children born under the one child policy being unable to sustain relationships; the introduction of laws allowing couples to divorce cheaply within one day; the changing role of women (R. Ryan, 2008). This is the context within which five participants claimed that following Biblical teaching on marriage, prayer and forgiveness had protected them from divorce. Marital bonds and harmony had strengthened. The view that Changlan and Fuyin had of their wife and husband being given to them by God and therefore not to be treated (or given up) lightly, was part of their new best account that a wise, loving God gives gifts for a purpose. The transformation experienced by

Changlan and Lili, from seeing marriage as about them being loved, to being about mutual love and sacrificial concern for the other, runs counter to a philosophy that seeks divorce quickly. Further examples of changed values affecting marriages were given in Chapter Five.

The inclination to see the other's perspective and to forgive, that married participants in this study described, was related to a self-concept which included experiencing forgiveness by God; Fuyin linked God's forgiveness 'streaming down' on her to her own ability to forgive her father. Also, rather than focussing on her husband's shortcomings, she now saw how kind he had been over the years.

These changes were related to: a best account which included a relationship with a Father God they perceived protecting and caring for them and a more secure self-concept, as loved and forgiven by God. They were sustained in changed marriages and new church communities of shared best accounts.

Eleven participants now referred to church as family, 'brothers and sisters' with shared values and aims, who were a source of support and care. Even Xuejing, who had not yet found a church in reach of her apartment, referred to her desire to be in one, saying 'it's time to come home'. For Yue, Wanglin, Enci and Changlan, the sense of belonging in a church in China helped them overcome initial tensions arising from changes in their relationships with parents after they became Christians. Also, their idea of being Chinese having been extended by their faith, their idea of family and home had also altered. Just as a Christian traveller away from home has somewhere to go, and belong, on a Sunday, so they had some people to belong with on a more extended basis. They have succeeded in 'broadening the borders of being Chinese' (Hua Yang, 2008, p. 207). Their identity

includes being Chinese *and* being Christian. They have a changed idea of home (Storti, 2001), which includes people and places outside China and has an eternal meaning too. 'Home will always be defined a little more broadly now' (Hunter, 1985, p. 188).

Butcher (2002, 2003) has highlighted the sense of loss that some returnees experience, which can be so intense that it is like mourning the death of someone close. I did not identify such grief in this study, although some missed intimacy with UK Christian friends. For Mei the loss seemed more marked because she had been unable to settle into church fellowship in China because of her and her husband's concerns about potential risks of attending church. Although others initially missed UK Christian friendships and church communities, generally this was no longer a concern because they had found their own church 'home' in China. They talked of being with people they could trust and share their lives with. They may have avoided the degree of grief experienced by Butcher's participants because they held new master stories of being part of the international family of God, and had found a church community in China.

The psychologist Triandis (1989) refers to the 'sampling' of three aspects of the self: private, public and collective. All of us sample all three, in varying degrees, but our cultural context affects the degree. Collectivism and common fate increase the sampling of the collective self, as does being in a culturally homogenous setting. Our ingroup determines social behaviour in a collective culture more than in an individualistic culture. For Lara, the church she attended in China never became her trusted ingroup, but her parents always had been. Her discomfort about the church's clandestine nature, her misgivings about the quality of the teaching and her parents' dislike of her going made it easier to give up going to church. Her combined desire to please her parents and her concern that her church was

clandestine, and therefore not socially respected, led her, in terms Triandis's theory, to sample her collective self all the more, sticking to her known ingroup.

There were three other single female returnees: Enci returned from the UK with a ready-made new ingroup of close friends who were at the same UK university together and attended the same church in China; Yue acquired a strong ingroup in her church, possibly partly because her family were never really her ingroup: she had always felt on the family margins, even to the extent of once wondering if she was adopted. Xuejing had been involved in her UK church to the extent of working as a church volunteer and living with a church family after graduating. Back in China, she initially struggled to find such an ingroup, but later settled in a church. Those married to Christians had their own home Christian ingroup to sustain their Christian self-concept and values.

Chinese bonds and a Chinese story

Those participants who had friendships in the UK with Chinese Christians who spoke their first language (Mandarin or Cantonese) continued their involvement in church after return to China. The four who attended Chinese churches in the UK settled in churches on return, as did the two who participated in a mainland Mandarin-speaking group within a British church and the two who had friendships with Mandarin-speaking Malaysian Chinese Christians in British churches. Three others, not particularly involved with Chinese Christians in the UK, also settled well in churches in China, but in the UK they attended small groups with more mature Christians, learning how to read and apply the *Bible* and to pray. These three were also put in touch with British Christians in China who invited them to groups for returned students and then introduced them to Chinese churches; two of

them were in the UK with husbands who also became Christians, so they were provided mutual encouragement in seeing Christianity as Chinese.

Caiyun, Huanglin, Jinglan, Lara, Mei, Xuejing and Yang lacked regular contact with Chinese Christians in the UK and were not attending church when I interviewed them, although I have since heard that Mei and Xuejing now do so. Yang had been in a Christian returnee group for several years after return but ceased when his wife became pregnant.

This suggests that spending time with Chinese Christians in the UK can help new Chinese Christians settle in churches on return. Experiencing Chinese Christian discourse and becoming accustomed to worship, prayer and Bible reading in Chinese may foster identification with Christianity as something Chinese, not a temporary, 'foreign' experience left behind on return home. Other Chinese returnees have told me they felt handicapped when asked to pray aloud in Chinese in China, because they were unfamiliar with Chinese Christian terminology; this made them feel an outsider.

Those who had contact with Chinese Christians in the UK may have developed a Christian best account which included China. Certainly two without that contact, Jinglan and Huanglin, who were not meeting with Christians in China, did not share that account, or saw themselves on the margins of it. In the UK, after deciding that there was only one God who created the whole world and all people, and being shown parts of the Bible showing God as concerned for all nationalities, Jinglan began to *think* she was part of the story. However, she said that after return to China she returned to a viewpoint she held before going to the UK: that the God of the Bible was only for the Jews and people in certain Western countries. Her lack of participation in Chinese Christian activities in the UK may have meant that she did not *feel* Christianity was Chinese, and the lack of visible

Christian activity in her home city or within her social circle, gave her

nothing to sustain the *thought* that it was.

This sense of being on the edge of someone else's story was not what the

seven women with prior problematic relationships with parents expressed.

In addition to identifying themselves now as children of a loving father God,

with a new family and hope of a secure eternity, they also saw themselves

as ambassadors spreading this story and bringing more people into it.

The idea of a change in master story brings to mind the concept of a

change in worldview which has traditionally been discussed by Christian

missiologists and anthropologists as part of religious conversion (e.g.

Hiebert, 1985; Kraft, 1996). Sire (2004, p. 17) defined worldview as

> a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart,
> that can be expressed as a story or in a set of
> presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially
> true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or
> subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the
> basic constitution of reality, and that provides the
> foundation on which we live and move and have our being.

However, as Smith has pointed out (2008), the term social imaginary, as

used by Charles Taylor (2004, p. 23), has a more socially-embodied

resonance:

> the ways people imagine their social existence, how they
> fit together with others, how things go on between them
> and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met,
> and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie
> these expectations.

In this study, for example, Lara's intellectual worldview had changed to

incorporate her belief in Christ's resurrection. However the depth of

emotion she revealed when talking of how uncomfortable she had felt in a

clandestine unregistered Chinese church showed the clash between the

social imaginary she brought back from the UK and her experience on

return. That church was constantly on the move, for fear of being

discovered by the authorities, and she felt Christians should not be like this, but should be able to be open about their faith. 'Social imaginary' also fits well with Yue's view of her role in the church in China: it is not just intellectual assent to the idea of a creator God adopting her as a daughter, but a feeling of belonging to God's family, which is the church she helps lead. She experiences purpose and value. All this is very different from her previous imaginary of being on the outside of her blood family and searching for purpose in life.

Ong (cited in X. Liu, 1997, p. 104) contrasts two imaginaries affecting modern Chinese, 'a post-Maoist official state project that is tied to the fixed territory of China… and a coastal phenomenon that envisions Chinese modernity in transnational terms'. In the context of this study the questions arise as to whether each participant inhabited one or the other of these imaginaries on arrival in the UK, and after their return to China, and whether that affected their ability to perceive themselves as Chinese Christians. It may be that another factor influencing the degree of engagement in the Chinese Christian world (in addition to visibility of the church, political pressures, career considerations and family concerns) is the social imaginary that developed in relation to the places people grew up in and lived in before and after coming to the UK.

The eight who lived for large parts of their lives in, and returned to, Shanghai, Beijing or large coastal cities with long international trading histories, were engaged in Christian churches or groups. The four who grew up in and returned to cities which do not fit that description were not engaged in Christian churches at the time of interview. The remaining seven all came from other provincial cities but returned to Shanghai or Beijing; they varied in their degree of church involvement. It seems likely that those who had spent most time in coastal trading cities, especially

those in the Pearl River Delta (one of the world's largest manufacturing centres) and in Shanghai (traditionally China's most cosmopolitan city), had most exposure to ideas and behaviour from outside China and, importantly, saw the adoption of such ideas and behaviour by those around them. This could have affected their concept of what it is to be Chinese, to a degree which made it more likely they would engage with the church than it was for those in cities less touched by the transnational experience.

Summary

This chapter opened with a diagram conceptualizing a process of change, which contained a number of elements: a personal framework, consisting of best account, self-concept, social bonds and values (Taylor, 1989); a socio-political context (Yang, 1999) and local church ecology (Wang and Yang, 2006). To Taylor's framework were added Fowler's (1981) contents of conversion: master story and centres of value, seen here as coterminous with Taylor's best account and values, and centres of power, extended here to include authority and security. Participants were shown to be affected by changes in individual parts of this framework and by changes in one part affecting the other parts. Findings from this study, about bridges to conversion and tensions and benefits returnees experienced living out changed values, provided additional elements to aid understanding of challenges and supports to sustained framework and values change.

These elements were then discussed as contributing factors or challenges to initial and sustained conversion and values change, first in a new context (the UK) and second, after returning to another context (China). Particular attention was paid to factors contributing to sustained change after return to China; in addition to elements from the original theoretical framework, an additional factor was discussed: involvement with Chinese Christians in the UK.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter the initial research aims and questions are considered and answers to the questions provided. The significance of the work is then summarized, in terms of its contribution to knowledge and also its practical relevance to members of the Christian church in the UK and China. The main limitations of the study are listed and recommendations for further related research are made.

Research aim and questions revisited

The general aim of this study was to draw attention to an as yet little-researched phenomenon, the presence of mainland Chinese students and scholars in British churches, who profess belief in Christianity whilst in the UK, and to increase knowledge about what this means for them after return. The focus was on whether and how core values changed (i.e. remained changed after return to China) and the implications of any such change for participants in China.

As Chapter Two explains, research in the US has identified factors contributing to Christian conversion there amongst mainland Chinese scholars and increased knowledge of what being Christian means, in terms of personal change, to some such people who remain living there (e.g. Yang, 1999; Wang and Yang, 2006; Wong, 2006). However, I identified no research about such people who return to live in China; we lack knowledge about whether and how such change is sustained after return to China, and about implications for those involved.

Also, within the field of international education, there is a considerable body of knowledge about returnees' contributions in, and experiences of, the

Chinese workplace (e.g. X. Li, 2004; C. Li, 2005, Rosen & Zweig, 2005; M. Yang & Tan, 2007), but much less about lasting effects of the overall study abroad experience on their values.

The contribution of this study to knowledge in these two areas is summarized later in this chapter.

The theoretical framework of this study was built on the relationship between values, Christian conversion and context: in particular Rokeach's (1973) definition of a *value* and Taylor's (1989) theory that values develop, and change, within a personal framework, also including social bonds, a personal narrative and a self-concept; Fowler's (1981) theory that values change during conversion; and theories that both socio-cultural context (Yang, 1999) and church (Wang and Yang 2006) context need to be taken into account in understanding Christian conversion amongst mainland Chinese.

Arguments of Inkeles and Levinson (1969), and Parsons and Shils (1951) about where values come into play informed the research methodology. A qualitative, interpretive approach, using semi-structured ethnographic interviews held in China, was adopted to allow an active contribution by participants, and some, albeit limited, researcher observation in the participants' home context.

The main research question posed was:

> 'Have the core values of postgraduate students from the People's Republic of China, who professed conversion to Jesus Christ whilst in the UK, changed as a result of that conversion?'

It will be answered here in four sections.

1. What are the participants' core values?

Each participant's values, as identified at the time of interviews, are summarized in the table in Appendix E. These were identified through analysis of interviews and a limited amount of observation of participants in China (described on pages 115 to 116). Values were identified through analysis of themes in what they said about decisions, dilemmas, joys, difficulties, changing relationships and other changes.

Values varied between individuals, although there were some values which were shared between several people. There was an increase in shared values after return. Tables on page 178 show how many and which people shared which values before professing belief in Christ in the UK and at the time of interviews in China.

Chapter Five contains a description of the six core values shared by most participants; evidence for the values is given there. At the time of interviews all the participants held 'caring for the family' as a core value. That this should increase in importance is not that surprising, given that seven had married since going abroad, and five had children. However, for thirteen, there was evidence that attitudes to parents, spouses and children had changed as a result of Christian faith: for example, evidence of forgiveness, caring for parents rather than merely submitting, considering the spouse's perspective more were discussed on pages 196 to 201. The relationship between this and having God as a new source of authority and security in the lives of seven women is discussed on pages 263 to 266.

'Salvation and being close to God' were strong values for fourteen. Examples of evidence for this are given on pages 204 to 207, and the relationship between this and their Christian beliefs, or master story, and self-concept as a child of God is discussed there and on pages 259 to 268.

'Caring for others' outside the family was particularly important for thirteen and is discussed on pages 207 to 213, and in the section 'changed relationships and a new community' on pages 267 to 272. It took a variety of forms, but there were five main areas: an increased understanding of others' perspectives and desire to take them into account; increased tolerance and forgiveness; greater focus on helping or serving others, including those outside the family and the church; serving within the church; and wanting to tell others about Christ.

For twelve, 'honouring God' (see pages 213 to 219, for examples of evidence) was a strong value. This is related to the new best account of the nature and meaning of life and the self-concept within it they had adopted as Christians who placed emphasis on the role of the Bible for their daily life. They were the same people who highly valued 'being part of a good church' (pages 219 to 225). The idea of God as a new locus of authority and security, and the importance of trusting, obeying and serving him were sustained in a new community, the church.

'Gratitude and contentment', that is *being* grateful and content, was a core value for ten (pages 225 to 227). These included four people who did not share all three of the specifically Christian values mentioned above. Participants attributed a decreased desire to acquire more and a desire to be grateful for what they already had to both Christian faith having led to finding security in God rather than in material wealth and to seeing a more relaxed, happier life in the UK.

Fewer asterisks against them in the shared values table on page 178, indicates that seven people shared fewer of the values mentioned above. One person only shared the 'caring for the family' value. It was clear from what he said that his values had changed less than others'.

2. Which core values changed, if any?

Everybody claimed change, although I found less evidence for changed values in seven than in the other twelve. Which values had changed varied by person, as can be seen by comparing the 'values before' column with the 'values after' column in the table in Appendix E. However, there was a marked increase in shared values after return (see the tables on page 178), with twelve people all holding three values related to their new Christian faith: salvation and closeness to God; honouring God; and being in a good church. Prior values had not included those centring on God or the church. Why this changed for these people is discussed in section 3, below.

Comparing those values which were held strongly by multiple participants before going to the UK (summarized in the tables on page 178), with values held by individuals afterwards (Appendix E), a reduction in emphasis on career achievement, on being respected and on being loved is notable. Two people were exceptions to that, still highly valuing being respected, particularly though their jobs. Values related to family were still important, but had changed in nature, as discussed on pages 196-204 and 268.

Another area of change was from a focus on the self as recipient (e.g. of love, respect) to an emphasis (on the part of ten) on understanding and attending to the needs and feelings of others. I say 'ten' rather than the thirteen listed in Table 5, page 178, as holding 'concern for others' strongly as a value, because three of those thirteen already held that value strongly before going to the UK, as can be seen from the table in Appendix E. The relationship between this and the Biblical commands to 'love others', a self-concept as a 'sinner' with failings of their own, and adherence to a Christian master story which included sharing the story with others, is discussed on pages 207 to 213.

Four (two men and two women) had been baptized as Christians in the UK but gave less evidence of change in values than the twelve above. None of the four was currently attending church or a Christian group, although I heard some months after the interviews that one had starting doing so. Three of them voiced elements of the traditional Christian best account and self-concept, but it was less embedded than with the other twelve in the use of Christian terminology and Biblical allusions to refer to their lives.

One person provided evidence that her values had changed but did not share all the Christian values which others did. She expressed a best account which included a clear self-concept of herself as a child of God but had not converted to Christianity in the sense the twelve had. Values of two others had changed little, although both placed more importance than formerly on living a more content life.

That certain values central to Christianity changed was clearly the case for twelve people, and to a lesser degree for two others, as is shown in the tables in Appendix E and on page 178. It is arguably the case for four more, if placing strong emphasis on being content and expressing gratitude is deemed a Christian value.

3. Why did values change, or not change?

As values change varied between people, so did the nature and degree of Christian faith. As mentioned above, twelve people shared three values related to their Christian faith, after return. At time of interviews these twelve: continued to hold key elements of the Christian story as their best account; held a similar concept of themselves as Christian; maintained strong bonds with other Christians in a Christian community (church for eleven and a Christian workplace for one), with eight married to a Christian; and valued serving, trusting and being loved by God, or possibly

simply 'God', very highly. Eight of the twelve had unhappy childhoods including difficult relationships with parents; seven mentioned difficult times or major changes in Chinese history affecting them. I note this in light of Yang's (1999) thesis that twentieth century Chinese history has been a factor in conversion to Christianity amongst mainland Chinese. That they no longer held academic and career achievement, being admired and feeling loved as strongest values was related to their Christian best account and self-concept as a child of God providing a revised view of the locus of security (from self, career and financial standing to God and salvation).

Seven of the twelve had strong connections with Chinese Christians in the UK, another attended church in China before coming to the UK and three were introduced by British Christians in the UK to Christian returnee groups in China; in short, those eleven experienced a cultural and contextual bridge between Christianity in the UK and China. The twelfth, Xuejing, did not have either bridge and had not settled in a church when I met her, but prayed with colleagues in a Christian workplace and has since joined a church. Through these twelve we see the relevance of Taylor's theory of the framework elements involved in developing and changing values and Fowler's theory of the contents of conversion.

Amongst the remaining seven, who shared fewer of the specifically Christian values, four (mentioned above) who had been baptised in the UK but were not currently attending church, had not had strong relationships with mainland Chinese Christians in the UK and only one had been (initially) part of a Christian returnee group in China. Three of these four had been put off attending church because of government restrictions on churches and on those attending them. These factors combined to mean they lacked the community of shared best account and values which helped the other twelve sustain and develop their revised personal framework.

Two others whose values had changed less and who did not share all the elements of the Christian master story shared by twelve, were both academics and lived in cities with fewer visible churches than other participants' cities. Nor had their husbands accompanied them to the UK. Thus they were not in a community (church or familial) which facilitated development of a Christian best account, self-concept and values. There may well be Chinese Christian academics in their cities but the local church ecology and political constraints may make them harder to meet.

For the final person, mentioned in section 2 above, who had changed but did not share all the Christian values shared by the twelve, it may be that the change in values and self-concept she has experienced stem as much from her experience living abroad and from her new life and responsibilities in China, as they do from any change in religious belief.

The paragraphs above on the remaining seven participants indicate that reference to a framework including the theories of Taylor, Fowler and Yang, is also helpful in understanding why some people's values changed less than others'.

4. To what or whom do research participants most attribute changes in core values?

The previous section touches on this, so this section will be brief. Evidence for the answer to this question was found in answers to a direct question asking participants this, and in what they said in other parts of the interviews.

Ten people attributed all change to God and their Christian faith. Two attributed change to God, their Christian faith, being in a different context (UK) and being independent from parents. Two attributed change to God,

Christian faith and experience of a more relaxed lifestyle. One attributed her change to God, the Bible and the example of UK Christians. One attributed the reduced value she placed on having money to life experience and her other changed values to God and the Bible. One said his Christian faith and the experience of fatherhood were behind his changes. One said Christian teaching and experiencing a more relaxed lifestyle were responsible. One said the Bible and Christians' teaching and examples of living were the reasons for her changed values.

5. Tensions or benefits experienced, on return to China, in relationship to any changed values

Tensions and benefits experienced were discussed on pages 227 to 232. Everybody said they had experienced benefits and only one person claimed to have experienced no tensions relating to changed values. That was Huanglin, who was not attending a church and exhibited few other signs of Christian faith.

Tensions most related to the Chinese context were found: in family relationships; in the nature of the church and its relationship to the state; in conflicts between Chinese law, or social norms, and Biblical teaching; in conflicts between certain workplace customs and Christian morality; and in a culture which prizes material status very highly.

Benefits described included: salvation; hope; purpose in life; inner peace; feeling loved; a sense of belonging; more harmonious marriages; being able to forgive; having protection and strength from God; and the relief of no longer needing to follow the crowd striving for more money and more status.

Contribution

Theoretical contribution

This study involved empirical research into a subject, to my knowledge, not formally studied before: the nature of any sustained change in core values of Chinese students who have studied abroad, converted to Christianity and returned to China, in the post-1949 era. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to three fields of knowledge: within the sociology of religion, about Christian conversion amongst the mainland Chinese diaspora; within international education, about the effects of mainland Chinese students' experience on values; and in the study of how values change.

Christian conversion amongst the Chinese diaspora

Researchers have found values change amongst mainland Chinese scholars still living in the US who converted to Christianity there (e.g. Temple, 1999; Wong, 2006), The present study takes this a step further, showing that Christian conversion and related values change have been sustained, by twelve of nineteen people at least, after return to China, despite being in a different socio-cultural context. It showed that, given certain factors, changed values related to the family, material possessions, God and the church, were sustained, despite certain tensions and challenges experienced in the Chinese context. This study adds knowledge about the tensions and benefits experienced living according to the new values in that context. We now know that factors which contributed to sustained change included: regular involvement in a church which formed a supportive community with a shared Christian master story, similar self-concepts as 'children of God' and 'brothers and sisters' and shared values; and being married to another Christian.

This was, according to my review of the literature, the first time Taylor's values theory (1989), Fowler's (1981) theory of the contents of conversion and Yang's (1998, 1999) theory have been used together. Brought together, with my concept of *bridges* to conversion, as a theoretical framework (illustrated in the diagram on page 236), they offer an aid to greater understanding of the complex and varied origins of Christian conversion and values change, and of the multiple factors which contribute to such change continuing or not across different socio-cultural contexts.

Values and the international student experience

From the perspective of the scholar of the effects of international education, specifically university study abroad, this study adds to the very limited body of knowledge about the longer term effect of the international student experience on returnees' values. It focuses on the mainland Chinese, who form a large proportion of international students in the UK and elsewhere. It provides insight into the contribution of an experience beyond the immediate university environment, the encounter with Christianity in the UK, to lasting change in values.

How values change

This study has also shown the potential for applying Taylor's (1989) theory of how values develop and change in empirical studies including, but not limited to, research about religious conversion. Indeed he wrote it as having general application, not only religious. An online search identified many articles referring to his theory from a philosophical perspective but only very few which had applied it in empirical research; those were in medicine.

Implications for practice

In terms of application outside the academic research context, the findings of this research are of relevance to Chinese Christians themselves and the Christian churches and organizations (Chinese and of other nationalities) which seek to support them. First, the findings suggest that introducing new Chinese believers to Christians from China living in the UK could help them prepare better to continue life as part of the church in China. Second, information about the relationship between state and church in China, about different kinds of church and about certain issues facing the church there could be helpful to prospective returnees, but *only* if such information is up to date, is not scare-mongering and is given by someone knowledgeable; and third, proper care and counselling could be made available for those for whom conversion brings up particular issues regarding hurt and forgiveness in the family. This last also needs caution.

Limitations

A number of limitations should be borne in mind, some when considering this study and its participants alone and some when considering potential wider applications of the findings.

This is a small study. Increased time and funding would have enabled more people to be interviewed. I wonder, for example, if I had interviewed more men would the most common values be the same and would the incidence of unhappy childhood be the same.

These interviews were conducted in English by someone who has read widely about China and about the Chinese church, and knows many Chinese people, but has limited knowledge of Chinese language, makes no claims to be a sinologist and has never lived in China. I will inevitably have misinterpreted or missed some things.

I explained earlier why opportunity to pursue questions or check my interpretation with participants later, by telephone or email, was limited or inappropriate. The extra time in China, and larger budget, which would have facilitated further meetings with participants, and greater understanding, was lacking. With hindsight, subjects I might have pursued further were: participants' awareness of theological reconstruction, their views on *suzhi,* any charitable activities and certain participants' childhood experiences. Longer time in China could also have facilitated a different approach to learning about and presenting participants' values changes: more observation of participants and their contexts, and the development of life stories, in some cases, in cooperation with participants, showing how and why their values changed.

This study required participants to take a backward look and is dependent on their memories; and their values at time of interview will have influenced their selection of stories to recount from the past. In theory a longitudinal study with interviews before coming to the UK, before returning to China and after return to China, would have facilitated a more accurate understanding of values at these times. However, such a study would be unpractical for several reasons, the most obvious being that it is impossible to know in advance who will convert to Christianity.

There is much in the findings which relates to family relationships. Had I been able to talk to parents, about whether and how their children had changed, this might have influenced my interpretation. However, given the likelihood that many of the parents do not speak English and the sensitive nature of both the subject of religion and what I was told by the children, this would not have been fruitful.

Recommendations for further research

I hope that this study and its findings provide stimuli to further research about the nature and consequences of conversion to Christianity amongst Chinese studying abroad, the degree any changes are sustained amongst returnees and about their contribution to Chinese society.

This study involved only nineteen participants. Research using the same approach with more participants would provide better evidence about whether the findings of this study are likely to have wider application. Also, a study with a greater number of male participants could explore whether changes are different, and have different reasons and consequences, for men and women; for example, whether male children had the same incidence of unhappy childhoods as females, and whether this influenced values related to security and having new experiences.

This study was dependent on participants' memories for its exploration of earlier values. A study using the same approach to answer the same research questions, but with the first interview held in the UK shortly after initial conversion, could provide more immediate insight into the process of change and might also provoke a different perspective on the past.

Further similar research on values change amongst returnees who converted to Christian abroad and those who did not, carried out by researchers fluent in the Chinese language, could inform the current debate on values in China, including that on the role of Christian values, (e.g. Zhuo, 2006). Employing the theoretical model in the diagram on page 236 may prove fruitful, and would test Taylor's theory in a broader context.

A longitudinal study, revisiting the same people in say five years' time, could ascertain whether changes in family relationships identified in this study continue and what longer-term effect, if any, the new values have on

relationships with parents, spouses and children. Similar questions could be asked about influences on behaviour in the workplace and about contributions to a 'harmonious society', for example in charitable activities.

As discussed earlier, Yang has argued (1998, 1999) that having experienced the socio-historical context of upheaval in twentieth century China (e.g. the Cultural Revolution) is a factor in conversion to Christianity amongst Chinese abroad. This matter was not explored in this study's interviews. However, four participants mentioned the lasting effect of poor childhood relationships with parents and mentioned consequences of historic events as affecting those relationships. This raises the question whether the same historic factors cited by Yang may influence conversion amongst the next generation, through their experience of their parents' behaviour. Research into whether and how parents' experiences affected their parenting behaviour and into whether that behaviour was a factor in the child's attraction to Christianity could illuminate the process of conversion greatly but would need considerable forethought, care and psychological expertise.

This thesis referred to Charles Taylor's (2004) use and definition of the term *social imaginary* and to Aihwa Ong's discussion (cited in X. Liu, 1997, p. 104) of different Chinese imaginaries. I encountered this term after conducting fieldwork and was thus unable to factor it into methodological decisions. A comparative study examining the influence of study abroad (and/or Christian conversion whilst abroad) on people from, and returning to, for example, Shanghai *and* less cosmopolitan cities could explore the degree to which the social imaginary contributes to, or hinders, change.

In light of current debate in China, this study made *values* its focus. However, its findings, and the theories informing it, point to a relationship

between change in values and change in identity (Taylor, 1989) and between conversion and identity (Fowler, 1981). In Chapter 2 (page 60) I referred to the existence of a rich literature on identity; this study has not mined that literature, and makes no claims to be a study on identity. Research into any continuing effects of conversion on *identity* of Chinese Christian returnees, and of identity on conversion, would add to knowledge about conversion across contexts and about effects of internationalization within education. This is an important gap which needs attention.

Bibliography

Abel, A. (2006). Favor Fishing and Punch-Bowl Christians: Ritual and Conversion in a Chinese Protestant Church. *Sociology of Religion, 67*(2), 161-178.

Anagnost, A. (2004). The Corporeal Politics of Quality (*Suzhi*). *Public Culture, 16*(2), 189-208.

Anderson, L. E. (1994). A new look at an old construct: cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 18*(3), 293-328.

Andrews, M. (2007). Exploring Cross-Cultural Boundaries. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry* (pp. 489-511). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Atkinson, R. (1998). *The Life Story Interview*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Aull Davies, C. (2008). *Reflexive Ethnography: A guide to researching ourselves and others*. London: Routledge.

Austin, C. (1983). Reentry Stress: The Pain of Coming Home. In C. N. Austin (Ed.), *Cross-Cultural Reentry: A Book of Readings* (pp. 123-131). Abilene: Abilene Christian University.

Ayano, M. (2006). Japanese Students in Britain. In M. Byram & A. Feng (Eds.), *Living and Studying Abroad: Research and Practice* (pp. 11-37). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Bai, L. (2006). Graduate Unemployment: Dilemmas and Challenges in China's Move to Mass Higher Education. *China Quarterly, 185*, 128-144

Bai, L. (2008). The Influence of Chinese Perceptions of Modernisation on the Value of Education: A Case Study of Chinese Students in New Zealand. *China 6*(2), 208-236.

Bardi, A., & Goodwin, R. (2011). The Dual Route to Value Change: Individual Processes and Cultural Moderators. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 42*(2), 271-287.

Barnard, S., & Owen, H. (2005). *International Students in the Community*. Loughborough: Loughborough University.

BBC. (2003). Actor Leslie Cheung 'found dead'. Retrieved 14th April 2010, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/film/2906999.stm

BBC. (2011). China detains Protestant Shouwang devotees. Retrieved 8th August, 2012, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13180842

BBC. (2012). China: The Paradox of Foreign Education. Retrieved 7th August, 2012, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19076873

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation. *Applied Psychology, 46*, 5-68.

Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 29*, 697-712.

Berry, J. W. (2006). Acculturation. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research* (pp. 543-560): Guilford.

Bieler, S. (2004). *"Patriots" or "Traitors"? A History of American-educated Chinese Students*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe.

Bond, M. H. (1991). *Beyond the Chinese Face*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bond, M. H. (1996). Chinese Values. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The Handbook of Chinese Psychology* (pp. 208-226). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Bond, M. H., & Hwang, K.-k. (1986). The Social Psychology of Chinese People. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The Psychology of the Chinese People* (pp. 213-266). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Boudon, R. (2001). *The Origin of Values*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Boudon, R. (2003). Beyond Rational Choice Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 29*, 1-21.

Boudon, R. (2006). A propos du relativisme des valeurs: Retour sur quelques intuitions de Tocqueville, Durkheim et Weber. *Revue francaise de sociologie, 47*(4), 877-897.

Briley, D. A., Morris, M. W., & Simonson, I. (2005). Cultural Chameleons: Biculturals, Conformity Motives, and Decision Making. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 15*(4), 351-362.

Brislin, R. W., Lonner, W. J., & Thorndike, R. M. (1973). *Cross-cultural research methods.* New York: Wiley.

Brockmann, H., Delhey, J., Welzel, C., & Yuan, H. (2009). The China Puzzle: Falling Happiness in a Rising Economy. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 10*, 387-405.

Bronowski, J. (1959). The Values of Science. In A. Maslow (Ed.), *New Knowledge in Human Values* (pp. 52-64). New York: Harper and Row.

Brown, L. (2009). The Transformative Power of the International Sojourn. *Annals of Tourism Research, 36*(3), 502-521.

Brunt, L. (2001). Into the Community. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography* (pp. 80-91). London: Sage.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buber, M. (2000 (1958)). *I and Thou* (R. G. Smith, Trans.). New York: Scribner.

Burnett, C., & Gardner, J. (2006). The One Less Travelled By....The Experience of Chinese Students in a UK University. . In M. Byram & A. Feng (Eds.), *Living and Studying Abroad: Research and Practice* (pp. 64-90). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Burnett, D. (2008). *The Spirit of China*. Oxford: Monarch.

Burt, S. (2006). *Returning Home a Christian: A Study of Returnee Issues Faced By Taiwanese Students Converting to Christianity While in the UK.* Unpublished Master's dissertation, All Nations Christian College, Ware.

Bush, T. (2002). Authenticity - reliability, validity and triangulation. . In M. Coleman & A. R. J. Briggs (Eds.), *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management* (pp. 59-72). London: SAGE Publications.

Butcher, A. (2002). A Grief Observed: Grief Experiences of East Asian International Students Returning to their Countries of Origin. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 6*(4), 354-368.

Butcher, A. (2003). *No Place Like Home? The Experiences of South-east Asian International University Students in New Zealand and their re-entry into their countries of origin.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Albany, Massey.

CathNews. (2007). "Christian explosion" among Chinese intellectuals, expert finds. Retrieved 20th September, 2008, from www.cathnews.com/article.aspx?aeid=4482

Cha, A. E. (2008). Young Volunteers in Quake Zone Ultimately Find a Modest Mission. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/21/AR2008052102630.html

Chang, K. A. (1996). Culture, Power and the Social Construction of Morality: moral voices of Chinese students. . *Journal of Moral Education, 25*(2), 141-157.

Chang, Y. (2009). A qualitative study of temporary reentry from significant others' perspective. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 33*, 259-263.

Chase, S. E. (1995). Taking Narrative Serously: Consequences for Method and Theory in Interview Studies. In R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *Interpreting Experiences* (Vol. 3, pp. 1-26). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Chatman, J. A. (1991). Matching People and Organizations: Selection and Socialization in Public Accounting Firms. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 36*(3), 459-484.

Chau, A. Y. (2010). *The impact of secularism and modernity on the five modalities of doing religion in China*. Paper presented at the Religions, Secularism, and Modernity in Asia Conference, University of Cambridge, 19th February.

Chau, A. Y. (Ed.). (2011). *Religion in Contemporary China: Revitalization and Innovation*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Chen, C. (2006). From Filial Piety to Religious Piety: Evangelical Christianity Reconstructing Taiwanese Immigrant Families in the United States. *International Migration Review, 40*(3), 573-602.

Chin, J. K. (2003). Multiple Identities among the Returned Overseas Chinese in Hong Kong. In M. W. Charney, B. S. A. Yeoh & T. C. Kiong (Eds.), *Chinese Migrants Abroad: Cultural, Educational and Social Dimensions of the Chinese Diaspora* (pp. 63-82). Singapore: Singapore University Press.

China Aid. (2012). Beijing Shouwang Church Announcement on Outdoor Worship Service on August 12, 2012.   Retrieved 29th August, 2012, from   http://www.chinaaid.org/2012/08/beijing-shouwang-church-announcement-on_14.html

China Daily. (2007). Reflect on study abroad. *China Daily.* Retrieved 15 August, 2007, from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2007-06/01/content_884889.htm

Chuang, T.-K. (1995). *Ripening Harvest: Mission Strategy for Mainland Chinese Intellectuals in North America*. Paradise: Ambassadors for Christ.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education* (Sixth ed.). London: Routledge.

Connection, C. C. (1987). Chinese Values and the Search for Culture-Free Dimensions of Culture. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 18*(2), 143-164.

Corey, J. W. (1979). Culture Shock in Reverse. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 48.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. (1997). *Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Dickson, D. (2007). Purpose and priorities in life: views of postgraduate students from China, at the University of Nottingham. Unpublished master's dissertation. University of Nottingham.

Doyle, G. W. (2010). Are Chinese Christians Being Persecuted? (2): Response to comments.   Retrieved 25th October, 2012, from

http://www.globalchinacenter.org/analysis/christianity-in-china/are-chinese-christians-being-persecuted-2-response-to-comments.php

Dunch, R. (2008). Christianity and "Adaptation to Socialism". In M. M.-h. Yang (Ed.), *Chinese Religiosities* (pp. 155-178). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Durkheim, E. (1982 (1895)). *The rules of sociological method: and selected texts on sociology and its method* (W. D. Halls, Trans.). London: MacMillan Education.

Elliott, J. (2005). *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage.

Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Our Selves in Research*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Fallman, F. (2010). Useful Opium? 'Adapted religion' and 'harmony' in contemporary China. *Journal of Contemporary China, 19*(67), 949-969.

Faure, G. O., & Fang, T. (2008). Changing Chinese values: Keeping up with paradoxes. *International Business Review, 17*, 194-207.

Feather, N. T. (1975). *Values in Higher Education and Society*. New York: The Free Press.

Fei, X. (1948). *From the Soil: the Foundations of Chinese Society* (G. G. Hamilton & Z. Wang, Trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fetterman, D. M. (1989). *Ethnography Step by Step*. Newbury Sage.

Foley, G. (1999). *Learning in Social Action: A Contribution to understanding Informal Education*. London: Zed Books.

Fong, V. L. (2004). *Only Hope: Coming of Age under China's One-Child Policy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Fong, V. L. (2006). Chinese youth between the margins of China and the first world. In Vanessa L. Fong & R. Murphy (Eds.), *Chinese Citizenship: Views from the Margins* (pp. 151-173). Abingdon: Routledge.

Fong, V. L. (2007). Morality, Cosmopolitanism or Academic Attainment? Discourses on "Quality" and Urban Chinese-Only-Children's Claims to Ideal Personhood. *City and Society, 19*(1), 86-113.

Fong, V. L. (2011). *Paradise Redefined: Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developed World.* . Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Fowler, J. W. (2000). *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum.

Fu, H., Watkins, D., & Hui, E. K. P. (2004). Personality correlates of the disposition towards interpersonal forgiveness: A Chinese perspective. *International Journal of Psychology, 39*(4), 305-316.

Fung, A. Y. H. (2009). Fandom, youth and consumption in China. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 12*(3), 285-303.

Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). *Truth and Method* (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans. Revised second ed.). London: Continuum.

Gao, G., Ting-Toomey, S., & Gudykunst, W. B. (1996). Chinese Communication Processes. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The Handbook of Chinese Psychology*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Gao, S. (2000). Twenty-first Century Chinese Christianity and the Chinese Social Process. *China Study Journal, 15*(2/3), 14-18.

Gao, S. (2006). Faith and Values: Case studies of Chinese Christians. In H. Yang & D. H. N. Yeung (Eds.), *Sino-Christian Studies in China* (pp. 315-324). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Gao, S. (2011). The Faith of Chinese Urban Christians: A Case Study of Beijing. In M. Ruokanen & P. Huang (Eds.), *Christianity and Chinese Culture* (pp. 259-275). Grand Rapids, MI: William B, Eerdmans.

Gecas, V. (2000). Value Identities, Self-Motives, and Social Movements. In S. Stryker, T. J. Owens & R. W. White (Eds.), *Self, Identity, and Social Movements*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Perseus Books.

Geertz, C. (1983). *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.

Geertz, C. (2000). *Available Light*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gill, S. (2007). Overseas students' intercultural adaptation as intercultural learning: a transformative framework. *Compare, 37*(2), 167-183.

Gill, S. (2010). The homecoming: an investigation into the effect that studying overseas had on Chinese postgraduates' life and work on their return to China. *Compare, 40*(3), 359-376.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine.

Goodwin, R., Polek, E., & Bardi, A. (2012). The Temporal Reciprocity of Values and Beliefs: A Longitudinal Study within a Major Life Transition. *European Journal of Personality, 26*(3), 360-370.

Gooren, H. (2008). Conversion Careers in Latin America. In T. J. Steigenga & E. L. Cleary (Eds.), *Conversion of a Continent: Religious Identity and Change in Latin America* (pp. 52-71). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Grasso, J., Corrin, J., & Kor, M. (2009). *Modernization and revolution in China: from the Opium Wars to the Olympics*. London: M.E. Sharpe.

Grey, M. (2002). Drawing with Difference: challenges faced by international students in an undergraduate business degree. *Teaching in Higher Education, 7*(2), 153-166.

Gu, Q. (2005). "Enjoy Loneliness" - Understanding voices of "the" Chinese Learner. *Humanising Language Teaching, Year 7*(6), 9. Retrieved from http://www.hltmag.co.uk/nov05/mart01.htm

Gu, Q. (2009). Maturity and Interculturality: Chinese students' experiences in UK higher education. *European Journal of Education, 44*(1), 37-52.

Gu, Q., & Schweisfurth, M. (2006). Who Adapts? Beyond Cultural Models of the Chinese Learner. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 19*(1), 74-89.

Gu, Q., Schweisfurth, M., & Day, C. (2010). Learning and growing in a 'foreign' context: intercultural experiences of international students. *Compare, 40*(1), 7-23.

Guan, J., & Dodder, R. A. (2001). The Impact of Cross-cultural Contact on Value and Identity: A Comparative Study of Chinese Students in China and in the U.S.A. *Mankind Quarterly, 41*(3), 271-288.

Guba, E. G. (1990). The alternative paradigm dialog. In E. G. Guba (Ed.), *The paradigm dialog* (pp. 17-27). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Guilherme, A., & Morgan, W. J. (2009). Martin Buber's philosophy of education and its implications for adult non-formal education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 28*(5), 565-581.

Gullahorn, J. E., & Gullahorn, J. T. (1966). American Students Abroad: Professional versus Personal Development. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 368*, 43-59.

Guo, F., & Cheng, Z. (2010). Labour Market Disparity, Poverty and Inequality in Urban China. *China Perspectives*(4), 16-31.

Guo, Y. (1998). The Roles of Returned Foreign Education Students In Chinese Higher Education. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 2*(2), 35-58.

Hammersley, M. (1992). *What's Wrong with Ethnography?* Abingdon: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. (1996). The relationship between qualitative and quantitative research: paradigm loyalty versus methodological eclecticism. In J. T. E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Qualitative*

Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences (pp. 159-174). Leicester: BPS Blackwell.

Hammersley, M. (1998). *Reading ethnographic research: a critical guide* London: Longman.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: principals in practice* (Third ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.

Hamrin, C. L., & Bieler, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Salt and Light: Lives of Faith that Shaped Modern China*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick.

Han, D., & Zweig, D. (2010). Images of the World: Studying Abroad and Chinese Attitudes towards International Affairs. *The China Quarterly, 202*, 290-306.

Handwerker, W. P. (2001). *Quick Ethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.

Hawkins, J. N., Zhou, N., & Lee, J. (2001). China: Balancing the Collective and the Individual. In W. K. Cummings, M. T. Tatto & J. Hawkins (Eds.), *Values Education for Dynamic Societies: Individualism or Collectivism* (pp. 191-206). Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Comparative Education Research Centre.

Hayhoe, R. (1990). China's Returned Scholars and the Democracy Movement. *The China Quarterly, 122*, 293-302.

He, G. (2011). Open letter to: The leaders of the People's Republic of China. Retrieved from http://blog.beliefnet.com/pray_for_the_persecuted_church/2011/07/894.html

He, P. (2002). *China's Search for Modernity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hechter, M., Nadel, L., & Michod, R. E. (Eds.). (1993). *The Origin of Values*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Hewitt, D. (2007). *Getting Rich First*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Heyl, B. S. (2001). Ethnographic Interviewing. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography* (pp. 369-383). London: Sage.

Hiebert, P. G. (1985). *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Hiebert, P. G. (1999). *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (2012). Press release 172 - Non-UK Domicile Students. Retrieved 7th August 2012, from http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2371&Itemid=161

Hitlin, S., & Piliavin, J. A. (2004). Values: Reviving a Dormant Concept. *Annual Review of Sociology, 30*, 359-393.

Ho, D. Y. F. (1996). Filial Piety and its Psychological Consequences. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The Handbook of Chinese Psychology*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences* (Second ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Holliday, A. (2002). *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Huang, J. (2004). *"Who am I": Identity Tensions Among Chinese Intellectual Christians*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, San Francisco, California, August 14, 2004. Retrieved from http://hirr.hartsem.edu/sociology/huang.html

Hunter, V. L. (1985). Closure and Commencement: The Stress of Finding Home. In C. Austin (Ed.), *Cross-Cultural Reentry: A Book of Readings* (pp. 179-189). Abilene: Abilene Christian University.

Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Hwang, K.-K., & Han, K.-H. (2010). Face and Morality in Confucian society. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Psychology* (pp. 479-498). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Inkeles, A., & Levinson, D. J. (1969). National Character; the Study of Modal Personality and Sociocultural Systems. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (Second ed., Vol. Four, pp. 418-506). Reading, USA: Addison-Wesley.

Isa, M. (1996). *Empowerment and disempowerment: The social-cultural reintegration of the wives of Japanese corporate sojourners.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oklahoma, Norman.

Jacka, T. (2009). Cultivating Citizens: Suzhi (Quality) Discourse in the PRC. *Positions, 17*(3), 523-535.

James, W. (1958 (1902)). *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: The New American Library.

James, W. (2002 (1902)). *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. New York: Modern Library.

Jia, W. (2001). Remaking of the Chinese Character and Identity in the 21st Century: The Chinese Face Practices

Joas, H. (2000). *The Genesis of Values*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come. *Educational Researcher, 33*(7), 14-26.

Jones, A., & Jenkins, K. (2008). Rethinking collaboration: Working the indigene-colonizer hyphen. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 471-486). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kagitcibasi, C. (1994). A Critical Appraisal of Individualism and Collectivism: Towards a New Formulation. In U. Kim, H. C. Triandis, C. Kagitcibasi, S.-C. Choi & G. Yoon (Eds.), *Individualism and Collectivism: Theory, Method, and Applications* (pp. 52-65). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kim, Y. Y. (2008). Intercultural personhood: Globalization and a way of being. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 32*, 359-368.

Kindopp, J. (2004). Fragmented yet Defiant: Protestant Resilience under Chinese Communist Party Rule. In J. Kindopp & C. L. Hamrin (Eds.), *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tension* (pp. 122-145). Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Kipnis, A. (2006). *Suzhi:* A Keyword Approach. *The China Quarterly, 186*, 295-313.

Kleinman, A. (Ed.). (2011). *Deep China: the moral life of the person: what anthropology and psychiatry tell us about China today* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kluckhohn, C. (1949). *Mirror for Man: Anthropology and Modern Life*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kluckhohn, C. (1951). Values and Value-Orientations in the Theory of Action: An Exploration in Definition and Classification. In T. Parsons & E. A. Shils (Eds.), *Toward a General Theory of Action* (pp. 388-433). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kluckhohn, F. R., & Strodtbeck, F. L. (1961). *Variations in Value Orientations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Kraft, C. H. (1996). *Anthropology for Christian Witness*. New York: Orbis.

Krause, N. (2009). Church-based Social Relationships and Change in Self-Esteem Over Time. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 48*(4), 756-773.

Krishnan, V. R. (2008). Impact of MBA Education on Students' Values: Two Longitudinal Studies. *Journal of Business Ethics, 83*, 233-246.

Kuah-Pearce, K. E. (2006). Locating the Self in the Chinese Diaspora. *Asian Studies Review, 30*, 217-221.

Kulich, S. J., & Rui, Z. (2010). The multiple frames of 'Chinese'values: from tradition to modernity and beyond. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Chinese Psychology* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kwon, J.-W. (2012). Does China have more than one culture? Exploring regional differences of work values in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 29*, 79-102

Kynge, J. (2006). *China Shakes the World*. London: Phoenix.

Ladykowska, A. (2012). The Role of Religious Higher Education in the Training of Teachers of Russian 'Orthodox Culture'. *European Journal of Education, 47*(1), 92-103.

Lai, K. (2006). Learning from Chinese Philosophies: Ethics of Interdependent and Contextualised Self

Lambert, T. (1999). *China's Christian Millions: The Costly Revival*. London: Monarch Books.

Lao, S. (1946). Dr Mao. In G. Kao (Ed.), *Chinese Wit and Humor*. New York: Coward-McCann.

Leach, E. (1976). *Culture and Communication: the logic by which symbols are connected: An introduction to the use of structural analysis in social anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, D. (1959). Culture and the Experience of Value. In A. Maslow (Ed.), *New Knowledge in Human Values* (pp. 165-177). New York: Harper and Row.

Lee, W. O. (2001). Hong Kong: Enhancing the Quality of the Self in Citizenship. In W. K. Cummings, M. T. Tatto & J. Hawkins (Eds.), *Values Education for Dynamic Societies: Individualism or Collectivism*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre.

Lee, W. O. (2009). Conceptualising Citizenship and Citizenship Education: A Trajectory of Exploring Asian Perspectives. *Chair Professors Public Lecture Series*. Retrieved from http://www.ied.edu.hk/cplectures/resource/prof_lee_wing_on_0906 23(1).pdf

Lee, W. O., & Ho, C. H. (2005). Ideopolitical shifts and changes in moral education policy in China. *Journal of Moral Education, 34*(4), 413-431.

Leonard, M. (2008). *What Does China Think?* London: Harper Collins.

Leung, K. (1996). The Role of Belief in Chinese Culture. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The Handbook of Chinese Psychology* (pp. 247-262). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Levinas, E. (1985). *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo* (R. A. Cohen, Trans.). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Li, C. (2005). Coming Home to Teach: Status and Mobility of Returnees in China's Higher Education. In C. Li (Ed.), *Bridging Minds Across the Pacific: US-China Educational Exchanges, 1978-2003* (pp. 69-109). Lanham: Lexington Books.

Li, M. (2011). Changing ideological-political orientations in Chinese moral education: some personal and professional reflections. *Journal of Moral Education, 40*(3), 387-395.

Li, X. (2003). *Theological Construction - or Destruction?* (J. Tai & B. Cheung, Trans.). Streamwood, IL: Christian Life Press.

Li, X. (2004). A Study by the Chinese Academy of Sciences on the Benefits of Study Abroad. *Chinese Education and Society, 37*(2), 61-87.

Li, Z. (1999). *Modernization and the Confucian World*. Paper presented at the Conference, Cultures in the 21st Century: Conflicts and Convergences, 5th February, 1999. . Retrieved from http://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/anniversary/Transcripts/LiTXT.htm

Lincoln, Y. S. (2010). "What a Long, Strange Trip It's Been...": Twenty-Five Years of Qualitative and New Paradigm Research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(1), 3-9.

Lingenfelter, S. G., & Mayers, M. K. (2003). *Ministering Cross-Culturally*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Liu, K. (2004). *Globalization and Cultural Trends in China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Liu, X. (1997). Space, Mobility, and Flexibility: Chinese Villagers and Scholars Negotiate Power at Home and Abroad. In A. Ong & D. Nonini (Eds.), *Ungrounded Empires; The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (pp. 91-114). New York: Routledge.

Lofland, J., & Skonovd, N. (1981). Conversion Motifs. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 20*(4), 371-385.

Lofland, J., & Stark, R. (1965). Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective. *American Sociological Review, 30*(6), 862-875.

Madsen, R. P. (2001). *Social Change and Spirituality in China Today*. San Francisco: University of San Francisco Centre for the Pacific Rim.

Maio, G. R., Olson, J. M., Bernard, M. M., & Luke, M. A. (2003). Ideologies, Values, Attitudes, and Behavior. In J. Delamater (Ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (pp. 283-308). New York: Kluwer Academic.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370-396.

Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Third ed.). New York: John Wiley.

Matthews, B. (2004). *Life Values and Approaches to Learning*. Adelaide: Shannon Research Press

McAdams, D. P. (1993). *Stories We Live By*. New York: Guilford Press.

McLaren, M. C. (1998). *Interpreting Cultural Differences: the challenge of intercultural communication*. Dereham: Peter Francis.

Meek, E. L. (2003). *Longing to Know*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press.

Mezirow, J. (Ed.). (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (Second ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Mundel, K., & Schugurensky, D. (2008). Community Based Learning and Civic Engagement: Informal Learning among Adult Volunteers in Community Organizations. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 118*, 49-60.

Murphy-Lejeune, E. (2002). *Student Mobility and Narrative in Europe: The new strangers*. London: Routledge.

Murphy-Lejeune, E. (2003). An Experience of Interculturality: Student Travellers Abroad. In G. Alred, M. Byram & M. Fleming (Eds.), *Intercultural Experience and Education* (pp. 101-113). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Needham, R. (1972). *Belief, Language and Experience*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ng, K. H. (2002). Seeking the Christian Tutelage: Agency and Culture in Chinese Immigrants' Conversion to Christianity. *Sociology of Religion, 63*(2), 195-214.

Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2004). *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nyiri, P. (2006). The Yellow Man's Burden: Chinese Migrants on a Civilizing Mission. *The China Journal, 56*, 83-106.

Olson, C. (2005). The different paths of Buddhism: a narrative-historical introduction

Pan, W. (2009). Core Social Values in Contemporary Societies. *Diogenes, 221*, 53-75.

Parsons, T., & Shils, E. A. (Eds.). (1951). *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Patron, M.-C. (2006). *"Une Annee Entre Parentheses". French academic sojourners in Australia: The impact of social and cultural dimensions of acculturation and repatriation on perceptions of cultural identity.* Unpublished PhD, University of South Australia, Adelaide.

Pei, M. (1994). *From Reform to Revolution: The Demise of Communism in China and the Soviet Union*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

People's Daily O. (2007). Report: China to complete first stage of modernization by 2015.   Retrieved 29th February, 2008, from http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200701/29/eng20070129_345749.html

Peppas, S. C. (2004). U.S. Core Values: A Chinese Perspective. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 24*(6), 58-75.

Philo, G. (2007). Cultural Transfer: The Impact of Direct Experience on Evaluations of British and Chinese Societies. Retrieved from http://www.gla.ac.uk/centres/mediagroup/cultural%20transfer.pdf

Polanyi, M. (1967). *The Tacit Dimension*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life History and Narrative* (pp. 5-23). London: Falmer Press.

Postiglione, G. A. (Ed.). (2004). *Education and Social Change in China: Inequality in a Market Economy*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.

Potter, G. (2000). *The Philosophy of Social Science*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital *Journal of Democracy, 6*(1), 65-78.

Qian, N. (2002). *Chinese Students Encounter America* (T. K. Chu, Trans.). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Rambo, L. R. (1992). The Psychology of Conversion. In H. N. Malony & S. Southard (Eds.), *Handbook of Religious Conversion* (pp. 159-177). Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press.

Rambo, L. R. (1993). *Understanding Religious Conversion*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Richardson, J. T. (1985). The Active vs. Passive Convert: Paradigm Conflict in Conversion/Recruitment Research. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 24*(2), 163-179.

Rogers, A. (2003). *What is the Difference? A new critique of adult learning and teaching*. Leicester: NIACE.

Rogers, A., & Horrocks, N. (2010). *Teaching Adults* (Fourth ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Rohan, M. J. (2000). A Rose by Any Name? The Values Construct. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 4*(3), 255-277.

Rohrlich, B. F., & Martin, J. N. (1991). Host Country and Reentry Adjustment of Student Sojourners. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 15*, 163-182.

Rokeach, M. (1970). *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rokeach, M. (1973). *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: The Free Press.

Rokeach, M. (1979a). From Individual to Institutional Values: With Special Reference to the Values of Science. In M. Rokeach (Ed.), *Understanding Human Values* (pp. 47-70). New York: Free Press.

Rokeach, M. (Ed.). (1979b). *Understanding Human Values*. New York: Free Press.

Rosen, S., & Zweig, D. (2005). Transnational Capital: Valuing Academic Returnees in a Globalizing China. In C. Li (Ed.), *Bridging Minds Across the Pacific: US-China Educational Exchanges, 1978-2003* (pp. 111-132). Lanham: Lexington Books.

Ryan, J., & Viete, R. (2010). Chinese International Students in Australia. In J. Ryan (Ed.), *China's Higher Education Reform and Internationalisation* (pp. 151-168): Taylor and Francis.

Ryan, R. (2008). Chinese divorce rate rockets as little emperors grow up. *Guardian.* Retrieved 23rd August, 2010, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/25/china

Saether, E. (2006). Fieldwork as Coping and Learning. In M. Heimer & S. Thogersen (Eds.), *Doing Fieldwork in China* (pp. 42-57). copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Salih, F. (1996). Accepting Personal Responsibility for Learning. In D. Watkins & J. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences* (pp. 85-105). Hong Kong: CERCE.

Sasagawa, S., Toyoda, H., & Sakano, Y. (2006). The acquisition of cultural values in Japanese returnee students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 30*, 333-343.

Savage, S. (2000). Psychology of Conversion - from All Angles. In M. Percy (Ed.), *Previous Convictions: Conversion in the Present Day* (pp. 1-18). London: SPCK.

Schauble, J. (2002, 6th May). US school story a huge Chinese hit. *The Age*. Retrieved from http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/05/05/1019441458295.html

Schnepp, O. (1989). The Impact of Returning Scholars on Chinese Science and Technology. In M. Goldman & D. F. Simon (Eds.), *Science and Technology in Post-Mao China* (pp. 175-195). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* (Second ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 25, pp. 1-65). San Diego: Academic Press.

Schwartz, S. H. (1994). Beyond individualism and collectivism, new cultural dimensions of values. In U. Kim, H. C. Triandis, C. Kagitcibasi, S.-C. Choi & G. Yoon (Eds.), *Individualism and collectivism: theory, method and applications* (pp. 85 - 119). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Schwartz, S. H. (2009). *Basic Human Values*. Paper presented at the Cross-National Comparison Seminar on the Quality and Comparability of Measures for Constructs in Comparative Research: Methods and Applications.

Schwartz, S. H., & Bardi, A. (1997). Influences of Adaptation to Communist Rule on Value Priorities in Eastern Europe. *Political Psychology, 18*(2), 385-406.

Schwartz, S. H., & Bilsky, W. (1987). Toward A Universal Psychological Structure of Human Values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*(3), 550-562.

Schwartz, S. H., & Bilsky, W. (1990). Toward a Theory of the Universal Content and Structure of Values: Extensions and Cross-Cultural Replications. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58*(5), 878-891.

Schwartz, S. H., Melech, G., Lehmann, A., Burgess, S., Harris, M., & Owens, V. (2001). Extending the cross-cultural validity of the theory of basic human values with a different method of measurement. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 32*(5), 519-542.

Seo, S., & Koro-Ljungberg, M. (2005). A Hermeneutical Study of Older Korean Graduate Students' Experiences in American Higher Education: From Confucianism to Western Educational Values *Journal of Studies in International Education, 9*(2), 164-187.

Shah, S. (2004). The researcher/interviewer in intercultural context: a social intruder! *British Educational Research Journal, 30*(4), 549-575.

Simpson, R., Sturges, J., & Weight, P. (2010). Transient, unsettling and creative space: Experiences of liminality through the accounts of Chinese students on a UK-based MBA. *Management Learning, 41*, 53-70.

Singh, M., & Sproats, E. (2004). *Constructing Local/Global Pedagogies: Insights into the Learning Experience of International Students*. Paper presented at the ANZCIES Conference, Melbourne, Australia, 3-5 December. Retrieved from http://www.paddle.usp.ac.fj/cgi-bin/paddle?e=d-010off-paddle--00-1--0---0-10-TX--4-------0-11l--11-en-50---20-home---00-3-1-000--0-0-11-0utfZz-8-00&a=file&d=anzcies04_06.usp.au

Sire, J. W. (2004). *The Universe Next Door* (Fourth ed.). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Smith, G. T. (2001). *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Smith, J. K. A. (2008). *Postmodernism: An Opportunity for Christian Scholarship and Practice*. Paper presented at the Christian Academic Network Conference, York, 12th April 2008.

Snarey, J. (2003). Editorial. *Journal of Moral Education, 32*(4), 323-328.

Snow, D. A., & Machalek, R. (1984). The Sociology of Conversion. *Annual Review of Sociology, 10*, 167-190.

Sovics, S. (2008). *Lost in Transition? The International Students' Experience Project*. London: University of the Arts.

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The Ethnographic Interview*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Stanley, B. (2003). Conversion to Christianity: The Colonization of the Mind? *International Review of Mission, XCII*(366), 315-331.

Steigenga, T. J. (2010). Religious Conversion in the Americas: Meanings, Measures, and Methods. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research 34*(2), 77-82.

Stevenson, H. W., & Lee, S.-y. (1996). The Academic Achievement of Chinese Students. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The Handbook of Chinese Psychology* (pp. 124-142). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press

Stewart, A. (1998). *The Ethnographer's Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Storti, C. (2001). *The Art of Coming Home*. London: Nicholas Brealey.

Sussman, N. M. (2000). The Dynamic Nature of Cultural Identity Throughout Cultural Transitions: Why Home Is Not So Sweet. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 4*(4), 355-373.

Swope, G., & Walsh, R. J. (1951). Mass Education Movement and JCRR. *Far Eastern Survey, 20*(14), 145-148.

Takeuchi, S., Imahori, T. T., & Matsumoto, D. (2001). Adjustment of criticism styles in Japanese returnees to Japan. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 25*, 315-327.

Tang, E. (2008). The Changing Landscape of Chinese Christianity. *Concilium: China and Christianity: A New Phase of Encounter, 2008/2*, 13-23.

Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, C. (2004). *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Taylor, S. (2002). Researching the social: an introduction to ethnographic research. In S. Taylor (Ed.), *Ethnographic Research: A Reader* (pp. 1-12). London: Sage.

Temple, W. C. (1999). *Perspective Transformation Among Mainland Chinese Intellectuals Reporting Christian Conversion While in the United States.* Unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield.

Tian, M., & Lowe, J. (2009). Existentialist internationalisation and the Chinese student experience in English universities. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 39*(5), 659-676.

Tian, M., & Lowe, J. (2010). Intercultural Experience in English Universities: A Case Study of Chinese Students. In F. Maringe & N. Foskett (Eds.), *Globalization and Internationalization in Higher Education* (pp. 291-304). London: Continuum International Publishing

Tomba, L. (2009). Of Quality, Harmony, and Community: Civilization and the Middle Class in Urban China. *Positions, 17*(3), 592-616.

Triandis, H. C. (1989). The Self and Social Behavior in Differing Cultural Contexts. *Psychological Review, 96*(3), 506-520.

Tu, W. (2000). Multiple Modernities: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Implications of East Asian Modernity. In L. E. Harrison & S. P. Huntington (Eds.), *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (pp. 256-266). New York: Basic Books.

Tu, W. (Ed.). (1994). *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Turner, Y. (2006). Chinese Students in a UK Business School: Hearing the Student Voice in Reflective Teaching and Learning Practice. . *Higher Education Quarterly, 60*(1), 27-51.

Vala, C. T. (2009). Pathways to the Pulpit: Leadership Training in "Patriotic" and Unregistered Chinese Protestant Churches. In Y. Ashiwa & D. L. Wank (Eds.), *Making Religion: Making the State* (pp. 96-125). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Wang, S. (2010). Chinese students studying abroad: The role of parents' investment in their children's education. In J. Ryan (Ed.), *China's Higher Education Reform and Internationalisation* (pp. 237-252): Taylor and Francis.

Wang, X. (2002). The Post-Communist Personality: The Spectre of China's Capitalist Market Reforms. *The China Journal, 47*, 1-17.

Wang, Y. (2004). *Religious Conversion to Christianity Among Students from the People's Republic of China: A Comparative Study.* . Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, San Francisco, California, August 14, 2004. Retrieved from http://hirr.hartsem.edu/sociology/wang.html

Wang, Y. (2007). 5,000 more students a year to study overseas. *China Daily.* Retrieved August 18, 2007, from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-06/05/content_886976.htm

Wang, Y., & Yang, F. (2006). More than Evangelical and Ethnic: The Ecological Factor in Chinese Conversion to Christianity in the United States. *Sociology of Religion, 67*(2), 179-192.

Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The Psychology of Culture Shock*. Hove: Routledge.

Ward, C., & Searle, W. (1991). The Impact of Value Discrepancies and Cultural Identity on Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment of Sojourners. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 15*(2), 209-225.

Ward, L. (1935). *Values and Reality*. London: Sheed and Ward.

Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Vol. 1).

Wellington, J. (2000). *Educational Research: Contemporary Issues and Practical Approaches*. London: continuum.

Welzel, C. (2006). A Human Development View on Value Change Trends (1981-2006).   Retrieved 26th May, 2008

Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wielander, G. (2011). Beyond Repression and Resistance - Christian Love and China's Harmonious Society. *The China Journal, 65*, 119-139.

Williams, M. (2002). Generalization in Interpretive Research. In T. May (Ed.), *Qualitative Research in Action*. London: Sage.

Williams, R. M. (1979). Change and Stability in Values and Value Systems: A Sociological Perspective. In M. Rokeach (Ed.), *Understanding Human Values* (pp. 15-46). New York: Free Press.

Wong, L. F. (2006). *From Atheists to Evangelicals: the Christian Conversion Experience of Mainland Chinese Intellectuals in the USA.* Unpublished D.Th. thesis, University of Boston, Boston.

Wu, Y., & Cui, X. (2010). House churches thrive in Beijing.   Retrieved 26 August 2010, from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-03/17/content_9600333.htm

Wu, Y., & Cui, X. (2010). House churches thrive in Beijing. *China Daily*. Retrieved from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-03/17/content_9600333.htm

Xiao, X. (2003). Industrializing Education? In C. Wang (Ed.), *One China, Many Paths* (pp. 237-249). London: Verso.

Xing, F. (1995). The Chinese Cultural System: Implications for Cross-Cultural Management. *S. A. M. Advanced Management Journal, 60*(1), 14-20.

Xinhua. (2008). More Chinese marry, divorce in 2007.   Retrieved 23 August 2010, from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-01/24/content_6419204.htm

Xinhua. (2009). China's "father of space technology" dies at 98. *China View* Retrieved 27th October, 2010, from http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-10/31/content_12365319.htm

Xue, H. (2008). *Cultural adaptation and personal capital formation; the experiences of Chinese students in UK higher education.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of the West of England, Bristol.

Yan, K., & Berliner, D. C. (2011). An Examination of Individual Level Factors in Stress and Coping Processes: Perspectives of Chinese International Students in the United States. *Journal of College Student Development, 52*(5), 523-542.

Yan, Y. (2002). Managed Globalization: State Power and Cultural Transition in China. In T. Aoki & P. L. Berger (Eds.), *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (pp. 30-58). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yan, Y. (2009). The Good Samaritan's new trouble: A study of the changing moral landscape in contemporary China. *Social Anthropology, 17*(1), 9-24.

Yan, Y. (2011). The Changing Moral Landscape. In A. Kleinman, Y. Yan, J. Jun, S. Lee, E. Zhang, T. Pan, F. Wu & J. Guo (Eds.), *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person* (pp. 36-105). Berkeley (CA): University of California Press

Yang, F. (1998). Chinese Conversion to Evangelical Christianity: The Importance of Social and Cultural Contexts. *Sociology of Religion, 59*(3), 237-257.

Yang, F. (1999). *Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Yang, F. (2001a). Religion and Ethnicity Among New Immigrants: The Impact of Majority/Minority Status in Home and Host Countries. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 40*(3), 367-378.

Yang, F. (2001b). *Three Approaches to Spiritual Values*. San Francisco: University of San Francisco Center for the Pacific Rim.

Yang, F. (2005). Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 44*(4), 423-441.

Yang, F. (2006). The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China. *The Sociological Quarterly, 47*, 93-122.

Yang, F. (2007). Oligopoly Dynamics: Official Religions. In J. A. Beckford & N. J. I. Demerath (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion,* (pp. 635-653). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Yang, F. (2009). Religion in China under Communism: A Shortage Economy Explanation. *Journal of Church and State, 52*(1), 3-33.

Yang, F. (2011). The Chinese House Church Goes Public. *Sightings*,

Yang, H. (2002). Christian Faith Amongst Chinese Universty Students. *China Study Journal,* (December 2002). Retrieved from http://www.ctbi.org.uk/index.php?op=modload%26name=knowledge%26file=kbasepage%26LinkID=286

Yang, H. (2008). *Understanding Experiences of Being a Chinese Overseas Student in the United Kingdom: Learning, Culture and Identity.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, Manchester.

Yang, M., & Tan, S. H. (2007). *Haigui* in China's Modernisation. In G. Wang & J. Wong (Eds.), *Interpreting China's Development* (pp. 202-205). Singapore: World Scientific.

Yang, M., & Tan, S. H. (2010). A Pivot for Change: The Potential Role of the *Haigui* in Addressing China's Social Problems. In L. Zhao & T. S. Lim (Eds.), *China's New Social Policy: Initiatives for a Harmonious Society* (Vol. 20, pp. 10). Singapore: World Scientific.

Yang, X. (1997). *Captive Spirits: Prisoners of the Cultural Revolution*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Yanow, D. (Ed.). (2005). *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe.

Ye, W. (2001). *Seeking Modernity in China's Name: Chinese Students in the United States, 1900-1927.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Yu, K. (2008). *Globalization and Changes in China's Governance*. Boston, MA: Brill.

Zhan, W., & Ning, W. (2004). The moral education curriculum for junior high schools in 21st century China. *Journal of Moral Education, 33*(4), 511-532.

Zhang, L. (2010). *In Search of Paradise: Middle-class Living in a Chinese Metropolis*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Zhang, R. (2004). Views on filial piety see change. *China Daily,* (7th December 2004). Retrieved from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-12/07/content_398111.htm

Zhao, X., & Xie, Y. (1992). Western Influence on (People's Republic of China) Chinese Students in the United States. *Comparative Education Review, 36*(4), 509-528.

Zhe, J. (2011). Buddhism in the Reform Era: A Secularized Revival? . In A. Y. Chau (Ed.), *Religion in Contemporary China: Revitalization and Innovation* (pp. 32-52). Abingdon: Routledge.

Zheng, Y. (2006). *China's Political Transition*. Nottingham: University of Nottingham China Policy Institute.

Zheng, Y. (2010). Society Must Be Defended: reform, openness, and social policy in China. *Journal of Contemporary China, 19*(67), 799-818.

Zhu, G. (2010). Prosecuting Evil Cults: A Critical Examination of Law Regarding Freedom of Religious Belief in Mainland China. *Human Rights Quarterly, 32*(3), 471-501.

Zhuo, X. (2006). The Significance of Christianity for the Modernization of Chinese Society. In H. Yang & D. H. N. Yeung (Eds.), *Sino-Christian Studies in China* (pp. 252-264). Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview questions and topics

Interview 1

- Basic information: age; siblings; marital status/children; home town; occupation; dates in UK; subject; qualification obtained.

- Chapters**:** Please try to think of your life as a story or book...and books have chapters. What would the chapters of your book be?

Childhood and teenage years

- Tell me about your parents? Their occupations and education level? From rural or urban areas?

- Were there other special people in your life?

- What sort of childhood did you have?

- Please describe a really happy memory from then?

- What were some struggles you had as a child?

- As you grew up what were your hopes and ambitions?

- What did you think, if anything, about religion or God?

Leaving home; university

- Tell me about leaving home; where did you go?

- Why that university and that subject?

- What did you enjoy and dislike most about life then?

- What sort of student were you?

- The most important relationships?

- Highlights and disappointments?

Leaving university; working life

- What did you do after university; who and what influenced that?

- How did you feel in this new life?

- Have you had any big dilemmas at work? How did you resolve them?

- Your most important relationships since university?

Family life (depending on situation)

- How did you meet your husband, wife, girlfriend, boyfriend? Their occupation and education level?

- What are your hopes for your child?

- What do you think makes a good marriage? How do you try to live that out in your marriage?

Life in general before coming to the UK

- Beyond family and work, what other activities were important to you before you went abroad?

- What were your aims in life?

- What were the most difficult decisions you made; how did you make them? Who helped?

- What contact, if any, did you have with religion?

- What did you think of Christians and their activities?

Time in UK

- How did you come to study in the UK?

- High points and low points in the UK?

- How did you cope with any problems?

- Your most important relationships at that time?

- Did you have any other activities outside study?

- Were there any people, or events, who strongly influenced you?

- How did you become involved with Christians?

- How and why did you become a Christian?

- Was life in the UK different afterwards? How?

Returning home

- What has it been like coming back?

- What has been best, and most difficult, about returning?

- Have these good things or difficulties increased or decreased over time?

- Have there been any surprises?

- What have your relationships with family and friends been like? Have they changed?

- What has been your experience of finding a job/going back to work?

- Have you had any difficult decisions to make? How did you decide? Who helped?

Life now

- What is the best part of life now… and the most difficult? Anything that particularly worries you?

- What are your hopes and plans for the future? Why?

- How do you spend your time? If you had more how would you use it?

- If they mention churches ask what they are like, what they do. If they don't mention it ask what their involvement is.

- Do you have any literary role models, or favourite literary characters…why? (This question was not often used).

- What are the biggest decisions you have faced? How did you make them?

- Looking back, what have been the biggest changes in your life?

- Can you describe your most important basic beliefs and values?

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me to help me understand your overall philosophy of life?

Interview 2

Objective: Reflecting on the previous interview, consider whether and how they have changed after going to the UK, and why.

Questions below were adapted to refer back to the previous interview.

1. Do you think you changed as a result of going abroad? How? Why? Can you give me some examples?

2. What about since coming back to China? Have you changed again? Did the other changes remain?

3. Do other people think you have changed? Evidence for that?

4. How are changes reflected in your life, behaviour, decisions?

5. What do you think caused these changes?

6. Do you think they could have happened if you had stayed in China?

7. Has your main life purpose, or what motivates you most, changed?

8. Do any of these changes relate to you becoming a Christian? What makes you think that?

9. What are the main differences between the ways you lived your life in UK and do now in China?

10. Would you say your involvement with Christians/the church is different from in the UK? How? Why?

11. What about your relationship with God? What is that like?

12. Do you experience any tension/dilemmas related to being a Christian? Was it the same in the UK?

13. What are the benefits for you of being a Christian?

14. If you could pass a message to Christians in the UK, to help them be better friends to Chinese students, what would it be? Messages passed on will be anonymous and will be grouped with messages from others.

15. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that would help me understand your most important beliefs and values?

Appendix B: Participant information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

'Have the core values of postgraduate students from the People's Republic of China (PRC), changed as a result of their time in the UK?

You are invited to take part in research which is part of a PhD. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information. Discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if anything is unclear or you would like more information. Thank you.

What are the aims of the research?

- to understand ways in which Chinese postgraduates find that their experience in the U.K. affects their core values, and whether they find that any changes remain after they return to China.
- I have a particular interest in whether changes in belief have such an effect.
- I hope that the results of this study will help university staff and others better understand Chinese students' experiences in the U.K. so that they can support future students better.
- I hope that participants will enjoy the process of talking about their experiences, or find it helpful.

By a 'core value' I mean that which matters most to a person and which tends to guide a person's decisions and behaviour.

Who is taking part?

I hope to interview people. Past postgraduates have been chosen because they are older and have usually given more thought to the issues being studied. Ex-students from China are being asked because they are a very significant group in U.K. universities. Over the past ten years I have spent a lot of time with people from China and become very interested in their experiences and opinions.

What if you do not want to take part?

This study is entirely voluntary. If you prefer not to be involved please say so.

What if you change your mind during the study?

You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. However, I would ask that you give me as much notice as possible if you wish to withdraw.

What is involved?

You will be asked to have two conversations with me, in English. The first conversation, talking about your life story, may need up to 2 hours. The second, reflecting on any changes, will probably last about an hour. You will

be asked to talk about whether and how you feel you have changed, for example, in your ideas about what matters in life or in how you make important decisions. Conversations will need to be recorded on a small digital recorder. I may need to contact you afterwards to check my understanding of something you said.

Maintaining your anonymity:

- I will respect the information you share with me and keep you anonymous.
- I will offer you the chance to read the transcript of our conversation to ensure that you are satisfied with its accuracy, that your anonymity is maintained and that there is nothing you prefer to be omitted.

Dissemination of findings:

- The completed thesis will be read by my supervisors and other staff within the School of Education, and by examiners. It will be placed in the University library.
- The thesis will contain reference to our conversations and may contain a transcript of one. I will give you the opportunity to discuss my analysis of our conversations, if you wish.
- Findings will be disseminated in presentations and academic journals.

Who can you contact if you have any questions or concerns?

Please contact me by email, ttxdd1@nottingham.ac.uk. Address: Room C4, the Dearing Building, School of Education, Jubilee Campus, University of Nottingham, Wollaton Road, Nottingham NG8 1BB. Telephone: 0785 4460518.

Should you not wish to contact me you can contact my supervisor:

Professor W. J. Morgan,
UNESCO Chair of the Political Economy of Education,
Centre for Comparative Education Research, School of Education,
Tel. 0115 9513717;
email john.morgan@nottingham.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the ethics of the research that you prefer not to discuss with me please contact the School of Education Research Ethics Coordinators, Professor John Holford (tel. 0044 115 951 4486) or Dr Alison Kington (tel. 0044 115 9514420), email: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk).

Thank you.   Debbie Dickson, 18th April 2009.

Appendix C: Participant consent form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title: 'Have the core values of postgraduate students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) changed as a result of their time in the UK? A research project and thesis contributing to the degree of PhD.

Researcher's name: Debbie Dickson

Supervisors' names: Professor W. John Morgan and Dr Qing Gu

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

- I understand the purpose of the research and my involvement in it.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified.

- I understand that I may be audio-recorded during the conversations.

- I understand that paper copies of conversation transcripts and audiotapes will be stored in a locked cupboard only accessible by the researcher and that electronic data will be stored in a password-protected area.

- I understand that access to (anonymised) data will only be given by the researcher to those academic colleagues who may need to see it for transcription, analysis or PhD assessment purposes.

- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed …………………………………………………………………… (research participant)

Print name …………………………………………………………… **Date**…………………………

Contact details:

Researcher: Debbie Dickson, email ttxdd1@nottingham.ac.uk
Professor W.John Morgan, email john.morgan@nottingham.ac.uk
Research Ethics Coordinators: educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix D: Extracts from interview transcripts

First extract from interviews with Changlan

D   So do you think you changed as a result of going abroad? And if you did, is it related to going abroad, or is it related to becoming a Christian? Have you changed?

CL   I think both. I would say. And in terms of going abroad to study I think I have many, many ideas which I cannot have in China. For example, the attitude towards the life, and the work, was quite different. I could see that British people, they seem to know how to truly enjoy their life, to enjoy their relationship with the family and really- the things they have in their hands. I can see that.

D   Say a bit more about family. In what way do they enjoy their relationship with the family?

CL   Yeah, actually before going to abroad, I thought the foreigners they tend to not that care about family, because in China you have to live with your parents and- but in UK seems- UK or the States seems the people will leave their parents after they've grown up and the parents will force them to go away, anyway. So that's a misconception, and after I am going to UK I can see, you know, from their talking and their attitude, I can see the family concept is very important actually for them. Although they might express it in a different way. So that's the change of the mind. Yeah, and many, many things. I started to enjoy the reading.

D   You always enjoyed reading?

CL   Because I can see, not only in UK but also in Europe, seems reading is a common sense for elders and children, you can see them keep reading

on the train, in the coffee shops and whenever they are- they can do that. So yeah I'm not so sure is it different from us-

D   I've been going around seeing all these books, you know, like bookstalls out on the street in Beijing, and people reading on the subway and thinking, 'oh, people read a lot here'! *[both laugh]*

CL   You know, when I was travelling in Germany, there was an old lady sitting next to us, she could not speak any English actually but she kept talking about, '*Mao Zedong, Mao Zedong'* something like that. And she was reading some book about China. And I was impressed. I thought the world did not understand China. But actually it's our people don't understand the world. Because in China we were told by elders that, 'oh, the world they do not understand China, they try to bring our government, our authority so they can take over our power'. Things like that. I had that concept, even before I came to UK. But after that, I read so many books about Chinese.. Cultural Revolution and things I cannot read in China.

D   So this- So the difference then in your attitudes as a result of finding that, and what you've just said about the family, is that now reflected in any way? In the way you live, the way you act, what you do now?

CL   Um… I cannot summarize, yeah, but I think I respect my parents, I do not treat them as a commander, and I try to convince them not to treat me as a child, so we can talk equally, as a friend. And I respect their limitation on their understanding about the world, and I try to protect them and- I don't know how to say, but anyway, seems we are getting close by this way.

D   So those things: Were they just related to having been abroad – that experience of living in another culture?

CL   Yes, I think so. In terms of the commitment to the Christ, I would say now I can see my life has a purpose, so whenever I face the difficulties, or the unexpected changes in my life, I'm not afraid. And I won't be disappointed by the challenges I would be faced tomorrow or in the future, because I believe that God has a perfect plan in my life, even though sometimes I may in the troughs and sometimes I may in the peaks, but my life keeps going. Yeah, and I can see my mind will not be easily influenced by the society because there's always the Holy Spirit reminding us what is right and what's wrong.

D   Have you got an example of that, where you've been- maybe you've felt the pressure of society, but then you've known the strength of the Spirit?

CL   Yeah, when I first came back from UK, I could not find a job, so my parents tried to arrange a job for me to work in the government. That was a pretty good job for many people actually – stable work, you don't have to work overtime, you can leave the office at 5:30 in the afternoon, and you have good compensation package, you don't have to worry about tomorrow and you have many other benefits which cannot be stated on the paper. But I know that if I have to join the government I have to accept the idea that there's no God. I know, yeah. So-

D   Would you have had to become a member of the Party or would you have been invited?

CL   I haven't been invited to the Party even when I was in the university, besides I am not the kind of person who are interested into this group, the grouping.

D   So- but just doing the job would have meant there was that expectation of not- of saying 'I'm an atheist'. So in just accepting the job, your behaviour would have to reflect that there was no God, or-?

CL   Because you cannot continue your job actually if you do not accept that- their ideas. You know, working in the government, eventually they will invite you to join the Party.

D   Also you might have to fill in an application form, or fill in forms that say whether you believe anything.

CL   They don't have to, they just ask you to interview, and pass some test, that's it. But I just declined this invitation from my parents. They seemed to not understand why I did that. I hurt them actually. Of course I did not tell them the true reason of this, but I just said 'Oh, I'm not interested', that's it. Because I don't want to provoke their anger about my religion belief. But now they seem to understand, 'ok, you make a good choice.' Now I can have a better future. So, yeah.

D   That's interesting. So they see that from a financial prospect? Stability?

CL   Yeah.

D   and- yeah, ok. So have- and since you came back, have any of- any people said you've changed? People that knew you before you went? Like your family.

CL   The words I speaking out is different from before. Because previously I was kind of – how to say – cynical. Criticize. To hurt people. You know, 'oh I'm not satisfied with these people' and this is not good'. 'Ah, what you do is really stupid', some things like that – I hurt many

people. Including my friends and family, but I think from the Psalm 39, that I have to control my mouth, with the- what word is that? – with the 'muzzle'?

D   Yes. *[both laughing]*

CL   Yeah, yeah, yeah. And Jesus said 'the things you eat cannot do any harm to you…'

D   'It comes from inside.'

CL   Yeah, it comes in outside. So I was reminded to control my mouth, and by doing that I actually control my mind, I think it in a positive way, to try to appreciate each other, even though they have a limitation, then so am I, I am limited in some way. I- er..yeah.

Second extract from interviews with Changlan

D   And- so any other changes? You talked about your main- you've got a purpose, and also you talked about your speech. The way you treat people. Anything else that's changed?

CL   The attitude towards marriage, I think. Even though I did not get any marriage before. But you know, divorce is very common in China, you know. There are two of my uncles, they divorced. My father has six brothers and sisters, two of them divorced already. And even carry on a relationship in China people tend to think, 'oh, it is easy come and easy go' and 'why bother?' Yeah, because they do not believe there is a God overhead. They do not believe someone will be getting married with them is the one sent by God. So who cares, it just happen like *[clicks fingers twice]*. Yeah, just like their life come into the world it just happened, *[clicks fingers]*. So it can happen again. So before I committed to the

Christ *[both laugh]*. Before I committed to the Christ, I would say I was kind of confused, yeah. I told you I was conservative.

D   Yes.

CL   But I'm confused. Sometimes I would say, 'ok, what's the matter? Maybe not this one, maybe another one, who knows?' and I would put myself into the centre of this relationship, and say 'ok, you love me, and I will love you. And I deserve to be loved, if I love you', right? But I can see from the Christianity and the teaching from the Bible says love is actually a sacrifice, a commitment to each other. 'Love is patient, love is kind' (Corinthians). So it is really beneficial to our relationship that both of us need to know that, just like Christ loved the church, you need to sacrifice yourself to each other. You have to get..adapt to other's weaknesses in their personality. It is a change. I think if I did not have this concept I would have broken up with Y after coming back. Because I seem to think, 'oh, she did not understand me any more. She is in the different situation. It seems I cannot touch her, I cannot have comfort when I'm in need, why didn't I just go and find someone else who can give me instant comfort?' *[both laugh]*

D   Does this person exist!?

CL   I think this is important. And this continue to help both of us to engage in this relationship.

D   How would you describe your relationship with God?

CL   My relationship with God. … I think just like father and son, yeah, and sometimes I'm naughty *[both laugh],* God will punish me, and sometimes I will- I don't know, it's an interesting topic to talk about relationship with God, and I was taken care by him above, yeah, so sometimes it's close, sometimes it's distant. I don't know. *[both laugh]*

D   Ok. And have you experienced any tension or any difficulty because you are a Christian?

CL   … Yeah, my colleagues and some from my friends they will challenge my belief, they will try to say something mockery towards my belief, though they did not mean to harm me, they just say maybe a joke. Something. But I was hurt and I could not put my anger towards them because I was reminded by the Spirit not to do so. So that will be my difficulty, yeah, because I don't know how to convince them that what I believe is the right thing to do. Yeah, because maybe I'm not that good at speech, not like C.S. Lewis or *[both laugh]* other people. So I'm just a humble man who do this humbly and believe it purely. I don't want to get involved in that many evolution/creation debate or something, I don't want to get into that way. And I believe that when people believe, not because they are convinced to, it's because it's the right thing to do, just like looking for your father. It's not that you are told 'this is your father', it's that you believe he is and 'it's true!', that's it. I never test my brother that I am the son of my father, but I believe he is, that's it, simple as that. You don't have to do the gene test and-

D   It's a recognition.

CL   Yeah, yeah.

D   It's that- it reminds me of 'my sheep recognize my voice'.

CL   Yeah, things like that.

D   And what about the benefits of being a Christian? What are they?

CL   Benefits? I think, I don't need to drink with other people, I have the excuse to say, 'ok, I'm a Christian, I cannot get drunk, so sorry, it's not my type.' Yeah, and when there's temptation which other people don't think that's temptation I can stay away from that. You know in China it's very common to go into the pub, which is quite different to UK. When we talk about pub in China it means you have get involved in some other- girls and-

D   Gambling?

CL   Things like that so, ok, I have that 'it's not my type, I don't want to get in the adultery stuff in here', so stay away from that, and they will joke, 'ok, he is a Christian, ok, leave him alone.'

D   Yeah, somehow they- but they won't push you.

CL   Though they might joke. Yeah, they won't.

D   Yeah, ok.

CL   It's true.

D   That's interesting, that's a different answer from anybody else, maybe if I'd interviewed more men, more of them would have said that.

CL   Yeah, sure.

[Pause]

D   Yeah, coming to the end. You said your life has a purpose now. So what- how has your main purpose, or how was your main motivation in life changed since becoming a Christian?

CL   Motivation.   Um … I believe that every day I'm facing different problems or issues, it's a task assigned by God. Even though it's boring and not interesting at all, or sometimes even difficult, I will take it pleasantly. I think I- it's like my father ask me to do something which I do not know at the moment what's the benefit, but I will do it anyway, just to be obedient. So I think that help me to overcome many jobs or tasks that is dull and, you know, not interesting at all, sometimes time wasting for many people.

Extract from interview with Fuyin

D: If you think about your life, right from the beginning until now, as a book, it would have chapters.

F: OK.

D: Can you divide it up into chapters? What would you choose?

F: Yes, perhaps, yeah, I could do.

D: What, briefly would they be?

F: Briefly, the first period, from the time I was born to.. the year before middle school, secondary school. Then the second period, from that to my marriage. After I got married, then is the third period. Yes, I can do those three.

D: Oh, that's three?

F: Mm, three chapters

D: That's interesting, that you did that. So why did you pick those three?

F: Why, the reason..you know, it's a long story. My.. I had to start from the very beginning, my background, my parents, what they do, their characteristics, really that's affected my life

D: Yes, tell me about that.

F: My dad served in the Red Army. He attended.. he is quite old, he is 81, this year, now. He joined the Army when he was 14, I heard. Attended the civil war, the Liberation war from 1945 to 1949, but before that, also the Japanese War, the war with the Japanese, maybe at later time, eight

years attend, maybe last four years. So he was a very quick manner, you know, very easy to get angry.

D: Yes.

F: Yes, that kind of person and he was very... both my parents, both my mum and dad very competitive, you know, always want to be the best. So it's really influenced us. All the three children, their three children inherited this characteristic, always want to be the best and always make great effort to be the best, in every area (laughs).

D: OK

F: It's very..very tiring for me now, because I feel I want to be the best, so I have to pay double efforts, or sometimes even more, to get what I want (laughs), it's very tiring. At that time, I was the third daughter, actually, I was third daughter in my family.

D: So you and two elder sisters?

F: Two elder sisters, and my dad is very, very.. he likes son very much. You know, very Chinese. I don't know… those kind of people like boys more, much more than girls. We call them… like, yes expect sons

D: Yeah, yeah and he got three girls.

F: ….So I was the third daughter and I heard that when my mum gave birth to my elder sister, the first one, my dad was there, because he expected a boy, but when a girl came out.

D: Yes.

F: He felt disappointed. And the second one he didn't (?) there. The third one he wasn't there. The third one, when I was born, I heard my dad

was very anxious to get a son, but when he saw it was a girl, a daughter, he felt very disappointed. Then, during the time we three girls were brought up.. actually, to be honest, we were treated a bit badly. Yes, I think.. we were treated badly, badly, because my.. you know, my parents put a lot of energy in their work. They cared about their work more than ..at that time...

D: What did your mother do?

F: They were all doctors, they were all doctors.

D: So your father was a doctor in the army?

F: No...yes, a kind of doctor in the Army. Afterwards he went to the university, also medical university, where he met my mum, and they got married. They both assigned to a hospital. They worked together. ….oh yes, they put a lot of energy into their work.

D: Yes.

F: So they are just a bit, kind of, you know… How.. just ..like, when they were happy.. when they were happy with their work, they were happy with us, otherwise, we just, we became very sensitive. Each time when my parents came in, we three first looked at their faces. When they looked good, oh, we just released. Otherwise, we had to be very..kind of nervous.

D: So, you were.. how old were, what was the age difference?

F: Every four years.

D: Between the children?

F: Yes, every four years.

D: So your eldest sister was eight years older than you?

F: Yes, the second four, then I was born.

D: And how old are you now?

F: 38.

D: OK

F: So, that's really a very negative impact on me. Maybe..yeah, I talked with my two sisters, they also got a very sad impact, impact on their personality. So at that time..just we..we were trying to please our parents but at the same time, we were always being beaten. You know, if my dad got angry with us, the first thing he would do, just beat us ..It's very hard.. you know, before I became a Christian, there's really a hatred in my heart for nearly 20 years.

D: Your father?

F: Yes, so that's my childhood. I don't want to mention more.. always..

D: Do you have any happy memories that stand out?

F: Little, very little.

D: And your childhood is the period before Middle School?

F: Yeah, before middle school, yeah.

D: And then so what happened when you went to Middle School? Was it better then?

F: No, no, I shouldn't divide it in that way. At primary school should be a period. That period was really nice, is really nice, good, because I was monitor there. Oh, should be..one, two, three, four.. but, oh, a bit confusing.. I mean .. I should, yeah, divide my childhood until primary

school. Then primary school is another, primary school is the second period, then secondary school .. till my marriage, from secondary to my marriage. I had really good memories when I was in primary school because I was a monitor, and I was very hard-working and got very good results each time. So, I was, jokingly said, er.. just assistant teacher in our class, so all my.. all my teachers loved me much more than other children.

D: OK.

F: So that made me.. I felt that. I sensed that, so it made me really happy. That was my happy time during the five year primary school. But after I, every day after I went home I just became nervous. Yeah, yeah. .. It's still, but it changed when I.. when I went to the middle school, because I, you know.. teenagers, there's a period. You know, I don't know what it's called [in English]. That's very.. became sensitive?

D: Adolescence?

F: Maybe, yes, sensitive to sex and sensitive to different... yeah, I don't know.. that period, and I went through that period..mm.. it is not really nice. And I remember very clearly, when I was in the middle school, a boy in my class, really.. he said, like fell in love with me and our event..our event became very.. a bit famous in our school, so it really gave me lots of stress (she laughs). I don't like that, but at that time, I really didn't like that situation.

D: So were you friends with him or were you staying away from him?

F: First, I remembered, because he showed his affection to me, I'm a bit.... I don't think I like him, but.. cos, if somebody likes you, you just, automatically a bit like him.

D: Yes, yes.

F: I examined my feelings afterwards, emotions afterwards. I feel it's kind of like that, because he, he really very strong affection. Writes letters to me every day or every week, but .. feel..sometimes feel very happy because somebody loves you (laughs), sometimes

D: So, then other people started talking about it?

F: Yes, lots of stress, that's from all the teenagers, stressed teenagers. So, that time wasn't that   nice...it's really gave me a lot of sad impact, both from the family and from the school.   That's the period until I got married..er, you know, you know the national examination, you've heard about that?

D: The university entrance?

F: I failed..yes, university entrance. I failed in that exam... oh, sorry, another story with my husband. Then I changed my school into.. When I was in high school I changed school to another place, where I met him. Another time.. he said he fell in love with me at the first glance, but at that time...you know, if you don't have much love from your parents, from your home, you just receive in other ways... I just... can't call love but.. kind of rely on...

D: Yes..depend?

F: Yes, I kind of depend on him.

D: So, how old were you then.. about 16, or..?

F: Yes, 17, yes. After seven years, we got married (laughs). So seven years, that's a long time.

D: So..don't move on. Stay in that time for a bit. So when you were in middle and high school, did you have any ambition or hope for the future? What were you thinking, for the future?

F: Hope.. hope for the future..just influenced from parents. They expect us to have a good job, a well-paid job, that's all. We don't have very ambitious.

D: Did you have an idea of what that might be?

F: No, I ..I personally did like to be a teacher. But my parents said that you can't make a lot of money. You have to move on the financial field, so they sent me to the banking school.. that's later.. that's kind of later. But at that time, no, cos you know, in our culture, our future normally is decided by parents. I don't know whether.. what others say, but it's true,

D: Yes, it's a heavy impact.

F: It's true. So you can't have your own opinion.. 'I want to be': no, no.

D: OK.

F: So we don't have the right to decide our future. Always have to follow what parents ask you to do. Otherwise, you're not a good child.

Appendix E: Table 5: Alphabetical summary of participants' values, bridges, tensions and benefits

Name	Values before	Bridge to initial conversion	Values after	Tensions and benefits
Caiyun	• Being top, achieving • Knowing purpose • Being admired • Learning about world outside	• Earlier search for meaning answered; incomplete conversion. Life experience and relationships with Christians in China challenged communist beliefs. UK gave chance to discuss questions in a community of believers. This led to social bonds and a felt experience of God's presence.	• Enjoying life as it is • Trust • Sincere relationships • Being God's loved daughter • Happy family life	• No tensions except ignoring calls to CCP meetings on return. However, she gave few external signs of being Christian • more easily making sincere friendships; having God's strength as support
Changlan	• Intellectual stimulus, freedom • Knowledge of the wider world • Meeting parental expectations • Being loved	• Encountered new best account. Friendly Christians and new ideas led to church attendance and articulating ideas in a community of believers, in his own language. He judged new account to be true.	• Following and honouring God • Respecting and caring for parents and wife • Respecting and serving others • Fellowship in a church with full Bible teaching	• Initially some tension with father; hurt at colleagues' mockery, misunderstanding; • life purpose which helped handle daily life; his marriage was good.
Enci	• Career & financial success • Happy trusting relationships with family and friends • Being admired • Being loved	• Looking for love and standards. Drawn to church in China by Christians' care and sincerity. This and answered prayer led to Chinese church in UK. Discussions in community led to belief and	• Serving God in church & helping others' faith • Trusting God, not self or financial security • Closeness with other Christians, in a church • Knowing God e.g. in prayer	• Some friction with colleagues; felt pressure not to be angry at work. • Eternal life; joy and peace in difficulties; access to help through prayer

Name	Values before	Bridges to initial conversion	Values after	Tensions and benefits
		new master story.	• Good family relationships	
Fuyin	• Being loved • Being best and respected • Fulfilling potential • Protecting parents' face	• Crisis. Enjoyed friendliness of UK Christians and attended church and Bible studies, read books but not that interested until financial and marital crises arose. Then believed in God's existence and relevance to her.	• Obeying and trusting God patiently • Spreading the gospel; others being saved • Experiencing peace from God & being grateful • Appreciating her family	• Struggle to trust God in difficulties; father's jibes at faith; • Peace because of salvation and belief God is leading her; improved marriage; role serving God.
Huanglin	• Fulfilling family duties • Achieving and being respected • Camaraderie; doing valuable things together • Being strong	• Incomplete conversion Attracted to UK church and social activities by happiness and warmth of Christians. Identified Jesus as fitting her prior idea of a sole God above other gods. Interest grew in group discussion and Bible reading.	• Looking after the family • Being respected as a responsible person • Making a contribution to society • Being content and less stressed.	• No tensions but not in church and gives little sign of being Christian; • Calmness to face life; using Biblical advice to help her students
Hui	• Exploring new activities, ideas • Expressing self artistically • Behaving responsibly, especially to parents	• Encountering a new best account. Learning English & culture and making friends drew him to church and to Bible discussion groups. This led to belief.	• Gratitude to parents and God • Being thought well of, as Christian and Chinese • Being a better person, through relying on God • Staying connected with God; through Bible teaching in a good church	• Struggling with an undefined issue; desire to only marry a Christian; • A completely new life and outlook; God's help in difficulty e.g. coping with betrayal.

Name	Values before	Bridges to initial conversion	Values after	Tensions and after
			• Not being judgmental	
Hunan	• Intellectual stimulus, new horizons • Purpose • Camaraderie • Knowledge	• Incomplete conversion Friendship and practical help of UK Christians drew him into a 'new world', a community of stimulating discussion on Bible and life. Other Chinese Christian academics helped as guides.	• Having purpose and a guide • An exciting life • Knowledge • Spending time with his son	• Feels different from other Christians; in China struggles without Christian guidance. • Hope.
Jinglan	• Loving family relationships • Self-development for job security • Knowing life outside her culture • Doing the right thing	• Incomplete conversion. Interest in British culture and kindness of Christians led to Bible study groups and church attendance; this and observing Christians' lifestyle led to belief in Bible as great book on love.	• Being content rather than striving for more, materially • Harmonious work and family relationships • Sharing Bible wisdom, teaching on love	• No-one to answer questions; wondering where God is (she does not attend church) • Has learned to love people; creating course on Bible; hope that God will know and help her
Lara	• Harmonious, caring relationships • Pleasing her parents • Camaraderie	• Encountered a new best account (initially only?) Meeting Chinese Christians in the UK challenged her idea of Christianity and led to social activities, Bible discussion and church attendance with UK Christians. She liked the people and atmosphere and accepted	• Being accepted and fitting in • Peaceful relationship with parents • Peaceful, pure life without stress of seeking material gain and status • Generosity	• The covert nature of church she attended; tension with parents over church and marrying a Christian • Less stressful life than others because less desire to earn & acquire more

| | | Bible account as true. | | |
Name	Values before	Bridges to initial conversion	Values after	Tensions and benefits
Lili	• Being loved and looked after • Wealth • harmony in the family • career progress	• Crisis and love In China she was impressed by the care of Christians for her sick brother, and the peaceful life of a Christian friend. When crisis hit in the UK she decided to believe in Christ, joined a British church and grew in faith within a community of Chinese Christian students.	• Being loved by & safe with God • A secure, peaceful marriage • Serving others; thinking from their perspective; • Closeness and good Bible teaching with other Christians • For others to be 'saved'	• Missing close Christian fellowship because of work hours; • Totally different life, not messy & struggling; marriage improved.
Mei	• Having friends; belonging; • Seeing the world outside; • A peaceful life.	• Encountered a new best account Joined a Bible course out of cultural curiosity, then joined Christian social activities, attended church and felt part of community. Turning point was a talk on science and Christianity.	• Caring for her husband; • Having friends and belonging; • Having a good temper; • Being contented and grateful;	• Fear of reprisal constrains church attendance & sharing her faith; fear of cults; • Solutions to problems through prayer; cheerfulness and mental health.
Wanglin	• belonging with peers; • academic achievement • intimacy with a boyfriend	• Minor crisis In the UK made Christian friends, joining their activities intermittently. A personal crisis & subsequent challenge from a friend led to a decision to believe. Faith grew when in Christian communities and decreased when she pulled away. Grew again as	• being close to God and having his guidance • being in good church and sharing life with Christian husband and friends • obeying and respecting God rather than material things • good relationships with immediate family	• difference with mother over material values; refusing Sunday work; less closeness with people who do not accept her faith; • good relationship with husband; being happy & unstressed; church

		she lived her faith in practice.		friendships
Name	**Values before**	**Initial bridges to conversion**	**Values after**	**Tensions and benefits**
Xiaohong	• Self-improvement, new career challenges • being respected • a relaxed, enjoyable life • being married	• Crisis. In Singapore and UK, she had Christian friends and tried prayer in difficulties. In UK a crisis led her to church with a Chinese friend and to a Bible studies led by a Chinese Christian. Prayer, sermons and discussion led to belief.	• Knowing and trusting God • Being on the right path • Understanding others and getting on with them • Family more important than job or status	• Restrictions in worshipping openly; being Christian makes relating well with others more important but it can be hard; • A happy marriage; understanding & forgiving others.
Xiaojia	• pleasing others and being praised • belonging and having purpose within the group/family • helping others • career success	• Encountered a new best account. In UK met Chinese Christians; enjoyed social events and Bible study. At a weekend away a video about Christianity and science challenged her ideas; she was touched by Christians' care; then she believed the Christian account.	• knowing what God wants for her, trusting and following him • pleasing God and being close to him • spreading the gospel • serving the church • fulfilling family responsibilities	• when she complains to God she feels she should not; sad when not close to him; • a completely new life; having God to rely on, not just own resources.
Xiaoshi	• Physical safety, freedom from fear • being respected • being top, at school and work	• Crisis (earlier) & love. In China, in great distress, she met caring Christians who introduced her to church. In UK, in a local Christian family, she experienced family, love and life in a new way. Her master story and self-concept	• being loved and saved by God • helping and forgiving others • serving God • supporting husband • within a church, helping others grow in faith	• sometimes atheistic background leads to using human logic and questioning; • eternal salvation; being chosen and loved by God; a peaceful life.

Name	Values before	Initial bridges to conversion	Values after	Tensions and benefits
		changed.		
Xuejing	• pleasing and honouring parents • maintaining own face • being loved • academic success	• Encountered a new best account. Met Chinese Christians at UK social activities, then Bible studies and church. Conversion stories of other Chinese challenged her ideas. Answered prayer led her to see new ideas as relevant to her.	• trusting and obeying God • a close relationship with God • company and support of other Christians • helping the needy • pleasing parents (but God first)	• none but temporary disappointments wondering why God withheld something; • eternity with God; never alone; hope; chance to be a better person.
Yang	• being respected; • career achievement • Using intellect to influence others • Being with friends and family • Playing sport	• Encountered a new best account. Attended Christian social activities to improve English and make friends. Curious about them, he joined Bible discussions; his ideas were challenged. Enjoyed church community. After more study he was baptised with four friends.	• Health and prosperity of the immediate family • Being respected in his job, including being in control • Trusting God for eternal life	• Some constraints on behaviour (eg work practices) when going the 'right way'; • hope of eternal life brings perspective: the trivial matters less, relationships easier
Yue	• Being loved for herself • Belonging • Purpose • Spiritual knowledge • Obeying father but wanting freedom	• Finding purpose and meaning. Arrived in the UK seeking truth and purpose. A Chinese student took her to a Christian social activity; then she attended a Bible course. After attending a Christian camp, reading a Chinese Christian book, regular Bible study with a friend, and answers to prayer she	• Trusting God • Knowing God and sharing that knowledge with others • Serving God and others in the church • Being loved and valued • Respecting parents but put God first	• With parents, about marrying a Christian; with colleagues over work practices; pastoral issues in church. • Eternal life; hope; friendship instead of loneliness; no more searching; making a

343

Name	Values before	Initial bridges to conversion	Values after	Tensions and benefits
		believed the Christian account.		contribution.
Yun	- Academic and career success - Being in control - status - Closeness with a trusted person - Prosperity	Crisis. In the UK a Chinese student introduced her to local Christians for English practice. She became pregnant and had to defer study; in a UK house church she studied the Bible and experienced care. Her ideas about life and the world were challenged; after asking many questions she believed.	- Allowing God to be in charge rather than herself - Following God rather than status or wealth - Security with God for her family - Intimacy with God and spiritual growth	- Not having the abortions (initially) (loss of job, stigma, giving birth abroad); trying to give God control. - God's love and closeness; peace in difficulties; her three children and marriage