QUALITY OF LIFE IN CHINA:
A SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONAL APPROACH

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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September 2002

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how quality of life (QOL thereafter) is constructed by lay people in contemporary China. Theoretically, the thesis critiques the mainstream literature on QOL – which uses expert categories to distinguish sharply between "objective" and "subjective" factors in the assessment of QOL - for failing to address the lifeworld of ordinary people and the wealth of meanings which they attribute to QOL. The dominant literature is particularly problematic when transposed to a Chinese context. The thesis therefore proposes an alternative theoretical framework to study QOL: a social representational approach. This approach re-conceptualises QOL as a symbolic construction, which is inherently cultural and historical, and which takes on different meanings as a function of people's social milieus and particular social position. It posits QOL as a system of symbols and meanings structurally bound up with current societal changes in China. Methodologically, the research is based on five complementary research methods and data sets: word associations, semantic differentials, public discourse in the media, individual interviews and focus groups discussions. Data are collected both in rural and urban settings, and amongst different generations of Chinese people. The analysis shows that, deeply embedded in the collective memory of Chinese society, the representation QOL is organised around a central thema opposing having and being. Having and being are antinomic orientations, emphasizing material possessions and spiritual subsistence, respectively, on the one hand, and are dialogically interdependent, on the other. The synthesis of the opposites between having and being constitutes the deep structure of QOL. The thema of having/being is expressed in the two sets of semantic artefacts. Having is objectified in material possessions, together with the pleasure and positive symbolic meanings consequent upon such possessions. Being is objectified in rootedness, connectedness, participation and freedom, and manifested through joy. The thema of having/being spills over, permeates and underpins the critical domains of life: health, family, work, social relations and the natural environment, emphasizing the instrumental and expressive aspects of QOL in each domain. The thema of having/being, intertwined with the coexistence of rival cultural, political and economic systems – Confucianism, Marxism and capitalism – in China's current social transition, provides the framework within which lay people organise their everyday life, assess of their own QOL and develop aspirations.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest thanks go to my supervisors, Professor Rob Farr and Dr Marie-Claude Gervais, whom I have been incredibly fortunate to meet at the LSE and to whom I am intellectually indebted. As the development of contemporary Chinese psychology is profoundly influenced by American psychology, I knew little about what has been happening in European social psychology before I arrived at the LSE. It is Rob who has led me, step by step, to familiarise mostly with this unfamiliar intellectual territory. I have benefited enormously from his great scholarship and encouragement. His work on a truly social approach towards social psychology not only provided the basis for much of what appears in this thesis, but will also define my academic career for the many years to come. Marie-Claude has provided me invaluable guidance and advice throughout the years of my PhD with her great kindness, particularly after Rob's retirement. Through her constructive criticism and extremely helpful comments on the draft versions of chapters, Marie-Claude has greatly sharpened my understanding of the theory of social representations. Her direction, support and patience ensured that the thesis would eventually see the light of day. There simply aren't words enough to express how deeply grateful I am to both Rob and Marie-Claude.

I am grateful also to many members of the Department of Social Psychology at the LSE who have generously offered their support at various stages of this thesis. Amongst them, I must mention Martin Bauer, Cathy Campbell, Bradley Franks, George Gaskell, Caroline Howarth, Sandra Jovchelovitch and fellow PhD students. I am grateful to them for their instructive comments and worthwhile advice on some parts of the thesis. I feel fortunate to have been able to discuss the ideas developed herein in this particularly stimulating intellectual environment. I would also like to thank Professor Kan Shi and Mr Huangdong Yang at the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences for their assistance in arranging my fieldwork in China.

I own an enormous of debt of gratitude to my parents for their love and understanding and for their unfaltering belief in me; to my brother, Jun Liu, for his continual support and encouragement; particularly to my wife, Jun Du, who has been through all the ups and downs with me; and to my lovely son, William Liu, who was born in this country in the final year of the thesis, and I feel extremely sorry that I could not share enough of my time with him.

Finally, I also acknowledge with gratitude the K C Wong Education Foundation, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Great Britain – China Educational Trust for their financial support. Without their help, it simply would not have been possible to do my PhD at the LSE.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to explore the organisation of social thinking with respect to quality of life (QOL thereafter) in contemporary Chinese society. It offers a specifically social representational approach towards QOL, which has been virtually neglected by either social representations, or QOL, researchers.

The question of what is the "good life" has generated long and philosophical debate for millennia. For the Epicurean philosophers of ancient Greece, the good life resided in human agency; they believed that a wise and self-controlled individual could live a happy life irrespective of any adverse situation (Marková, 1995). For the Confucian thinkers of ancient China, the good life was to be found in a harmonious society wherein individuals fulfilled the duties and obligations inherent in their status. In modern Western industrial societies, the public concern with QOL is closely associated with the paradox of affluence: whereby great improvement in material wealth seems to go hand in hand with spiritual discontent, social alienation and environmental degradation (Day & Jankey, 1996; Evans, 1994; Evans & Wingo, 1977). For instance, American President Lyndon Johnson referred to the idea of QOL in a speech saying: "the Great Society is concerned not with how much, but with how good – not with the quantity of goods, but with the quality of our lives" (quoted in Campbell, 1981, p.4).

However, this is not the same case in contemporary Chinese society. The term QOL has not entered Chinese society until the death of Mao Zedong in 1976. In the Mao era, China was an autarkic society, the state was dictating much of ordinary people's lives, freedoms were curtailed, and only the very basic could be guaranteed. There was little public articulation of QOL. In the late 1970s, the Communist Party of China explicitly renounced class struggle as a vehicle for social development and carried out the policy of reform and opening-up. This new policy prioritised the modernisation of Chinese society, the development of the national economy, and the improvement of Chinese people's quality of life. Since then, ordinary Chinese people have experienced increased material comfort, greater freedoms and more diverse lifestyles,

and the term QOL has progressively found an existence in the symbolic articulation of everyday life. The term QOL now has infiltrated into daily conversations and permeated the mass media; it has become a part of ordinary language in Chinese society. Jiang Zemin (2001), the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, clearly states that the Party's policy is to enable all people across the country live a comfortable life, and to continue to improve their QOL. In this sense, it seems that QOL is a new social representation in China.

Moreover, Chinese society is undergoing a massive transition. The rival cultural, ideological, political and economic systems of Confucianism, Marxism and capitalism now co-exist, bringing about a number of opportunities as well as a series of constraints to people's lives. The move from the so-call "iron bowl of rice" towards a job market entails both the freedom of mobility and the insecurity of employment. The "gold rush" of rural-to-urban mobility bestows some tens of millions of rural migrants with great economic rewards at the expense of uprootedness. The new economic ethos requires people to give precedence to their own needs and desire, while both the Confucian and the communist systems emphasise the social embeddedness of people and their obligations to others. The one-child-per-couple policy forces ordinary people to confront the dilemma between the duty to the state and the filial obligation to family and ancestors. Living in the midst of such a social transformation, ordinary Chinese people are increasingly concerned with how to establish their priorities amongst competing value systems, how to reconcile the contradictions in expectations, how to deal with the uncertainties introduced by the free market, how to take maximum advantage of the reform, and how to organise their lives. These kinds of concerns are, to a great extent, cohered and crystallised under the umbrella of "QOL".

The systematic study of QOL began some four decades ago (McCall, 1975). Research into QOL currently spans a wide range of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, economics, politics, marketing, urban planning, medical sciences, but no agreement exists as yet as to the precise meanings of QOL (Grayson & Young, 1994). I shall argue, the mainstream literature on QOL is particularly problematic when it is transposed to a Chinese context. Recently, some Chinese scholars, for instance, Feng and Dai (1996), have begun to study QOL in Chinese society. However, following the

model of the mainstream literature on QOL in Western societies, they lock themselves up in a list of items constituted by the researchers themselves to evaluate the quality of Chinese people's lives. As a consequence, the richness of social knowledge about QOL in Chinese culture from the perspective of social actors is absent, and the research loses its significance to the ordinary Chinese people whose QOL it is supposed to be captured.

This poses an important question: how can social psychology contribute to the scientific analysis of social thinking about QOL in Chinese society? The theory of social representations, I believe, is ideally placed to answer the above question as the theory is concerned with the social origins of common-sense knowledge and the constitutive role of social representations in social life (Moscovici, 1984a). Its ultimate aim is to understand and to explain the genesis, structure and content of lay knowledge. I shall argue, and attempt to demonstrate, that the theory of social representations provides a viable conceptual approach towards capturing the organisation of common-sense knowledge about QOL in Chinese society. It does so by positing a degree of correspondence between lay thinking and social morphology. I hope to redress some of the academic "colonialism" which currently characterises much of the social scientific work on QOL by developing a social representational approach towards QOL which better addresses the social and cultural embeddedness of lay thinking about QOL in Chinese society.

This thesis comprises nine chapters. Chapter One describes the context of my study: Chinese culture and its recent transformations. With a long history, Chinese culture is both rich and complicated in its content, which is divergent from mainstream Western culture. As mentioned above, the theory of social representations pays much attention to the social determination of common-sense knowledge in communicative practices, and stresses the structural relationship between special social conditions and their corresponding forms of knowledge. It is thus necessary to discuss the context of Chinese culture and society in which the social representation in question emerges and circulates at the very onset of the thesis.

Chapter Two critically reviews some key theoretical perspectives and empirical studies on QOL. It suggests that the miscellaneous theoretical approaches to the study

of QOL can be grouped conceptually into: a) objective models, b) subjective models, and c) holistic models. Each of these models represents a body of research, with a particular set of concerns and assumptions to an understanding of QOL. On the basis of the discussions of the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of each model, it is argued that the mainstream literature on QOL is underpinned by Cartesian dualisms (Marková, 1982), which prevent them from addressing the social construction of QOL.

Chapter Three proposes an alternative theoretical framework to the study of QOL: a social representational approach. It suggests that the Cartesian dualistic paradigm should be supplanted by a Hegelian paradigm (Marková, 1982) to overcome the problems entangled in the mainstream literature on QOL. The theory of social representation is one of the few approaches in contemporary social psychology to be truly committed to a Hegelian paradigm. It focuses on the dialectical relationship between subject and object as well as between the individual and society, and it thus provides a viable theoretical framework to embark on a study of how ordinary Chinese people are involved in the construction of contemporary societal understandings of QOL. By re-conceptualising QOL as a social representation, it is argued that QOL is socially shared knowledge of what counts as the "good life" in contemporary Chinese society.

Chapter Four addresses methodological issues. It firstly develops a methodological framework within which the social representation QOL can be sampled and analysed in its diverse locations through a triangulation of different methods. Then it depicts the five complementary research methods used in the empirical studies to account for QOL: word associations, semantic differentials, public discourse in the media, individual interviews and focus groups discussions with the rural and urban residents amongst different generations. For each method, its theoretical rationale, research procedures and the method of data analysis are described. Finally, it addresses how the different data sets are integrated.

The empirical findings are presented in four chapters. Given the scarcity of research on the lay representation QOL and the complexity of the issue involved, Chapter Five explores the semantic meanings of QOL in contemporary Chinese society. Rather than attempting to approach to the issue in the manner of lexicons and thesaurus, this

chapter examines the denotative and semantic meanings of QOL through word associations and semantic differentials tasks.

Chapter Six explores the basic organisational principles of the representation QOL: What is the underlying taken-for-granted basis of the notion of QOL in contemporary Chinese society? The chapter shows that, despite the great complexity evident in the data, QOL is a dyadic construction structured around the dialogical opposite between having and being. It suggests that this dialogical opposite between having and being is the deep structure of the representation QOL, and thus constitutes the thema of the representation. The semantic artefacts of this thema in contemporary Chinese society are also discussed.

Chapter Seven explores how the thema of having and being is "horizontally" spilled over the domains of life. It shows QOL is activated in five critical domains: health, family, work, social relations and the natural environment, and the thema of having and being permeates and underpins these domains, emphasizing the instrumental and expressive aspects of QOL in each domain.

Chapter Eight examines the ways in which social transition in China are restructuring the relations both between individuals and their family and between the individual and the state, how ordinary Chinese people frame these transformations – based on the competing value systems of Confucianism, Marxism and capitalism – as either opportunities or constraints in terms of their own QOL, and how the thema of "having" and "being" is expressed in the ways in which people actually pursue their QOL in this context.

Finally, Chapter Nine, the concluding chapter, integrates the empirical findings on QOL in Chinese society, and attempts to use these empirical findings to explore, theoretically, the structure of social representations and their embeddedness in the history and culture of a given society. It is my hope that this thesis, as a whole, not only presents detailed empirical descriptions of the organisation of the representation QOL in China, but also attentively offers an alternative conceptual framework for the study of QOL and contributes the development of the concept of themata concerning the structure and genesis of social representations.

1

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: CHINESE CULTURE IN THE THROES OF SOCIAL TRANSITIONS

With its long history, Chinese culture is both rich and complicated, and it differs in substantial ways from mainstream Western culture. Modern Chinese history is characterised by ideological and cultural confrontation, destruction and reconstruction. This century alone, China has undergone massive, even revolutionary, shifts in its economy, politics, society and culture. Recent social transition seeks to modernise the state, to introduce the free market and to improve the quality of Chinese people's lives. The meaning of QOL needs to be addressed in this context. QOL in contemporary Chinese society cannot be understood without an understanding of traditional Chinese culture and its transformations in the course of modernisation. These are issues to which this chapter is devoted. It aims at providing, in brief, a context of the research: the basic characteristics of traditional Chinese culture and its recent transformations. Section 1.1 introduces the key doctrines of the Confucian ideology and their prevalence in traditional Chinese society. Section 1.2 discusses the impact of Marxist ideology upon Chinese culture and Chinese rural-urban dual society system during 1949-1978. Section 1.3 focuses on the dramatic social change and the new ideological configuration in contemporary Chinese society that resulted from China's transition into a market economy since the late 1970s.

1.1. Traditional Chinese Culture: Confucianism

For many centuries, Chinese society was characterised by a small-scale, self-contained and self-sufficient peasant economy. The small-scale production in agricultural society and the blood relations of the patriarchal clan system were the social and economic foundations of traditional Chinese culture (Tang & Zou, 1996). It is widely acknowledged that Confucianism is at the heart of traditional Chinese culture (De Bary, Chan & Watson, 1960; Tu, 1990; Weber, 1951). Founded by Confucius (551- 479 BC), a key figure in Chinese intellectual history, Confucianism

is a blend of ancient Chinese folk knowledge with the original thoughts and observations of Confucius. As a worldview and a way of life, Confucian ideology has already transformed itself into a culture, a history and a reality (Feng, 1948), and exerted a profound influence upon Chinese society for more than two and half millennia. The term "Confucianism" is thus often used as synonymous with traditional Chinese culture (Stockman, 2000).

1.1.1. Harmonious Society and Social Hierarchy

A significant feature of Confucianism is its emphasis on a harmonious society and the appropriate arrangement of social relationships (Abbott, 1970). The harmony of society in traditional Chinese thought was based on hierarchical and unequal relations in which each individual occupied a proper place. The most important relations in traditional Chinese society, embedded in the Confucian doctrine of "rectification of name", were "let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, and the son a son" (Kim, 2000, pp.280-281). Each of these "names" or "statues" contained certain responsibilities and obligations, and there were strict rules of order for people with different ranks. The achievement of a harmonious society was thought to be determined of people's fulfilment of the duties and obligations inherent in their status.

The doctrine of "rectification of name" organised traditional Chinese society into a pyramid-like hierarchical society. The bottom layer of society comprised many clans of ordinary people or subjects which were connected by the blood relationship between the father and the son as the mainstay of the society. At the apex of society was the emperor. The emperor was the symbol of the "unity of man and Heaven", and his personal position was based exclusively on "his charisma as the plenipotentiary of Heaven where his ancestors resided" (Weber, 1951, p.143). The ministers and a range of government officials at different levels were located in-between. The emperor and the father were given absolute authority over the subject and the son, respectively. The relationship between the emperor and his ministers was regarded as the relationship between the father and the son. The unequal status amongst people had thus been determined. Large-scale peasant uprisings in Chinese history only replaced

the dynasties, but they never touched upon the hierarchical order of society itself (Tang & Zou, 1996).

The doctrine of *yin* and *yang*, originally used to explain the origin of the universe in Taoism, was the metaphysical basis of social hierarchy (Tang & Zou, 1996). *Yin* and *yang* are considered as the two forces which regulate the universe. *Yang* represents masculinity, power, warmth, light, dryness, hardness, while *yin* represents femininity, passivity, cold, darkness, moisture and softness. Everything in the world carries *yin* and embraces *yang*. They achieve harmony by combining these two forces. In the hierarchical order of social life, the emperor, husband and father were considered as *yang*, and subject, wife and son were regarded as *yin*. *Yang* was above and *yin* was below. Thus the emperor ruled his subject, the husband dominated his wife and the father guided his son.

Since Confucianism positioned individuals in a strict social hierarchy, there were little equal relationships amongst people. As Fairbank (1966) observes, an equal relationship has little precedence in Chinese experience, "the order of nature is not egalitarian but hierarchic" (p.12). The distinction between the dominant and the dominated as the feature of social life was widely accepted as a matter of fact. Consequently, as a relational being, the individual in traditional Chinese culture was "sensitive to his relations with other, above, below or on equal footing with him" (King & Bond, 1985, p.31).

1.1.2. The Centrality of Family

The predominance of the family over the individual and the continuity of patrilineal descent occupied a central position in Confucianism. China being an agrarian society based on the family as the basic unit of production for a long time, traditional Chinese culture emphasised the collective quality of the family member's life and behaviour. The family dominated most people's economic and social life. The collective interests of the family as a whole were deemed much more important than those of its individual members. The consequences of individual behaviour were considered to be shared by the whole family, as King & Bond (1985) exemplified that the meaning of

"face" should be viewed in relation to the gain and loss of the status of the family, not just those of the individual.

The main axis of family life in traditional Chinese society was vertical (i.e. parent-child), rather than horizontal (i.e. husband-wife) (Fei, 1992; Hsu, 1953). The parent-child tie was considered as permanent, and superior to the husband-wife bond. Filial piety, one of the important doctrines in Confucianism, connected, social psychologically, the younger generation with the elder in the family. Filial piety comprised three implications: showing filial obedience to parents, being willing to support parents and having sons to continue the family line (Tang & Zou, 1996). With regard to the relationship between a husband and a wife, it was not regarded as natural relationship as it contained some elements of social relations, and was thus less important. For instance, a man may have to divorce his beloved wife because she did not please his mother (Hsu, 1953).

The continuity of patrilineal descent was a fundamental principle of the traditional Chinese family system (Ebrey, 1990). This principle dictates that male offsprings were especially valued for their roles in carrying on the family line. The continuity of patrilineal descent was central to the spiritual sustenance of Chinese people. Of three unfilial acts, producing no son was the worst. If a wife could not produce male offsprings, her husband was enjoined to take a concubine, if he could afford it, to raise a son (Lamson, 1935). Patrilineality, in this way, was allied with gender inequality. Confucianism defined a woman in terms of her obligation to the male family member. This is illustrated in the so-called rule of the "Three Follows" (Fei, 1992, p. 85), according to which a woman's status was thought to be subject to that of her father before marriage, of her husband during marriage, and of her son in widowhood. When a daughter married out of her natal family, her obligation transferred to the family of her husband.

A family in traditional Chinese culture was more than the sum total of all its living members. A family acted as the primary milieu in which a strong bond held together the generations of the past and the present (Chu, 1985). In this sense, a family was the converging point in the temporal sense where the ancestors and the living members interfaced. The belief in the continuity between the dead and living was at the heart of

ancestor worship (De Bary, Chan & Watson, 1960; Ebrey, 1990; Freedman, 1967a). Ancestors were thought to bring prosperity to their descendants, provided that the descendants properly protected their graves and performed ceremonies in the home (Hunter & Sexton, 1999). In this line, Hsu (1949) argues that the Chinese sought and found their security in the ancestor's shadow. Ancestor worship was also exemplified by the Chinese custom that an individual's achievement was credited to the ancestors. It was the obligation of an individual "to glorify clan and honour ancestors", as a popular Chinese saying goes. Failure, on the other hand, was thought to bring disgrace to the ancestors.

Family life also played an important role in the maintenance, transmission and transformation of the Chinese cultural heritage. As the primary social reality for people, the family was chiefly responsible for socialising its members to function within the Confucian ideology (King & Bond, 1985). The esprit of traditional Chinese culture was transmitted and reproduced into the mind of family members by family teaching and daily practices.

1.1.3. The Self and Society

The emphasis on the hierarchy and harmony of familial and social relationships rather than on individuality in traditional Chinese culture does not entail a disinterest in the self, but an insistence on seeing the self in a web of relationships. Confucianism attached great importance to the self. But the self was discovered through a person's role in the family and in social life, and was thus considered to be linked to others in a web of interrelatedness.

Fei (1992) argues that the self in Confucian culture was embedded in familial and social relationships and was emotionally tied to personal obligations as defined by those relationships. These relationships and obligations bound individuals to others in their lifeworld. Furthermore, King & Bond (1985) insist that more than a role-player prescribed in social structure, the self was an active and reflective entity. This view of self was crystallised in the unique Confucian concept of self-cultivation which entails a subtle interplay between role and identity. Open acknowledgement of the role of

others in shaping one's life is a central feature of collective culture (Gervais & Jovchelovitch, 1998b). By contrast to individualistic Western culture, in which people share a set of implicit and unexamined cultural values and practice that emphasise individual rights, independence, self-determination, and freedom, collectivistic traditional Chinese culture placed higher value on interdependence, and fostered a solid connection between the self and others (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus & Nisbett, 1998). There was no clear-cut boundary between the self and others. An individual was expected to adjust one's self to meet other's expectations and to work for the good of the dyad, the family, and the state. In this sense, an individual made no distinctions between personal and collective goals, or subordinated his/her personal goals to collective goals if he/she did make such a distinction (Hui & Triandis, 1986). This collectively constitutes the person's social identity in Chinese society.

Moreover, Confucianism holds that all things in the universe are inseparably interrelated and mutually interacting. There is a transcendence dimension in Confucianism that unites self, society, nature and the supernatural (Tu, 1990). The purpose of self-cultivation extends far beyond the individual self, it relates at once to the family, the society, and the cosmos. This "anthropocosmic" vision in the Confucian ideology extends the interrelatedness for the self not only to familial and social relationships but also to the natural and the supernatural environment.

1.2. Ideological Crisis and the Introduction of Marxism in China

With several thousand years of civilisation, China boasted itself as the "Middle Kingdom": the nation occupying the centre of the world. Chinese people also thought that their culture was the most advantageous one in the world (Levenson, 1958). This Chinese anthropocentric self-image was, however, repeatedly defeated and humiliated by firepower in the Opium War (1839-1842) and the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). The Chinese elite in the early twentieth century began to question the values of Confucianism, once the official ideology and cultural foundation of China. Various social reform schemes, national construction plans, and revolutionary campaigns were debated and pursued to revitalise the nation.

Three very different ideological approaches underpinned these schemes, plans and campaigns: a) wholesale Westernisation, b) traditionalistic conservatism, and c) pragmatic eclecticism (Ci, 1994; Yang, 1998). Wholesale Westernisation advocated an unconditional replacement of Confucianism with Western culture. Traditionalistic conservatism defended orthodox Confucianism and rejected Western culture. Pragmatic eclecticism upheld the essence of Chinese culture but integrated specific aspects of Western civilisation especially in relation to its technological achievements. Yang (1998) notes, Chinese people have long been torn between the need for cultural maintenance and that for social change. The intellectual dilemma of reconciling Chinese cultural identity with potentially threatening social and economic reform has been at the heart of all attempts at modernisation. Different ideological approaches focused on the culture identity and social change in radically different proportions.

However, all of the non-violent, reformist ideological campaigns failed to stop an aggressive fascist Japan from nibbling more and more territories from China throughout the 1920s and 1930s. There was therefore a strong call for a complete, revolutionary change to sever China from these humiliating experiences. With the success of the Russian October Revolution, the Leninist version of Marxism – characterised by class struggle and violent revolution – seemed an attractive model to follow. It would restore pride to China. Thus, following the victories of the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945) and of the Chinese Communist Party against the Chinese Nationalist Party in the Civil War (1945-1949), Marxism, a "Western counterculture" (Shaw, 1996, p.255), gained its wider popularity in mainland China.

With the seizure of the state power in mainland China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party determined to transform China's backward, agrarian society into an advanced, socialist society. It launched a series of campaigns to promote and instil Marxist ideology, and adopted two intertwined steps, a planned economy and class struggle, towards constructing a socialist society.

According to orthodox Marxism, socialism is a grandiose scheme to cure the social problems created by capitalism. For Karl Marx (1883/1976), capitalists employ workers from free labour markets and exploit their labour force without mercy. They produce irresponsibly, pour products continuously into consumer markets, and create

cyclical production surpluses and economic crises. When an economic crisis occurs, capitalists lay off workers and drive them to the streets without taking any social responsibility. In reaction to Marx's critique of the early capitalists, socialist China, following the Soviet Union's model, practised a planned economy. It sought to determine centrally both the supply and the demand sides. The Chinese Communist Party also regarded class struggle as the essence of Marxism and as the crux of the Russian October Revolution (Tang & Zou, 1996). The proletarian and bourgeois classes were seen as social enemies with antithetical economic goals and ideological interests. Class struggle in China aimed at the expropriation of private property, on behalf of the proletariat class, and finally, the destruction of class relationships which had prevailed in traditional China. This communist revolution contributed tremendously to publicising the ideas of equality, equity and fairness across the old line of social stratification amongst all the Chinese people. The egalitarian practices, however, were dualistic in nature, and actually rigidified the distinction between rural and urban sectors.

In rural areas, private land ownership and land tenancy were abolished, and land ownership was transferred to the state. Traditional family-based agricultural producers were integrated into People's Communes, which geographically consisted of several natural villages. People's Communes were popularised throughout the whole country from the 1950s. As a basic unit of society in rural areas, a Commune took charge of everything, including not only agriculture, but also industry, commerce, education and even militia. The government of the township was also abolished and integrated into a Commune. A People's Commune was meant to be economically self-sufficient. Members of a Commune had equal income for equal labour, which was calculated by the work-point. They were tightly controlled by the collective but enjoyed comparatively few state welfare benefits. People's Communes were regarded as a transitional form from socialism to communism in the relations of production as well as in the relations of distribution. Mao Zedong, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, called it as "the bridge to communism" (Tang & Zou, 1996).

In urban areas, the state owned and operated major work organisations. The basic work organisation in China was called *danwei*[1] (it means literately the "work unit"). A *danwei* was organised around a line of production, business, service, profession, and administrative function. As a building block of society in urban areas, the *danwei* was a salient social phenomenon and held an important position in the individual's work and life (Shaw, 1996). A *danwei* referred not only to a workplace where a group of people were employed to carry out a line of business under the socialist state planning. Rather, it was an all-encompassing welfare institution that covered its employees' housing, health care, pension and childcare. The state also practised a centralised distribution of the labour force; all employment was arranged by the government. Low wages and wide employment were the basic principles aimed at "everyone being secured a living and everyone having a job" so as to ensure social stability. Under the socialist planned economy, the state assigned each urban resident a job. Once assigned, lifetime employment was guaranteed, and mobility was largely restricted to promotion with the *danwei*. Workers in state enterprises were considered as the proletarian category, all jobs were considered as equal importance to the socialist revolution, and income differentials were relatively small in this low-income, high welfare, lifetime employment system.

This rural-urban dual society system was instituted by the unique Chinese *hukou* system, which refers literally to the household registration system. Up to the late 1970s, China maintained a tight control over rural-to-urban mobility. The *hukou* system was seen as an indispensable feature of Chinese socialist economic planning and designed to forestall rural-to-urban migration (Cooney & Li, 1994). Every citizen was required to register at his/her permanent residence. Registration under the *hukou* system was the principal means to establish one's official status (Chan, 1994) and to approve one's residence in a specific city, town or village. One's *hukou* status was inherited from one's mother and was thus predetermined. While initially conceived as an instrument for migration control, the *hukou* system was soon transformed into a social institution which divided Chinese society into spatial hierarchies whose sharpest division was between "agricultural" and "non-agricultural" registration

[1] This thesis employs the Pinyin system for the translation of Chinese terminology. Having replaced the older Wade-Giles system, the Pinyin system is now the official romanisation system in the People's Republic of China, and has been adopted by the United Nations.

status (Mallee, 2000). The essential distinction between these two categories of citizens was their relations to the state. Individuals registered as the "agricultural" category depended mainly for their livelihood on their own labour and the fluctuating harvests. Social welfare provisions such as education and medical service under the administration of People's Commune were supported by the villagers themselves, and maintained at a low level. Individuals registered as the "non-agricultural" category, on the other hand, were issued with rationed coupons for daily necessities such as grain, cooking oil and cotton clothes, and were eligible for housing provision and other major social welfare provided by the government through their *danwei*. Labour influx from rural to urban areas was rigidly controlled by the government through the Public Security Bureau. An individual could be sent to rural areas as a punishment or for "re-education" if he/she were violating regulations. Urban residents were thus seen as superior to rural residents in terms of both social reputations and tangible advantages. In this sense, a new inequality between rural and urban sectors was introduced into Chinese society by the communist egalitarian practices.

The egalitarian philosophy at the heart of the Chinese Communist Party was a key driver of gender equality in an otherwise rigidly gendered society. Traditional Chinese society believed, and practiced, a gendered division of labour in which a man's place was at work and woman's place was at home. The Chinese Community Party wiped out this traditional belief and practice. Its women policy was framed within the Friedrich Engelsian (1884/1972) concept of women's liberation and gender equality (Zheng, 2000), which insisted that women would only achieved liberation through participation in social and economic production. It was the Party's policy that urban women should enjoy equal employment opportunities with men, that rural women should share the same farming workload as men, and that women and men should enjoy equal pay for equal work. Women's participation in social and economic production enhanced their status both at home and in social life. For the first time in Chinese history, it was recognised that women could "hold up half the sky". The position of "housewife" became a scorned social category and a historic relic.

Collectivism, the core value in traditional Chinese culture, was not abandoned, but was incorporated into the Marxist ideology characterised by class struggle and public ownership. Arguably, it was precisely this collectivism which made the integration of

Marxism in Chinese society imaginably in the first place. The purpose of class struggle was to eliminate class exploitation and class oppression by abolishing private ownership, and thus to realise social justice, fairness, and equality. The value of an individual was publicised as being unified with the responsibilities of society. An individual must not have concern for his/her personal fame and gain, but must subordinate his/her personal interests to those of the proletarian class. Western individualism was criticised as morally vacuous and socially irresponsible. The collectivism which was used to characterise traditional Chinese culture was intensified thereby. Its foci were the perpetuation of self-sacrifice and the establishment of a collective will.

1.3. Recent Reform and Opening-up and Ideological Conflicts

China's liberal economic reform and opening-up to the outside world were inaugurated at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in December 1978. The new leadership, headed by Deng Xiaoping, explicitly renounced class struggle as a vehicle for social development, and introduced a policy of reform and opening-up. Priority was given to developing the national economy, improving the quality of people's life, and striving for a modernised society. The decollectivisation and decentralisation of the economy have since then proceeded unevenly, and a predominantly state-owned and centrally planned economy is being gradually transformed into a market economy. A stock market, real estate market, labour market and other crucial elements for a market economy are coming into being. The reform and opening-up have not only resulted in a remarkable increase in the growth rate of the Chinese economy and average per capita income, but also brought about far-reaching social transformations. The impact of the massive social, cultural, economic and political change stretches out to every corner of the country, and touches the every facets of ordinary people's daily life, thus marking a distinct break with the past communist ideology and practices.

The reform started in the agricultural sector with the elimination of the People's Commune, and the establishment of a "household responsibility system". The "household responsibility system" is the functional equivalent of family farming.

Although land ownership still belongs to the state, individual households are permitted to sign contracts that afford them effective control over the management, output, and marketing of agricultural production in exchange for payments. The decollectivisation of agriculture and the emergence of state-sanctioned free markets not only stimulate the enthusiasm of farmers and lead to a rapid increase of agricultural production, but also relax the restrictions on rural-to-urban mobility. Faced with the surplus rural labourers due to the introduction of the "household responsibility system", the government permits, and in fact encourages, villagers to engage in non-agricultural occupations. Rural migrants are mainly involved in unskilled/semi-skilled occupations, such as construction work, peddling, unskilled commercial work and domestic help. By the mid-1990s, the total migrant population had reached about 80 million (Mallee, 2000), certainly making China's recent peacetime population movement the largest in history. The term "migrant flood" thus gains its currency to depict rural labour flows. Rural migration plays a double role: remedying hardcore rural poverty and lowering urban-rural inequality. However, it is almost impossible for the people who are working in the city but coming from rural areas to change their *hukou* from the "agricultural" to the "non-agricultural" category. As "outsiders", migrants are segregated from the urban host population. They are considered as "rustics" by urban residents, and maltreated at work. They remain ineligible for many benefits enjoyed by those with legal urban identity, such as housing, social insurance and child education services. Although the *hukou* system is no longer used to prevent rural-to-urban mobility, Chinese society can still, by and large, be divided into an "agricultural" segment and "non-agricultural" one. This division remains crucial in determining people's life chances.

The initial success of the reform in rural areas leads to urban reform. The urban reform involves two interrelated ingredients: the introduction of plural forms of ownership and the restructuring of the employment system. As the non-public economic sector has been clearly stipulated to be an important component of a market economy, the mushrooming of private firms, joint ventures and foreign-invested businesses has turned China into a pluralistic economic society. Parris (1999) argues that the popular image of the successful private "boss", complete with a private car and a villa in the suburbs, provides an attractive alternative lifestyle for many people, marking a significant shift in society from public to private interests. The employment

system reform, which involves worker recruitment, unemployment insurance, labour contract and the possible dismissal of workers, has eliminated a majority of urban residents' dependence on the government for lifetime employment, and attachment to a *danwei*. In the process of restructuring thousands of state-owned non-viable industrial enterprises through mergers, bankruptcy or privatisation, millions of employees have found themselves in the category of "surplus labour". Zheng (2000) argues that the move from job assignment by the government to a job market – in which plural forms of ownership coexist and compete, freedom of mobility joins freedom of discrimination, and opportunities blend with insecurity – has profoundly changed individuals' relationships to state and reshaped their identities. The once powerful *danwei* has had to waive its prestige and give way to a new economic reality. An employer can no longer afford to provide the welfare to its employees. Healthcare, education and housing have been increasingly recompensing services to those who can pay for them, rather than the socialist welfare for every citizen.

The great improvement and enrichment of ordinary people's lives go hand in hand with the swell of the disparities between the better off and the worse off. The reform has promoted and glorified the new rich by rejecting the "Maoist cult of poverty" (Parris, 1999). The gap separating the rich and the poor, both between and within regions, has enlarged rapidly under the reform (Perry & Selden, 2000). Egalitarianism is now blamed for a lack of incentives and perceived to be hindering economic development. One of Deng Xiaoping's famous adages is that "to get rich first is glorious", which encourages individuals to work hard for personal material prosperity. As a consequence, a class of wealthy entrepreneurs, which is identified as China's "new middle class" (Goodman, 1999), is coming into existence with control over material resources far in excess of the average urban residents, and the mass media recount on a daily basis the success stories of millionaires (Stockman, 2000). According to the United Nations Development Programme (1998), China in the course of a few decades has moved from the rank of the world's most egalitarian societies to one of the most unequal in its distribution of income, wealth and opportunity. The increasing mobility and greater media access heighten the awareness of these disparities.

The population policy in China has witnessed two reverse processes over the past half-century: pronatalism and antinatalism. A pronatalist policy had been implemented during the 1950s and the early 1960s. A positive approach to population growth stemmed from the Marxist outlook towards population. In diametrical opposition to Malthus (1798), Marx (1883/1976) argued that the elimination of the existing capitalist system and the establishment of a socialist system would create more room for population growth. Engels (1884/1972) also believed that there ought to be more wealth if there were more people. This viewpoint exerted tremendous influence upon China's pronatalist policy at that time. Mao Zedong (1964) insisted a man is not only a consumer but also a producer, and, thus, that China's large population would be a great asset. However, facing serious pressures on the country's resources and infrastructure, aggravated by the rate of population growth, the Chinese government conducted birth control campaigns and promoted a voluntary birth control from the late 1960s, and further introduced a policy of one-child-per-couple since 1979. The policy stipulates that a couple is allowed to give birth to only one child in normal circumstances. But there are regional and urban/rural differences in the implementation of the policy. The aim of the policy is to ensure that the population growth keeps in step with economic development and that economic gains resulting from reform and opening-up are not entirely consumed by an ever-burgeoning population. On the other hand, as a core cultural value, having offsprings is integral to the family happiness, and male offsprings are especially valued both for their contribution to the family welfare and for their roles in preserving family continuity through future generations. This value is deeply entrenched in the mind of Chinese people. This antinatalist policy is thus fraught with profound implications and complications of Chinese culture.

Under an international context of two-pronged antagonistic relations with both the West from the 1950s to the 1970s and the former Soviet Union during 1960s and the 1970s, China was a relatively autarkic society. It sacrificed the potential fruits of international cooperation for economic autonomy and self-reliance. Today the reform and opening-up extend and intensify China's engagement with the outside world; the links to the rest of the globe are extraordinarily dense both economically and culturally. An increasingly large numbers of foreign companies come to China and set up their branches there. International capital defines leading sectors of economy and

finance. Hollywood films are being shown in Chinese cinemas. Foreign television programmes captivate much of audience. Western fast food franchises such as McDonald's, KFC and Pizza Hut rub shoulders with Chinese restaurants. Global fashions such as the craze for famous brands, discos, keeping fit, bowling, share dealing, surfing the Internet, bungie jumping, rock climbing and river rafting have all entered China and attracted now many participants. With ever increasing connections with the rest of the globe, China is becoming a member of the international community. It is through the process of globalisation that Western capitalist ideology and lifestyle have made deep inroads in the minds of Chinese people, and facilitated ideological and cultural change in contemporary Chinese society.

The rapid development of a market economy provides Chinese people with the freedom to pursue materialistic goals. The state's decreasing control over the individual promotes the individual's free-choice and self-reliance. Increasing involvement in the globalisation introduces Western ideology and remoulds the traditional Chinese mentalities. In this way, a wave of individualism and materialism is challenging the traditional Chinese way of life, and sweeping away communist values such as "selfless devotion to others". Ordinary Chinese people find themselves in the throes of ideological transitions. The ideological shifts directly undermine the values of collectivism and communism. Wong & Mok (1995) argue that there are three major systems of value which shape the ideological configuration in contemporary China: traditional Confucianism, egalitarian socialism and free market value. These contesting value systems offer different, sometimes complementary or competing sets of values and orientations for the definition of social relations and the organisation of social life.

1.4. Summary

This chapter has briefly introduced the cardinal features of traditional Chinese culture and its transformations during the past half-century. Traditional Chinese culture emphasised the hierarchical and unequal relations between the dominant and the dominated, the predominance of the family over the individual and the continuity of patrilineal descent, and saw the self at a web of interrelatedness of family, social

relations, nature and the supernatural. As the Chinese Communist Party seized the state power in 1949, Marxism became a guiding ideology in Chinese society. China's communist experiment during 1949-1978 was characterised as the establishment of a collective will, the distinction between rural and urban sectors, and egalitarianism within each sector. Chinese society is now undergoing yet another massive and rapid transition. The decollectivisation and decentralisation of the economy and increasing involvement in the globalisation since the late 1970s have brought about far-reaching transformations to contemporary Chinese society. The contesting value systems of traditional Confucianism, orthodox Marxist and Western capitalism represent a new ideological configuration in contemporary China. In this sense, Chinese culture and its transitions provide a real "laboratory" for exploring how QOL is socially constructed.

2

CONCEPTUAL MODELS OF QOL: A CRITICAL REVIEW

This chapter critically reviews theoretical perspectives and empirical studies on QOL. It suggests that miscellaneous theoretical approaches to the study of QOL can be grouped conceptually into: a) objective models, b) subjective models, and c) holistic models. Each of these models represents a body of research, with a particular set of concerns and assumptions in relation to QOL. Sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 discuss and analyse the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of each type of models, on the basis of some representative approaches which predominated in the mainstream literature on QOL. Section 2.4 argues that the approaches reviewed offer but a partial and limited insight on QOL, and that they are based on implicit Cartesian assumptions.

2.1. Objective Models

2.1.1. Characteristics

The objective models of QOL are characterised by defining QOL in terms of objective living conditions. The criteria for defining QOL may include physical health, personal circumstances (income, accumulated wealth, living conditions, etc.), social relationships, activities, and wider societal and economic influences. They exclude any reference to how the individual perceives and interprets such objective conditions. These objective models do not depend on any self-ratings based upon an internal referent, but only on a person's actual behaviour and current conditions compared to some objectively determined and measurable external referents. They "represent in a broad sense the individual's standard of living represented by verifiable conditions inherent in the given cultural unit" (Evans, 1994, p.53).

The national and regional demographics are the major sources of information on the objective living conditions. These statistics are compiled through censuses, micro-censuses, economic accounts and specialised surveys, all containing socio-

demographic and socio-economic data which contribute to a representative picture of the state of society and developments in objective dimensions. Social scientists in this field often depend upon this material for secondary analysis. "The research is restricted to measurements of such 'hard' data" (Glatzer & Mohr, 1987, p.16).

The objective models of QOL are closely related to the social indicators movement (Miles, 1985). Originally the term "social indicators" emerged as a political entity (Sullivan, 1992) and was used by politicians as a platform to trumpet the success of their administrations. For instance, in 1932 Herbert Hoover campaigned for the presidency promising "a car in every garage and a chicken in every pot" (quoted in Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976, p.1). Social indicators first came into the research field as a scientific concept and a course of concern in the mid-1960s. From a social scientific perspective, research on social indicators was prompted by the recognition that along with a rise in national income, and personal material benefits, there also appeared rising levels of violence, public disorder, and environmental pollution. These new problems suggested that "there was more to society than economic growth, and the social indicators gauged the rising importance of the social welfare of the nation" (Day & Jankey, 1996, p.41). Social indicators were seen to reflect the overall "health" of the nation and the well-being of its citizens. Social indicators are comparable to the Gross National Product (GNP) in that they emphasise on measurability and comparability. These attributes provide the thrust for intensive research on social indicators as an appropriate subset of social statistics. Yet, social indicators widen the range of issues that are deemed important to the well-being of a nation, and include social development alongside economic well-being. Social indicators are used as tools "for monitoring unpredictable patterns of national development, for providing data to help simplify decisions about complex issues" (Miles, 1985, p.25), and for comparing and contrasting the resource amongst different nations and regions.

2.1.2. Representative Approaches

There are various objective approaches to the study of QOL. Each of these is based on a set of assumptions about what represents the good life. The representative types

proposed and practised include the Social-Economic-Political-Environmental Index (Liu, 1974), the Physical Quality of Life Index (Morris, 1979), the Human Development Index (the United Nations Development Programme, 1990; 1991), and the Quality Adjusted Life Years (Williams, 1979, 1985).

2.1.2.1. Social-Economic-Political-Environmental Index

The Social-Economic-Political-Environmental Index (SEPEI) is one of the early approaches in the social indicators movement. Based on an understanding that QOL does not necessarily increase proportionally with rise in material wealth, and that QOL index should not be directly related to economic indicators, Liu (1974) developed the SEPEI as an alternative "systematic methodology for assessing a group of social, economic, political and environmental indicators" (p.188) to reflect adequately the overall "health" of a nation and its citizen's well-being.

The SEPEI includes nine indicators: individual status, individual equality, living conditions, agricultural production, technological development, economic status, education, health and welfare, and state and local government. Each factor involves a numbers of variables. The criteria used to select these indicators are that they should be "sufficiently universal", "flexible enough to encompass any lifestyle", "general consensus" and "open to verification" (Liu, 1974, pp.188-189). The nine indicators can be used separately to assess performance in the respective areas, but the overall SEPEI is constructed based on the assumption that the nine composite indicators have equal importance in determining QOL.

2.1.2.2. Physical Quality of Life Index

The Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) was developed by the US Overseas Development Council (ODC) under the direction of Dr Morris in the late 1970s. Because the traditional yardstick of economic performance (i.e. GNP) alone could not provide adequate information about changes in the live of individuals, Morris (1979) introduced the PQLI as a new social indicator to monitor progress. The PQLI has been vastly influential as a measure of national development, due to its institutional backing and the simplicity of its calculation.

The PQLI consists of three components or indices, namely, infant mortality, life expectancy at age one, and basic literacy. The selection of components is based on the following three assumptions: a) people, generally, prefer to have no or few deaths amongst the infants born to them; b) under almost all circumstances people prefer to live longer, rather than shorter, lives; and c) literacy could serve as a surrogate for individual capacity for effective social participation (Morris, 1979). Each index meets the following criteria: the need for a non-ethnocentric measure; the need to measure results, not input; the need to reflect the distribution of social results; the need for simplicity; and the need for international comparability (ibid). Concerning the composition of the components, it is assumed that these three factors are linear additive. Each of these three indicators is thus essentially treated as contributing equally to the PQLI. The PQLI can be used not only to measure change at the national level and to look at relative performance amongst the countries, but also to measure change over time, to make comparisons amongst various sectors.

2.1.2.3. Human Development Index

The Human Development Index (HDI) was suggested by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990 and modified in 1991. Since then, the UNDP has published HDI for various areas around the world in its annual *Human Development Report.* The HDI has attracted a great deal of attention from policy-makers, academics and members of the general public. It has become an influential criterion to measure the social development of countries.

The HDI consists of three components: longevity, educational attainment and a decent standard of living. Human development, according to the UNDP, "is a process of enlarging people's choices" (United Nations Development Programme, 1990, p.10). In principle, these choices can be infinite, such as political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect. Nevertheless "the most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and enjoy a decent standard of life" (ibid, p.10). Thus, the UNDP suggests the system to measure and monitor human development should, for the time being, focus on these three essential elements of human life. Longevity is measured by life expectancy at birth; the educational attainment is measured by a

combination of adult literacy (two-thirds weight) and combined primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment ratio (one-third weight); the decent living standard is measured by real GDP per capita. The HDI is composed of these three components in a linear additive model.

2.1.2.4. Quality Adjusted Life Years

The Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) (Williams, 1979, 1985) attempts to integrate the study of QOL into a framework of cost-utility analysis, by adopting and explicit economic approach, the QALYs distanced itself from the social indicators movement. The QALYs is based on the belief that a person's QOL should affect the value (or "utility" in economic terms) of that particular year of his or her life. Originally, this approach was used in an attempt to reduce health care gain to a common unit of account, and hence enable "objective" decisions to be made about the allocation of resources amongst conflicting priorities.

The basic idea of the QALYs is that a person who is faced with the prospect of living Y years at less than full health may be able to equate this with the prospect of living X years (where X<Y) at full health. The QALYs assigns a value of one to a year of healthy life expectancy, and assigns a value of less than one to a year of unhealthy life expectancy. For example, if a person were only at 50% full health over a 10-year period, he or she would score five QALYs for those ten years. Thus, any number of profiles of probable survival duration in a whole range of health states can be converted to their respective "full health life year" equivalents.

The central premises underpinning the philosophy of the QALYs are stark economic facts that health demands are infinite but a country's healthcare resources are limited; a monetary value of life, utilising various decision theory models, is, therefore, a rational and efficient means of allocating the scarce available resources (Fallowfield, 1990). The QALYs have been used in two separate contexts. First, where a choice has to be made amongst different possible forms of treatment for the same individual, and, second, where a choice must be made amongst alternative ways of allocating resources for a diverse range of health interventions. The idea is that a QALYs

measure may be used as a decision aid in cases where different therapeutic options may produce quite diverse combinations of lengths of survival and of QOL.

2.1.3. Criticisms

The objective approach to QOL has been applied to various fields, because it "facilitates concise, comprehensive and balanced judgement about the conditions of major aspects of a society" (Raphael, 1996, p.160). Yet, I wish to ague that there are a number of problems with all the objective models of QOL described above.

Firstly, these objective models fail to distinguish external causes of QOL and QOL itself. As Schuessler and Fisher (1985) note, external conditions may foster or facilitate QOL, but they do not constitute QOL itself. It is mistaken to define QOL as some kind of conditions external to human life. Even in the social indicators movement, a debate broke out over the adequacy of various measures (Glatzer & Mohr, 1987).

Secondly, the domains of QOL research reflect the concerns of individual researchers and government agencies rather than the concerns of ordinary people. Professionals and researchers "decide, on the basis of their own judgement, what constitutes a good quality of life and what comprises the components of such an assessment" (Marková, 1995, pp.201-202). Each individual researcher has his/her own set of favoured criteria in defining, and consequently, his/her own method in evaluating QOL" (Liu, 1974). All the measures in these objective models consist of such a set of domains or components, which are then pooled through a simple linear additive model to arrive at the overall QOL index. In this sense, the objective modes of QOL seem somewhat arbitrary.

Thirdly, the perception of what constitutes the good life is likely to be radically different between societies and cultures (Diener & Suh, 2000b; Oliver, Holloway & Carson, 1995). Yet, the objective models of QOL do not take account of culturally-bound characteristics of QOL. Such silence amounts to ethnocentrism.

To conclude, due to these limitations, these objective models provide only a limited and, in many ways, inadequate approach to the study of QOL.

2.2. Subjective Models

2.2.1. Characteristics

The subjective models of QOL are characterised by defining QOL in terms of an individual's subjective reactions to life experiences. Such a subjective approach depends on the direct experience of the person whose life is being assessed. It indicates how people perceive their own lives. Satisfaction, happiness, or related attitudes are all worthy of measurement in the subjective approach. The overall reaction to life may be reflected in a number of specific life domains, such as material comforts, health, work, leisure, family life, social relations, safety, religion, neighbourhood, housing, education, the self.

The subjective models of the QOL can be distinguished into an external referent approach and an internal referent approach (Evans, 1994). The external referent approach rests on the assumption that an individual's satisfaction or happiness is determined by particular external, or environmental, variables. It seeks the origin of QOL in the extent to which the environment and social welfare satisfy the individual's need. QOL in this approach is viewed as the individual's subjective judgement as to the extent to which his or her needs in the various domains of life have been met. The internal referent approach is based on the proposition that the quality of a person's life is an enduring internal characteristic that causes certain outcomes. In this approach, satisfaction, happiness, or related attitudes are derived from an individual's state of mind. The QOL of an individual is, in principle, independent of environmental or societal factors, and is determined by the individual him/herself.

2.2.2. Representative Approaches

Various subjective models of QOL have been developed. Each model proceeds from its particular view of the individual's perceptions on the good life. The main types found in the literature include the subjective social indicator (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers 1976; Campbell, 1980), the person-centred approach (Schalock, 1990, 1994 & 1996), the city ranking approaches (Pacione, 1989), the want-equilibrium theory of happiness (Nordenfelt, 1993), and sense of relative superiority (Headey & Wearing, 1988). The former three belong to the external referent approach, and the latter two belong to the internal referent approach.

2.2.2.1. Subjective Social Indicator

The subjective social indicator (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers 1976; Campbell, 1980), aims at "developing indicators that would document the subjective quality of life" (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976, p.ix). The concern here is the experiences of life rather than the conditions of life.

The work of Campbell *et al* has attracted a great deal of attention amongst social scientists, policy-makers and the public in general, because they "redirected the course of quality of life research" (Day & Jankey, 1996, p.41) from an objective approach to a subjective approach. Campbell *et al* (1976) note that the roots of this redirection are as follows:

> The nation must change from its fixation on goals which are basically economic to goals which are essentially psychological, from a concentration on being well-off to a concern with a sense of well-being. (...) It is no longer enough for the nation to aspire to material wealth; the experience of life must be stimulating, rewarding, and secure. (p.1)

Campbell *et al* (1976) define QOL as a general sense of well-being. The self experiences a sense of well-being when the needs he/she feels are appreciably reduced. Need satisfaction stems from the degree of fit between an individual's perception of their objective situations and their needs or aspirations. The self has many needs, and needs may be met in many ways. QOL inheres in the totality of all such feels of need satisfaction. The conceptual model of QOL Campbell and his colleagues put forward is shown in Figure 2-1.

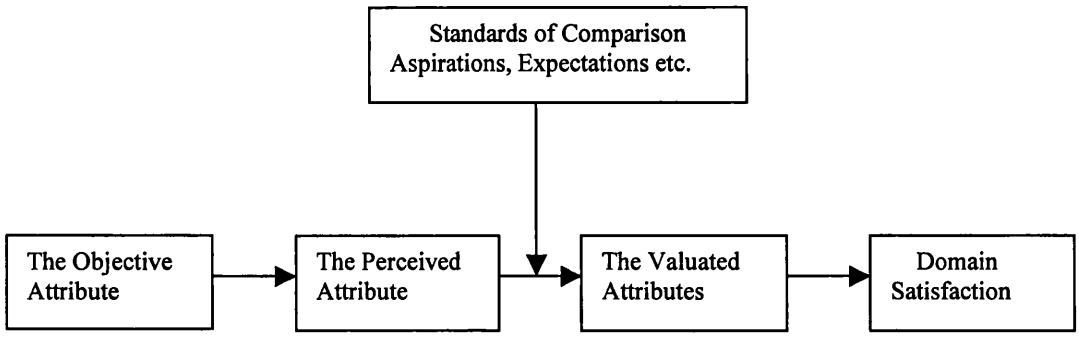

Figure 2-1: The conceptual model of subjective social indicator
(Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976, p.13)

Within this model, how a person assesses a particular attribute of a particular domain is dependent on his or her perception of that attribute in relation to internal standards against which he or she assesses that perception. Campbell *et al* (1976) suggest that a person's perception of any domain attribute is dependent upon, but distinct from, the objective environment. The way in which a person perceives the environment is not necessarily identical to the environment as it actually is. The mechanisms governing subjective-objective divergence are the levels of aspiration and individual taste.

Empirically, Campbell *et al* (1976) prefer to study domain-specific satisfactions. The domains which they selected include health, marriage, family life, national government, friendships, housing, job, community, religious faith, non-work activities, financial situation, and organisations. The selection of the domains is "based in part on the presence of earlier research, in part on relevance to questions of public policy, and in part on our intuitive sense of their importance in the lives of the general population" (ibid, p.13). The global feelings of well-being about life could accurately be seen as a composite of feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each of the above domains of life.

2.2.2.2. Person-Centred Approach

The person-centred approach (Schalock, 1990, 1994 & 1996) emphasises that the study of QOL requires an in-depth knowledge of people and their perspectives. Schalock (1996) defines QOL as a subjective phenomenon based on a person's interpretation of personal characteristics, objective life conditions, and the self's perception of significant others. This approach attempts to integrate major factors in an individual's perceived QOL. Based on the literature review, Schalock (1994) suggests that a person's perceived QOL is related significantly to factors within three major life domains, namely, home and community living, school or work, and health and wellness. Satisfaction serves as an intervening variable between each of the domains and a person's perceived QOL (Schalock, 1996).

2.2.2.3. City Ranking Approaches

City ranking approaches are based on Cutter's (1985) suggestion that QOL is related to the following three main indicators, namely, the social environment, the physical environment, and perceptual indicators. Within the social and physical environments, each QOL dimension could be measured either objectively, using existing data sources, or subjectively, reflecting a population's "self-image" of well-being. Perceptual indicators, reflecting the subjective assessment of place and objective measures, enable the assignment of weightings to QOL characteristics. The weighting is an essential issue in the city ranking research. The various elements of QOL are quantitatively different from one another in the sense that they cannot be reduced to a single index on objective grounds; thus, the perceptual weightings are needed.

Cutter's conception of QOL is employed by the Strathclyde/Glasgow Quality of Life Group as the basis of a new method of incorporating perceptual weightings in their QOL studies. Unlike those studies which use "expert opinion" or the researchers' own views as the source of weightings, the Group employs opinion survey data to derive weights which are then attached to a set of some 50 objective QOL criteria, and so derive a single set of measures and rankings. This approach, it is argued, gives a measure of the relative importance of QOL measures without reference to a specific location, and thus avoids some of the problem of distinguishing between the "real" and perceived assessments of QOL in cities.

Pacione, another Glasgow researcher, uses objective indicators to explore inter-city differences, and those between Glasgow's sub-areas, but relies on a survey method with a random sample of households to explore micro-level variations in the perceived QOL. Pacione (1989) argues that his multi-scale, multi-indicator methodology provides a comprehensive assessment of the structure and distribution of QOL in Glasgow, and that his methodology can be applied to other cities.

2.2.2.4. Want-Equilibrium Theory of Happiness

The want-equilibrium theory (Nordenfelt, 1993) takes human happiness as the kernel of QOL. The theory argues that "want-equilibrium takes care only of the *relation* between wants and satisfied wants"(Nordenfelt, 1993. p.7, italic in original).

The theory equates QOL with the dimension of happiness-unhappiness with life. The basic idea can be formulated in the following way: P (a person) can be completely happy with life, if P's conditions in life are exactly as P wants them to be; Similarly, P may be completely unhappy with life, if nothing in life is at all as P wants it to be; P can be more or less happy with life according to the degree of agreement between the state of the world – as P sees it – and his or her wants.

2.2.2.5. The Sense of Relative Superiority

Headey and Wearing (1988) equate QOL with subjective well-being (SWB), and consider "the sense of relative superiority" (SRS) as a key adaptive mechanism which maintains SWB.

Headey and Wearing (1988) notice that almost all human beings explicitly believe that their own performance in major life roles is well above average. QOL researchers have made many attempts to explain this, such as attributing it to measurement error, low levels of aspiration as well as to high levels of perceived achievement (e.g. Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976), but without much success. In addition, they found the effect is commonplace in research on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) and attribution theory (Heider, 1958). Much research in the field of social comparison theory turns out that most people believe that they are healthier, more

considerate, more honest and more creative than others, and will live longer than others (e.g. Myers, 1980; Nosanchuk & Erickson, 1985). People also believe that in-groups to which they belong are superior to out-groups (Janis, 1972). Attribution theory espouses the principle that people tend to accept explanations which maintain or enhance their self-esteem. Most people give more favourable motives and explanations for their own behaviour than they attribute to others who engage in precisely the same behaviour. However, the significance of SRS, and particularly its close link to SWB, has been largely overlooked in social comparison theory and attribution theory.

Headey and Wearing (1988) label the phenomenon, that people rate themselves favourably compared to others in most major roles and domains of life in QOL research, as the human sense of relative superiority (SRS). "SRS is a crucial mechanism accounting for high levels of SWB" (p.499). The particular significance of SRS, they suppose, is that it appears to be a prop that most people have in place to support a high absolute level of SWB. The cost of SRS is to fail to perceive one's own poor performance and hence to take corrective action. The general proposition underlying the model of SRS is that SRS is an important link in the chain of SWB, an important psychological mechanism which reinforces both SWB and personality traits associated with SWB.

2.2.3. Criticisms

Although "subjective appraisal of life conditions proved a better predictor of global QOL than did background factors or scores of objective QOL within life domains" (Oliver, Holloway & Carson, 1995, p.2), there are serious limitations to the subjective models of QOL.

First, various subjective models of QOL tend to be highly individualistic. They treat QOL as synonymous with the happiness and the satisfaction of the individual, and seek answers based on the isolated, static and analytical research on states of the individual. The emphasis in this approach is the importance of cognitive factors in the individual evaluation of QOL, where these factors are "uniquely personal" (Oliver,

Holloway & Carson, 1995, p.2). Particularly, the internal referent approaches of the subjective models assume that QOL is an enduring internal characteristic of the individual, and independent of societal conditions. Thus these subjective models of QOL fail to provide any theoretical insight to account for the dynamics of social change and to reflect the complexity of social reality. One must suppose, however, that QOL is in some way related to social conditions.

Secondly, like the objective models of QOL, the domains of QOL research in various external referent approaches of the objective models reflect the priorities and interests of each individual researcher rather than the concerns of ordinary people. Respondents are only allowed to place the importance on a number of the life domains selected by researchers. A linear additive combination of domain satisfactions is normally used to account for a global QOL. The issues of how ordinary people experience and think about QOL are seldom taken into consideration.

Thirdly, some recent QOL researches limit themselves to a particular domain of human life, such as the quality of family life, the quality of working life and the quality of friendship. In this way, it breaks down artificially the whole construct, QOL, into its components. This unfavourable trend results directly from a debate over the relations between global satisfaction and domain-specific satisfactions within the framework of the subjective approach to QOL (Schuessler & Fisher, 1985; Headey, Veenhoven & Wearing, 1991). Although the concern underpinning this more atomistic approach is legitimate, the solution it proposed is most unfortunate.

Therefore, like the objective models discussed in section 2.1, the subjective models of QOL only constitute a very partial and limited contribution to an understanding of QOL.

2.3. Holistic Models

2.3.1. Characteristics

The study of QOL is characterised by a continuous shift back and forth between the objective and the subjective models. It is in the context of such unproductive pendulum swings that a holistic approach to QOL was developed. It attempts to integrate both the objective and subjective elements of human life. This approach is characterised by viewing QOL as a multidimensional phenomenon, as a dynamic, complex, constellation of interacting components. The underlying assumption in the holistic models of QOL is the recognition of an individual's physical, psychological, spiritual and social aspects of QOL, together with the personal values or needs associated with these aspects.

2.3.2. Representative Approaches

Two representative holistic models of QOL will be discussed in this section: one is the "overall general well-being approach" (Felce & Perry, 1995, 1996), and the other is the "Being-Belonging-Becoming approach".

2.3.2.1. Overall General Well-Being Approach

The overall general well-being approach (Felce & Perry, 1995, 1996) aims at integrating objective and subjective indicators, collectively reflecting a broad range of life domains, through an individual weighting of the relative importance of each domain. This model accommodates both concerns that objective data should not be interpreted without reference to personal autonomy and preferences and concerns that expressions of satisfaction are themselves relative to the individual's temperament and the circumstances and experiences that have shaped their frame of reference (Felce & Perry, 1995).

The model is based on a broad agreement that QOL is a multidimensional construct. QOL in this model is defined as an overall general well-being. The overall general well-being comprises objective descriptions and subjective evaluations on five life domains, which are weighted by a set of personal values, as shown in Figure 2-2,

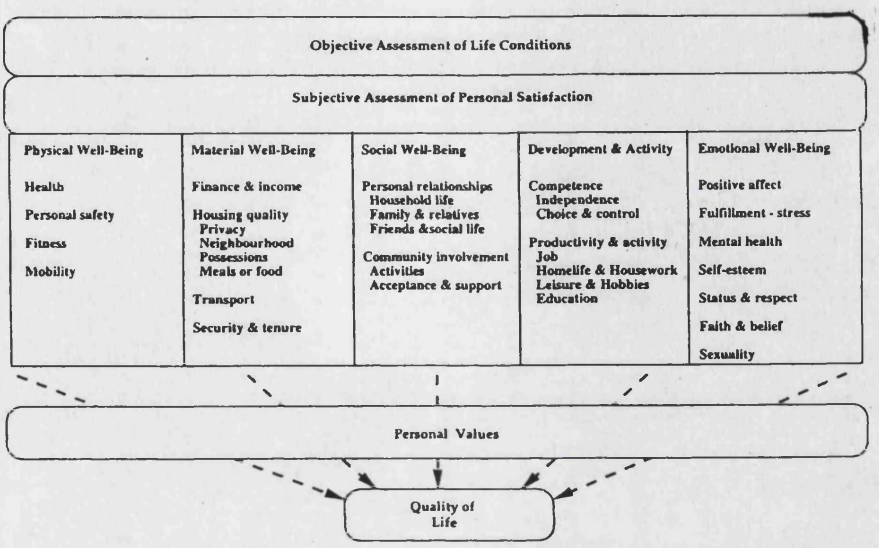

Figure 2-2: The overall general well-being model
(Felce & Perry, 1996, p.53)

The three facets in the model are objective description, subjective evaluation and personal values. Objective description refers to the description of the life conditions in which people live. Subjective evaluation refers to personal satisfaction with such life conditions. The significance of both is interpretable in relation to the value or importance the individual places on each life domain. The basic idea in this approach is that these three facets are "in dynamic interaction with each other" (Felce & Perry, 1995, p.62). Changes in some objective domains of life, for instance, may change satisfaction or one's personal values or both, as well as affecting each other. These three facets, on the other hand, are capable of changing independently of each other because of external influences.

The five life domains in this model are not empirically determined, but devised by the researchers "as a means of classifying the substantial agreement on the range of factors relevant to quality of life that the authors report in their analysis of the literature"(Felce & Perry, 1996, p.54). These five domains refer to physical, material, social, and emotional well-being, together with the extent of personal development and purposeful activity.

2.3.2.2. The Being-Belonging-Becoming Approach

The Being-Belonging-Becoming approach to QOL is developed by a multidisciplinary research team from the QOL Research Unit at the Centre for Health Promotion (CHP) at the University of Toronto. The approach is heavily influenced by the humanistic-existential tradition in philosophy. It recognises the individual physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions. It acknowledges individuals' need to belong, in both a physical and a social sense, as well as distinguishing themselves from others as individuals by pursuing their own goals and making their own choices. "These themes are incorporated in three major domains of quality of life – namely, *Being, Belonging, and Becoming*" (Renwick & Brown, 1996, p.77, italics in original). QOL in this approach is defined as "the degree to which the person enjoys the important possibilities of his or her life" (ibid, p.80). This conception of QOL is modelled in Figure 2-3.

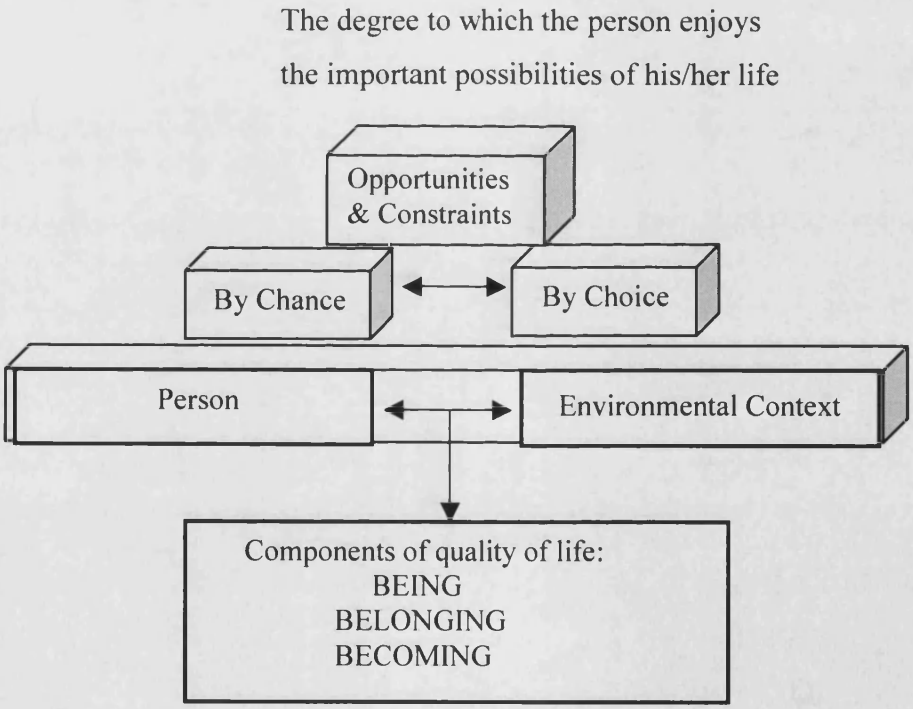

Figure 2-3: The Being-Belonging-Becoming model of QOL
(Renwick & Brown, 1996, p.81)

The model is multidimensional and it assumes that QOL is holistic in nature. The model was developed on the basis of an analysis of the QOL literature and of qualitative data that the researchers collected in the focus groups and in-depth interviews with people. The exclusive use of qualitative research methods in relation to QOL is found only in this body of research.

In the above model, possibilities refer to both the opportunities and the constraints in people's lives and reflect the continuing interaction between people and their environmental contexts. Some possibilities occur "by chance", they are not, essentially, under a person's own control, such as one's gender and one's family's socio-economic status. Other possibilities occur "by choice", they are amenable to much more control by individuals, such as an individual's decision about the selection of a friend, joining groups and choice of occupation. QOL results from "those possibilities that have become important to people and the way they live their lives" (ibid, p.81).

The notion of enjoyment implies two interrelated ideas. One refers to the experience of pleasure or satisfaction; the other refers to the possession or attainment of some characteristic, as embodied in such expressions as "they enjoy a good health". In essence, enjoyment of important life possibilities includes "both the attainment of meaningful things or goals that are possible in people's lives and the pleasure associated with this" (ibid, p.82).

The model focuses on "the person's possibilities in three fundamental areas of life that are common to the human condition and are essential dimensions of human experience" (ibid, p.82). That is, being, belonging, and becoming. Each of them has three sub-domains. Being refers to the most basic aspects of who is one as an individual. It comprises physical being, psychological being, and spiritual being. Belonging is concerned with the connections between an individual and his or her environments. It contains physical belonging, social belonging, and community belonging. Becoming focuses on achieving personal goals, aspirations, and hopes by engaging in purposeful activities. It consists of practical becoming, leisure becoming, and growth becoming. The extent of people's QOL in each of the nine areas "is

determined by both the relative importance or meaning attached to each dimension and the extent of individuals' enjoyment in each area" (ibid, p.84).

2.3.3. Criticisms

The holistic approach to QOL is relatively a new trend. It highlights the complexity of the concept of QOL by viewing QOL as a multidimensional phenomenon and by taking into account both the subjective and the objective dimensions of human life. However, there are also serious limitations in this approach.

Firstly, the holistic approach does not overcome the false separations between subject and object as well as between the individual and society. It stops at taking into account both the subjective and the objective dimensions of human life and jointly measuring QOL both subjectively and objectively. The dialectical relationships between subject and object as well as between the individual and society (Mead, 1934) is less elaborated in this approach. This approach thus goes less than half way to overcome the dualism dominated in the study of QOL.

Secondly, the holistic approach pays little attention to the intrinsically cultural and historical embeddedness of QOL, because it fails to elaborate the dialectical relationship between the individual and society. As a result, QOL is considered as a universal construct that is amenable to unrestricted context-free generalisation. For instance, the researcher within the holistic approach proposes that "conceptualisation of quality of life should be generic as well as applicable across society as whole and to particular subgroups within it" (Felce & Perry, 1996, p.52).

To sum up, the holistic model, like both the subjective and objective models, does not provide a satisfactory approach to the study of QOL.

2.4. Crisis in QOL Studies and the Cartesian Paradigm

2.4.1. The Current Crisis in the Study of QOL

Having reviewed the extensive literature on the QOL research in the previous sections, the reader may legitimately ask: "is there actually such a thing as QOL?" Our review reveals that the concept of QOL has spawned a multitude of conceptual models at diverse levels of inquiry, and that there are endless debates ranging from fundamental ideas concerning the nature of reality to the nuts and bolts of actually measuring QOL. Some identify QOL as the life satisfactions or dissatisfactions of individuals with their life conditions. Some, by contrast, relate the concept to social, economic and political factors as well as the objectives of government social policy: levels of health, education, the distribution of income, welfare, and so on. Others argue that QOL is a complex constellation of interacting mechanistic and causal components, and that life conditions and life satisfaction, as well as being personal values, all interact to determine QOL.

It is apparent that research on QOL is ill-integrated. There are many conflicting proposals and assertions. Theoretical and methodological problems abound. There has been no generally accepted notion or definition of QOL. As a result, Rosenberg (1992) suggests that the term of QOL is a "misnomer" (p.77), and Wolfensberger (1994) advocates abandoning the concept of QOL in an article entitled: "let's hang up 'quality of life' as a hopeless concept" (p.285). It would appear that QOL, as a concept and a field of research, is in crisis.

2.4.2. The Root of the Crisis: Cartesian Paradigm

I wish to argue that the current crisis in QOL research has its roots in the Cartesian paradigm[2] (Marková, 1982). Underpinned by this paradigm, QOL is viewed as a purely objective or a purely subjective phenomenon or the combination of both, and as a time-free and space-free construct. This perspective urgently needs to be shifted.

[2] The term paradigm in this thesis is used as in Kuhn's (1962) sense, i.e. a set of metatheoretical presuppositions which form a framework underlying scientific research.

2.4.2.1. The Subject/Object Dichotomy

One of the major problems in current QOL research is the dichotomy between object and subject. This chapter has identified the objective and subjective models. The differences between the two are substantial. The former assumes that observable, external conditions of life are absolute standards and valid measures for QOL. The latter equates QOL as one's satisfaction with his or her lot in life: an inner sense of contentment or fulfilment with one's experience of the world. It insists that the individual, himself or herself, is the one and only judge of his/her QOL. QOL has no meaning apart from a person's happiness. This dichotomy subject/object is related to the dichotomy individual/society. The objective models concern with QOL at a societal level; subjective models concern with QOL at an individual level.

These dichotomies, subject/object as well as individual/society, in the study of QOL are by-products of a hidden Cartesian dualistic paradigm (Marková, 1982). The Cartesian mind/body dualism claims that the mind and the body are two independent entities, the mind exercising intellectual activities, the body being governed by mechanical laws. By proclaiming that the existence of objects in the outside world can only be deduced from the contents of the mind with the help of operations of the mind, the Cartesian dualism between mind and body also creates dualisms between self and other as well as between the individual and society. The separation of subject and object, in other words, the world-of-consciousness and the world-in-itself, in the Cartesian dualistic paradigm is complete. "Interaction between the thinking subject and the rest of the world was not considered by the Cartesian paradigm"(ibid, p.23).

These Cartesian presumptions have become the unquestioned assumptions underpinning all of the three conceptual models of QOL. Many Cartesian principles are embedded in these models. Subject and object as well as individuals and society are separated from each other. The objective models equate QOL with external life conditions, without reference to any individual's subjective experience. The subjective models treat QOL as synonymous with happiness and satisfaction of the individual, with priority being given to the mind of the individual. In this way they individualise QOL. More recently, some holistic models consider QOL as a multidimensional phenomenon comprising both objective living conditions and

subjective judgements, but they do not transcend the false separation between subject and object in the study of QOL. They virtually ignore the dialectical relationships between subject and object as well as between the individual and society.

2.4.2.2. Mechanistic Approach

Cartesian philosophy, by integrating itself with Newtonian physics which provides a static or mechanistic conception of the world, resulted in a positivistic approach. The positivistic viewpoint stresses the isolated, static and analytical nature of research, and is concerned only with how the world works, as it is.

> It is rightly assumed that, in order to study a phenomenon, we are obliged to set it apart artificially from the great whole, to isolate it, to make it as 'pure' as this may be done; we only follow as far as possible the variation of a single element at a time, while we suppose that, during this time, all others remain without change. (Meyerson, 1908, p.431)

In addition, in the positivistic framework, phenomena still remain the same despite any changes in their surrounding contexts. They are given in nature and so can move freely from one context to another without themselves being changed. As a consequence, scientific generalisations about human cognition can be accepted as universal, unrestricted, and stable. This means that we do not need to consider the cultural and historical context of the phenomena we study.

Current QOL research is dominated by such a positivistic approach. The positivistic approach "so dominated quality of life research across all areas that its assumptions are frequently not even recognised by those working in the quality of life field" (Raphael, 1996, p.151). Following the positivistic point of view, firstly, QOL is viewed as an independent entity capable of being defined and measured; secondly, QOL is understood through the development of concepts based on what is observable and measurable; thirdly, the purpose of inquiry is to develop universal principles and laws to explain and predict QOL, which is time- and context-free; and finally, there is a distinction between fact and value, QOL is considered to be value free, the researcher only collects "facts" without reference to any interpretation on value judgement.

In brief, although all three models of QOL reviewed in this chapter are useful in some cases, they fail to provide any theoretical insight to account for the social and cultural embeddedness of QOL. The false separation between subject and object, as well as mechanistic viewpoint, in the current study of QOL is the direct consequences of the Cartesian assumptions. This perspective requires an urgent shift in focus.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has identified three types of conceptual models of QOL: objective, subjective, and holistic. A range of theoretical approaches to QOL have been reviewed, categorised, and criticised according to the framework of these three conceptual models. These models deal with QOL at different levels of inquiry. The objective models are sociologically oriented. The focus of the inquiry is the external conditions of life; it is highly related to the development and implementation of social policies and programmes. The subjective models are psychologically oriented, with priority being given to the human mind, and the focus of the inquiry is the happiness and satisfaction of the individual. The holistic models view QOL as a multidimensional phenomenon, taking into account both subject and object as well as a set of personal values. As far as the root philosophy is concerned, each of these conceptual models is underpinned by the Cartesian dualistic paradigm, and dominated by a positivistic viewpoint. This places the current study of QOL in crisis. Therefore, a shift in perspective and in the level of inquiry is essential. The next chapter shall argue that the Hegelian tradition of thought is a more viable paradigm to explore QOL and the theory of social representations is an appropriate conceptual framework to this end. It shall advocate that QOL should be studied at the socio-psychological level, by re-conceptualising QOL as a social representation, which is socially and culturally determined.

3

A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO QOL

This chapter discusses the epistemological standpoint and conceptual framework which guide my study of QOL. Section 3.1 advocates the adoption of the Hegelian paradigm for redirecting the metatheoretical presuppositions on QOL. Section 3.2 argues that the theory of social representations can serve as an appropriate framework to conceptualise QOL. Section 3.3 suggests that QOL be best conceived as being itself as a social representation, in the light of the Hegelian paradigm and the theory of social representations.

3.1. Hegelian Paradigm

Chapter Two has concluded that the current crisis in the study of QOL is rooted in Cartesian assumptions, and that a shift in paradigm is extremely urgent. This section shall argue that the Hegelian tradition of thought is a viable paradigm for re-directing the analysis of QOL.

The Hegelian tradition of thought (Marková, 1982) transcends Cartesian dualisms and constructs a synthesis of the individual and society. Firstly, in the Hegelian paradigm, subject and object are different aspects of the same process. Hegel transcended the dualism between the world-for-consciousness and the world-in-itself, i.e. between the knowing subject and the object of his knowledge, by re-conceptualising the relationship between the knower and the known. All knowledge in the Hegelian tradition of thought is neither subjective nor objective knowledge. Rather, "it is knowledge based on *interaction* between the knowing subject and the object of its knowledge" (Marková, 1982, pp.111-112, italic in original). Thus, the world-for-consciousness and the world-in-itself form an inseparable unity. Secondly, a basic premise of the Hegelian tradition of thought is the social or interactive nature of mind and, as a consequence, a reflexive self-consciousness. Mind and consciousness develop out of the mutual encounter of one person with another and communication

amongst people. Whilst interacting with others, "the one has to be able to see himself through the eyes of the other to become self-consciousness" (Marková, 1982, p.149). In this way, the individualistic notions of mind and consciousness are transformed into dynamic and social conceptions, transcending the dualism between self and others as well as between the individual and society. Thirdly, the evolutionary or historical perspective is an important character of the Hegelian paradigm (Purkhardt, 1993). Contrasting with the mechanistic conception of the world inherent in Cartesian paradigm, the Hegelian tradition of thought provides an organic and developmental conception of world. Any knowledge is relative to specific social and historical contexts which evolve and change. Knowledge is acquired through a "circle returning within itself" (Marková, 1982, p.178). It is through the interdependent development of the individual and society that reality is gradually reconstructed and recreated (Purkhardt, 1993).

The course of scientific activity is shaped into the scientific community's choice of a paradigm (Kuhn, 1962). To overcome the limitations inherent in the mainstream literature on QOL as discussed in Chapter Two, Cartesian dualistic paradigm should be supplanted by Hegelian paradigm (Marková, 1982), because "the best antidote to Cartesian dualism is some form of Hegelian synthesis" (Farr, 1987, p.354). It is the above distinctive features of the Hegelian tradition of thought which provide a more appropriate epistemological perspective, or a viable paradigm, to analyse QOL. Within this paradigm, it is essential to draw attention to the dialectical relationships between subject and object as well as between the individual and society, to reconceptualise QOL as a socio-psychological construct, and to examine QOL in a particular social, cultural and historical context.

It is worth noting that Moscovici's theory of social representations is in some ways in debt to Hegel (Wells, 1987; Farr, 1987). Moscovici (1987) acknowledged that he was aware of, and influenced by, the Hegelian tradition of thought.

3.2. The Theory of Social Representations

The aim of this section is to clarify some critical aspects of the theory of social representations, and to highlight those aspects of the theory which are of relevance to the study of QOL. The theory will enables me to reconceptualise QOL as being itself a social representation, that is, a social construct which is both socially "real" and psychologically active for human beings.

3.2.1. Social Representations as Common Sense Knowledge

A key feature of the theory of social representations, as far as the present study is concerned, is its explicit focus on common-sense knowledge. Moscovici states that he was led to take an interest in social representations by his desire to "a scientific analysis of what is commonly called common sense" (Moscovici, 1973, p.ix), or to "*rehabilitate common thinking and common knowledge*" (Moscovici & Marková, 1998, p.376, italics in original) in social psychology. Social representations, for Moscovici (1981b), are "the contemporary version of common sense", "a set of concepts, statements and explanations originating in daily life in the course of inter-individual communications" (p.181). Common-sense knowledge in a modern society originates not only from tradition and consensus which are produced spontaneously by the members of a society, but also from public debates around recent scientific discoveries and theories which are spread by the mass media (Moscovici & Hewstone, 1983).

Empirically, research on social representations was originally concerned with the transformation of scientific knowledge into common knowledge. Moscovici's seminal work, *La Psychanalyse: Son image et son public* (1961/1976), focused on how the science of psychoanalysis was transformed into everyday thinking in French society in the mid 1950s. Following this narrow view on social representations, a number of empirical studies became concerned with the circulation of knowledge from a core of experts into the wider mass public (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). However, it is now recognised that social representations do not necessarily develop from scientific or expert knowledge. Researches have studied such diverse objects as everyday conception of health and illness (Herzlich, 1973), the human body (Jodelet, 1984), madness (Jodelet, 1991), nature (Gervais, 1997), death (Bradbury, 1999), and

African-American (Philogène, 1994, 1999). Taken together, these studies have augmented and somewhat transformed the meaning of social representations to encompass not only popularised scientific theories, but also the "broad and heavily contested field of social or cultural phenomena" (Wagner, 1998, p.299). In other words, the notion of social representations is mainly concerned with common-sense knowledge in general. This expanded view of social representations as the belief systems of modern societies is widely accepted amongst researchers (Wagner, 1998). The theme of the present study, QOL, falls under this broad view of social representations.

3.2.2. Social Representations as a Sensitising Concept

Moscovici refers to social representations in different ways, according to changing contexts. In an early paper, Moscovici defined social representations as "the elaborating of a social object by the community for the purpose of behaving and communicating" (1963, p.251). Later, he specified somewhat his idea, defining social representations as "a system of values, ideas and practices...", and "'theories or branches of knowledge' in their own right, for the discovery and organisation of reality" (1973, p.xiii). However, the concept has been widely criticised as "vague" or "ill-defined" (Potter & Litton, 1985; Jahoda, 1988). As a reply, Moscovici suggests that vagueness is a virtue of the theory of social representations, that it arises by design (1985), and that it makes possible for further development and elaboration (1988). However, it seems to me that a failure in differentiating different types of concepts has led to some critical confusion.

Blumer (1969) makes a distinction between a "definitive concept" and a "sensitising concept":

> A definitive concept refers precisely to what is common in a class of objects, by the aid of a clear definition in terms of attributes or fixed bench marks. This definition, or the bench marks, serve as a means of clearly identifying the individual instance of the class and make-up of that instance that is covered by the concept. A sensitising concept lacks such specification of attributes or bench marks and consequently it does not enable the user to move directly to instance and its relevant content.

> Instead, it gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitising concepts merely suggest directions along which to look. (pp.147-148)

A number of concepts, such as culture, intelligence and social class, are not definitive but sensitising concepts by nature. That a concept is sensitising, but not definitive, Blumer (1969) argues, is not merely because of its immaturity and lack of scientific sophistication, but due to the nature of the empirical world which it is seeking to study and analyse. In the same vein, Gergen (1973) argues that psychological theory should "play an exceedingly important role as a sensitising device" (p.317).

From this perspective, Potter and Litton's (1985), as well as Jahoda's (1988), criticisms may only refer to the failure of social representations theory to provide a definitive concept; while Moscovici consistently refers to social representations as a sensitising concept, unwittingly. In my view, it is most meaningful to regard explicitly social representations as a sensitising concept. In doing so, the concept can direct the gaze of social psychologists towards the lay theories which ordinary people elaborate and towards the profane thought through which they construct reality in their natural settings.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the concept of social representations runs the risk of becoming so 'versatile' (Allansdottir, Jovchelovitch & Stathopoulou, 1993) as to lose its specificity (Gervais, 1997). Thus, it is necessary to clarify social representations else conceived as a sensitising concept. Jodelet's (1988) definition offers the most clearest and most consensual view of social representations.

> The concept of social representations indicates a specific form of knowledge, i.e. common-sense knowledge, the contents of which reveal the operation of processes that are generative and that (serve) distinct social purposes. More generally, it indicates a form of social thought. Social representations are practical and communicable ways of thinking that are oriented towards an understanding and mastery of the environment (both social and material...). As such, they offer specific distinguishing features in regard to how either the contents, or the mental operations or the logic (of social representations) are organised. The social distinctiveness of either the contents or the processes is attributable to: (i) the conditions and contexts in which the representations emerge; (ii) the means by which they circulate; and (iii)

> the functions which they serve in interaction both with the world and with others. (pp.361-362; quoted from: Farr, 1990, p.48)

Furthermore, in accepting social representations as a sensitising concept, it is natural to treat the distinction between the consensual and the reified universes as a sensitising, but not a definitive, device. Moscovici's distinction between two universes engenders heated debates amongst social representation theorists (cf.: Farr, 1987; Wells, 1987; Mckinlay & Potter, 1987; Purkhark, 1993; De Rosa, 1994; Moscovici, 1987). Much of these debates are concerned with the failure to specify the precise and definitive features of each social universe and of their corresponding forms of knowledge. In my view, the distinction between the two universes is intrinsically sensitising, but not definitive, in nature. The distinction is "grounded on sense instead of on explicit objective traits" (Blumer, 1969, p.150). It lacks precise "reference" or "bench marks" which allow a clean-cut boundary between the two. The role of the distinction between the two is to "direct study of our natural social world wherein empirical instances are accepted in their concrete and distinctive from" (ibid, p.152).

3.2.3. The Constructionist Features of Social Representations Theory

The aim of the theory of social representations was to counteract, and redefine, the problems and concepts of individualistic social psychology. It is the following constructionist features of theory, in my view, that constitute a radical challenge to individualistic and reductionist social psychology, and that grant the theory its significance.

Firstly, social representations are socially constructed phenomena. They are constructed through the processes of people's interaction with, and communication about, their physical and social environments. Social representations provide an environment of thought which determines how people perceive and understand the world and which directs their actions. In other words, social representations neither exist purely in the mind of subject nor purely in some objective reality "out there", but in the interaction between the two. They "represent things which exist independently

and endow them with attributes which simultaneously relate subjects and objects" (Wagner, 1998, p.322). Moscovici aims explicitly at overcoming the false separation between subject and object that has come to characterise so much of modern psychology:

> There is no implication of any clear-cut division between the outside world and the inner world of the individual (or group); subject and object are not regarded as functionally separated. An object is located in a context of activity, since it is what is because it is in part regarded by the person or the group as an extension of their behaviour. (Moscovici, 1973, p.xi)

The notion of social representations here clearly eliminates a blind faith in the law of causality which insists on the independence of entities; it nullifies the distinction between subject and object, and it gives priority to the relational and supra-individual nature of social psychological reality. A representation is simultaneously a representation of something and of someone, i.e. it refers to some object, yet belongs to some person or some group (Moscovici, 1984a; Farr, 1987).

Secondly, social representations are based on communication and are basic to communication. On the one hand, social representations arise in the communication process, both under influence of the media and in the course of ordinary conversation. "Representations are formed through the act of communicating. This, of course, is also the mechanism whereby they become realised collectively" (Farr, 1990, p.50). It is through the process of communication that the cognition of the individual is shared by others and thus emerges into the "public eyes as a social representation" (Philogene, 1994, p.103). For Moscovici (1984b), the word "social" was meant to "indicate that representations are the outcome of an unceasing babble and a permanent dialogue between individuals" (p.950). On the other hand, social representations permit communication to take place in a social group by providing a meaning for the objects of talk common to members of the group. People communicate to reach a consensus about reality and to maintain an identity with group members. In this sense, Moscovici and Hewstone (1983) state, representations are "food" for communication.

Thirdly, the theory of social representations differs from much of research in social cognition through its simultaneous focus on structure, process and content. It is

impossible to divorce the structure and process of social representations from their content. This stands in contrast to purely cognitive representations, which focus on structure and process of representation which are universal, irrespective of content. The content differs across social groups and cultures at one point in time, and changes over time within each group or culture. Along this line, Moscovici (1988) argues that a social representation must be conceived of as a dynamic "network of interacting concepts and images whose content evolves continuously over time and space" (p.220). As such, a task of the theory of social representations is to study specific belief systems within different social groups and cultures across time.

Fourthly, social representations are both cognitive and cultural phenomena. Social representations, once constructed, exist in some sense independently of that which is being represented. They become objects in their own right. This applies not only to representations shared in the minds of individuals and groups, but also to representations embedded in the symbolic and cultural artifacts of a society. Representations exist in the culture as much as they do in the minds of people. In studying social representations, "one must study both the culture and the mind of the individual" (Moscovici & Marková, 1998, p.400). An individual's mind cannot be divorced from the physical and cultural milieu, in which it develops and in which it is immersed. The mind is more than just located in the physical brain of the individual. It is also expressed in our social interactions and in the cultural products of our society. For the theorists of social representations, "stereotypes are in the media as well as being in people's minds. They are in the one because they are in the other" (Farr, 1990, p.48-49). Thus, they "advocates the sampling of culture as well as of cognition; of the media as well as of minds; and of objects as well as subjects" (ibid, p.48).

And finally, social representations are intrinsically related to social, cultural and historical contexts. Social representations are shared bodies of knowledge that constitute the social realities in which people live. They are the dialectical by-products of the acquisition of knowledge in the society, as they are influenced by the knowledge that has already been acquired through time. They are the symbolic products of social thinking, communicating, and interacting amongst group and individuals, within a particular social, cultural and historical context. Moscovici revived the long-neglected Durkheimian concept of "collective representation" with

his theory of social representations in the 1960s. This reflects his interest in understanding modern societies which are much more dynamic, continually changing and than ever before (Farr, 1990, 1998). As such, there is a strong commitment to treat seriously the social, cultural and historical nature of social representations. "To describe and explain historically and socially changing forms of social knowledge is precisely the aim of the theory of social representations" (Gervais, 1997, p.48).

3.3. QOL as a Social Representation

This section re-conceptualises QOL as being itself a social representation, by relocating QOL within the consensual universe, and arguing that QOL is socially constructed within a given cultural and historical context. This section also proposes that the actor's point of view must be the primary focus of the study of QOL, and suggests that QOL is internally organised as a dynamic network.

3.3.1. The Consensual Universe of QOL

Moscovici (1981b, 1984a) differentiates the universes of discourse into the reified and the consensual. The reified universe and the consensual universe form two distinct types of reality, each with its own logic, limits and attributes (Moscovici & Hewstone, 1983). Firstly, the reified universe is in which "all things are the measure of man" (Moscovici, 1984a, p.20). This universe treats society as the system of isolated objects, such as persons, ideas, environment and activities, in which individuality has been lost: "This society ignores itself and its creations" (ibid, p.20). The consensual universe, by contrast, is one in which "man is the measure of all things" (ibid, p.20). It is a system of symbols and meanings derived from common parlance and everyday life. In this universe, society is a visible and continuous creation itself. Secondly, the reified universe is one which generates scientific or expert knowledge. It corresponds to the spheres of the professions and academic disciplines, in which not everyone is equal and free to express an opinion, or to access the truth. Only experts, according to specific criteria and rigorous rules, can distinguish between truth and falsehood. In the consensual universe, by contrast, everyone acts as an "amateur scientist" or "curious

observer". In principle, all have an equal right to voice their opinions. Conversation amongst members of the public creates a sense of communality and maintains social life. This distinction between the two universes, in my view, provides us with a powerful sensitising device for shifting the focus of the study of QOL from the reified universe onto the consensual universe.

It seems that most conceptual models and empirical studies on QOL as discussed in Chapter Two place the phenomenon of QOL in the reified universe. This misplacement opens a door to Cartesian paradigm. As a result, QOL is conceptualised as an independent entity which is indifferent to the collective life of humans. Researchers presuppose the logical separation between the individual and society. They seek precise and unambiguous laws on QOL by means of empirical observations. They set criteria for assessing QOL, based on their own judgement and rules. Thus, the misplacement caused much confusion concerning QOL and a crisis in the study of QOL as discussed in Section 2.4.

I shall argue, here, that the phenomenon of QOL corresponds to the consensual universe with the following justifications. Firstly, the term QOL is widely used in public discourse. It "has become popularised, even cliched" (Farquhar, 1995, p.1439). In the West, the term QOL came into being in the 1960s (Campbell, 1981; McCall, 1975). As it is associated with the old concern of what constitutes the good life, this new term gains acceptance in general public and infiltrates rapidly people's everyday life and ordinary conversations. Everyone has a voice in and a share of what constitutes QOL. In the course of daily conversation and of mass mediated communication, everyone contributes to a greater or lesser degree to the elaboration of the collective understanding of QOL. In recent years the term QOL has appeared in a range of media from television to newspapers and it has been linked to various areas from advertisements to political speeches. In this way, QOL is materialised as a symbolic cultural product, and becomes part of social life.

Secondly, there is a multiplicity of discourses related to the term QOL. Such diversity is reflected in both scientific and lay conceptions of QOL. The notion of QOL varies according to changing perspectives and cultural values. In scientific discourse, there are "countless definitions of quality of life" (Romney *et al.*, 1992, p.166), it often

seems that there are as many definitions of the QOL as there are QOL researchers. In public discourse, the notion of QOL is bound to historical and cultural contexts, according to their own circumstances and how they perceived those of others. Ordinary people consciously attach or unconsciously project their own meaning on to the term. The construction of QOL appears in different prototypical forms rather than in a single model. It is scarcely surprising that one should find such heterogeneity in the everyday understanding of QOL. The concept QOL is also confused with diverse notions concerning what might otherwise be called the good life, happiness, well-being, welfare, and so on. The polysemy of the concept is an undoubted fact. But while such varied and loose meanings are problematic from a mainstream scientific perspective or in the context of policy-making, it becomes a sign of the richness the lay conception of QOL from a social representational perspective. The task is to map these meanings to reflect their structure, their origins, their process and their psychological function in changing contexts.

Thirdly, the other side of the coin is that, despite the diversity of discourses involving the term QOL, there is nevertheless a sort of consensus. Whatever the differences in emphasis, QOL remains a popular conception, held by lay people, experts, and governments. These very different social actors share the belief that they are dealing with the same construction, QOL. In everyday parlance, the term QOL is seen as important to individuals, related to their situations and, in particular, to their value systems. The term is likely to include a number of factors or domains of life, such as good health, reasonable income, satisfying interpersonal relationships, intelligence, personal security, sexual fulfilment, interesting work, and plentiful leisure time, etc. All of these connote a positive sense. Undoubtedly the term sometimes refers to adverse factors, such as unhappiness, environmental pollution and discomfort. However, the awareness of these adverse factors reflects a yearning for a reasonable standard of life and a good QOL (Jahoda, 1995).

In brief, the term QOL is widely used in public discourse albeit in a polysemous fashion. It also is used and understood by lay actors in the course of everyday life. These are in themselves authoritative reasons for locating QOL in the consensual universe. "QOL" may be conceived as a shorthand for all that is desired. It is therefore inherently social and cultural. It can only be understood in the changing contexts of

people's lives, aspirations, expectations and self potentialities, as these all shaped through participations in social, cultural, political and economic life.

3.3.2. QOL is Socially Constructed

The nature of QOL has not been elaborated systematically either in the history of Western civilisation or in contemporary research. As Marková (1995) notes, there are two extreme philosophical viewpoints on QOL, or well-being, in the history of Western civilisation: the Epicurean and the Utilitarian The former derives QOL entirely from an individual's attitude of mind, independent of environmental and societal factors; while the latter seeks the origin of QOL in the extent to which environmental and social welfare satisfies the needs of the individual. Thus, from the outset, QOL was misconceived as a phenomenon at an individual level. This misconception stems from a false dichotomy between individual and society and from treating them as separate entities. Research on QOL since the 1960s, as discussed in the previous chapter, has also failed to elaborate the dialectical nature of the relationships between subject and object as well as between the individual and society.

The Hegelian paradigm and the theory of social representations provide sufficient conceptual tools to re-conceptualise QOL as a social construct, which is produced by dialogical interactions between self and others, between subject and object, and between the individual and society as well. Both sides are different aspects of the same social process. They sometimes coincide each other, sometimes they are in opposition. The formation and transformation of QOL are possible through the reconciliation of the opposition. QOL is actively constructed in the process of social interaction, but it is not merely an individual phenomenon. This argument can be elaborated in the following five aspects.

Firstly, the meanings of QOL are continuously produced, transmitted and transformed in the course of social interaction. Individuals are born into particular socio-cultural settings, and grow up learning about themselves and their social-cultural settings through a particular set of cultural, personal, and linguistic experiences. They develop these experiences through social sources, such as family, friends, schools and the

mass media. These experiences become a part of individuals' conscious and unconscious frameworks for reacting to their own socio-cultural settings and judging their own QOL. Individuals' reactions to their socio-cultural settings and judgement on their own QOL, in turn, further develop these experiences. As a consequence, QOL is inevitably social in nature.

Secondly, QOL involves social processes. It is grounded in inter-personal relationship, and oriented both to self and to others. It is not only influenced by, but also influences, the relationship between self and others. Although QOL may sometimes be expressed as life satisfaction or the happiness of the individual, to conceive of it as an individualistic phenomenon is mistaken. "One can become an individual, the self, only through a *dialogical process* of interaction of one self with the other self" (Marková, 1995, p.195, italics in original). The awareness of self in relation to other is critical for QOL.

Thirdly, QOL as a system of beliefs, values and practice are formed and maintained collectively by the act of communicating. In Chinese culture, people often hold such beliefs as "more children equals greater happiness", and "you will live to be a healthy 99-year-old, if you always walk 100 feet after dinner". This kind of QOL-related knowledge is based on tradition and consensus, and spontaneously produced by ordinary people. It is transmitted from one generation to another by, and prevails in, the ordinary conversations. Other aspects of QOL-related knowledge, for instance, "smoking harms health", is originated from scientific discoveries, and diffused mainly through the mass media of communication. By communicating with each other, individuals create the consensual world that enable them to share QOL-related knowledge, which, in turn, is capable of orienting individuals' QOL-related practice.

Fourthly, the gaps between the subjective and objective aspects of QOL may be bridged by a process of social comparison. Individuals do not assess their QOL in a vacuum; they are motivated to make social comparison between themselves, others, and the objective world in general. When an individual reports that he/she has a high or low level of QOL, it depends on whom the comparison is being made with (Festinger, 1954). Here the notion of a frame of reference is employed. According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, *et al.*, 1985), when making social

comparisons, i.e. between self as in-group member and other as out-group member, there is a tendency to perceive one's in-group as being different from, and better than, the out-group, thereby achieving a positive distinctiveness, and enhancing one's social identity. This tendency can explain some paradoxical findings in the empirical study of QOL. For example, older African-Americans report higher levels of happiness than older Anglo-Americans despite their inferior objective living conditions (Campbell *et al*, 1976); some individuals who are disabled in accidents report a high level of happiness, compared to individuals who are not disabled (Campos & Johnson, 1990).

Fifthly, individuals may adopt different perspectives on QOL depending on their role in the social interaction. The self can clearly distinguish between his/her own perception of QOL and those of others, and so can judge his/her own QOL by different criteria from those of others. Jahoda (1995) highlights the differences in perspectives on QOL of people with learning disabilities as between themselves and client carers. While the carer focuses on fostering his/her clients' self-sufficiency or self-help skills to require a minimum of staff supports, the client with learning disabilities focuses on social life and friendship; he/she tends to regard staff as an important and reliable source of social support and friendship.

3.3.3. The Intrinsic Cultural and Historical Relativity of QOL

QOL, as a social construct, is bound to be relative to the experience, expectations, and aspirations of the surrounding culture and its historical realities. It differs widely from one culture to another at the same point in time and from one point in time to another within the same culture.

When talking about cultural relativity, one has to confront the relationship between global and local aspects of QOL. Undoubtedly, there are globally agreed upon aspects to QOL. The systems of human cultures and values tend towards convergence, rather than divergence, with rapid development of mass media of communication and their accelerative influences on modern societies, on the one hand, and with political and economic integration globally in the wake of the Cold War, on the other hand. Improving human QOL has become a worldwide development strategy. There are

many values which are universally accorded recognition as QOL, such as health, longevity, education, employment, leisure, and social security. It is internationally agreed, according to the World Health Organisation (cf.: WHOQOL Group, 1993; Skevington *et al*, 1997), that the concept of QOL incorporates and is affected in complex ways by a person's physical health, psychological health, level of independence, social relationships and his/her relationship to salient features of the environment, despite considerable cultural differences. People's beliefs concerning QOL, however, vary dramatically from culture to culture, and they are shaped in a powerful way by cultural values. The differences in beliefs concerning QOL between cultures are substantial. There are no universal, unrestricted, context-free generalisations on QOL which can be indiscriminately applied to all cultures. People's beliefs concerning QOL are inextricably linked to the values, norms, and ideological aspects of a given culture. QOL cannot be understood without an understanding of the values and ideology of a given culture, and of how these values and ideology are expressed, sustained and challenged by individuals.

A central value in Western culture is individualism, a collective representation of the individual as being responsible for his/her own actions. This is built into the legal codes of many Western countries (Farr, 1991). Thus QOL in Western cultures is seen as reflected in the realisation of individual rights (Marková, 1995). In contrast, the central value in traditional Chinese society was collectivism. Individuals were expected to accord primacy to collective goals, to evaluate one's actions in terms of their consequences for the well-being of the group, and to seek harmony in social relations. This collective representation of collectivism in traditional Chinese culture was intensified by a socialist system, which characterised by a public ownership, in modern Chinese society in the pre-reform era. However, China is undergoing a massive transition into a market economy. The rival sets of values, collectivism and individualism, currently co-exist in Chinese society. This creates an important socio-psychological question: what do ordinary Chinese people consider as the central to their quality of lives in the symbiosis of antithetical value systems? Indeed, why has the very concern with QOL emerged now in the public space.

The historical dimension is also important to understand QOL. People's beliefs concerning QOL are firmly wedded to historical circumstances, and thus are dynamic

and continually changing. Every historical era has its own political-economic structure and life-style which, to some extent, is different from those of another era. QOL at any given time reflects the *zeitgeist* of that era. It varies substantively across different historical eras. There is no such a thing as "transhistorical validity" (Gergen, 1973, p.314) in relation to QOL. Taking the material aspects of QOL as an example. In Chinese society from the 1950s to the early 1970s, a bicycle, a watch, and a sewing machine were seen as essential to QOL. From the late 1970s through the 1980s, a colour TV, refrigerator, and washing machine were the focus of QOL. In this decade, the focus seems to shift into private housing and car ownership. It is exceedingly important to study dynamically changing conception of QOL across different historical eras. Archive documents and other historical materials provide a resource for the longitudinal study of QOL. However, it is striking how little attention has been paid to this issue, both theoretically and empirically.

To summarise the discussions from Section 3.3.1 to 3.3.3, QOL is located in the consensual universe, thus it is a system of symbolic meanings, which, although recently dominated by expert discourses, is fundamentally derived from common parlance and daily life. QOL is socially constructed through dialectical interactions between self and others, between subject and object, and between the individual and society as well. As a social construct, QOL is firmly embedded in specific cultural and historical circumstances. Thus, it differs widely from one culture to another at the same point in time and from one point in time to another within the same culture. On the basis of these arguments, it is reasonable to conclude that QOL is itself a social representation.

3.3.4. QOL from the Actor's Point of View

Bruyn (1966), by citing William James, makes a distinction between knowledge of people and knowledge about people: "knowledge of people is personal and social, whereas knowledge about people is intellectual and theoretical" (p.34). The distinction reflects the divergence in perspective between actors and observers (Farr & Anderson, 1983). The former is the perspective of the actor; the latter is the perspective of the observer. Mainstream literature on QOL as discussed in Chapter

Two, concerns knowledge about people. The evaluation of QOL is assumed to be in the eye of the observer. The criteria or components of QOL are set by researchers, and reflect the priorities and interests of each individual researcher. As Nordenfelt (1993) notes, the researcher lock him/herself up "in a framework constituted by a more or less arbitrarily selected list of items, and let[s] the questions within this framework determine the evaluation of a person's QOL" (p.136). The point of view of the actor is thus lost.

In light of the Hegelian paradigm and the theory of social representations, the study of QOL must shift its position from knowledge about people to knowledge of people, i.e. shift its ground from the eye of the observer to that of the actor. QOL as a representation is held by the actor, thus it is essential to understand QOL from the actor's point of view. The concept of QOL has little meaning if it is set apart from the way in which ordinary people experience, perceive and explain their own lives and circumstances. The actor's point of view must be the primary focus of the study of QOL. Looking at the world from the perspective of the actor is conducive to the exploration of how ordinary people "theorise about" QOL in which they participate, and of how these theories enable them to construct reality and to determine their actions ultimately.

Different actors who share the same culture may adopt different perspectives and thus attach different meanings to QOL. For instance, the representation QOL varies substantively across the life cycle of the individual. Every age group has its own set of central activities. The QOL for a given age group will revolve around this core of activities. When individuals mature, their self-images, roles and opportunities change, the meaning of QOL for them changes too. Bearon (1989) notes that young adults are reported as seeing material well-being as more important than health, whereas health is more salient for the elderly. The elderly normally pay close attention to maintaining the status quo and to preventing their worst fears from being realised. For retirees, formal work plays a less significant role, while leisure becomes more prominent and they tend to choose pleasurable activities that foster intimacy with families and friends. On the other hand, their abilities to cope with the pressure of life tend to reduce, so they have an increasing need to rely for practical assistance on their network (Moss, 1994). I shall discuss later, in relation to sampling issues, the possible

influences of some socio-demographic variables, such as generation and residence area, on ordinary people's representation QOL in Chinese society.

3.3.5. Internal Structure of QOL

The representation which ordinary people have of their QOL may contain a number of components, such as health, education, finance, personal development, interpersonal relationship, and work, to mention but a few, in varying orders of priority. The elements of QOL must be settled empirically by the actor, but not determined a priori by the researcher. It is essential, as discussed in Section 3.3.4, to disclose the actor's "naïve" theories concerning QOL, without imposing the researcher's preconceptions.

The representation QOL, by its very nature, involves not only a number of components, but also the complicatedly intrinsic relationships and organisation of these components. Abric's (1993, 1996) theory of the central-peripheral system is an influential approach for a structural analysis of social representations. According to this theory, some elements constitute a central core, which is decisive for the meaning and the organisation of the representation; whereas others are peripheral elements, which serve to adapt the representation to different contexts. However, it seems that this theory is, to some extent, an oversimplification. By re-analysing the empirical findings of Herzlich (1973) concerning health and illness and of Herzberg *et al* (1959) concerning job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction, Farr (1977 a, b) points out, there is a tendency, as Heider's (1958) theory of social attribution concerning success and failure, of attributing the positive pole to the self and the native pole to the non-self. The same structure holds across the representations of success/failure, of health/illness, and of job satisfaction/job dissatisfaction. Inspired by his argument, this thesis theoretically supposes that the representation QOL is organised around a deep-seated inner-core, and that this inner-core is generative across different domains of life and is social in origin. On the other hand, the internal structural of QOL should principally be determined empirically. A key task of thesis is to explore this organisation.

3.3.6. A Theoretical Model of QOL as a Social Representation

On the basis of above discussions, a theoretical model of QOL as a social representation is developed as shown in Figure 3-1.[3]

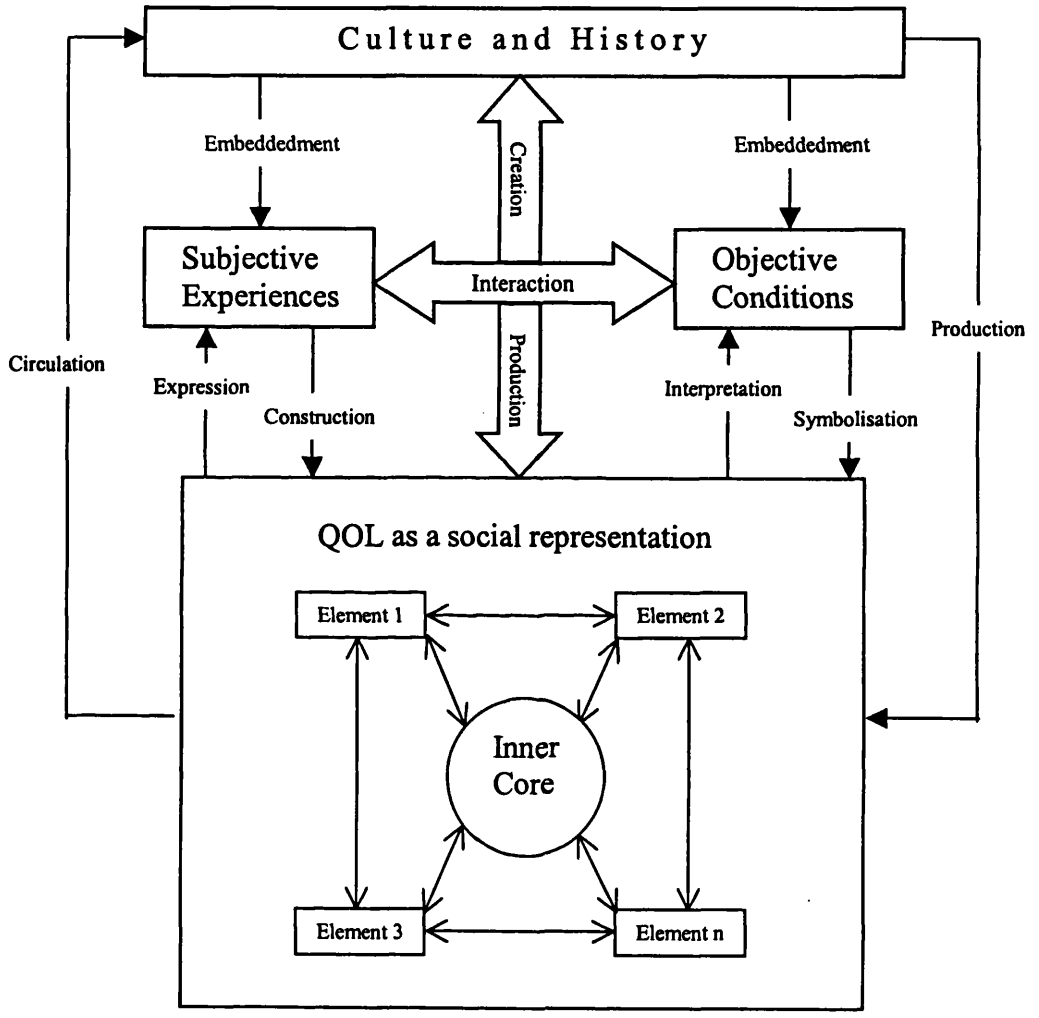

Figure 3-1: A theoretical model of QOL as a social representation

[3] The format of this model is partly inspired by Jodelet's (1988, 1989) work.

The model depicts the potential dynamic relationships amongst the conditions and contexts in which the representation QOL is produced, the means by which QOL circulates, and possible ways in which QOL is organised internally. These relationships can be elaborated in words as follows:

1. The representation QOL originates in, circulates and diffuses throughout, society, under specific cultural and historical conditions; it also evolves over the time in different cultures.
2. It is through the process of interaction between subject and object, which are embedded in a given cultural and context, that the representation QOL is socially constructed. The representation QOL, once constructed, becomes a part of the culture and history.
3. The representation QOL constructs, and re-presents, new social realities; and it gives them a mode of expressions. It also symbolises objective conditions of life, and gives them interpretations and meanings.
4. The representation QOL is a broad-range dynamic system, which incorporates a number of elements, in varying orders of priority; these elements lie in a deep-seated inner-core, which is generative and social psychological in nature, and involves complex chains of causation amongst them.

3.4. Conclusion

The Hegelian tradition of thought, which transcends Cartesian dualisms, provides a viable paradigm for directing the study of QOL. The theory of social representations, which is located at the crossroad of sociology and psychology, offers a powerful conceptual framework to redefine QOL at a social psychological level. It is argued that the concept of social representations is not definitive, but sensitising. In doing so, some critical confusions on the theory have been clarified. The theory expresses a clear commitment to a social constructionist approach. Furthermore, QOL itself is reconceptualised as a social representation. It is argued that QOL should be relocated in the consensual universe. QOL is socially constructed in daily interactions, and it is embedded in a specific social, cultural and historical context. It is essential to study

QOL from the actor's point of view. It is supposed that the representation QOL is organised around a deep-seated inner-core, which is generative across different domains of life and is social origin. A theoretical model of QOL as a social representation is developed. The model reflects dynamic relationships amongst the conditions and contexts in which the representation QOL is produced, the means by which QOL circulates, and ways in which QOL is organised internally.

4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodological principles and strategies which guided my empirical research. Section 4.1 develops a methodological framework within which social representations in general, and QOL in particular, can be sampled and analysed in their diverse locations through a combination of different methods. Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 discuss three sets of methods, namely, a) word associations and semantic differentials; b) interviews, including individual in-depth interviews and group interviews; and c) content analysis of a Chinese newspaper, respectively. Each section begins with a justification for using that method in the study of QOL, includes a description of the research design, and presents methods of data analysis. Section 4.5 explicates the strategy for integrating these different research methods and data sets.

4.1. A Multi-Method Approach

In his discussion of methodological issues in the study of social representations, Farr (1993) notes, "it is a singular feature of the theory that it does not privilege any particular method of research" (p.22). Due to the complexity of the phenomenon of social representations, methodological triangulation (Flick, 1992a, b) is a standard practice amongst researchers. Moscovici has encouraged, from the outset, the use of different methods, complementarily, to examine a given phenomenon. In his seminal work, Moscovici (1961/1976) himself studied social representations of psychoanalysis on different levels by a combination of different methods, including content analyses of the French press, questionnaires, an opinion poll, and open-ended interviews. A combination of methods, since then, has been a distinctive characteristic of the empirical works in the field of social representations. For instance, Jodelet (1991) studied madness by using participant observation, questionnaire, interviews with different social groups, and analyses of documents. Gervais (1997), in her work on nature, combined the analysis of local newspapers, with individual interviews, group discussions, a public debate and participant observation. The exception is the

Herzlich's (1973) study on social representations of health and illness. She chose open-ended individual interviews as her only method for collecting data. Her work, however, is criticised because she fails to sample and to demonstrate the phenomena at a collective level (Farr, 1977a, 1993).

The methodological basis for a multi-method approach, however, has not been fully elaborated in the field of social representations. Sotirakopoulou and Breakwell (1992) argue that different methods allow researchers to investigate different components of a social representation, and then a synthetic procedure has to be used to bring all these different components together. The critical shortcoming of this proposition, however, is its underlying elementarist assumption on the nature of social representations, i.e. the "'break down' of the construct in its components" (p.32). It sets social representations apart, artificially, from its greater whole. Gervais (1997) establishes a link between the methodological foundation and Duveen and Lloyd's (1990a) typology of processes involved in the emergence and transformation of social representations, namely, sociogenesis, ontogenesis, and microgenesis. She proposes that the triangulation of research methods should "highlight these three genetic processes and their respective functions" (p.116). It is a distinctive contribution to the methodology of social representations.

Triangulation, in my view, must take into consideration the multilayered nature of a social representation and the fact that the representation operates simultaneously at different levels of human thought. Marková (1996) suggests that human thought and knowledge are multilayered and that they operate concurrently at the levels of both reflexive awareness and of taken-for-granted, unreflexive thought. The theory of social representations, she claims, is concerned with "interdependencies between conscious and reflexive thinking processes on the one hand and with unconscious, habitual and automatised thinking processes on the other hand" (Marková, 1996, p.181). Farr (1990, 1993, 1998) proposes that social representations co-exist simultaneously at both the cultural and the psychological levels, and that they are both of culture and of cognition. These analytical distinctions have significant methodological implications. In my view, both of these distinctions, in a complementary manner, provide a solid methodological foundation for empirical work on social representations.

Unreflexive thought processes refer to "such processes that take place largely without awareness", including "such forms of thought that can be described as habitual, automatised, un-reflected upon and unconscious" (Marková, 1996, p.185). Reflexive thought processes are "those of which the individual is aware", they are "based on reasoning, reflexion" (ibid, p.186). Social representations, at the collective level, correspond to culture. "They are collectively available both at the time of transmission and, later, in archives and libraries" (Farr, 1998, p.281). Culture is both a product of and a producer of the human mind. The theory of social representations is concerned with all of those diverse forms of thought and their products.

The multilayered nature of a social representation, together with the fact that social representations exist and operate simultaneously at different levels of human thought, raise a number of questions as to which methods should be employed in order to intercept and to explore the diverse locations of the social representation under study. In this study, the methods selected and combined are word associations, semantic differentials, individual and group interviews and a content analysis of the mass media. This particular combination reflects the following concerns:

Firstly, the methods of word associations and semantic differentials are considered specifically suited to exploring the unreflexive psychological layers of a representation. In a task of word associations or semantic differentials, respondents usually respond immediately and unreflexively. Such responses are "likely to be stereotypes and culturally shared beliefs: something that is not thought about but evoked more or less automatically" (Marková, 1996, p.191).

Secondly, interviews are considered especially pertinent to exploring the reflexive layers of a representation. In an interview situation, either an individual interview or a group interview, respondents are expected to reflect upon their own thoughts, "to provide rational answers and to explain and to elaborate their positions on the issues in question" (Marková, 1996, p.191). This does not imply that respondents speak only their own voices, and that respondents' implicit and unreflexive views are not also circulating in the processes of communication. Rather, through their voices, it is possible to retrieve the belief systems, or social representations, which are socially

and historically endorsed. In an in-depth interview, implicit and unreflexive ideas are likely to be elaborated into more explicit "lay theories" in the course of social interaction.

Thirdly, a content analysis of the mass media of communication is considered especially appropriate to exploring a social representation at the cultural level. The media are a basic form of mass communication in modern societies, which make those societies significantly different from traditional societies. Social representations presented in the culture are mainly reflected in the mass media. It is through the very act of communicating via the media that social representations are formed and transmitted in modern societies.

These rationales offer a useful framework for sampling and analysing social representations at their diverse locations. The use of multiple methods in a complementary fashion, or methodological triangulation, reflects an endeavour to realise an in-depth understanding of different aspects of a social representation. In the following sections, I will justify and describe the research designs associated with each of these methods – word associations, semantic differentials, individual and group interviews, and the content analysis of a Chinese newspaper – in relation to my empirical study of QOL in Chinese society.

4.2. Word Associations and Semantic Differentials

The common feature of both word associations and semantic differentials is that they are effective ways for obtaining information about the meanings of a target object (here, QOL) produced spontaneously by respondents, although technically the former is an unstructured procedure, while the latter is a structured procedure.

4.2.1. Justification

4.2.1.1. Word Associations

The purpose of using the method of word associations in the present study is to uncover shared ideas of QOL held by ordinary Chinese people at an unreflexive level. These ideas are elicited by asking respondents what comes into their minds when they are presented with a stimulus word. This method allows the researcher to access what respondents habitually and automatically think about QOL.

The method of word associations, like other open-ended methods, allows respondents to freely express their feelings, understandings, views and opinions of QOL, albeit in very concise form, without imposing the researcher's preconceptions. It has the advantage of "leaving the choice of significant categories to the subject" (Di Giacomo 1980, p.332). Moreover, this procedure, unlike other open-ended methods, is easily distributed to a large population and thus enables the researcher to tackle the representation QOL within a large population.

With these advantages, the method of word associations, combined with other methods, is frequently used to investigate various topics under the framework of social representations. These topics include the individual (Marková, *et al,* 1998), the Euro (Meier and Kirchler, 1998), war and peace (Wagner, *et al*, 1996), the meaning of work (Mannetti and Tanucci, 1993), mental illness (Zani, 1993), a student protest movement (Di Giacomo, 1980), and self-identity and time perspective (Mahjoub, Leyens, Yzerbyt & Di Giacomo, 1989).

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of using word associations in the study of QOL. The method of word associations only enables the researcher to access decontextualised contents, but cannot inform about complex dynamic relationships amongst aspects of the construction. It gives some important insights into the content spontaneously associated with QOL, but not how such content categories may be organised or structured in Chinese people's thinking.

4.2.1.2. Semantic Differentials

The purpose of using the method of semantic differentials (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957) in the present study is to capture the connotative meanings of QOL at an automatic thinking level. The method of semantic differentials "is a

combination of associations and scaling procedures designed to give an objective measure of the connotative meaning of concepts" (Osgood & Luria, 1969, p.505). This technique usually asks respondents to rate one concept or a set of concepts on a list of 7-point bipolar scales. The technique of semantic differentials is designed to measure the spontaneously affective or emotional connotation of a concept. It "responds only to feeling, not to reason" (Osgood, 1971, p.36). It assesses emotional connotation in the form of a group aggregate and for a general situation (Bauer, 1993).

The method of semantic differentials is "a componential model", which describes "the meanings of a large number of concepts in terms of a relatively small number of distinguishing features" (Osgood, 1971, p. 3). Based on a series of studies on different concepts, Osgood postulated that the connotative aspect of a concept could be described in three independent dimensions: Evaluation (E), Potency (P), and Activity (A). As a semantic frame of reference, these dimensions are deemed to be universal, irrespective of linguistic and cultural background. Any concept can be represented as an endpoint of a vector in this three-dimension space (Osgood, *et al*, 1957; Snider & Osgood, 1969; Osgood, 1971). The natural adaptability to a factor analysis is a positive feature of the semantic differentials, but "shared affective features, E, P, and A, will be amplified and the many subtler denotative features of meaning will be damped." (Osgood, 1971, p. 38) through using a factor analysis. Thus, Osgood (1971) admits that this technique is significantly "insufficient as a vehicle for discovering the features of semantic space" (p.38).

The technique of semantic differentials, combined with other methods, has been used in the study of social representations in different contexts, for instance, to investigate resistance to change (Bauer, 1993) and mental health (De Rosa, 1987). Usually, this technique "is not used in its classic form but is modified and adapted to the object of SRs" (Doise, Clémence, Lorenzi-Cioldi & Kaneko, 1993, p.54).

4.2.2. Research Design

4.2.2.1. Data Collection

The data were collected by means of self-completion questionnaires in Chinese. The questionnaire was originally designed in English, and it was piloted prior to in the actual thesis. I translated it into Chinese myself. Two Chinese postgraduate students at the University of London checked the accuracy of the translation. The questionnaire consists of three parts: a) word associations task; b) semantic differentials task; and c) socio-demographic information (See Appendix I).

In the word associations tasks, respondents were asked to answer the following two questions:

> *1. Please write down the first 5 words or phrases which come into your mind when you think about "quality of life".*
> *2. All things considered, what do you think are the most important factors influencing a person's quality of life? Please: (a) list as many key words or phrases as possible; (b) mark these factors in order of importance by using 1, 2, 3, etc.*

Task 1 is a typical task of word associations. Task 2 is a variant task of word associations. These two questions aim at exploring the same issue, the semantic universe of QOL, but from different angles. Task 1 invites the respondents to express their spontaneous responses to the stimulus word "quality of life". Task 2 asks respondents to give their answers to the question of what are the most important factors associated with "quality of life" by considering all aspects of the subject matter. Task 2 may thus involve more or less reflective thinking on QOL. It is assumed that the order of the responses for Task 1 would reflect the importance of that respondent's diverse ideas of what are the constituents of QOL; Task 2 includes an explicit ranking task.

In the task of semantic differentials, a specific set of polarities for the concept QOL was developed. Six persons, including three Chinese postgraduate students at the University of London and three non-Chinese postgraduate students in the Department of Social Psychology at the LSE, were asked to choose 25 relevant polar attributes out of 78 that are listed by Snider and Osgood (1969). The criterion used to select bipolar scales was relevant to the concept being judged, as suggested by Osgood *et al* (1957).

For the present study, this concept is QOL. Those 25 polarities which were mentioned more than 3 times were chosen. The 7-point rating scales were randomly oriented and ordered, and were anchored at the endpoints.

4.2.2.2. Sampling

The sampling is not intended to be representative of the Chinese population as a whole in any statistical sense, but rather be a source of illustrative data. Respondents were thus selected on pragmatic criteria, but not at random. For the convenience of sampling, three types of natural group respondents in the two cities of China: Beijing and Changchun, were used in this study. These three types of natural group are middle school students, university students and further education college students. Further education college students normally are employed in various occupations; they attend classes in the evenings. The size of the sample is n = 320 [4]. The average age is 25.3 years, ranging from 12 to 72 years. For the basic characteristics of the sample, see Appendix II.

The respondents were approached in June 1998 [5]. The questionnaires were completed in group sessions. Respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaires independently and as quickly as possible on the basis of their first impressions.

4.2.3. Data Analysis

For the word associations, data were analysed and coded for the purpose of identifying the different semantic elements of QOL, according to classical rules of content analysis (cf.: Holsti, 1969; Rosenberg & Jones, 1972; Di Giacomo, 1980). The principles and rules for distinguishing the semantic elements are as follows:

1. Extracting all original words and phrases mentioned by respondents by previewing all answer sheets. Exactly repeated words and phrases were eliminated in this way.

[4] Only 317 respondents completed word associations tasks.
[5] I would like to thank Dr Yuxiang Lu at Beijing Normal University and Ms Bo Du at Jinlin University for helping administer the surveys in China.

2. Words or phrases that obviously have the same meaning are grouped under the most common word when nuances seem irrelevant, e.g. "work", "job", "career", "occupation" → "work".
3. Phrases accompanied by modifiers that do not change substantially meaning of their core words are grouped under their core words, e.g. "happy family", "family", "family members", "family harmony", → "family".
4. Phrases that obviously have two or more meanings are placed in two or more separate entries, e.g. "clothing, food, housing" are placed in the "clothing", "food", "housing" entries, respectively.
5. Some specific objects are grouped under general entries, e.g. "physical health" and "mental health" are grouped under "health".

30 semantic elements of QOL were identified in this way. For details of the coding scheme, see Appendix III. Data were originally coded by myself. The inter-coder reliability is CR = 0.86 [6].

For the semantic differentials, the profiles of scale medians are plotted. Factor analysis is used to discover semantic space, within which connotations of QOL can be specified.

4.3. Interviews

The aim of interviews in the present study is to disclose ordinary Chinese people's "naïve" theories concerning QOL. Both individual and group interviews[7] will be used in this study.

4.3.1. Justification

[6] This coefficient of reliability (CR=2xCA/n1+n2) was based on 35 (about 11 % sample) randomly selected response sets which were coded independently by two coders, me and Dr Zhongfei Zhou at the Queen Mary and Westfield College. I would like to thank him for his help.

[7] The terms group interviews, focus group interviews and focus group discussions are used interchangeably in this thesis.

Individual in-depth interviews, and, more recently, group interviews, have been widely used in the study of social representations. Interviews enable researchers to gain access to social representations in general, and to QOL in particular, at a reflexive level. Like most open-ended qualitative methods of data collection, they allow respondents to express freely and in their own words their "naïve" theories on the subject under study without being too much constrained by the researchers' own preconceptions.

4.3.1.1. The Parallels between Social Representations and Interviews

The interview is an ideal method of data collection for the study of social representations. There are at least three parallels between social representations and interviews.

Firstly, social representations have been defined as "branches of knowledge" (Moscovici, 1973, p.iii), as "social constructions of everyday knowledge" (Flick, 1994, 1998a), and as "lay knowledge" (Marková, 1996). Likewise, an interview is viewed as "a construction site of knowledge" (Kvale, 1996, p.14). As a specific form of human interaction, the interview provides a specific social encounter through which knowledge is not only expressed but also constructed and evolved through dialogue and interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (individual interview) or amongst participants (group interview).

Secondly, social representations can be social in at least three senses, in that they are (i) representations of some aspects of the social world, (ii) socially shared, and (iii) social in origin (Jaspars & Fraser, 1984). Similarly, the interview seeks, through questioning, to obtain empirical knowledge concerning the everyday life of participants from their own perspectives and in their own terms. The nature of empirical knowledge of the everyday life is "the social construction of reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This is socially negotiated, shared knowledge of the social scene, even it is elicited from individuals.

Thirdly, social representations are generated through everyday conversations. Conversation, as Moscovici (1984a) puts it, "is at the hub of our consensual universes

because it shapes and animates social representations and thus gives them a life of their own" (p.54). Correspondingly, the interview is a form of conversation, a "conversation with a purpose" (Webb & Webb, 1932, p.130), which incorporates elements of everyday life into the conduct of research. Therefore, it makes sense to reproduce everyday conversations in the form of individual or group interviews. In an interview situation, the informal encounters of everyday life are replicated and simulated in a research context. Thus the interview, as an admittedly approximate simulation of relatively inaccessible everyday conversation, is an effective means of accessing the processes by which meaning is socially constructed through everyday verbal interaction. Through this kind of conversation the researcher can intercept and focus on the social representation under study.

4.3.1.2. Combining Individual Interviews with Group Interviews

There are various forms of research interviews. The in-depth individual interviews and the group interviews are both widely used. Both modes, normally, use an open-ended interview schedule to stimulate respondents to address their feelings, understandings, and explanations on a given topic in their own terms. Each has its own strengths and limitations. The strategy in the present study is to apply these two modes to the same topic so as to draw on each mode's strengths and avoid or counter the other mode's weaknesses.

Firstly, it is often argued that there is a difference of depth versus breadth between the two modes (Crabtree, Yanoshik, Miller & O'Connor, 1993). In an in-depth individual interview situation, the interviewee has many more opportunities to clarify his/her intentions and meanings. This type of interviews probes deeply the respondent's feelings and understandings. In a group interview, the context provides comparisons and debates which can lead participants to talk about a wider array of experiences and opinions. Group interviews may be less controlled than individual interviews. They afford opportunities for unanticipated issues or themes to arise. Social representations need to be explored both in depth and in breadth by using the two modes (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996).

Secondly, the two modes of interviews may reveal or access the social representation under study from different points of view. In an individual interview situation, the interviewee tends to adopt a perspective of his/her own, and focus on his/her own QOL. While in a group context, the participants may adopt the perspective of an observer, and discuss wider views on QOL, beyond the views of the participants themselves. The divergence in perceptive between the actor and the observer is an important issue in social psychology (Heider, 1958; Farr & Moscovici, 1984a; Farr & Anderson, 1983). Gathering the data from individual and group interviews allows this research to retrieve important information about the representation QOL with respect to oneself and respect to others.

Thirdly, the two modes of interviews elicit social representations through different interactional mechanisms. In an individual interview situation, data and insights arise from the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer seeks rapport, creating an atmosphere of empathy, privacy and intimacy, as a means to gathering data. The interviewer and the interviewee act in relation to each other and reciprocally influence each other. In a group interview situation, participants interact amongst themselves, and the role of the interviewer (or mediator) is significantly reduced. Data and insights are produced "on group interaction, on realities as defined in a group context, and on interpretation of events that reflect group input" (Frey & Fontana, 1993, p.21). The interactions between two individuals and amongst a group of individuals, in my view, are two typical, and quite different, forms of face-to-face communication and co-operation. Social representations are created, reproduced and challenged through both dyadic interaction and group interaction. Both types of interviews can be regarded as simulations or replications, as far as possible in a research context, of different everyday social communications and of different forms of normal human interaction.

Fourthly, the criticisms from quantitative researchers concerning interviews relate to their reliability and validity (cf. Morgan, 1993). Reliability (which refers, here, to the reproducibility and stability of a representation, excluding transcription reliability and coding reliability), in my opinion, is not valid criterion for interview in the study of social representations. This is primarily because social representations operate at a particular juncture in time and space, in a given society, rather than in the laboratory.

Social representations change over time. They never repeat themselves. Concerning validity, some researchers have devoted much conceptual effort towards developing alternative criteria for qualitative study. Lincoln and Guba (1985), for instance, suggest that qualitative research should emphasise trustworthiness rather than validity. However, no general agreement has been reached on alternative criteria on the part of qualitative researchers. The issue concerning validity has to be considered in a research design. One major source of invalidity for group interviews is their false consensus effect or group polarisation (Paicheler, 1979; Myers, 1982), i.e. participants in a group have a tendency either to move towards a consensus or to shift towards unrepresentative extremes. One major source of invalidity for an individual interview is the demand characteristics of the interviewee. However, concurrently applying the two modes of interviews to the same topic, although time-consuming and expensive, should contribute to increasing the overall validity of the empirical analysis.

It is clear that each of two modes of interviews involves quite different contextual factors and comprises a distinct set of strengths and limitations, which either facilitate or inhibit certain kinds of discourse. The best approach is to combine the two types of interview, in a complementary manner, to the study of QOL.

4.3.2. Research Design

4.3.2.1. Sampling

Burgess (1982a) makes a distinction between statistical sampling and theoretical sampling. The former is expected to be random and representative, while the latter is expected to be typical and diverse (Patton, 1980). The strategy of theoretical sampling is especially suited for the study of social representations (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). This strategy was adopted for both individual and group interviews in the present study.

The arrangement of sampling is based on three different social categories: generation, gender, and area of residence. This arrangement is derived from the following considerations. Firstly, the older generation may be assumed to be more profoundly

influenced by Confucianism and Marxism, while the younger generation, who grew up in a social environment where China is in a transition into a market economy, may be assumed to be more affected by capitalism and individualism. Secondly, in traditional Chinese society men were superior to women. Gender relations have been radical transformed since the introduction of communist ideology. Men and women are equal under the laws. The traditional values of gender inequality, however, have not lost their hold on the lives and thinking of ordinary Chinese people, especially in rural areas. It therefore made sense to sample the views of both men and women with respect to QOL. Thirdly, there are huge gaps between urban and rural areas in China in terms of daily life. Rural life is more traditional than urban life, and rural inhabitants fare generally less well than urban residents in terms of their financial income, access to health and entertainment facilities, and in educational attainment. The boundaries between the two sets of populations are relatively fixed and rigid. Thus, these three factors, generation, gender, and area of residence, are important for the representation, QOL, in Chinese society. They provide usefully interpretative rules make sense how Chinese people understand their QOL as well as that of others.

With these theoretical and empirical considerations in mind, I selected 16 interviewees for in-depth individual interview, covering three social categories: generation (older, at age of 50-65, and younger, at the age of 20-35), gender (male and female), and the area of residence (Beijing and Yangjiasan village in Hebei Province). There were 2 interviewees in the each of the eight different combinations of these three social categories. In group interviews, these three social categories, generation (older and younger), gender (male and female) and the area of residence (Beijing and Yangjiasan village), were also used to select the participants. There were four interviewing groups, namely, 1) elderly people in Beijing, 2) young adults in Beijing, 3) elder people in the village, and 4) young adults in the village. Each of four groups included both men and women. In these kinds of group settings, members of an interviewing group are of similar age and residence, but of mixed gender, in an attempt to replicate an everyday context of group composition in the "thinking society" (Farr, 1993). Each of these groups was composed of 5 or 6 participants. Appendix IV depicts the characteristics of these interviewees and participants.

4.3.2.2. Interview Strategies

Cohen and Manion (1989) list the advantages of using open-ended questions in the interviews:

> They are flexible; they allow the interviewer to probe so that he may go into more depth if he chooses, or clears up any misunderstandings; they enable the interviewer to test the limits of a respondent's knowledge; they encourage cooperation and rapport; and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes. Open-ended situations can also result in unexpected or unanticipated answers which may suggest hitherto unthought-of relationships or hypotheses. (p.313)

Due to these advantages, an unstructured, open-ended interviews strategy was applied to both individual and group interview sessions. The following questions were used in the different phases of an interview session to map out the general aspects or the key issues of QOL as experienced by respondents:

1. *What is your understanding of quality of life? How would you describe your quality of life?*
2. *Think of a time when you felt exceptionally good or exceptionally bad about your life. Tell me what happened.*
3. *What could make your life better? And what could make your life worse?*
4. *Looking a few years ahead, what improvements in your life would you most hope for? What are you going to do to achieve these improvements?*

In the course of an interview, the questions asked varied depending on the actual development of the interview. When a sub-theme, for instance, health, emerged in an interview session, the respondents were, normally, questioned at the following three levels:

a) Descriptions, for example:

What are the signs with regard to your health states?

What do you do to keep healthy or to avoid being ill in daily life?

b) Comparisons, for example,

How is a healthy person different from an unhealthy person?

Comparing with the past two decades, are people healthier now or not? Why/why not?

c) Explanations, for example,

Why is health important for your life?

Why can some people keep healthy and avoid being ill?

4.3.2.3. Procedures

I conducted both the in-depth individual and the group interviews myself. Both modes of interview were conducted in the following three phases:

Initiation

I introduced myself (a PhD student), the context of the interview (collecting data for my PhD thesis) and the main topic of the interview (your personal views on QOL). I also confirmed the confidentiality of what they say, and asked for their permission to record the interview. When the tape-recorder was switched on, the respondents were invited to introduce themselves in terms of their general personal information, such as, age, occupation, educational attainment, etc.

Main conversation

Both types of interviews were started with the very general theme of QOL. The order of the sub-themes and questions in different interview sessions were flexible, depending on the sequence of these sub-themes discussed by the respondents themselves in the course of their narration. This strategy was adopted in an attempt to avoid putting the issues into the respondent's mouth.

Every effort was made to create an open and relaxed atmosphere in which each respondent felt free to share his/her point of view in both the individual and the group interview situations. I did not predetermine any responses, but allowed opportunities for unanticipated issues to arise. My role was to listen, take notes and ask questions on relevant themes. In the group interview, as a moderator, I monitored the complex social interactions, encouraged contributions from all participants, and managed domination, disruption, diversion, and other problematic group dynamics. Notes were

taken of who is speaking and when. These notes aided in later transcription of recordings.

Closing the interview

When a formal interview session was closed and the tape-recorder was switched off, respondents were given an opportunity to make comments off the record. This informal debriefing, noted immediately after each session, was used for the interpretation of the discourse. Respondents were again ensured confidentiality and informed as to how the information they provided is to be used.

4.3.3. Data analysis

A qualitative content analysis was applied to the verbatim transcripts of the tape recordings of all the interviews. Data analysis was guided by the following four distinct but inter-related principles:

Firstly, the analysis combined a theory-driven approach with a data-driven approach. The data were analysed from the perspective of the theory of social representations in general and my own epistemological approach to QOL: QOL as a social representation, in particular, as discussed in Chapter Three. On the basis of such a theoretical approach, the coding frame was constructed in two different dimensions: 1) the themes being addressed, and 2) the social actors involved. The themes involved three different levels: descriptions about QOL, explanations regarding these descriptions and strategies for maintaining and improving QOL. The unit of analysis is the unit of meaning. Rather than coding into a pre-existing scheme, the themes on each level were summed up inductively from the data. The themes were continually created and revised throughout the coding process. As far as the actor is concerned, it is theoretically assumed that QOL as a social representation is constructed by actors depending on their social backgrounds: generation (young adult and the elderly), gender (male and female) and the area of residency (urban and rural).

Secondly, the analysis considered both the structure and content of the representation QOL. QOL as a social representation is a broad-range dynamic network of values,

beliefs and practices, themes and sub-themes cannot be investigated inorganically. To sketch the complex structure and interrelationships within the representation QOL, the analysis also focused on the complicated links amongst these themes/sub-themes, and amongst the descriptions, explanations and practices as well. This strategy thus provides an in-depth portrayal of the themes and sub-themes of the common thinking about QOL and its dynamic organisation.

Thirdly, the analysis was concerned not only with the QOL the structure and content, but also with its constructing processes. Much attention was paid to how the representation QOL is grounded in the Chinese social and cultural background, and thus is constructed through social interactions, communication and the practices of daily life. This strategy allows the present study to uncover both the thematic content of QOL and the processes of the genesis, maintenance, transmission and transformation of the content.

And fourthly, the analysis of data also considered both presence and absence in a discourse. A theme may be absent or implicit from a discourse, due to being unspoken, taken-for-granted, or taboo. Both what is present and what is absent are crucial to social representation research (Gervais, Morant & Penn, 1999). Bearing the issue of absence in mind, the analytic work kept a balance between accepting manifest content at face-value and identifying an implicit or unspoken theme. The triangulation of methods of data collection used in this study provides a useful device to retrieve the absence from a given data set.

The computer software package "QSR-NUDIST" version 4 was used to assist this analysis. Appendix V presents the "Index System" created from the interview data. This "Index System" reflects my conceptualisation of the data.

4.4. Content Analysis of the Chinese Newspaper: *Press Digest*

4.4.1. Justification

The purpose of the content analysis of the Chinese newspaper is to pinpoint how the representation QOL is reflected in the circulation of information in the media, and thus to explore the representation at a cultural level. The content analysis of the newspaper, unlike word associations and interviews as described in the previous sections, does not produce data *per se*. It makes use of data periodically produced for the purposes other than research. These data constitute the continuing records of the society. The distinctive advantage of this method is its unobtrusive nature (Webb *et al*, 1966). It enables us to gain access to the real-world knowledge of QOL, which is not influenced or contaminated in either form or content as it might be simply by virtue of being investigated.

The theory of social representations explicitly places great significance on the cultural level of social representations, as manifested in the mass media of communication, both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, Moscovici (1981a) describes social psychology as a science of culture, and particularly of our culture. Farr (1990, 1993, 1998) proposes that social representations are part of culture as well as of cognition, they exist in the media as well as in the minds of people. "Cultural phenomena are ecological patterns of psychological phenomena" (Farr, 1990, p.59). This profound argument establishes a theoretical connection between social representations at the cultural level and the empirical investigation of the mass media coverage on the one hand, and, between cultural phenomena and psychological phenomena on the other hand.

Social representations are intrinsically linked to communication processes. Communication refers not only to face-to-face interaction between two or more individuals, but also to communication through the media. The mass media of communication, which exert a profound impact on the ways in which people act and interact with each other in modern societies, play a key role in the formation and diffusion of representations (Farr, 1995; Sommer, 1998). Thus, in accepting the theory of social representations, the researcher is committed to treating seriously the information that circulates in society concerning the object of his/her study. Often this involves an analysis of the content of the media (Farr, 1993). Empirically, the cultural and social dimensions are re-instated in the study of social psychology by Moscovici's (1961/1976) original work, social representations of psychoanalysis in

France, through a content analysis of the print media. This seminal work differentiates the study of social representations from the conventional study of attitude and opinion, which is more or less individualised. The content analysis of the written or pictorial materials, presented by mass media in particular, is nowadays routinely included in the various topics of social representation studies, for instance, illness (Herzlich & Pierret, 1987), mental illness (De Rosa, 1987), health, illness and handicap (Marková & Farr, 1995), and man (Kruse, 1998).

4.4.2. Sampling

Tabloid newspapers are considered as an especially appropriate media for the purposes of the present study. Although television and radio have strong influence on contemporary Chinese society, it is difficult to gain access to a large amount of the video/sound-recorded tapes or transcripts of the programmes broadcasted. However, there is no such limitation as far as newspapers are concerned. Issues are available not only at the time of publication, but also in library archives. There are two types of newspaper in China: one is the official organ of the Communist Party, the other is tabloid newspaper. The former, as the mouthpiece of the state, aims at propaganda and propagation (Moscovici, 1961/1976); the latter, by contrast, is meant to reflect the concerns of ordinary Chinese people and to diffuse information. Tabloid newspapers, thus, are chosen as appropriate media for analysis in this study.

Press Digest was selected as an appropriate newspaper for a systematic content analysis. As a national publication, and with the circulation of 1.2 million copies, *Press Digest* is one of the most widely circulated publications in China. It publishes half-weekly, on every Thursday and Sunday. The articles reprinted in this newspaper cover political, social, legal, cultural, economic and academic issues and the everyday lives of Chinese people. A large portion of articles is related to the ideas of QOL. The newspaper contains eight pages in each issue. From 1995 onward, *Press Digest* reorganised its layout into eight sections, each occupying a single page:

Page 1: Current Affaire
Page 2: Economic Life

Page 3: Law and Social Life
Page 4: Health Care
Page 5: Arts and Sports
Page 6: Academia and Book Review
Page 7: Report from Abroad
Page 8: Feature

Although a large portion of articles on *Press Digest* may be relevant to the notion of QOL, it is impossible to analyse all of them. Only the articles form the "Feature" section published between January 1998 and March 2000 were selected for further content analysis.

The reasons for this sampling strategy are twofold. Firstly, "Feature" is a superordinary section. In content, the article in this section, normally, focuses on ordinary people's experiences in everyday life, including the political, social, legal, cultural, economic, domestic aspects of people's life. In format, the size of the article in this section is large, as normally there is usually only one article on each issue, which occupies the whole of page eight. Secondly, *Press Digest* has been available on the Internet from January 1998[8]. Therefore it was possible to download the relevant materials for a computer aided data analysis (hardcopies are also available).

After previewing all the whole articles in the "Feature" section published from January 1998 to March 2000, articles that are completely irrelevant to the notion of QOL in Chinese society, such as stories from abroad and investigations on criminals, were excluded from the sample. In this way, 145 articles in total were selected for a further content analysis. Appendix VI lists the issue dates and titles of these articles.

4.4.3. Data analysis

The principles for analysing the interview data, as discussed in Section 4.3.3, were also applied to the media data analysis. Although the term QOL rarely appears in most of the selected articles, these articles describe the genuine experiences of how ordinary Chinese people organise their lives, and reveal fundamental changes in Chinese society and their impacts on people's everyday life. Thus the articles truly

[8] Its website is: http://www.gmw.com.cn/3_rili/jbcx_gb.htm

reflect social actors' views of QOL. The analysis employed the following three criteria to identify whether a unit of meaning in an article is relevant to the notion of QOL: a) inherent logic of an article itself, c) the semantic elements detected from the task of free associations, and c) the themes and subthemes disclosed in the interview data. The computer software package "QSR-NUDIST" version 4 was also used to assist the data analysis. Appendix VII presents the "Index System" created from the media data.

4.5. Triangulation and Integration

Considering the multiple methods used in the present study, it is indispensable to further elaborate on how different source of data are integrated. The idea of triangulation was originated navigation and military strategy in which multiple reference points are used to locate the exact position of an object (Smith, 1975). Triangulation as a methodological principle was initially imported in social science research as a strategy for validating results obtained with individual methods. For instance, Fielding and Fielding (1986) put emphasis on triangulation as a validity-test strategy.

However, triangulation as a methodological principle in social science research has recently shifted its focus from validation into in-depth understanding (Denzin, 1989; Flick, 1992a, b; Gervais, 1997). In other words, the purpose of using multiple methods is to "gain a really many-sided kaleidoscope" (Flick, 1992a, p.180). Methodological triangulation in this thesis relates multi-methods in a complementary fashion so as to add breadth and depth to an understanding of complexity of the organisation of social thinking about QOL.

Bearing this in mind, a "theme-centred" strategy was adopted to integrate different sets of the data. In other words, the data which address the same theme, or the same issue, were pooled together. The presentation of the empirical findings is organised around the substantive topics of the social representation in question. Of course some inconsistencies and contradictions exist between the data sets. These may be due to the limitation of a particular method, but they can also demonstrate that the

representation QOL appears differently as it is approached from different angles. The inconsistencies and contradictions between the data sets do not necessarily invalidate the findings across different methods. Rather, they may capture different aspects of QOL.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that social representations in general, and QOL in particular, are multilayered, that they co-exist and operate at both unreflexive and reflexive levels on the one hand, and at both cultural and psychological levels on the other hand. A combination of different methods allows one to intercept and to analyse the representations in these diverse locations. Bearing this methodological assumption in mind, I made use of the five complementary research methods in order to analyse how the representation QOL emerges and circulates in Chinese society. These methods are word associations, semantic differentials, public discourse in the media, individual interviews and focus groups discussions with the rural and urban residents amongst different generations. For each method, its theoretical rationale, research design and the methods of data analysis were described. The methodological triangulation aims to add breadth and depth to our understanding of complexity of QOL as a social representation.

5

THE SEMANTIC MEANINGS OF QOL: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Given the scarcity of research on the representation QOL amongst Chinese population and the complexity of the issue involved, this first empirical chapter of the thesis aims to explore the semantic meanings of QOL in Chinese society. Semantically, the meanings of a concept can be expressed in two distinct but interrelated categories: denotation and connotation. Rather than attempting to approach to the issue in the manner of lexicons and thesaurus, this chapter examines the semantic meanings of QOL empirically. Section 5.1 explores the denotative meanings of QOL through word associations tasks. Section 5.2 explores the connotative meanings of QOL through semantic differentials task.

5.1. The Denotative Meanings of QOL

The denotative meanings of QOL refer to the totality of things to which QOL is applicable. To this end, we need to explore what factors or elements are associated with QOL. The analysis of word associations provides such information on QOL from the point of view of the actors. It explores, in an admittedly limited and deconcontexted fashion, the range of meanings which lay subjects spontaneously and unflexively attribute to QOL.

As discussed in Chapter Four, there were two tasks of word associations in this study. In total, 2804 valid associations were generated in these two word associations tasks: 1376 for Task 1, and 1428 for Task 2. On average, each respondent gave 4.34 and 4.50, respectively, in response to Task 1 and Task 2.[9]

A qualitative content analysis of all associations given in the two word associations tasks was carried out at first. The result of this preliminary analysis (based on the

[9] The valid cases for Task 1 and Task 2 are 317, respectively, although 320 respondents participated in completing the questionnaire.

procedure discussed in Chapter Four) led to the creation of 30 relatively mutually exclusive semantic elements. And then a quantitative analysis on the frequency and sequence of associations was performed on these 30 semantic elements. The frequency of response in the tasks of word associations can be interpreted as the degree of consensus on a specific semantic element amongst respondents. The rank can be interpreted as the strength of the link between a specific semantic element and the target construct, QOL. Table 5-1 shows frequencies and ranks of order for these 30 semantic elements.

Several observations can be drawn by examining Table 5-1. Firstly, from the perspective of ordinary Chinese people, QOL is neither mere subjective satisfaction/dissatisfaction in life nor mere objective living conditions as the mainstream QOL literature stated. Rather, QOL is a multi-faceted construct. The denotation of QOL in contemporary Chinese society refers to all 30 semantic elements listed in Table 5-1. These elements involve a broad range of dimensions of life, including intra-personal attributes, interpersonal accounts, person-material links, individual-society relations and human-environment arrangements. This finding is compatible with Lawton's (1991) view that QOL is the "multidimensional evaluation, by both intra-personal and socio-normative criteria of the person-environment system of an individual" (p.6). However, the multidimensional view of QOL itself and the content of these dimensions, in Lawton's research, are determined a priori by the researcher. These 30 semantic elements of QOL found in this study were settled empirically by the respondents without imposing any preconceptions of the researcher.

Secondly, these 30 semantic elements are not endowed with an equal importance. Rather, they are associated with QOL in varying orders of priority. It can be seen from Table 5-1 that the respondents gave the highest priority to money, in terms of both frequency and the order of evocation, in both Task 1 and Task 2. This suggests that money is believed to be the most significant constituent of QOL. Considering the average frequencies and ranks between Task 1 and Task 2, as shown on the column of Frequency Mean and the column of Rank Mean on Table 5-1, family, housing,

Table 5-1: Distributions of The Semantic Elements

SEMANTIC ELEMENTS	FREQUENCY [a]			RANK [b]		
	TASK 1	TASK 2	MEAN	TASK 1	TASK 2	MEAN
Money	46.1 [146]	63.1 [200]	54.6 [173]	1.92	1.93	1.93
Family	16.4 [52]	40.1 [127]	28.2 [90]	3.13	2.80	2.96
Housing	40.1 [127]	10.7 [34]	25.4 [81]	2.25	3.06	2.66
Happiness	29.7 [94]	18.3 [58]	24.0 [76]	2.52	2.62	2.57
Education\ Knowledge	15.1 [48]	31.9 [101]	23.5 [75]	2.81	2.41	2.61
Leisure	30.3 [96]	14.5 [46]	22.4 [71]	3.14	3.63	3.38
Health	18.9 [60]	22.3 [74]	21.1 [67]	2.80	2.95	2.87
Work	12.6 [40]	28.1 [89]	20.3 [65]	2.83	2.81	2.82
Food	32.5 [103]	7.3 [23]	19.9 [63]	1.99	2.43	2.21
Environment	14.5 [46]	25.2 [80]	19.9 [63]	2.54	2.84	2.69
Personal Network	12.6 [40]	24.9 [79]	18.8 [60]	4.08	4.00	4.04
Society & State	10.4 [33]	25.6 [81]	18.0 [57]	3.15	2.60	2.88
Life Attitude	11.0 [35]	22.7 [72]	16.9 [54]	3.14	2.72	2.93
Spiritual Life	18.3 [58]	9.5 [30]	13.9 [44]	2.64	1.97	2.31
Material Life	15.1 [48]	6.6 [21]	10.9 [35]	2.29	2.48	2.38
Commitment	13.9 [44]	7.6 [24]	10.7 [34]	2.50	2.71	2.60
Ability	4.4 [14]	17.0 [54]	10.7 [34]	2.86	2.46	2.66
Personality	3.5 [11]	17.4 [55]	10.4 [33]	3.55	3.45	3.50
Clothing	17.0 [54]	1.9 [6]	9.5 [30]	2.39	2.50	2.44
Social Service	12.6 [40]	5.7 [18]	9.1 [29]	3.35	3.00	3.18
Car	13.9 [44]	2.5 [8]	8.2 [26]	3.32	3.75	3.53
Success	6.6 [21]	8.5 [27]	7.6 [24]	3.14	2.74	2.94
Social Position	9.1 [29]	5.7 [18]	7.4 [24]	2.45	2.94	2.70
Self-Effort	3.5 [11]	10.7 [34]	7.1 [23]	2.55	2.53	2.54
Consumer Goods	9.8 [31]	3.8 [12]	6.8 [22]	2.58	3.83	3.21
Love & Affection	4.7 [15]	5.7 [18]	5.2 [17]	3.13	2.56	2.84
Opportunity	1.3 [4]	6.9 [22]	4.1 [13]	3.50	3.73	3.61
Security	4.7 [15]	2.5 [8]	3.6 [12]	3.13	4.00	3.57
Freedom	4.1 [13]	1.9 [6]	3.0 [10]	3.08	3.17	3.12
Sex	1.3 [4]	0.9 [3]	1.1 [4]	3.75	4.00	3.88

Notes:

a. Frequency represents the ratio of the number of associations to the number of valid cases (317 for both Task 1 and Task 2); the figures in the brackets are the number of associations.

b. Rank is calculated by the following formula:

$Rank=(R_1*F_1+R_2*F_2+...+R_n*F_n)/(F_1+F_2+...+F_n)$

Here, $R_1, R_2, ... R_n$ stands for the order of rank 1, 2, ...and n.

$F_1, F_2, ... F_n$ stands for the number of response to each rank.

happiness, education/knowledge, health, work, food, environment, society/state and life attitude are also important constituents of QOL[10]. It seems that the remainder of the elements are relatively subsidiary components of QOL.

Thirdly, there are visible discrepancies between the associations to Task 1 and the associations to Task 2, in terms of both frequency and the order of evocation. As described in Chapter Four, Task 1 tends to elicit spontaneous and unreflective thoughts and feelings to QOL, while Task 2 tends to elicit more rational and reflective (but not at all a great depth) views and ideas to QOL, they are thus likely to tap into different layers of the representation. A comparative analysis on the differences between the associations to Task 1 and Task 2 shows that, the elements housing, happiness, leisure, food, clothing and car are more salient in Task 1 than in Task 2; while the elements family, education/knowledge, work, personal network, society/state, life attitude, ability, personality and self-effort are more salient in Task 2 than in Task 1. It seems that Task 1 is likely to evoke the associations with respect to material possessions and subjective experiences, while Task 2 is likely to evoke the associations with respect to the self and his/her relations to significant others and society. This result provides evidence to the multi-layered nature of a social representation (Farr, 1990, 1993; Marková, 1996). It also demonstrates the values of a multi-method design to explore the diverse locations of a social representation.

Fourthly, respondents associated with the target word QOL by common language at very different levels of abstraction. Their associations involve both very abstract notions, for instance, material life or material possession, and particularly manifest objects, such as a house, foodstuff, a piece of clothing and a car, although these semantic elements all belong to the analytical category of "material possessions". This form of different levels of abstraction also applies to the element spirituality (or spiritual life) and other relevant elements. Spirituality and religion are interchangeable terms (Lewis, 2001) in the sense that both refer to the search for the sacred in Western culture (Hill, et *al,* 2000; Pargament, 1999), although the distinction and overlap between the two have increasingly drawn the attention of social scientists (Hill, *et al,*

[10] Cut-off criterion here is as following: frequency > 15% and rank <3.0.

2000). However, this is not the same case in Chinese culture. China has never been a highly religious society due to the deep-rooted influence of Confucianism (Tang & Zuo, 1996). Following Marx's motto that religion is the opiate of the masses, religious commitments and activities have been strictly restricted by the Communist Party of China (Chu & Ju, 1993). Consequently, spirituality or spiritual life, to ordinary Chinese people, is a mere counterpart of material life, which may entail subjective, intellectual, cultural, ideological or moral aspects of life. In this sense, spirituality in Chinese culture is a highly abstract element, and other relevant semantic elements, such as happiness, commitment, leisure, life attitude and success, are extremely pertinent to spirituality. A possible explanation for the symbiosis of the associations at both a highly abstract level and a concrete level is that QOL, as a form of common-sense knowledge, reflects the polysemous nature of daily language and the co-existence of different modes of knowledge (Moscovici & Marková, 1998).

Finally, although the 30 semantic elements of QOL listed in Table 5-1 are significant to an understanding of the denotative meaning of QOL, it seems that the overall organisation of QOL is dismantled by the method of word associations. These semantic can only be viewed as the "building blocks" of the representation QOL. A social representation in general, and QOL in particular, is a network where various semantic elements that draw their significance from all the elements to which they are linked (Moscovici, 1988; Vergès & Bastounis, 2001). However, the method of word associations cannot grasp the contextualised meanings of the target stimulus word, and thus significantly reduces the complexity of the social representation under study. As a consequence, both the richness of the meaning of each element, and the interactions amongst these elements, are lost. For instance, the meanings of material possession and spirituality, and the way they interact with other elements such as health, family, work, personal network and environment, in the contemporary Chinese context, are absent from this data set. In other words, ordinary Chinese people's knowledge of QOL has only been hinted at through the analysis of its denotative meanings. The real challenge will be to find how the elements fit into an organising structure of QOL, to identify the sources and consequences of the representation QOL in lives of different groups of Chinese people. Such issues will be explored in depth through other methods and will be reported in Chapter Six, Seven and Eight.

5.2. The Connotative Meanings of QOL

The semantic meanings of term QOL involve not only its denotation but also its connotation. According to Salomom (1966), the connotation of a concept refers to the emotive or affective response it arouses in the minds of its users. Hanestad (1990) suggests that the term QOL has gained currency partly because of its positive connotation. However, to my knowledge, there is no empirical evidence on the emotional connotation of QOL. Osgood's technique of semantic differentials is, by design, a method devised to assess the spontaneous affective or emotional connotation of a concept (Osgood, 1971; Bauer, 1993). The analysis of the results from the semantic differentials used in this study thus provides valuable information about the connotative meanings of QOL in Chinese society.

5.2.1. The Analysis of Semantic Profiles

The 320 respondents completed the task of semantic differentials in the form of a questionnaire, as described in Chapter Four. The medians of their ratings on the 25 polarities for the concept QOL is shown Figure 5-1. It is apparent from Figure 5-1 that the concept QOL in this study received essentially positive ratings. None of the 25 polarities falls on the negative side. Only 1 of the 25 polarities (changeable-stable) is at the neutral point (median = 4)[11]. This result reveals a common representative pattern which places the image of QOL towards the positive pole. In other words, QOL has a positive emotional connotation.

In addition, in the tasks of word associations, respondents normally associated QOL with positive factors, such as success, safety, health, ability, satisfaction, and material sufficiency. Respondents sometimes added some positive adjectives to certain factors,

[11] This neutral point rating may reflect the dilemma in Chinese society: ordinary people beg for social stability to secure their QOL on the one hand, but they are eager to reform the current economic and political systems to improve their QOL in the medium or long-term on the other hand.

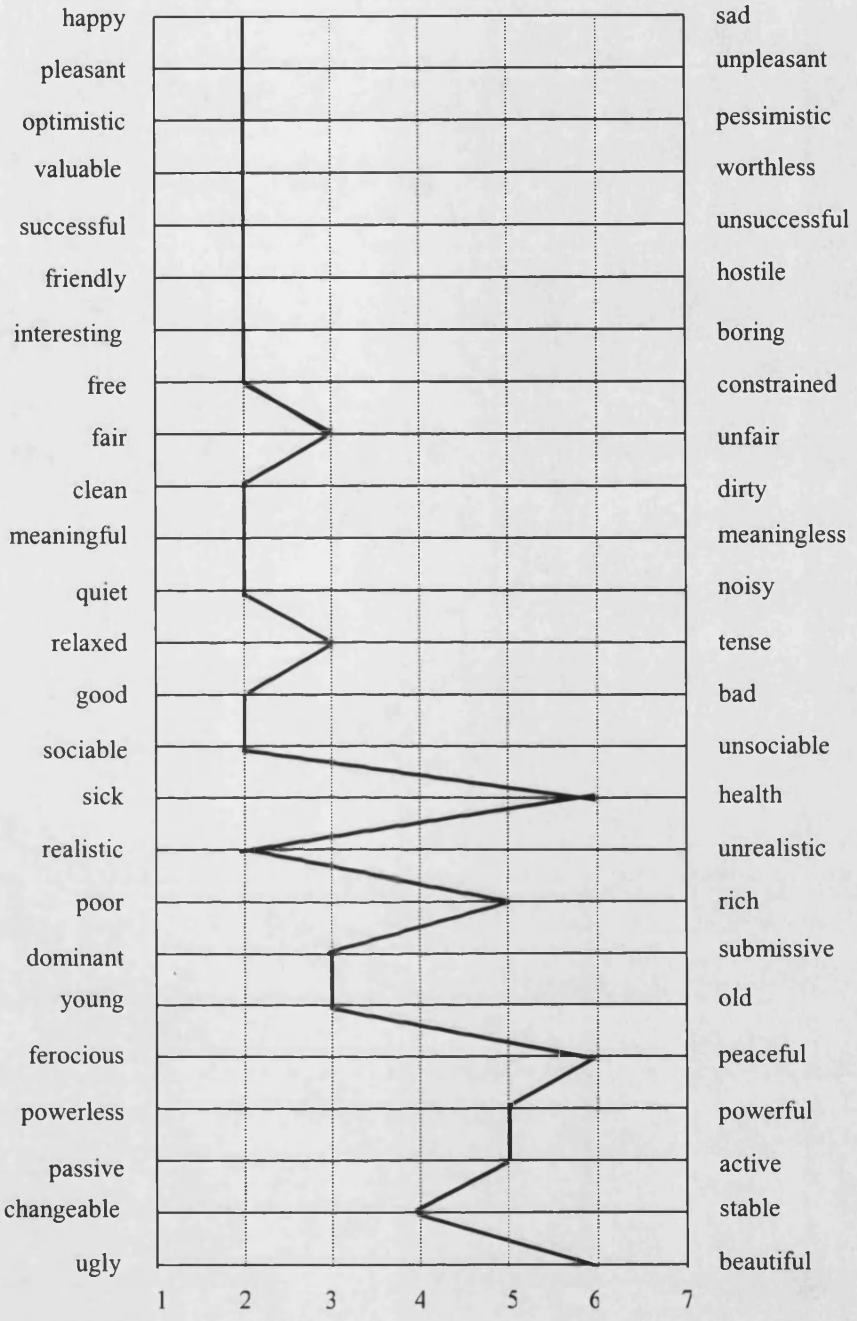

Figure 5-1: Semantic differential profiles of QOL

for instance, enjoyable job, happy family, and positive attitude towards life. Occasionally, respondents produced a few negative associations, for instance, pollution. Adverse associations, however, reflect a longing for the good life, for example, by improving environmental quality. In brief, empirical evidence from both semantic differentials and word associations suggest that QOL is commonsensically positive in Chinese culture.

5.2.2. The Semantic Space of QOL

A factor analysis was applied to the ratings of semantic differentials in order to explore the semantic space of QOL. It produced an interpretable two- factor solution[12] as shown in Table 5-2. These two factors account for 42.38% of the total variance. Amongst these, the first factor accounts for 32.07% of the total variance, and the second factor, 7.31%.

Although the connotation of a concept is normally described in three independent dimensions: evaluation, potency, and activity (Osgood, 1957, 1971), the latter two dimensions, may be combined as dynamism (Osgood, 1957; Kumata & Schramm, 1969). In addition, the dimensions potency and activity can hardly be explained in terms of the representation QOL. Thus a two-dimensional space model, evaluation-dynamism, is used as a semantic frame of reference in this study.

The first and dominant factor may be identified as an evaluation as shown in Table 5-2. This factor is represented with the following polarities: happy-sad, pleasant-unpleasant, optimistic-pessimistic, valuable-worthless, successful-unsuccessful, friendly-hostile, interesting-boring, free-constrained, fair-unfair, clean-dirty, meaningful-meaningless, quiet-noisy, relaxed-tense, good-bad, sociable-unsociable, realistic-unrealistic, and dominant-submissive. Most of these polarities have loadings

[12] The factor analysis was conducted on SPSS 7.5. A principal component analysis was chosen as the extraction method, and Direct Oblimin (delta = - 9) as the rotation method. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy is .920.

Table 5-2. A two-factor solution for 25 polarities

	Component	
	1	2
happy-sad	.783	.122
pleasant-unpleasant	.752	.084
optimistic-pessimistic	.743	.101
valuable-worthless	.722	.057
successful-unsuccessful	.711	.159
friendly-hostile	.701	.060
interesting-boring	.699	.133
free-constrained	.692	.158
fair-unfair	.682	.005
clean-dirty	.673	.098
meaningful-meaningless	.662	.103
quiet-noisy	.608	.061
relaxed-tense	.578	.169
good-bad	.573	.178
sociable-unsociable	.568	.093
sick-healthy	-.546*	.492
realistic-unrealistic	.517	.021
poor-rich	-.487	.420
dominant-submissive	.413	.073
young-old	.372	.159
ferocious-peaceful	-.380	.682
powerless-powerful	-.401	.477
passive-active	-.454	.471
changeable-stable	.002	.452
ugly-beautiful	-.387	.412

Note:

* Negative loadings are due to the orientation of this polarity.

of .50 or better to the first factor. This first factor reflects substantial agreement with the results obtained in Osgood's studies (1957, 1971) where factor analysis produced a first factor identified as evaluation. The polarities sick-healthy, poor-rich and young-old have high loadings on the first factor but do not restrict their loading to this factor. The highest loadings and the most restricted polarities to the second factor are ferocious-peaceful and changeable-stable. Thus the second factor might be labelled as dynamism. The polarities powerless-powerful, passive-active and ugly-beautiful have high loadings on this factor but do not restrict their loading to this factor.

With reference to Figure 5-1, the connotation of QOL is represented as either strong (media >= 2 or median <= 6), weak (median =3 or median =5), or indifferent (median = 4), across the 25 attributes. Within the dimension evaluation, QOL connotes 20 attributes. 15 of these are strongly positive: happy, pleasant, optimistic, valuable, successful, friendly, interesting, free, clean, meaningful, quiet, good, sociable, healthy and realistic. 5 of these are weakly positive ones: fair, relaxed, rich, dominant, young. Within the dimension dynamism, QOL connotes 5 attributes. 2 of them are strongly positive: peaceful, and beautiful, and 2 of these are weakly positive: powerful and active. 1 of these is at the neutral point: changeable/stable. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that Chinese people conceive QOL as a fairly good, and somewhat dynamic, construction.

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter has empirically explored the semantic meanings of QOL from the viewpoint of social actors in Chinese society. The analysis suggests that the denotation of QOL involves 30 different semantic elements, generated by the content analysis of the word associations tasks. Amongst these elements, money is regarded as the most significant constituent of QOL. High priorities are also given to the following 10 elements: family, housing, happiness, education/knowledge, health, work, food, environment, society/state and life attitude. The analysis of the results from the semantic differentials indicates that QOL contains a positive emotional connotation. The concept QOL can be also specified in a two-dimensional semantic space: evaluation and dynamism. QOL is conceived by ordinary Chinese people as a

fairly positive, and somewhat dynamic, construction. However, due to the restriction of the methods of word associations and semantic differentials, the organisation of social thinking about QOL is exploded into a number of semantic elements. We now turn to the detailed examination of this organisation, which emerges through individual and group interviews with lay Chinese people and through accounts published in the Chinese newspaper *Press Digest*.

6

A DYADIC CONSTRUCTION OF QOL: HAVING AND BEING

This chapter explores the basic organisational principles of the representation QOL: What is the underlying taken-for-granted basis of the notion of QOL in contemporary Chinese society? How do ordinary Chinese people conceptualise QOL in their daily life? Section 6.1 shows that, despite the great complexity evident in the data, QOL is a dyadic construction structured around two pivotal orientations: having and being. Sections 6.2 and 6.3 discuss these two orientations in detail, respectively, including their social and cultural roots, their manifestations, their characteristics and their implications.

6.1. The Distinction Between Having and Being

Chinese people do not conceptualise QOL as a unitary construction, but a heterogeneous aggregate of meanings. As discussed in Chapter Five, 317 respondents in the word associations tasks produced a total of 2,804 valid responses, grouped around 30 semantic elements. The interview and media data also show that the notion of QOL invokes a wide range of themes and subthemes, which varies from one individual to another. Further analysis, however, indicates that QOL is not an unorganised mass, but a polymorphic construction. As will be shown in this chapter and the following chapters, the most important meaningful differentiation within this polymorph is the distinction between having and being. Having and being are two central orientations, which permeate and underpin almost all aspects of the discourses on QOL across the different data sets. The having orientation constructs QOL as the possession of money and material objects, and an individual's possessive relationship to them; the being orientation frames QOL as psycho-social and spiritual sustenance, and an individual's intangible relationship to relevant social groups. The distinction between having and being does not mean the return to Cartesian dualism between subject and object. Rather, it entails divergent types of relationships between subject and object. For both the having and being orientations, "the individual is an

inseparable part of the world and world is a part of the essence of the individual" (Kilbourne, 1991, p.446). The having orientation focuses on subject's possessive relationship towards object, gives priority to how subject instrumentalises object as resources to be possessed and consumed. The being orientation emphasises the "authentic" relationships between subject and object, and gives priority to the existential merits derived from the harmony between the two.

However, neither the having orientation nor the being orientation are found to exist in their pure form. Rather, they coexist dynamically. A hybrid of the having and the being orientations is the most notable feature in the discourses on QOL. The hybrid nature of having and being is twofold. Firstly, almost all subjects in this study draw on both orientations to construct QOL, but the relative importance accorded to each aspect varies from one individual to another, from one life domain to another, and from one conversational context to another. Secondly. The acknowledgement of the disparity between these two orientations does not necessarily reject the links between the two. From the having orientation, possession is perceived as the crux of life, while a spiritual sustenance is seen a derivative from such possession. From the being orientation, spiritual well-being is perceived as the pivot of life, while possession is seen as mere means for survival. The following excerpts illustrate the differences between these two orientations, as well as the hybrid nature of the two. The first excerpt emphasises having, the second, being.

> G2-03: The bigger the house, the better the life. The more the money I own, the better the life I have. If I had a very luxurious house, I could enjoy it myself alone, or invite my friends to stay with me. Therefore, the richer the material aspect of quality of life is, the richer the spiritual aspect of quality of life is.
> G2-02: Only if material things are guaranteed can you enjoy the spiritual things. For example, if you cannot afford to buy a computer, you cannot enjoy the fun brought about by the computer.
>
> I don't deny that quality of life is related to food and shelter, and to better living conditions. But quality of life is not restricted to these things. I think that quality of life for our Chinese people is mainly related to spiritual life. That is to say, you can rationally feel that you live in this country, you know the values of your life and your work, and your life is enjoyable. (I-04)

This dyadic construction of QOL, as will be seen in Chapter Seven, cuts across the following critical life domains: heath, family, work, social relations and environment. In these critical domains, having is always associated with an instrumental approach, while being is generally coupled with an expressive approach. The instrumental approach concentrates on the monetary values derived from these life domains, and instrumentalises these domains as economic resources to be possessed and consumed. The expressive approach focuses on the joy derived from these life domains, and attaches existential meanings to them. This split between the instrumental and the expressive approaches derives from, and corresponds to, the division between having and being. This dyadic view, therefore, acts as the organisational principle of the representation QOL.

It is worth noting that the distinction between having and being is by no means specific to the representation QOL, or, indeed, to Chinese society. It is, to some extent, comparable to Gabriel Marcel's (1949) theological and philosophical demarcation between "having" and "being", and to Eric Fromm's (1979) humanist-psychoanalytic distinction between "to have" and "to be". However, neither Marcel's nor Fromm's divisions are concerned with QOL, but with the different modes of human existence in Western culture. In this thesis, the distinction corresponds to the underlying taken-for-granted organising principle of the representation QOL, induced by the analysis of the empirical data from Chinese society. Furthermore, it will be of interest to explore how this dyadic construction is lived, and to analyse the specific contents to which it refers, in contemporary China. Given the coexistence of complementary and conflicting value systems – traditional Confucianism, orthodox Marxism and the Western capitalism – in contemporary Chinese society, QOL is inevitably bound up with correspondent conflicting values, experiences and practices amongst Chinese people. Indeed, Confucianism elevates intellectual and spiritual values over material interests (Chai & Chai, 1962), while capitalism is characterised by its materialistic orientation (Dittmar, 1992; Tawney, 1921). Marxism promotes public ownership, capitalism promotes private ownership. Confucianism focuses on hierarchy, while Marxism and capitalism emphasise equality. Confucianism and Marxism advance solidarity, while capitalism encourages egotism and personal freedoms (Farr, 1991). These different pairs of antitheses are bound to generate a complex and conflicting representation QOL.

6.2. Having Orientation

Materialism and hedonism are dominant themes in Western industrial societies (Fournier & Richins, 1991; Fromm, 1979). With the rapid development of a market economy in China, the very same logic is unfolding there. Combined with some elements of traditional Chinese values, money and material possessions are seen as essential to QOL. It is in this context that "to have" is actualised as a crucial orientation towards QOL

6.2.1. Money as a Nucleus of QOL

The having orientation is particularly preoccupied with money. Here, money is never a mere means of survival. Rather, it is being endowed with near omnipotence as well as omnipresence. It constitutes the pivot of everyday life, and thus a major pillar of QOL.

Analysis of the data indicates that the possession of money is an important string of the discourses on QOL. Perhaps surprisingly given the recent communist past, many Chinese people believe that money is the most important thing in life and that the ownership of money is a self-evident manifestation of QOL. In this sense, money constitutes a nucleus of QOL. As shown in Chapter Five, in the tasks of word associations, money is given the highest priority, in terms of both frequency and the order of evocation. Some respondents in the word associations even associate QOL with nothing but money. In the interviews, respondents also express this same theme that money is a nucleus of QOL, with different tones. For instance:

> I don't think money is almighty. But I do believe that money is the determinant of quality of life. We need money in every aspect of life. We have to suffer a lot without enough money. (I-01)

> Money is the major pillar of quality of life. It is absolutely impossible to talk about quality of life without this financial pillar. [...] I earned only 30-40 *yuan* a month before the 1970s, and I had to support my little children. I lived a difficult life at that time. I wanted to have a good life

> but I could not afford it. My income has increased recently. I now earn 800-900 *yuan*[13]. My children have grown up, and become financially independent. It is obvious that my quality of life has been much enhanced. (I-03)

The importance accorded to money must be interpreted in relation to China's current transition into a market economy. In the pre-reform era, as China performed a command economy and put class struggle as a vehicle for social development, ordinary people had very little money, and money had limited functions due to the scarcity of goods in the marketplace. With the transition into a market economy, the country seeks economic growth in the first place. The emergence of a market economy has not only provoked a remarkable rise in the average per capita income, a brisk market, and a growing gap between rich and poor, but it has also promoted further capitalisation. For instance, former welfare provisions, such as housing, education and medical care, are increasingly monetarised. The power of, and desire for, money is thus accentuated. It is widely believed that money can buy a good life, as money allows the acquisition of goods as well as expresses a person's worth. In this sense, the country's prioritisation of economic growth goes hand in hand with the profane valorisation of the possession of money and material wealth.

The obsession with money and material possessions is closely linked with a lay representation of a market economy (Roland-Lévy, Kirchler, Penz, & Gray, 2001). A market economy is seen as a system ruled by the inexorable power of money. It contrasts sharply with the previously practised socialist system in which society was dominated by state planning, and with the prospect of a communist system, promised by Marxism and the Chinese Communist Party, in which money would be abolished. With the transition into a market economy, Chinese society has gradually evolved into a monetarised society in which money penetrates and participates in almost every sphere of life, and money can be translated into almost everything we want. Yet, this widespread belief in the great omnipotence of money does not necessarily call into question the coming of Communism. The idealisation of Capitalism cannot entirely eradicate the dream of a fair society based on the Communist redistributive principles.

[13] *Yuan*, a currency unit in China. 1 *yuan* is currently equal to 0.9 GB pound.

> Now it is a market economy. Money is the equivalent of a commodity. If you have money, you have everything, you can have whatever you want, and your quality of life is thus guaranteed. As this guy just mentioned, if you want a computer, you can afford to buy a computer. Money has this power. The money you own represents how much social wealth you can possess and how much material resources you can arrange. [...] Money is the financial basis of life, and everybody needs it. Your quality of life and even your survival will be threatened without money. Perhaps when Communism is realised in the future, money will no longer be needed because commodities will be distributed in according to needs. (G1-01)

The pivotal role of money as a nucleus of QOL is illustrated in the following four aspects. Firstly, money is represented both as an enabling agency that allows the acquisition of goods and the sharing of social wealth, and as an expression of a possessive relationship over material objects. As an exchange value for the acquisition of goods, money is framed as a unique device that differentiates a bitter life from a good life. QOL is objectified, to a large extent, through the possession of money.

> In the past we were leading a hard life. We could not even afford enough food sometimes. Even if you had some money, you were only able to buy the few commodities which were under the state control. Due to the reforms and opening-up policy, our income has been significantly increased, and market has been brisk. My family has bought a refrigerator, a colour TV set, a washing machine, a VCD player, a camera, and so on. Our quality of life has gone up. (I-10)

> Life means working hard to earn money. If you cannot earn enough money, you are unable to eat good food and wear good clothes, you have to suffer a bitter life. When you have enough money, your quality of life will go up. (G4-03)

Secondly, the possession of money has fundamental repercussions for gender relations. Money is seen as an agent which not only enables its owner to possess material things, but also participates in marital life. Marital relations may be predicated on enduring love and care, but they are not exempt from monetary considerations. It was not uncommon in traditional Chinese society that the entry of a wife into a household was marked by the transfer of money (Watson, 1991). This marriage rite is very much alive today in some rural areas. At Yangjiasan village, I was told that many young men who are already near 30 or even over 30 have not married. The reason involved for this state of affair is that "our village is very poor, these young men do not have money to get married" (*G4-01*). A 32-year-old man suffering from infantile paralysis

told me, "life is bitter for me. [...] I thought of marriage, but I will not get married because I cannot afford it" (*I-16*). The unspoken words behind these expressions are that women are treated as things or commodities which can be bought and sold. Lack of money makes these young villagers unable to "possess" wives. The other side of the same coin is that the cost of divorce is equally monetarised. Although "buying a wife" is a traditional rite in rural areas, the compensation for divorce is a relatively novel practice in urban areas. The party responsible for the dissolution of the marriage has to compensate the other party. For instance, "I have transferred my love unto another lady. We have no choice but to divorce. I pay you 50,000 *yuan* as compensation" (*Press Digest*, 28/11/1999). This new-fangled practice to divorce has transferred the old image of women as things or commodities into a new notion of both women and men as commodities. Money facilitates both obtaining a desirable partner and getting rid of an undesirable one.

Thirdly, money, in terms of QOL, is deeply imbued with an emotional meaning. Money is seen as a source of pleasure. It is believed that such a pleasure is inherent in money itself as well as in what money brings to life. The possession of money is thus sought for pleasure or hedonistic companionship. QOL, in this line, is deliberate pleasure, and the absence of pain. This is partly in line with Aristotle's view that a good life is a life with pleasure (cf.: Megone, 1990). The following excerpt describes how pleasure is derived from accreting money in a stock market.

> Like a secret mountain, the stock market introduced into China straightforwardly controls the entire gamut of Chinese people's feelings, be they happiness or anger, pleasure or grief. [...] A great pleasure is shown on the faces of those who made money in a stock exchange (*Press Digest*, 01/03/1998).

Pleasure does not only arise from the accumulation of money but also from the spending of money. A respondent said their family of three just went on a luxury holiday in Suzhou and Hangzhou cities, and "... spent 1,700 *yuan* each person as travel expenses. We got great pleasure from the holiday, and therefore felt that our quality of life had been greatly improved". (*G1-03*). The underlying "chain of causation" inside this is that the accumulation and spending of money leads to a

pleasure, which, in turn, becomes as an important part of QOL. In other words, the pleasure derived from money constitutes an emotional underpinning of QOL.

Fourthly, when individuals face events or forces which are out of their control, they may appeal to a "deputy agent" (Ainsworth & Ainsworth, 1958). Money is perceived as such as a "deputy agent". It is commonly accepted that the more money people have, the safer they feel. Money is seen as the best antidote against anxiety and insecurity. Without doing anything to change the situation that is likely to arouse the anxiety in the first place, money provide a way of reducing or terminating the anxiety, and endorses a sense of security.

> For the patient with an incurable severe illness, money can be used to buy the most expensive medicine and nutriment for him/her, and to hire the best nurse to take care of him/her. Although all of these may not be effective for curing the disease, they reduce the pressure of the patient, and produce a sense of security. (*Press Digest*, 20/09/1998)

6.2.2. QOL Anchored in Material Possessions

The having orientation casts QOL in material terms. With the expansion of the Chinese consumer market, wide ranges of consumer goods are now available: domestic goods (furniture, refrigerators, washing machines), leisure equipments (TV sets, video recorders, CD players and cameras), transport tools (bicycles and cars), information equipments (telephones and computers), to list but a few. Yet, for ordinary Chinese people, QOL depends essentially on having four types of material possessions: food, clothing, a car and a housing unit. In the words of an interviewee, "to me, quality of life depends mainly on food, clothing, a car and shelter" (*I-05*). They are not just material things. They are deeply symbolic objects too. This section intends to answer "why" and "how" these material possessions constitute vital parts of QOL for Chinese people.

6.2.2.1. Food Consumption

As an "archaic form" of possessions (Fromm, 1979), food consumption has been highly valued in Chinese culture. Chang (1977) notes that food consumption is

"central to the Chinese way of life and part of the Chinese ethos" (p.14). Imported from the former Soviet Union, a very promising prospect of utopian Communism, although not its totality, was to have milk and bread for breakfast, and potato and beef for dinner. This anticipation for Communism prevailed in the pre-reform period. For ordinary Chinese people, whether life is good or bad depends, to a great extent, on food consumption. Food consumption is thus re-recreated as an essential part of QOL in Chinese culture. The following excerpt manifests this.

> We led a bad life in the past because we did not have enough food. Our quality of life has been greatly improved these days, a great of variety of food is always available there. For example, in the past, we had no place to go to buy vegetables in this village. In winter, we ate only the pickles we had salted in summer. Now it is a different story. People do not make pickles any more. We can eat fresh vegetables and the vegetables planted in the vegetable shed in the winter. Fresh vegetables can be eaten throughout the year. We can also eat meat everyday. In the past, even if you had money, you could not buy meat and fresh vegetables. (G3-03)

Why does food constitute such a crucial part of QOL in Chinese culture? How do Chinese people negotiate their relations with food? The data analysis indicates that food consumption is highly valued in five distinct but complementary ways.

Firstly, food consumption is linked to the image of self-preservation, not only for the individual but also for the race, in Chinese culture. China has been an agrarian society for millennia and it currently has to feed one-fifth of the human species on a relatively small area of the arable land. Not surprisingly, food supply and consumption have been a major preoccupation in Chinese society. An interviewee stated, "there is an old Chinese saying which goes: the mass regard food as their God" (I-05). During the period of the "three catastrophic years" from 1959 to 1962, at least 2.6 million Chinese people died of famine (Kane, 1988; Country Information and Policy Unit, 2002). This epoch of "hungry ghosts" (Becker, 1996) still vividly resides in the collective memory of Chinese people, as manifested in the following personal account from media data.

> I was admitted to a university in 1960, the second year of "the three bitter years" in China, with hunger looming over the Chinese land. This university is located in the capital of the province, and the food supply

> was much better than in counties and villages. Except for 30 *jin*[14] of grain ration per person per month, the only food for us was black and hard biscuits made of wheat bran. Some students bought the biscuits and put them beside the pillow, eating one piece every night to stop their stomach growling from hunger and to get some sleep. Some students bought the biscuits from the shop outside the campus, and finished eating them before coming to the dormitory, but they still felt empty in their stomach. Some students bought the biscuits, and had not tasted them, and the biscuits were grabbed away by hungry people. Some students really deserved respect; they took the biscuit back home in vacation, eating them together with family members. Through this difficult period, I understand that when people are entangled with hunger, nothing else has a place in people's mind. (*Press Digest*, 11/03/1999)

The obsession with food, and the anxiety about the food crisis, are thus deeply embedded in Chinese culture. A Chinese fiction novel, *Yellow Peril*, written anonymously (1991), prognosticates a nation-wide starvation in China in the near future: endless deaths, civil wars for plundering limited foods, nuclear bombings, finally the destruction of the Chinese civilisation and the world-wide retreat of a billion yellow faces. Self-preservation in this context has gone far beyond its biological sense and engendered social meanings. The above excerpt is a residue in memory and the novel is fictitious. However, they capture the collective anxiety of Chinese people with respect to food: the prospect of starvation is never far off. The primary significance of food for QOL is the relief from the threat of hunger for the individual and the nation as a whole. It is thus the base line and prerequisite of QOL.

Secondly, food consumption is intimately related to health. An essential aspect of Chinese health beliefs is that health is the consequence of a natural equilibrium, while illness is the outcome of some imbalance. Diet is seen as crucial to maintaining such a natural balance. Although there is some controversy concerning what is healthy food, there is consensus in the data that eating a wide range of different foodstuffs is essential to maintaining good health, and to prevent and cure illness. This issue will be further discussed in Chapter Seven.

Thirdly, food consumption is represented as a type of "full" possession. Chinese people make an important distinction between "*shen nei zhi wu*" and "*shen wai zhi wu*". Literally referring to "the things incorporated into the body" or "interior

[14] Jin, a metric unit of mass in China, 1 *jin* is equal to 0.5 kilogram.

possessions", "*shen nei zhi wu*" means the things that are physically connected with the body. Literally referring to "the things outside the body" or "exterior possessions", "*shen wai zhi wu*" means the things that are not physically connected with the body. Food consumption is a unique interior possession. Other things, such as a car and clothes, belong to exterior possessions. Unlike exterior possessions, swallowing foodstuff signifies that material things are assimilated into one's body, and become a part of the self. "Food in your mouth cannot be taken away by others" (*I-08*). From this perspective, food consumption represents a completely individual ownership. And of course, as a kind of "full" possession, food is further interpreted as a signifier of social status. QOL is then assumed to be linked to access to rare and expensive foodstuffs which are socially recognised as indicator of high social status.

> Chinese people particularly like eating rare things. I have a classmate whose father is a government official. He likes eating precious food such as river dolphins. (G2-01)
>
> Some people often eat food worth thousands of *yuan* at one meal; some even eat little antelopes. (I-08)
>
> Some richer people especially like eating precious food. They even eat food covered by a thin layer of gold. (G2-04)

Gold as a precious metal is irrelevant to nutrition, but it is an expression of status. As Clark (1986) notes, "the recognition of gold as a symbol of excellence almost seems an integral part of human consciousness" (p.50). River dolphins and little antelopes are rare animals under state protection in China. They are valued because of their rarity. Swallowing these precious things is not to supply energy, but to display the excellence of the eater. This symbolic significance of food is obvious here. As a type of symbolic incorporation, it gives material things cultural and social meanings. It is through one's relations to things that symbolic incorporation reflects and reproduces one's self-image and one's status in relation to others. The underlying idea behind this is that the incorporation of precious things within one's body, which others may not be able to do, endows the person with a better QOL compared to others.

Fourthly, food consumption is culturally instituted as an important source of pleasure. It is through the pleasure derived from eating that food is positively associated with the emotional aspect of QOL.

> I think eating is very important to my quality of life, because when I have a good meal, I get much pleasure. (I-05)
>
> G2-04: Eating is very important for quality of life. If I were a rich person I would eat whatever I like.
> G2-02: Eating gives you much pleasure.

Pleasure from food is mediated by cultural knowledge as to what constitutes a "good meal". China has its own distinct food culture. This food culture is not just a kind of traditional cuisine, but also a repertory of symbols and collective memory regarding Chinese identity. It is through such an identity that a bodily pleasure is activated in food consumption. This explain why many Chinese people living abroad experience little pleasure eating the food of their host countries, and they prefer their own food cooked according to Chinese way.

> I think that my daughter who studies in the USA lives a hard life there. [...] She even cannot find a Chinese restaurant in the state she stays. Every other week, she has to drive to a neighbouring state for one or two hours to have a Chinese meal and buy some Chinese foodstuff. Every time she returns to China, the first thing she wants to do is to go to a restaurant to have Chinese dishes. (*Press Digest*, 23/09/1999)

Fifthly, food is also associated with communal life. It connotes the sharing of good things and of pleasure with significant others. It is a common occasion for the Chinese families to sit around table and eat together. Sharing dinner acts as a social and emotional bond amongst family members and symbolises family harmony, and the QOL of the whole family is thereby realised.

It can be seen from the above discussion that food is related to QOL in complex and multi-facetted ways. At its most basic, food is essential for survival; the ever-prevalent threat of famine in China means that its value is recognised by all. Food is also related to QOL via the mediation of a good health. As an unalienable possession that pertains to one's body and to one's self, food is also used as a signifier of social status. Finally, food is also related to QOL both through the pleasure inherent in "cultural identity on the tongue" and through sharing the pleasure derived from a meal with significant others, especially family members.

6.2.2.2. Clothing

Clothing for human being not only serves functional needs such as warmth and protection, it, like food, also creates social meaning and identity. Clothing in this sense is a sign system which communicates important information about the occupation, origin, personality, tastes, and current mood of its wearer amongst others (Flugel, 1950; Lurie, 1992).

For ordinary Chinese people, clothing is socially regarded as a visible expression of QOL. In the period of the planned economy, clothing purchases were restricted by rationing. Cloth consumption was limited to around 6 meters a year per person. The durability of the fabric used to be a major concern. An old interviewee recalled, people at that time paid much attention to the durability of clothing, because of the poverty and rationing restriction. "Dacron was a favourite fabric for clothes due to its durability" (*I-03*). There was a saying then, "wearing a cloth for the first three years when it is new, for the second three years when it becomes old, and for the third three years after patching it here and there" (*I-03*). There is another case. China used to import chemical fertilisers from Japan after resuming diplomatic relations with Japan in the early 1970s. These chemical fertilisers were packed in nylon bags on which was printed the label: "Japanese Urea". Rural people found these bags were very durable and cheap, suitable for making clothes. A doggerel was very popular in rural areas then: "Spending 0.8 *yuan*, you can buy a pair of trousers, with the sign of "Japanese" in the front and "Urea" in the back" (*Press Digest*, 07/10/1999). With the prosperity of the national economy from the 1980s, great changes in dress have taken place. "Western-style suits, jackets, cowboy clothes, sportswear, Mandarin gowns, casual wears have now ruled their domains respectively" (*Press Digest,* 07/10/1999). People display their new affluence with relatively expensive and stylish apparel. Splendid and colourful clothes are made possible by, and they symbolise, an improvement in the economic status of China and its citizens, and, in turn, in their QOL.

> With the increase in income, people in this village no long wear patched clothes. We wear whatever clothes we like. It suggests our quality of life has greatly improved. (I-11)

In ancient China, strict differences in colour, style and adornment of dress were made between the emperor, officials and commoners. For instance, red, green and yellow were highly privileged colours, and thus applied to the emperors and officials. Commoners could only wear other colours. Throughout the 1950s-1970s, as the Chinese Communist Party promoted equalitarianism, clothing lost its function for differentiating between classes. Instead, clothing served to reaffirm political identity. Lenin-style clothes and Soviet cotton print were very popular in China in the 1950s, which were the sign that China learnt from her "elder brother" modestly and reverently. In the 1960s, Chairman Mao advocated that "the whole nation must learn from the People's Liberation Army". The yellow military uniforms began to be popular across the nation. Blue jeans were prevalent clothes in the period of "the working classes lead everything". Western-style garments disappeared from the public at that time. Now that the "economic revolution" has replaced the "political revolution", China increasingly witnesses an inequality in the distribution of wealth. Clothing in this context becomes a symbolic expression of its wearer's position in the socio-economic hierarchy. Across all the data sets, these were instances of people referring to "expensive" garments, western-style formal suits, fashionable items and famous brands as expressions of their QOL. Affluence in dress is strongly associated with Western style and fashion, no matter how irrelevant to the Chinese context. When individuals reach a higher socio-economic position, they invest their money in their dresses, and make use of their dresses as a way to flaunt their newly acquired wealth. For instance, "when I got rich, I was magnificently decked out with fashionable clothes and jewellery. I dressed as a rich person" (*Press Digest*, 29/03/1998). In contemporary China, clothing, thus, objectifies social and material inequality. In this way, clothes create and support a particular image of a better QOL both to the wearers themselves and to others.

6.2.2.3. Housing

One of the major concerns identified from the different data sets bearing on QOL is the possession of a housing unit. Housing for human beings not only functions as shelter, but also provides inner surroundings in which people can satisfy many aspects of their physical, psychological, and social needs (Anderson, 1974). In this sense, it is likely to be true globally that proper housing is an important contributor to QOL.

However, housing in Chinese society has rich culturally and historically specific meanings.

There is a double-track housing policy in China, due to the rural-urban dualistic society system. In rural areas, it is the individual's responsibility to build their own private houses in their native villages with the permission to occupy public land from local authorities. In urban areas, it is the government's responsibility to build housing units for the residents. In urban areas, the ownership of housing units, however, witnessed two reverse processes over the past half-century: nationalisation and privatisation. As a part of abolishing private ownership, the Chinese Communist Party nationalised urban housing and introduced a welfare housing allocation system in the 1950s. The government practised a low-salary scheme, which excluded housing consumption, and regarded housing as a kind of welfare benefits. Housing was allotted to the employees by the *danwei* according to the length of service, position, age and family size. For the individual, housing was the most important benefit given by the *danwei*. Housing privatisation, as an organic segment of the reform towards a market economy, has been ongoing since the 1980s, in response to acute housing shortage, to the government's unbearable financial burden, and to the abuse of the old system. This process of privatisation shatters many people's dreams of gaining free housing from their *danwei* on the one hand, but it makes home ownership a possibility for a greater number of Chinese citizens, on the other.

The significance of housing to QOL is linked to that of the family. The family occupies a central position in Chinese culture and family life is a critical domain of QOL, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven. The possession of a housing unit, as revealed from the data, is identified as the home of a family, and an essential material prerequisite for the establishment of a nuclear family. In both urban and rural areas, a housing unit is conceived as a precondition for young people to get married. During interviews, a young lady in Beijing told me that she married her husband after they purchased a flat: "This flat is a place completely belonging to us, it represents the existence of our family. It gives us a sense of home to return to. If I had not had the flat, I would feel that I do not have a home" (*I-06*). At Yangjiasan village, I was told that the precondition for a man at this village to get married is that he must have a house. "If you do not have a house, you will be looked down upon, and you cannot

get married. Even if you are betrothed to somebody, you must promise to build a house for the would-be wife, otherwise the girl won't marry you. You cannot get married until your house is built"(*G4-02*). The unavailability of a housing unit represents a threat to the conventional way of life and to the obligations of family life. In this sense, housing both constitutes the material basis of family life, and itself symbolises the existence of a family. This is more or less equivalent to Le Roy Ladurie's (1978) historic observation on a French village that "the family of flesh and blood and the house of wood, stone or daub were one and the same thing" (p.24).

The significance of housing to QOL is also found in the expression of housing as the medium of privacy and self-fulfilment. A housing unit is seen as a personal space, a space belonging to oneself, and building one's life around privacy and sobriety. It is a private place for recovering from the anxieties of public life. This is manifested in words of a 30 year-old interviewee, who still lives in a dormitory:

> An independent housing unit is of prime importance for my life, I need my own space of life. It represents privacy. [...] I am reluctant to expose my privacy to others. One day if I get rich, the first thing I will do is to buy a housing unit. No matter where it is, I will have a space that belongs to myself, and not to be disturbed by others. (I-07)

The issue of housing in Chinese society gives rise to a dilemma in terms of QOL. The dilemma is the conflict between buying houses and waiting for allocation in urban areas. Under the old urban housing allocation system, a married couple normally has to wait for several years to be allotted a small flat, and then moves into a larger one after another several years. The system creates a huge imbalance between those who are allocated and those who are not. The persons who are on the waiting list always experience a strong sense of disappointment and injustice. "'When thinking of others who have been allotted home, I am always very angry', says a young man who is on the waiting list"' (*Press Digest*, 02/04/1998). The new system provides urban residents with equal opportunities for purchasing their homes. But the striking gap between the housing price and actual income of ordinary people generates enormous frustration, and makes such opportunities like a hand-burning potato. In Beijing, a three-bedroom flat costs on average 600,000 *yuan* in 1999, which roughly equals the total income of a middle-income employee working for 30 years (*Press Digest*, 02/04/1998). Access to affordable housing thus becomes a major concern for ordinary

urbanites. Against this background, it is easy to understand how home ownership is central to QOL.

6.2.2.4. Car

In most industrialised countries, car ownership is very widespread. For instance, 69% of British families own a car and 24% have more than one car (Furnham & Argyle, 1998). Most British people regard cars as a necessity rather than luxury (Lunt & Livingstone, 1992). Furthermore, as Fromm (1979) notes, in industrialised countries the whole economy is built around automobile production and life is greatly determined by the rise and fall of the consumer market for cars.

However, this is not the case in China. Access to cars, normally chauffeur-driven cars, used to be a privilege of top government officials. With the transition to a market economy, the car is no longer the monopoly of officialdom; it has increasingly become a private property. However, for the time being, only people achieving great success in the market economy can afford to own their own cars. Bicycles and public transportation are still the main means of locomotion for the majority of people. A car in this context is by no means a utilitarian vehicle but a symbolic possession. Car ownership is a form of conspicuous consumption. The prestige associated with the car links it strongly to QOL. An interviewee whose husband is the owner of a computer company and whose family has a private car made the following statement:

> With our private car, I don't have to wait for the bus under the rigorous sunshine in the summer. In the winter I can listen to music and enjoy warm air in the car. Compared to other people, I feel I have a better social status and better life. I have got a sense of superiority compared with those who have to take the bus. [...] Other people think we have done a good job in Beijing and made some achievements. [...] Over the weekend, my family can go to Beijing suburbs, such as Huairou County, to spend one day or two in a place with a nice view, just away from the noisy city, and relax the mind. (I-06)

This excerpt shows that a car as a symbolic object expresses a range of meanings. A car affords comfort and pleasure, it symbolises personal success and wealth, and it establishes one's superior standing. In reply to my question "looking a few years ahead, what improvement in your life would you most hope for?" a recurrent answer

is "to own a private car": "I wish to have a car, although I cannot afford it currently" (*I-02*). "I have learnt to drive years ago, and got my driving licence now. I have a strong wish to have a car in the near future" (*I-07*). The car, like elegant clothes and sophisticated meals, expresses personal uniqueness, and personal success in social and economic relations. QOL is crystallised in the ownership of a car. This point of view is entirely defined by Western individualistic and individualistic values.

6.2.3. Education and Knowledge as Avenues for Economic Advantages

Chinese culture has always placed a high value on education. Historically, education, along with success in civil examinations, was the primary avenue to officialdom (Ho, 1962; Hsu, 1953), and a key means for honouring the clan and glorifying the ancestors (Yu & Yang, 1994). China's transformation into a market economy shifts the value of education from political privileges and ancestors' glories to prospective economic advantages. To ordinary Chinese people, education is highly valued for its potential to bring tangible material benefits. Education in this context is seen as a generator of prosperity. This is enunciated in different ways.

Most Chinese parents believe that education is the key medium for their children's future affluence. They do their utmost for their children to get the best education possible. For rural parents, their children's admission into a university is considered as a means to breaking away from an impoverished social and economic environment and moving into the richer cities. For many urban better-off parents, sending out their children to study abroad is considered as a means to procuring a possibility for a better income in the near future. In this respect, supporting children's education is seen as a long-term investment for the purpose of greater financial returns.

> I suffer a lot to make a living because I did not have much education when I was a boy. ... I am now trying every means to make money to support my son's education. If he can pass the examination and enter a college, he will get a job in a city and make a lot of money. He will not need to suffer and live a hard life. (G4-01)

> In China, even if I can educate my son to a university professor, it is impossible to improve radically his financial situation in the future. That

> is the reason why I want to send him to study abroad. Although sending him to study abroad will consume my saving of many years, I think it is a valuable investment. (*Press Digest*, 23/09/1999)

Like many developing countries, China has also experienced a considerable brain drain. A large portion of Chinese students who complete their study in the developed countries remain in their host countries. Although the outflow of these talents involves a wide range of social, political, economic and cultural factors (Qian, 1997), the immense gap between their income at home and abroad is indisputable. People believe that they can obtain greater benefits from their knowledge through remaining in the developed countries. In other words, the economic value of their knowledge can be better realised abroad. A causal connection between knowledge and wealth is thereby established.

> I have many friends studying abroad. In communication with them over the phone or by email, most of them told me that they are reluctant to go back to China. They all emphasize that the value of their knowledge can be better realised abroad, because their monthly income there is usually several times higher than in China. (I-08)

This causal connection between knowledge and wealth is also reflected in an indigenous image of "*chongdian*". Literally referring to "recharging", "*chongdian*" means "re-skilling", the access to learning opportunities to upgrade one's knowledge and skills after a formal education. "*Chongdian*" is seen as an essential strategy for individuals to cope with the challenges associated with China's increasing integration into a global knowledge-based economy. For ordinary Chinese people, knowledge-based economy not only refers to information technology, biotechnology, the Internet, e-commerce, or intellectual properties, etc, but also, perhaps more importantly, to the fact that knowledge has the potential to bring about personal wealth. This is exemplified in the following excerpts.

> It is now the era of knowledge-based economy. Knowledge has shown its importance for gaining wealth. (*Press Digest*, 17/06/1999)

> Mr Zhang hopes to accumulate wealth with a fast speed. His "*chongdian*" in Beijing University provides him such an opportunity. (*Press Digest*, 16/12/1999)

The instrumentalisation of knowledge is further realised and demonstrated through a lay sharp division between "strong-power knowledge" and "weak-power knowledge", or "*qiang shi zhi shi*" and "*ruo shi zhi shi*" in Chinese. Strong-power knowledge, in the words of an interviewee, is "the type of knowledge which can easily be exchanged into money, such as electronics and computer", while weak-power knowledge is "the type of knowledge which can hardly be exchanged into money, such as Chinese language and history" (*I-07*). This distinction in itself embodies a having orientation towards QOL, as the criterion for the cleavage is the potential profit value of knowledge. In the gradual movement towards a market economy, strong-power knowledge, with its inherent power to generate personal wealth, is increasingly valued, while weak-power knowledge, with its inability to bring about personal wealth, is progressively devalued.

> The most popular scene on campus now is the simulated stock market organised by the economic society, rather than the forum on literary works organised by the literature society in the 1980s. [...] Books on English, computer, finance and investment become the most popular readings for university students. [...] Thinkers are leaving us towards afar. (*Press Digest*, 11/03/1999)

6.3. Being Orientation

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, lay Chinese people understand QOL as a complex of notions, combining both "having" and "being". This section turns to the latter aspect, which conceives QOL as the authentic, rather than possessive, relations between the self and the world. The most notable feature of this orientation is that it seeks to portray the nature of human relations rather than material conditions. The idea of being in Chinese culture involves a number of ideas, including rootedness, connectedness, participation and freedom.

6.3.1. Rootedness

The idea of rootedness is found to be at the very heart of the Chinese notion of being. Weil (1987) notes, the sense of rootedness, as the most important and least recognised

human need, is the essence of human existence. Rootedness for Chinese people in this study seems to be articulated in two considerations: natural rootedness and ancestral rootedness. The combination of these two types of rootedness provides critical psychological anchors and existential ties in Chinese culture, and is thus intrinsic to QOL.

Chinese people conceive the universe as a continuous whole. In Chinese cosmogony (Chai & Chai, 1962), human life is not compartmentalised, but is manifested in the union of humans with nature. The preoccupation with harmonising with nature permeates all major aspects of people's life. Life is said to be the offspring of mother earth, and death is said to be the return to nature. For instance, at Yangjiasan village, I was told that old men and women always exhort their children not to cremate them, but to bury them in the ground, after their death, because "burials make the dead return to nature" (*G3-03*). The strong commitment to nature is also reflected in the practice of daily life. For instance, urban people seek joy by communing with nature: "every year our family go travelling: to the rivers and to the forests. We are very happy with returning to nature" (*I-03*). It is in nature that people find their roots.

Natural rootedness is particularly manifested in the belief in, and practice of, *fengshui*. Reflecting the traditional thinking of integrating humans into nature, *fengshui*, a Chinese geomancy, is key to understanding the Chinese belief concerning the silent dialogue between humans and nature in terms of being. In Freedman's (1967b) words, *fengshui* is "in fact a complex of beliefs concerned with a central theme in Chinese metaphysics: Man's place in nature and universe" (p.191). *Fengshui* is considered as an important way for arranging the home of both the living and the dead. A Yangjiasan villager told me, "we think about *fengshui* when building our houses and burying the dead" (*G3-01*). *Fengshui* transforms the human relationship to nature from a passive into an active one, enabling individuals to locate themselves in nature.

Buildings at Yangjiasan village are also categorised into *Yang* buildings and *Yin* buildings. *Yang* buildings refer to the houses where people live, while *Yin* buildings refer to the tomb where the dead are accommodated. Despite some contradictions as to how to choose *Yang/Yin* sites, common to all these discourses is that *Yang* buildings should have a southern exposure, while *Yin* buildings should have a

northern exposure. Both types of buildings should be surrounded by green mountains and rivers. In this way, *Yang* and *Yin* merges into one, Heaven and earth come together, and humans and nature become a "whole". The villagers firmly believe that, through a *fengshui* master's proper choice and arrangement, the individual will be in a cheerful state of mind and everything will go well for him or her. The choice of a good site for a house will ensure that a family live a happy and peaceful life. The choice of a right site for a tomb will bring good luck to the dead, which in return gives a positive response for those who are still alive. For instance:

> When the tomb site is properly chosen, the later generations can be happy, become officials and make fortunes. Otherwise, bad fortunes will fall on this family. One family in our neighbourhood chose a place with good *fengshui*. The son of this family has just been promoted to be a regimental commander. The other day, he came back to the village to entertain the relatives and villagers with a big banquet. (I-15)

The principles of *fengshui* are largely taken-for-granted. Ordinary people have little reflexive awareness of them. People know and make use of the notion of *fengshui*, but they seldom actively reflect on the principles governing their practice of *fengshui*. They are concerned with the outcomes, but not with the reasons, of *fengshui*. They fully trust their ancestral wisdom and knowledge. In fact, the wisdom and knowledge of *fengshui* are so taken-for-granted that any inquiry on that point appears pointless and ridiculous. When I ask "why do you consider *fengshui* in choosing your site for building house or burying the dead?" a typical answer is that "it is the traditional knowledge which has been passed down on us from old generations". This, however, does not rule out the fact that ordinary people often turn to "experts", *fengshui* masters, for critical decisions.

> In choosing the sites for homes and tombs, we always invite a *fengshui* master to come over, asking him to choose a proper place. He locates a place by a compass, and consults some books, and eventually finds a good place of high fengshui quality for us. (I-15)

The idea of rootedness is also expressed in the notion of ancestral rootedness. The notion of ancestral rootedness is extremely weak in Western industrial society. The industrial revolution and its accompanying value of individualism crumbled the blood ties and transformed them into isolated individuals (Marková *et al*, 1998). By contrast,

ancestor worship is deeply seated in Chinese culture (Hsu, 1971). An individual is considered as a necessary link in a chain of lives, with ancestors at the one end, and descendants at the other. Death by no means breaks down the perpetual connection based on blood ties. There is an intimate and emotionally charged communion with the ancestors (Freedman, 1967a), which constitutes an important spiritual substance of Chinese people.

Ancestral rootedness plays a substantial role in the Chinese notion of QOL. The analysis indicates that personal success and prosperity alone cannot account for an individual's QOL in Chinese culture. Ancestral rootedness is in fact invoked to make sense of personal success and prosperity. This is demonstrated in an interviewee's words: "Being a Chinese, standing out from the crowd and bringing honour to the ancestor are important aspects of quality of life" (*I-07*). "Standing out from the crowd" characterises a kind of personal achievement, which is highlighted in terms of being in the individualist Western culture (Spence, 1985; Hutton *et al*, 1998). However, "standing out from the crowd" and "bringing honour to the ancestor" are inseparable in terms of QOL in Chinese culture. In relating personal achievement to the ancestors, individuals find their sense of identity and belonging, as part of the family lineage. QOL is actualised when personal achievement is shared with, and endorsed by, ancestors. This is exemplified in the following excerpt:

> He may go into cities to do business, or go abroad to study. However, when he achieves a great success in his undertaking and creates a public sensation in a remote place, he thinks, in his sub-consciousness, that his achievements are worth nothing in front of strangers. It is only when he goes back to his hometown to present these achievements to his lineage and to glorify his ancestor that his achievements are endorsed, and his life becomes meaningful and significant. (*Press Digest*, 14/02/1999)

6.3.2. Connectedness

Connectedness means to relate to other people in close and enduring relationships. If rootedness refers to one's "vertical" belonging, then connectedness characterizes one's "horizontal belonging". The establishment and maintenance of union with others is an essential part of QOL. It is evident in the data that connectedness occurs

in a diverse social matrix: family, workplace and community. Through these social arenas, the individual transcends the separateness of individual existence, thus engendering a sense of meaningful and social existence. Social connection is reciprocal in nature. It involves mutual understanding, sharing intimate thoughts, giving and receiving support, and being cared for by others, as well as caring for others. This reciprocity of connectedness is significant for being.

> There was a lady named Guan in my wife's work unit. Her husband died in a road accident many years ago, and she was always sick. [...] My wife and I often went to visit her with some food and soybean oil we bought. Ms Guan was a nice lady. She knitted a sweater for my wife later. My wife said to me once: How nice Ms Guan is. I feel that this kind of mutual care and mutual support is a comradely love amongst people, which is very important to quality of life. (I-08)

On the other hand, social isolation, the opposite of social connection, is detrimental to QOL. An interviewee used the metaphor "living in the desert" (*I-05*) to express the experience of loneliness and separateness. This metaphor suggests that the disconnection is experienced as lack of sustenance, and linked to a dry, arid life. It even evokes a threat to one's existence. Social isolation may be caused by a number of factors, including personal restrictions such as illness, social-economic reasons such as unemployment, and geographic and social mobility. For instance, as Chinese society has become more mobile and conventional local ties become weaker, people become more alienated and lonely. With the relaxation of rural-to-urban mobility, more and more agrarians migrate into urban areas as a way of getting richer, but they experience social exclusion in their new locations. These migrants lose close contacts with their families and original communities, but new ties with their urban fellows are hard to establish due to the stigma attached to their rural origins. Their geographic and social mobility forces them to face the dilemma between the material affluence, on the one hand, and loss of attachment, on the other. The trade-off between having and being is acutely felt by these migrants. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

Connectedness can be achieved in two different ways. The first derives from Confucian ideology and is highly compatible with a communal form of social organisation, in which the self is described as collectivist (Hofstede, 1980; Kim, 1994;

Triandis, 1989, 1995), or interdependent (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus & Nisbett, 1998). In this view, connectedness is actualised by an individual's submission to and integration in the collective.

> For Chinese people, one's happiness or sorrow is actually the happiness or sorrow of his/her family and clan. [...] We Chinese do not speak of the "self", and the "self" actually belongs to others. One owes others when he/she is just born. Therefore we have a traditional Spring Festival which helps us repay the "debt". [...] During the Spring Festival, various activities such as offering sacrifices to ancestors, exchanging greetings at get-togethers, having banquets, and visiting friends and relatives are done among families. There is no room for the individual. (*Press Digest*, 14/02/1999)

The second way is more compatible with the basic assumptions of western individualism and capitalism. Connectedness is achieved by both uniting the self with others and retaining the individuality and integrity of one's own self, but greater relative importance is attributed to satisfying the wishes and desires of the self. In other words, the establishment of union with others should not occur at the expense of a loss of personal integrity.

> When I married my husband, he wanted me to stay at home to be a full-time housewife. My responsibilities everyday were to clean the house, make food, etc. He could support me without any problem. But I was very impulsive during that period, and so I was very disappointed [with that lifestyle]. I stayed at home everyday, and nobody talked to me. I had to wait for him everyday to communicate with him. I did not have an independent self. It seemed that I lived only for that home and for my husband. My husband was also very demanding, and I often felt I could not satisfy him. I thought I was a loser in life. [...] I tried to make some adjustments. I started driving lessons and playing the piano. But life at that time was still meaningless. [...] Now I am no longer a housewife. My husband and I are independent persons, and we have fewer conflicts. I feel that we are living a harmonious family life, and enjoying a relatively higher quality of life. (I-05)

The key element that distinguishes these two ways is the position of the self in the sphere of connectedness. The former involves a symbiotic nature of relatedness in which individuals may lose independence (Fromm, 1991). For the latter, there is insistence on the individuality and autonomy of the self in the process of connecting

with others. This paradox may reflect the symbiosis of traditional collectivism and, increasingly, the values of individualism in contemporary Chinese society.

6.3.3. Participation

Another recurrent theme in the data concerns the importance, for Chinese people, of participating in activities that provide them with a means of commitment, direction and purpose. Through such activities, individuals set goals, feel useful, encounter challenges, and derive spiritual nourishment. A sense of being emerges from social participation. By contrast, social disengagement, the opposite of social participation, tends to lead to a life filled with idleness, boredom and isolation. Hanging around day by day, and doing little or nothing constructive, individuals feel hopeless and useless, and experience a sense of social, intellectual and spiritual deprivation. This is clearly manifested by the following excerpt of an interviewee who was compulsorily retired from a state-owned company at the age of 60 and then hired at a private company after a brief period of unemployment.

> When I was first retired from my formal work, I missed working very much. Sometimes, I sat beside the window at home, watching people passing by, going to work and coming back from work. I would not leave the window until there was nobody passing by. This was not only a kind of nostalgia. I felt empty in mind because I had nothing to do all day long. I tried every means to fill my life. I bought a monthly ticket and went to parks everyday. I took care of my grandson. I read newspaper and watched TV. I also learned to use computer. Of course, I played games on computer sometimes. These things gave me some sense of substance in life, let me feel that my mind is not completely empty. [...] One day somebody asked me to do a temporary job, and I accepted the offer happily, because I had to have some spiritual subsistence. To be honest, I did not know how to kill time when I had nothing to do. As for my quality of life, one important point is that I must have something to do, to have spiritual subsistence. (I-01)

Individuals may actualise their participation in various arenas and ways. For the majority of adults, work is not just a way of earning money, but also a socially and culturally valued avenue to social participation. For elderly people, taking care of their grandchildren after retirement is highly praised in Chinese culture. However, not

all types of participation are socially or culturally valued. Some types are highly personally valued. Leisure is in opposition to work in respect of their different social values. Leisure and work, however, are somewhat similar in the sense of eschewing social disengagement. At Yangjiasan village, I was told that villagers maintain their participation by means of various leisure activities, such as chatting, watching TV and playing mah-jong, when they are unable to cultivate the land in severe winters. Furthermore, it is indisputable that, at least amongst urban educated elites, computers and the Internet are transforming the patterns of participation by creating a virtual space. "The physical space for the team activities is being replaced by the computer virtual space for individuals' activities" (*Press Digest*, 08/02/1998).

Why is participation significant to a sense of being? The data analysis indicates that people experience a great joy when they are completely committed to and absorbed in activities. Joy is derived from the accomplishment of the tasks as well as the process of involvement in the tasks. The joy inherent in social participation lies at the centre of being.

> When I was a journalist, I often brought a notebook and an audio recorder with me to do interviews. I always felt a great joy and a sense of achievement when I completed writing articles around the interviews. Later, I transferred my job to the radio industry. When I hosted a programme, I carried a lot of CDs with me to the studio for live broadcast. I often felt a great joy again in the process of communicating with my audiences in the live broadcasts. (*Press Digest*, 09/12/1999)

> I wish I can set up my own business enterprise and create a famous Chinese brand in the near future. It will probably take my whole lifetime to achieve these goals, if I really do so. But I will find great enjoyment in the process of struggling for the goals. I have liked playing ball games since my childhood, so I like to use playing sports as a metaphor. When is the happiest time for a sport team? It is not the time when the team wins championship. It is the time when it is first established, and nobody knows how to co-operate. At that time, the team progresses everyday, which is the time they feel promising. I think life is like that. Quality of life is a continuous joy that arises from your participating in life. (I-07)

Fromm (1979) makes a significant distinction between joy and pleasure: "The distinction between joy and pleasure is crucial, particularly so in reference to the distinction between the being and having modes" (p.117). Joy is the concomitant of the involvement in valued activities and is associated with being; while pleasure is

associated with the possession of financial and material resources and is aligned with having.

While in the having orientation knowledge is seen as the generator of wealth, as discussed in the above section, in the being orientation, knowledge is valued both intrinsically and because it contributes to the individual's QOL by facilitating active participation. Knowledge is thought to be an important resource for the individual to pursue diverse valued activities. This resource increases the individual's ability to cope with various goal-impeding obstacles, and broadens the individual's opportunities for participating in valued tasks. Knowledge thus enables people to partake in socially and personally valued tasks.

> There is a trend in society that knowledge acquisition is driven by utilitarian considerations, but this is not the case for me. I spent lots of money on table tennis and computer classes. I never intend to make profits from my knowledge on computer and skills on table tennis. I am just interested in playing table tennis and writing computer programmes. The courses improved my skills of playing table tennis and made me keep pace with the continuous updates of computer technology. I gain a great joy from playing table tennis and writing computer programmes, which certainly enhances my quality of life. (I-08)

6.3.4. Freedom

As embedded in the cultural and social values of individualism, freedom is at the heart of people's images of what it is to be an individual and what is the well-being of the individual in Western democratic societies (Marková *et al* 1998). Sen (1993) explicitly asserts the need to take freedom into account in defining QOL in Western culture. In China, individual freedom is a somewhat alien notion. The traditional Chinese ideology, intertwined with Marxist doctrine, regarded society as an organic whole whose collective rights prevailed over individual rights. The notion of personal freedom was thus rejected as the scrap of bourgeois ideology by the Chinese Communist Party. The reforms towards a market economy have deeply weakened the authority of both traditional values and Marxism, and strengthened such individualist values as freedom, individual rights, and independence from authority. It is against this backdrop that lay concerns with freedom must be understood. The analysis

indicates that, for contemporary Chinese people, personal freedom is highly valued and positively linked to QOL. This is manifested in the words of two interviewees:

> Our life would be better if there were more freedom in our society. (I-01)
>
> We will live a happy life as long as my personal freedom is not restricted. (I-05)

There are a bewildering variety of meanings associated with the term "freedom". The meaning of freedom is contested in both everyday and academic discourse (Cranston, 1953; Swanton, 1992), although freedom as a value is taken-for-granted in Western culture. The data analysis reveals that, in Chinese society, people speak of freedom in terms of the *removal* of restrictions on their personal choices. Freedom refers to "be the master of myself", "having rights to control myself", and "no external restrictions on my own choice". Freedom in this sense entails that the individual has opportunities to make his/her own choice without constraints from the external world. The meaning of freedom in Chinese society implicitly involves the relationships between the individual and the state, and collective reactions against the state encroachment in private life. This contrasts with the Western ideas that the function of the state is to protect and guarantee individual rights and freedom, which deems freedom as an inalienable right based on the inherent dignity of human beings (Lukes, 1973). Freedom in China is considered as the individual's emancipation from interference or restrictions by the state on the one hand, and as a kind of bestowal derived from, granted or conceded, by the state on the other hand. For instance:

> The People's Commune controlled every aspect of people life for quite a long time. My father had never been to Zhangjiakou, the nearest city to our village. [...] Now that the "household responsibility system" is in place, we can go wherever we want and do whatever we like. Some young men and women even go to Beijing to work. Nobody else interferes into our freedom. The present life is much better than the past. (I-12)
>
> To improve our quality of life, I wish the government could grant us more freedom and democracy in the near future. (I-01)
>
> I adore Deng Xiaoping from the bottom of my heart, who is a great man. It is him who provides us with a good policy that allows people to have a freedom to build up their family fortune and to live a happy life. (I-03)

The economic reforms in China have moved some distance from the overemphasis on collective goals and disregard for individual rights. People are now experiencing unprecedented freedom in everyday life. Freedom, relating to QOL, is found to be mainly manifested in the three distinct aspects: economic freedom, freedom of mobility and political freedom. There are some imbalances amongst these three aspects of freedom.

With respect to economic freedom, people are free to make money and to have private properties. In rural areas since the People's Commune has been replaced by the "household responsibility system", villagers experience the freedom to control over their agriculture production. As an interviewee stated, "we can plant whatever we like to plant on our contracted land, and sell our products in the free markets" (*G3-02*). In urban areas, the notion and practice of ownership through stock purchase and other forms of investment is now commonplace. "To be a boss" is a new but trendy idea. People are encouraged to buy and own their own home. Economic freedom is seen as a principal feature of freedom, and a key contribution to QOL, in contemporary Chinese society. It is believed that more economic freedom brings about more personal wealth, and that more money, in turn, gives rise to more personal choice.

Freedom of mobility has been subjected to administrative control in China. This administrative control of people's geographic movement, according to the official doctrine, has important significance for the maintenance of public order and state security. A major restriction encountered by ordinary Chinese people for their free mobility within their own country is the *hukou* system. Although millions of villagers have immigrated to work in cities with the relaxation of rural-to-urban mobility from the 1980s, the *hukou* system necessary for a change of permanent residence is still in force. For the people who originate from rural areas, the *hukou* system is seen as "an invisible hand", which places them in a socially disadvantaged group and interferes with their private life. The story of Miss Zhao Yu, printed in *Press Digest* on 4 June 1998, illustrated this point. Miss Zhao Yu, who comes from a village in eastern China, works as a nursemaid in a private home in Beijing. She falls in romantic love with a young Beijinger. To her, love can be romantic, but marriage is practical. According to the regulation on *hukou*, her *hukou* cannot be transferred into a Beijing one because of marriage, and the *hukou* state of their prospective child will be inherited from hers at

the village. The child is thus not entitled to compulsory education and other welfare in Beijing. "She has to be patient with her deprived life from the day she was born, as she was unable to choose her mother. However, as a prospective mother, she has a right to decide that her potential child would no longer inherit a deprived identity" (*Press Digest*, 04/06/1998). Miss Zhao Yu has thus to refuse marriage with the man. Although intended at controlling over rural-to-urban mobility, the *hukou* system also blocks the freedom of mobility between different cities. The public policy of the *hukou* system, in this sense, has transformed itself into a social-psychological barrier, blocking not only the freedom of settlement in the country, but also the freedom of choice in the private sphere such as entering into marriage.

A few interviewees did speak of the importance of political freedom, such as free speech and free election, in relation to QOL at a very superficial level, but this topic is near absent from most interviewees and from media data. There are many possible explanations for this absence of explicit concern with political freedom. It may be that, because political freedom, -- freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession, and of political rights according to law -- is guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution of 1982, there is little point in discussing this issue. It may also be that economic freedom affects individuals' life more directly and saliently than does political freedom, which tends to be part of people's background awareness. However, a more likely explanation is that, following by the suppression of the democracy movement at Tiananmen Square in June 1989, the separation between political control and economic asceticism became the twin vehicle of the Chinese communalist authoritarianism (Ci, 1994). This, in turn, makes it difficult for Chinese people to voice their opinions openly on this sensitive topic. Whatever the reason, the inmost explication of political freedom in relation to QOL is almost entirely absent from all the date sets.

6.4. Conclusion

Although the representation QOL invokes a wide range of themes and subthemes, the data analysis reveals that QOL is not an amorphous mass, but a dyadic construction which is structured in two cardinal orientations: having and being. It is found that

having and being are the main threads which permeate the discourses concerning QOL and underpins the major aspects of QOL. The hybrid of the having orientation and the being orientation thus acts as the organisational principle, and constitutes the social psychological reality, of QOL. For the having orientation, money and material possessions, including food, clothes, car and housing, are seen as the dominant themes of life, the essence of QOL. QOL is realised by the possessions of money, material things, and the pleasure and symbolic meanings consequent upon such possessions. In this orientation, the relationship between the individual and the lived-world is the one of owning and possessing. For the being orientation, QOL is essentially spiritual subsistence. This spiritual subsistence is predicated on "authentic" relationships between the self and the world, including the relationships between the self and others, between individual and society, and between humans and nature. The sense of rootedness, connectedness, participation and freedom derived from such relationships, as well as the joy consequent upon such relationships, are perceived as the essences of QOL. Neither orientation exists in its pure form. Having and being intertwine and interact with each other, and they coexist in rival and complementary ways, both in the culture as well as in the individual.

7

QOL AS HARMONY ACROSS CRITICAL LIFE DOMAINS

QOL as a social representation is embedded and embodied in critical life domains. This chapter presents the empirical analysis of the key domains in which QOL is activated: health, the family, work, social relations and the natural environment. These domains are summed up inductively from the analysis of three sets of data: word associations, interviews and articles from *Press Digest,* and thus reflect the concerns of ordinary Chinese people. Each section of the chapter focuses on how QOL is derived from, and reflected in, each of these domains respectively. Although these five domains are arranged as five analytically distinct sections of the chapter, they are mutually constructive aspects of a single social reality. For instance, it is impossible to understand work without knowing how social relations are lived in China; similarly, health issues cannot be fully understood without considering family relations and human-environment relations in Chinese culture. As a result, each domain serves only as the portal to the complex fabric of QOL.

7.1. Health

It is widely recognised that health is very important to QOL, as reviewed in Chapter Two. Some crucial issues related to this theme, however, have not been fully elaborated. For instance, what does it mean to be healthy or ill in the context of QOL? How does health contribute to QOL? How does illness disrupt QOL? For a better QOL, how do ordinary people manage their health? This section attempts to answer these questions in the context of Chinese culture.

7.1.1. Health as the Absence of Serious Illness

At first sight, the data seem to show that health is viewed as the absence of illness. For instance, "health is not being ill", and "a sick person cannot be regarded as a healthy

one". The point of reference to construct health is its opposite: illness. This notion of health is compatible with Herzlich's (1973) term "*health-in-vacuum*".

However, further analysis indicates that there are distinctions between minor and major sickness, between short-lived and chronic illness, and between curable and incurable diseases, in the data. A minor, short-lived or curable illness, such as cold, fever and appendicitis, are accepted as an inevitable part of an individual's daily life. Minor/major, short-lived/chronic and curable/ incurable are three key criteria for judging whether the illness reduces QOL. Health is thus conceptualised as the absence of serious -- major, chronic or incurable -- illness. The label "illness" seems to be reserved for the serious illness.

> Health does not mean no any illness at all. A common cold is an illness. Health means no major illness, organic pathological changes, genetic diseases, or incurable diseases such as cancer. A person who catches a cold, has a fever, or gets appendicitis is still a healthy person. (G1-02)

> It is nothing to catch a cold. Everything will be all right after I take some medicine. However, I feel frightened if I have a painful stomach and headache, because I do not know whether the illness is serious or not. I feel scared. (I-13)

Health and illness are also associated with the span of life. Health is regarded as a major contributory factor towards a long life, while illness is considered as a primary cause of a short life. "Health means a long life, but illness may cause a short life" (G2-02). Longevity thus seems to be a necessary condition of QOL, although longevity in itself does not suffice to procure QOL. Related to this issue, respondents separated an individual's life into episodes of greater or lesser productivity, in terms of health and illness. It is the former, rather than the latter, that has a potentiality for promising QOL.

> The ratio between the healthy time and sick time in one's entire life is very important to one's quality of life. If you live for 80 years and you have 2 years to illness, you enjoy a good quality of life. But if you live for 80 years and you spend 40 years curing diseases, you are not happy and your quality of life is very low. It is better to live healthy for 60 years than sick for 80 years. (G1-03)

7.1.2. The Implications of Health and Illness for QOL

Health and illness have complex implications for QOL. Heath is represented as a major contributor to QOL, while illness, the antithesis of health, is depicted as a fundamental disrupter of QOL. The roles of both health and illness in relation to towards QOL are organised in two different sets of arguments: instrumental and expressive.

7.1.2.1. Instrumental arguments

From a purely instrumental perspective, health is represented as a means to attain wealth and as a potential resource of the individual, while illness is seen as a barrier towards possessions and as an invalidator of an individual's resource. This approach highlights the economic implications of health and illness towards QOL.

In the interviews, respondents always associated health with money. On the one hand, most people would agree that health is much more important than money in terms of QOL. "People's physical body and wisdom are priceless, while money is a dead thing" (I-15). In this sense, priority is given to health over money. On the other hand, perhaps more importantly, the logic of this priority is that health is represented as the basic precondition for financial benefits. Health provides people with the possibility of earning money and of saving the cost of medical care. Its converse statement, however, does not exist, that is to say, health is priceless, and money can buy almost everything but not health. In other words, for ordinary Chinese people, health does not necessarily mean richness, but it can function as a money earner.

> To be healthy is much more important than money. With health you can earn money, but money cannot buy health. (G1-01)
>
> If I am in good health, I can save some money from medical expenses. (I-01)

The other side of the same coin is that illness is always associated with poverty. Poverty may result from continual sickness, while illness, in turn, may be brought on and aggravated by poverty. In this way, illness forms a vicious circle with poverty. In

rural areas, where there is no medical welfare system, villagers have to pay the cost of medical service themselves. In urban areas, the old free medical care system has been gradually replaced by the new medical insurance system starting from the 1990s, which is characterised by shared medical expenses by employers and employees. Thus illness is very costly for Chinese people. People with lower income worry very much about expensive medical expenses in the case of serious illness. Major illness tends to put great strain on the patient and his/her family. The cost of medical care may deplete lifetime savings or force people to run into debt. For instance, an old factory worker in Sichuan, as disclosed *Press Digest* (08/03/1998), spent the family's entire savings in two years in order to cure his wife's cancer. Furthermore, long-term absence from work through chronic illness tends to cause the loss of income and perhaps the loss of employment. This further aggravates the financial pressure on the patient and his/her family. Thus people sometimes have to make a crucial choice between health and money. This can be seen from the following excerpt.

> I am now old. If I get ill and need money to cure the illness, I will estimate whether or not I deserve to spend the money and whether or not the illness can be cured. If I can live several years more, it is worth spending the money to cure the illness. But if I spend the money, the illness cannot be cured, and I am still going to die after the operation, I will not go to see doctors. If the illness can be cured, and we do not have enough money, I think my children will give us money for treatment. (I-01)

Moreover, health is perceived as a fundamental resource in life. A popular Chinese saying goes: "As long as the green hill is there, one need not to worry about firewood". Health is compared to the green hill in both media and interview data. Health here is represented as an important resource for engaging in various activities. For instance, "with health, you can carry out normal daily activities"; "good health enables us to solve the problems faced at work with much more energy"; "health refers to a strong capability in sports"; and "with good health, people can enjoy a better life". In this way, health is seen as a very particular kind of capacity, which is distinct from, but interrelated to, physical strength and intelligence. Thus health constitutes a key individual resource for achieving QOL. Illness, on the other hand, limits and disrupts activities in many ways, and major illness even prevents people from enjoying otherwise rewarding aspects of their lives.

I can do nothing if I get ill, even basic household chores. (I-13)

I have a friend who has a lot of money. He suffers from diabetes and has to be injected with insulin. He dares not eat fruits and ice cream. He can neither smoke nor drink. Is he happy? (G1-03)

7.1.2.2. Expressive Arguments

From a purely expressive perspective, health and illness entail existential merits, and psychological and social meanings. The implications of health and illness for QOL under this approach are exemplified in the following three ways.

Firstly, health and illness are linked to the "being" orientation of QOL through different emotional states: positive feelings in the case of health, and negative feelings in the case of illness. To be free from illness is an important source of a good mood. This positive emotional state gives people confidence and a sense of certainty, and makes their life more enjoyable.

Being sound in mind and body makes me very happy. (I-01)

When you are healthy, you feel great every morning, and do not have any uncomfortable feeling. You have a desire to eat when you want. You are energetic enough to do what you want to do. (I-05)

On the other hand, ill-health tends to annul the joy of life. It not only provokes pain, suffering and other immediately unpleasant sensations, but also triggers more enduring feelings of depression, anguish and impotence. These negative emotional reactions erode confidence for the future, thus making life meaningless.

I got an accident in my home in 1992. The gas tank exploded, and I was burned by fire. I got 40 percent burns on my arms. To make things even worse, I was infected with hepatitis during the blood transfusion. I felt dejected immediately, thinking that death was there waiting for me. My mother worried about me, and she died not long after my accident. That year was the most unfortunate year of my life. I encountered three unlucky things, and I spent the whole year in misfortune. I felt that life was so meaningless. I became another person. I could not reverse the bad mood. (I-02)

The relationship between health/illness and the emotions in lay beliefs is one of reciprocal causation. They are bound together in a circular process. Not only do health and illness cause different emotional states, but health and illness are also caused by different states of emotion. Health is associated with positive feelings and an optimistic attitude towards life, while illness lays its roots in the soil of negative emotions such as repressed desire, excessive worries, pent-up fury or a pessimistic attitude towards life. It is believed that as long as an individual keeps in a good mood, he/she will be in good health, and that if an individual collapses in his/her mind, illness will definitely come to him/her.

> If you like talking and laughing, you will be healthy, and full of vitality. (I-09)

> Illness, such as cancer, is caused by one's long-lasting bad mood. (G2-02)

Second, health and illness are strongly associated with the private sphere and the family life. Keeping in good health is not only the responsibility of the individual him/herself, but also the duty of his/her family. For Chinese people, the health of family members is conceptualised as a vital part of family happiness. Illness afflicts not only the sick individual, but brings misery to the whole family.

> When Ms Yang was in her glory a gentleman married her. But her marriage disappeared together with sunlight and colours when she lost the sight of both eyes. Too deep for tears, her heart was bleeding. [...] She had to return to her parents' home. She ran into the doorframe when entering the parents' flat and bumped into the refrigerator again inside the room. She could not see that tears were coursing down the cheeks of her aged parents. [...] Accompanied by her parents, Ms Yang sought medical help from various possible sources. (*Press Digest*, 08/04/1999)

Finally, health and illness have social consequences, and affect people's social networks. Health is considered as an important foundation for the individual to keep harmonious relations with others, while illness tends to break these harmonious relations, and serves as a source of social exclusion.

> When it was confirmed that he was infected with AIDS, Mr Song just wanted to be dead and gone. [...] All of his friends and neighbours dared not visit him; hundreds of villagers gathered in the local government and

> asked to forbid Mr Song to return to their village. [...] Also nobody dared to get in touch with his father and no employer dared to employ his father. (*Press Digest*, 09/05/1999)

7.1.3. Health Practices

Acknowledging the critical roles of health towards both having and being, ordinary Chinese people highly value their health in daily life. They make use of different practical strategies to maintain and promote good health and prevent illness. These practical strategies indicate that health as a major contributor to QOL is also represented in a practice level, as Duveen (1996) notes that ideas and practices are not separated each other within a social representation. As Chinese society is rigidified in a distinction between urban and rural sectors by the *hukou* system, there are divergent perspectives on health practices between urban people and rural people.

7.1.3.2. "Healthy" Food and "Nutritious" Food

Food is related to QOL not only for its acting as a type of "full" possession as discussed in Chapter Six, but also via the mediation of a good health. Both urban and rural residents share a common notion that there are specific relationships between food consumption and its consequences for health and illness. Health is considered to depend on balanced nutrients and trace elements within the body. The body needs many elements to keep its natural balance, which cannot be "too high" or "too low" or "too hot" or "too cold". Illness, on the other hand, is seen as the result of disequilibrium of these elements within the body.

However, urban people and rural people hold different notions on how to keep equilibrium of nutrients within the body. Urban people believe that the consumption of "healthy food" is critically important for health. For them, "healthy" food involves fresh fruits, vegetables, and coarse food grain such as maize, sorghum and millet. Modern urban life witnesses a high rate of overweight and obesity, and these diseases are caused by over-consumption of "unhealthy" food such as meat, rice and wheat. Thus people should eat more "healthy" food and less "unhealthy" food. However, rural people believe that the consumption of "nutritious food" is critically important

for health. For them, meat, milk, eggs, rice and wheat are such "nutritious" foodstuff. These things can nourish the body and have a better healthy value because illness is associated with undernourished. A reasonable explanation for this division is that it possibly reflects different living standards between the two sectors in China.

7.1.3.3. Physical Exercise and Physical Labour

Both urban and rural residents share a common belief that health depends on the proper regulation of exchanges between the body and the outside world. The exchanges involve consuming food and discharging spent residues, taking in oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide, and restoring energy by sleeping. Health lies in the successful regulation of these exchanges, and illness results from the blockage of these exchanges.

However, urban people and rural people adopt different strategies to normalise these exchanges. For urban residents, physical exercise is regarded as effective ways to maintain the proper functions of bodily organs and to facilitate these exchanges on the one hand, and to avoid the malfunction of bodily organs and the blockage of these exchanges on the other. In order to keep good health, they practice various kinds of physical exercise, such as playing balls, running, swimming, climbing mountains and deep breathing.

> I have paid great attention to respiration. Every morning, I stand on the balcony to do deep breath for several times. In this way, I have a large vital capacity, and I have kept excellent health. With a large vital capacity, the oxidation of the blood is good. All nutrients within the body are transported through the blood. If the blood lacks of oxygen, one's health will become worse for sure. Therefore, I feel that breathing is the most important thing. (I-03)

Rural residents, however, tend to think they do not need any physical exercise, because their everyday farming work is the best way for building up their physique. They integrate physical exercise with farming work to enhance health and prevent illness.

> Urban people like you sit in offices all day long, the food you eat cannot digest within the body. We farmers go to the farm field to work everyday, even in winter. It is just like, but better than, physical exercise. It is very good for our health. [...] You urban people pay attention to exercise, such as running and playing balls, and but you cannot do exercise everyday. In winter, you do not go out for exercise. We are different. We do farm work everyday and every season, and we do not stop physical labour for a single day. (I-15)

In brief, for Chinese people, health is the absence of serious illness in terms of QOL. Health is represented as a major creator to QOL, while illness, is depicted as a fundamental disrupter of QOL. The roles of health and illness towards QOL are organised in two different sets of arguments: instrumental and expressive ones. The former focuses on the economic values of health and illness towards QOL, while the latter emphasises the existential merits of health and illness towards QOL. There are divergent perspectives on health practices between urban and rural residents.

7.2. Family

Chinese culture places a great emphasis on family life. The word "family" in Western culture refers primarily to the nuclear family (Goldthorpe, 1987); in Chinese culture, it is often extended vertically to include a married couple's parents even if they do not live together in the same place (Fei, 1992). Both parent-child relations and marital relations are indispensable to Chinese family life. A family functions as the extended self on the one hand, and as the foundation of all social relations on the other, and thus constitutes the "pivotal axis of both private and social life" (Gervais & Jovchelovitch, 1998a, p.717).

7.2.1. Parent-Child Relations

Parent-child relations, the clearly defined categories of blood ties, are a major aspect of family harmony in Chinese culture. Unlike the weak parent-child bonds characteristic of Western culture (Acock & Demo, 1994), there are strong interdependent and reciprocal relationships between parents and their children in

Chinese culture. QOL for Chinese people is structurally and emotionally bound up with harmonious parent-child relations.

7.2.1.1. A Complete Family

In contemporary China, some young urban couples conceive of a dyadic family without a child as a pioneer lifestyle. However, for the vast majority of people, a good life relies crucially on bearing offspring within a family. Being pregnant in Chinese is, literately, synonymous with "being happy". It is a custom in Chinese society that a family should be composed of young and old members. Married young people are expected to procreate. A family without a child is regarded as an incomplete one. A child is not only considered as a source of happiness, but also as the re-generated self of the parents.

> A family without a child is absolutely not a perfect family. People need to enjoy perfection, love and family happiness. Children are one of the joys in life. A family with children is a perfect family. (I-02)

> As a person, one should experience getting married, bearing a baby, and bringing up a child. [...] When you have a child, you will feel that you do not live only by yourself, your child is the continuation of your life. Someday, you get old, and are dead, your life will still continue. (I-05)

Sterile couple often feel profound sense of failure in life, sometimes together with a loss of "face". Traditionally, some sterile couples fulfil their dreams of becoming parents through adoption, which is normally handled amongst their relatives. It is not entirely exceptional for a brother or sister to give up one of their own offsprings to their sibling, thereby completing their sibling's family. In vitro fertilisation now provides an alternative. A woman describes her experience of becoming the mother of "a test tube baby" as follows:

> The only secret in my marriage was that I was unable to be pregnant. The diagnosis that I was sterile due to hereditary diseases dealt my husband and me a head-on blow. I was on the brink of spiritual collapse. [...] Fortunately, the "test tube baby" technique gave me a new hope. I knew that this new technique is not perfect at the moment. But whatever the risks it entailed, I wanted to try to become a mother. [...] When looking at our newborn "test tube baby", my husband and I are happy beyond

words. We have realised our long-term dream of becoming parents. (*Press Digest*, 20/06/1999)

7.2.1.2. Instrumental and Expressive Considerations

Giving birth to either a son or a daughter carries quite different meanings for many Chinese families, especially in rural areas. A young couple usually prefers to have a son rather than a daughter. In order to bear a son, some rural families do not hesitate to pay huge fines for breaking the family planning policy. The preference for sons over daughters is linked to QOL in the two complementary ways: "raising sons for one's old age", and "the inheritance of the family line". The former is based on material considerations; and the latter reflects a yearning for merging a momentary life into a timeless life through endless male heirs. The emphasis of the former is instrumental, and of the latter, expressive.

According to conventional beliefs, taking care of old parents is primarily the duty of sons. When a daughter gets married, she belongs to another family. She no longer contributes to the material status of her natural family, and parents must provide a dowry as their daughter enters her husband's family. Parents can only rely on their sons to take care of them in old age and to give them proper burial. This instrumental idea of "raising sons for one's old age" is illustrated in the following excerpt.

> For me, my son is the most important part of the family. I have done everything for him so I hope that he can take care of me in the future when I am unable to work. Now I can work and don't need his help. If someday I am unable to walk and work, it is his turn to look after me. [...] A daughter is different, you cannot count on her after she marries out [...] In a word, I look after my son while he is young, and my son takes care of me while I am old. (I-11)

Moreover, sons alone can carry the family line. This idea is illustrated by the fact that the penis is metaphorically referred to as the "root": it expresses the existential rootedness of the newborn into a long family line which is, in turn, perpetuated by the newborn son. Without a male heir, the family line originated from the ancestors is terminated, and this family's place in the universe gets lost forever. This explains why a couple without a son is perceived as one which seriously lacks basic filial piety towards their parents and ancestors. This severe lack in filial piety is morally

equivalent to the idea of religious sin in Western culture (Lee *et al*, 1996). This highlights the expressive nature of the tie between generations.

> I-12: It is good to have a son. I like a son.
> I: Why?
> I-12: When the baby boy is just born, I know that I have the root. That is the reason why I would like sons.
> I: Why is a son called the root?
> I-12: A son can carry on the family line. If I am dead, my son can continue the family. If I do not have a son, it means I cannot produce a male heir to continue the family line. The root is broken.
> I: Why can't the root be broken? Why must people give birth to a son?
> I-12: We have a tradition here that a family line must depend on the sons. If one has only daughters, daughters will marry, and married daughters belong to other families. As a Chinese saying goes: "A married daughter is like the water splashed". A son is different, he can continue to give birth to another son. It goes on and on, one generation after another. When I die, I still have my son; when my son dies, he still has his grandson. In this way, sons and grandsons are endless. If I do not have a son, people will say that the root of my family is broken and your family line is over.
> I: Why can't the family line be over?
> I-12: People live in the world for reputation. My family reputation cannot pass on to the later generations without a descendant. No descendant, no aristocratic family. If I have a son, my family position in this world will be handed down to later generations.

Related to both instrumental and expressive considerations, a significant theme across the data sets is that of parents longing to see their children become 'dragons'. The dragon is the most important totemic creature in ancient China. The awesome appearance and magical powers of the dragon have led to an inevitable association with strength and potency (Goodkind, 1991). The image of the dragon signifies the parental wishes for a glorious future and better life for their offspring, and it expresses parental hopes to fulfil vicariously their own unrealised dreams and goals. Due to the strong parent-child bond and interdependence in Chinese culture (Wu & Tseng, 1985), the boundaries between parents and their children are minimal. Parents tend to see their children as the re-generated self, or the extension of themselves. The accomplishments and glories of their children will become those of the parents themselves. This is exemplified in the statement of an old female villager in the interview: "It is a natural thing that I will live a good life if my children live a good

life" (G3-05). Parents often find more meaning in their own lives if their children accomplish extraordinary achievements and enjoy better lives.

> Everybody is longing to see their children become dragons. I have suffered a lot to make a living now as I live at this mountainous village. But my son should not live here all his life. I place great hopes on my son and wish him to have bright future. [...] As long as he lives a good life, I don't care if I live a difficult life. (I-13)

As a return for the care given by their parents, it is the obligation of adult children to be entirely devoted and loyal to their parents. Filial piety is not only a moral obligation, but also a reflection of harmonious relations between elderly parents and their adult children. In association with QOL, filial piety, here, entails two interrelated but distinct supports: financial support and psychological support. These two aspects of filial piety link respectively to an instrumental consideration and an expressive consideration in parent-child relations.

In rural areas, as elderly people have no state pension, financial support from children is essential to secure their parents' material needs. The traditional belief of "raising sons for one's old age" is thus largely unquestioned.

> Showing filial respect to the parents is mainly reflected in providing them with food, cloth and articles for daily use. That is the basic situation in our rural areas. (G4-02)

In urban areas, children may also support financially their parents, but they tend to offer more psychological support. Children are seen as spiritual and emotional ballast for their parents. Warm relations and frequent contacts are the principal means for parents to obtain psychological support from their children.

> Filial piety does not merely mean that you give them living expenses. It also means that when they need you, for example, they want to talk to you, or they need you to be with them, you should meet their requirements. (...) I can understand the mind of my old parents, and their feelings. I will try every means to satisfy their needs, and to make them feel happy. I think that I have an obligation to make my parents happy. They need care. Although they are cared for by their colleagues and friends, the care is different from that of their children. Their most direct

concern is their children. You don't have to accompany your parents everyday, as long as you let them feel you care about them. (I-05)

7.2.2. Marital Relations

Another aspect of family life is the horizontal link between a husband and a wife. A married couple is assumed to spend most of their lives hand in hand, -- to loves, trust and support each other, and to bear and raise offspring together -- the relationship between the couple constitutes an important part towards QOL.

7.2.2.1. Marital Harmony

Most aspects of young people's marriage in Chinese society are traditionally subordinated to the wishes and the expectations of parents. Parents make decisions on whom their sons or daughters should marry, when they should marry and how their weddings should be celebrated. Some parents see marriage as an opportunity to form political or economic ties with other families. Young couples are normally matched through a "go-between". In some cases, they are not consulted and do not meet until the wedding day. Arranged marriages are still customary and seen as expressing filial piety.

Arranged marriages are prevalent at Yangjiasan village. Most interviewees could not explain explicitly why they perpetuate this practice. They simply stated: "This is the tradition handed down from our ancestors". The analysis reveals that most families at Yangjiasan village in fact originated from the same ancestor. They belong to the same lineage, which is organised along the same patriarchal line. The male villagers have seldom moved out of the village for hundreds of years. Mate choice is restricted by "Five *Fu*", which determines the close relatives within five generations and forbids endogenous marriage. Inter-village marriage has thus become widespread. A male has to "marry in" a female outside the village, and a female has to "marry out" of her village. However, due to lack of contacts with outside villages, young people have to be matched through "go-betweens", a process normally arranged by their parents.

Arranged marriages have gradually disappeared in the urban areas as the Chinese Communist Party encouraged "free choice marriage" since the early 1950s. The prevalent view in the urban areas is that it is a young person's own responsibility to look for a spouse. However, the majority of young people may still take their parent's advice seriously in selecting their spouse.

> I-07: When I look for a girlfriend, my consideration is that I will be satisfied with her for 50 percent, and my parents will also be satisfied with her for another 50 percent. Unlike typical Westerners who emphasise the self, Chinese people have to consider how other people will see this matter. She must be pleasing to the eyes of both my parents and me.
> I: Your marriage is yours, why should you have to ask for permission from your parents. If your parents are against it, will you give up your own choice?
> I-07: Regarding this question, I have read some books on the game theory. I can have a choice for my partner, but I don't have any choice on my parents. I can change my potential partner for marriage, but I can't change my parents. Speaking from another angle, my parents don't have any choice with respect to me either. If I maintain my stance, they will certainly make concessions.

In this way, marital relations in Chinese culture should express harmony between a couple, between young people and their parents, and even amongst an entire family lineage. QOL is fundamentally intertwined with socially functional marital relations.

7.2.2.2. Instrumental and Expressive Considerations

The discourse on marital relations in the data sets is guided by both instrumental and expressive considerations. Although these two considerations are interdependent and each seems to call the possibility of the other into play, they are linked to QOL from different angles. The instrumental consideration frames marriage as a vehicle for acquiring properties and for making a profit, and accentuates the monetary value of marital relations. The expressive consideration sees marriage as the endowment of a heterosexually romantic love, and emphasises the intimacy, personal attraction, and a sense of spiritual partnership.

> My husband is ten years older than I. When I married him, he was handsome and intelligent. But he is now very poor and too old, I have to divorce him. (*Press Digest*, 21/05/1998)

> Love is also very important. The two people need to communicate with each other. They need the whole gamut of human feelings: happiness, anger, grief and joy. Life without love is too insipid. (I-06)

The data analysis also indicates that sexual gratification is a meaningful contributor to QOL, although this theme is implicitly, but not explicitly, expressed in the data. In the word associations task, a few respondents associate sex with QOL. But they use euphemism, for instance, "X life" or "private life", to signify sexual matters. As a taboo subject in traditional Chinese, sex was seldom discussed in public, and any materials relating to sex were strictly forbidden. Nowadays, it is still widely unquestioned for Chinese people that sexual relationships are confined to married life.

However, with public attitudes towards sex becoming more liberal, pre-marital sex and cohabitation are gradually being accepted by some young Chinese people. The discourse about pre-marital sex and cohabitation is also organised around both expressive and instrumental considerations. The expressive consideration considers pre-marital sex and cohabitation as the "expression of love", "no contract union" and "a path to marriage" (*Press Digest*, 24/12/1998). The instrumental consideration is activated in a more subtle way through the traditional value placed on female virginity. According to the Confucian moral code, remaining a virgin is central for a girl's marriage prospects, and a girl should be ready to die to preserve her chastity. Although this traditional discipline is challenged by contemporary practices, the loss of virginity, especially if it involves a man other than the prospective husband, still carries stigma. A young man states it explicitly: "I wish that my potential girlfriend stays in 'purity' for me" (*Press Digest*, 24/12/1998). The unspoken words behind the notion of virginity are that a woman is viewed as the exclusive possession of a man. In this way, pre-marital sex and cohabitation are linked to having and being.

7.3. Work

Work is a fundamental social activity and a major aspect of human life. Through work, individuals procure their sustenance, identity, social and economic status. Work is also necessary for the survival and prosperity of a society as a whole. As an important

link between the individual and society, work is one of key life domains in which QOL is activated.

7.3.1. Different Approaches to Work

Three different sets of arguments on the role of work towards QOL are retrieved from the data: instrumental, and expressive and dedicative approaches. The distinction between the instrumental approach and the expressive approach corresponds to Morse's (1953) distinction between "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" rewards elicited from work. The distinction between the dedicative approach and the expressive approach corresponds to Harpaz's (1990) distinction between work as the self's contribution to society and work as self-expression. Each of these approaches relates to the having and being aspects of QOL in different ways.

7.3.1.1. Instrumental Approach

The instrumental approach considers work as a means of survival for both self and family. In terms of the relationship between the individual and society, the instrumental approach emphasises how the individual gains some material return from society. In this context, work is regarded as a major contributor towards QOL in terms of its direct material consequences. Here, work serves as a means or instrument to fulfil the material needs central to QOL. An individual "sells" his/her labour for money and for the things that money makes possible. The underlying principle is "the work-or-starve philosophy" (Campbell, 1980, p.114). To work means to be an income-earner and to protect the self from poverty. On the other hand, the instrumental approach does not restrict itself to monetary rewards exclusively, it also includes consideration of non-monetary benefits, such as convenient working hours, good physical working conditions, employment security, housing allocation, and healthcare. In some circumstances, these are an individual's major drive to work. The Chinese phrases the "iron bowl of rice" and the "clay bowl of rice", which imply job security in the pre-reform period and job insecurity in the reform period respectively, metaphorically associate job with livelihood, highlighting the instrumental approach of work.

G1-1: All that I have done is for survival. I work to make money, to support my family, and to survive.
G1-3: A good job can definitely improve your quality of life, because it can let you make good money. It is very clear that when you have a good financial basis, you enjoy a higher degree of social wealth, and have good feelings. Your quality of life will certainly be increased.

Quality of life depends on your own labour under any circumstances. You cannot live a good life if you do not work hard and earn lots of money. (G3-02)

I wish I could find a job in a university, so that I can have flexible working hours. I can handle some family affairs if some urgent things happen. I don't like to work in a company, because the regular working time cannot be guaranteed and working overtime is a very normal matter there. My husband now works at a company. Sometimes he has to work for more than 15 hours a day, and has no time at all to take care of the family. The family won't be like a family if my job is like his. The family will be a failure if none of us takes care of the family. [...] The administrative departments in university are good places to work. The workload there is relatively lighter. I can have a good social position, make good money, and have the opportunity to be assigned a flat if I am able to work there. (I-06)

7.3.1.2. Expressive Approach

The expressive approach views work as a goal in itself and as a way of life. Its major concern is the enjoyment and a sense of achievements inherent in work. In this context, work is regarded as a major contributor towards QOL in terms of demonstrating, proving and glorifying the self. This expressive approach assumes that work procures the individual with great joys and self-actualisation. QOL here is associated quintessentially with self-worth and the sense of superiority from career blossoms.

I like exciting and challenging jobs. I think, if you do something good in a field that you have not got involved in, you can satisfy your self-esteem. Also, it represents your capability, and high IQ. You will feel proud. Actually, this is purely non-material interest. It is like playing games, which some people never tire of, although they cannot make money from it at all. It is actually a self-challenge. In this case, I feel that I can beat some other people. Many of my classmates have frequently changed their jobs, although new jobs do not necessarily guarantee a high income. It seems that the change is a challenge and great fun, as well as a better quality of life for them. (I-07)

Although both the instrumental and expressive approaches consider work as individualist goal-seeking activities, the distinction between the two is indisputable: the former emphasises extrinsic rewards, while the latter stresses intrinsic rewards, such as joy, variety, interests, challenge, accomplishment and autonomy. Yet, the instrumental and expressive approaches are not mutually incompatible. In other words, the expressive approach does not necessarily mean a complete detachment from the pursuit of extrinsic rewards such as money. Money here is linked with, and functions as an outward sign of, success, fame and recognition by others.

7.3.1.3. Dedicative Approach

This approach consists in perceiving work as a contribution of the self to society, and as a self-sacrificing devotion to a noble endeavour. QOL in this context derives from knowing that one productively participates in a collective effort, and contributes to the greater good. Here, the QOL of an individual is inseparable from that of others. The root of this approach lies in the Communist ideology, which emphasises selflessness, collective goal and effort. Insisting that individuals should dedicate themselves wholly to public interests, the Chinese Communist Party promotes a dedication to work. As the Party used to deny the legitimacy of private interests, the desire for personal gain, fame, or even personal gratification from work was criticised as bourgeois. According to the ideology of communism, an individual's work and achievements are linked to the welfare and fame of others and the state. For some, selfless dedication to the state and to society remains an important pathway to QOL.

> It is not good for a person to eat several hundred kilograms of grains a year but make no contributions to society. [...] As a state-owned factory leader, I always put work as my first priority, and seldom consider my own interests. To me, work means to realise my life value, that is, to make contributions to society and to the country. My quality of life depends heavily on how I can make the factory a top one in China. This is the goal that I have been pursuing all my life. I would like to dedicate all of my life to this goal. [...] The workers in the factory are like my brothers and friends. I would be held responsible if the factory collapses and the workers cannot earn their wages. [...] If all of the state-owned enterprises go smoothly and everybody's job is guaranteed, society will surely show prosperity. (I-04)

7.3.1.4. Concurrence of the Three Approaches

These three approaches are not mutually exclusive. Any individual may hold more than one approach concurrently and alternate between them, prioritising particular an approach at different times and in relation to different aspects of work. This is exemplified by the statement of an old female interviewee: "Only through work can I contribute to society and be recognised by society" (I-01). The dedicative and expressive approaches stand side by side in this case.

On the other hand, different approaches may be incompatible. When conflicts occur, individuals have to differentiate what is their primary concern from what is their secondary concern and make their own choice.

> A job should provide you with both a stable income and enjoyment, which are a guarantee for the quality of life. But this is not always the case. My brother-in-law works as a guard in a detention centre. This is a permanent job with high income. But he cannot stand to see those drug addicts and prostitutes everyday. He feels disgusted when a prostitute strips in front of him or a drug addict urges him to take drugs and touches him. He desperately wants to leave the detention centre, no matter how much he gets paid there. (G1-05)

7.3.2. Farming Work and "Jobs"

Residents tend to distinguish between farming work and "jobs". They believe that their farming work is not a job, and that a job refers only to paid employment in urban areas. For instance, in the interviews many farmers claimed that they "have no job", although they go farming everyday. To them, jobholders "eat state grain"; while farmers "grow their own grain". Jobholders are salary/wage earners, and are also eligible to mandatory retirement with pension; farmers depend mainly on their own labour at the mercy of heaven, and on their children's support at their old age.

> G3-01: Our farmers live at the mercy of heaven, and our income depends on the weather. We have to save part of this year's income to secure next year's livelihood in case of extreme bad weather.
> G3-02: And to prepare next year's production too.

G3-03: Unlike officials and factory workers, we have no cash income. We usually have to sell millets for cash. Otherwise, we have no money to buy salt and coal.
G3-01: Factory workers can be allocated some basic living expenses by the government even when their factories are bankrupt. But we have to depend on our labour to make a living.
G3-03: We also have no pension at all in our old age. Our livelihood in old age is not guaranteed.
G3-04: Although I am over 60 now, I still go farming everyday and make a living myself. If someday I am unable to walk and work, I will have to rely only on my children to support me.

The villagers rarely maintain that their farming work is a kind of contribution to the state, and is spiritual reward. The major concern of these rural people is that farming work is less rewarding than "jobs" in terms of the instrumental approach. In other words, material return is a key differential between farming work and "jobs". This lay cleavage between farming work and "jobs" reflects the separation between rural and urban population. Throughout Chinese history, villagers were self-reliant based on farming as an essential family enterprise, while the emperor and his bureaucrats lived on taxes (Hsu, 1953). The rural-urban division in modern China is instituted by the *hukou* system. The individuals with an urban *hukou* were eligible to jobs, while the individuals with a rural *hukou* were bound to farming work. Although the *hukou* system is no longer used to prevent rural-to-urban mobility, Chinese society is still, by and large, divided into an "agricultural" segment and "non-agricultural" one. This division remains crucial in determining people's life chances, and creates a boundary between farming work and "jobs". Thereby, rural residents largely work for "having" at the expense of "being".

7.4. Social Relations

Individuals exist across a broad spectrum of social relations. QOL in Chinese culture, to a great extent, is conceived as being linked to not only the self and family, but also to significant others and society as a whole, and thus realised across a broad spectrum of social relations.

7.4.1. Interpersonal Networks

The individual in Chinese society is closely linked to significant others in a web of social relations which involves not only one's family but also a broad interpersonal network. Unlike family relations that are confined to blood and legal ties, the interpersonal networks are confined to social ties, and established on the basis of social interactions. Interpersonal networks differentiate between in-group and out-group, and prescribe mutual obligations for in-group members. The data analysis indicates that interpersonal networks contribute to QOL in two interrelated but distinct ways: *guanxi* and friendship

Guanxi, a Chinese indigenous concept (Bian, 1994; Fei, 1992; Hwang, 1987), literately means "relations", referring to directly or indirectly instrumental personal connections. Chinese society is traditionally organised in hierarchically structured relationships and the distribution of goods and services is very often at the discretion of the bureaucrats at different levels. In Chinese folk beliefs and daily practices, *guanxi* is intrinsically instrumental: it serves to find someone who has the power to break through the bureaucratic control of social resources and opportunities. The relationships amongst individuals in the context of *guanxi* thus serve as a means to facilitate access to various benefits, such as children going to a better school, and workers getting promotion.

Friendship, by contrast, involves intimately expressive personal relations. Although Chinese people differ greatly in the premium they put on friendship, being with friends is conceived as the best antidote for loneliness and an important source of joy. The desolation of life without a friend is compared to "staying on an uninhabited island". Close friends share weal and woe with each other. It is through exchanging information and ideas and doing enjoyable things together that friendship provides individuals with the sense of emotional support, warmth and attachment.

Sharing a dinner is used as a "lubricant" for either *guanxi* or friendship. It is a common way of finding *guanxi* to seek for help and of nurturing friendship. Food, in

this sense, symbolises social interactions, and represents as a "glue" of interpersonal networks.

7.4.2. Social Comparisons and Self Comparisons

Thinking about QOL always implicitly, or explicitly, involves comparisons. Comparisons are made in relation to different sources and forms of referents (Sirgy, 1998). When Chinese people think and communicate about their QOL, they invoke different referents in two distinct dimensions: temporal and spatial ones. On the temporal dimension, the referent is one's past. On this dimension the key aspects of the individual's past life are selected as benchmarks against to compare the current QOL of the person. On the spatial dimension, the referent is meaningful others. On this dimension the others are selected to form the basis against which the individual compares his/her QOL. The former is self comparisons, the latter, social comparisons (Festinger, 1954). Through the processes of both self and social comparisons, the present is linked to the past, and the self is linked to others. It is worth noting that the past is not an "objective" moment, but the object of some reconstruction, just as the choice of comparative "others" is not neutral or unmotivated.

A divergent tendency is found between the temporal comparison and the spatial comparison. When individuals make self comparisons on the temporal dimension, their current life circumstances seem greatly positive and satisfactory. This favouritism is manifested a shift, perceived by the subjects themselves, from "contriving to survive" to "giving a zest to life". The need for food and clothing is salient in the context of "contriving to survival"; while the impetus for entertainment such as sports, tourism and expedition is salient in the context of "giving a zest to life". This shift can be seen from the following interview excerpt:

> When I was a little girl, like most of families at that time, my family was poor and lived an industrious and frugal life. We did not have new clothes to put on, and not enough food to eat. When my parents bought a new item of clothing, the older child would wear it first, then the second one would continue to wear it, and finally the youngest one. Unlike today's children who can have meat everyday, some of them even are over-nourished, we were all malnourished at that time. This kind of

> problems does not exist now. Life has become more varied and colourful. We can now have a variety of entertainments, such as bowling, dance, *karaok*, swimming and holiday, to enrich our lives. (I-06)

When making a social comparison on the spatial dimension, individuals tend to select others who are deemed to have a better QOL than their own as the basis for comparisons. There is a tendency for individuals to perceive themselves as a relative low-status group, as they often select others who are in slightly higher status than themselves as an applicable referent. For instance, the rural residents tend to choose the urban residents as a referent, the populace in the urban areas tend to pick the gentry as a referent, and the elite in China tends to prefer to have foreigners in the developed countries as a referent. As a consequence, the out-group favouritism effects are widespread and predominant. This tendency can be seen from the following three interview excerpts:

> Comparing with urban people, we farmers belong to the lower social strata and live a bitter and hard life. (G3-04)

> Unlike ordinary people, private businessmen and high-ranking officials can do whatever they want to do and live with wealth and glory. (I-08)

> There is a gap between China and developed countries in many aspects of life, such as environmental protection, social security, civilisation, and living standard, etc. This gap cannot be filled very soon. (*Press Digest*, 23/09/1999)

Both the current life favouritism on the temporal dimension and the out-group favouritism on the spatial dimension may occur simultaneously. A possible explanation for this tendency is that the former reflects the improvement of the QOL in Chinese society as a whole, and the latter reflects, and serves as, a motivational impetus for individuals' upward social mobility for a better QOL. This tendency seems to challenge the perspective of social identity theory that social comparisons are made to enhance self-esteem (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). A likely explanation of this mismatch is that it reflects two contrasted types of culturally patterned socialities and psyches (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus & Nisbett, 1998). Social identity theory is developed in the background of Western culture, in which a person is encouraged to believe that he/she is unique, different and better than others (ibid). The above

tendency, however, is discovered in Chinese culture, in which a person is socially expected to think that he/she is ordinary, quite similar to or no different than others.

7.5. The Natural Environment

The focus of this section is the importance attributed to the natural environment by lay Chinese people in relation to QOL. Again, the data show that the natural environment is valued for its contribution to QOL both instrumentally and expressively.

7.5.1. Instrumental Approach

The dominant feature of the instrumental approach is that QOL depends on the human manipulation and exploitation of the natural environment in order to suit material needs. From this perspective, the environment exists primarily for human use, and it is valued for its contribution to QOL in terms of its economic meanings. This approach is fundamentally anthropocentric (Dunlap & Catton, 1994) and dependent on the mechanistic representations of nature (Gervais, 1997), in which humans are seen as different from, and superior to, all other living beings on the earth. Humans are not only masters of their own destiny, but also masters of nature. The environment is considered as a perpetual and inexhaustible repository of resources to fulfil human material needs. This instrumental perspective is illustrated below.

> A leader came to Huayang Town, Yangxian County, saying: "There are so many primitive forest sources in your Huayang, why do not you exploit these forests to serve people?" The Changqing Forestry Farm was thus established. Five hundred trucks went into the mountains, and rows of trees were lumbered down. (*Press Digest*, 28/05/1998)

The instrumental role of nature in respect to QOL is particularly obvious when it cannot be fulfilled or when QOL is jeopardised by pollution and environmental degradation. The interviewees in Beijing were extremely worried about environment deterioration and pollution in their city. I was told that Beijing had been hit by serious dust storms 14 times in 2000 (the year when I conducted my fieldwork). People suffocated and were covered with dust when they went out of their homes. I was also

told that Beijing was very seriously polluted, and anecdotally, that pilots did not need navigation to fly to Beijing, because they could see Beijing 500 kilometres away: a huge grey cluster.

Yet, for some people, the current environmental crisis is an inevitable consequence of China's transition from a traditional agrarian society into a modern industrial society. The priority here is given to the instrumental value of the natural environment: for the sake of immense gratification in intensive consumption, we have to tolerate pollution; for the sake of speedy economic growth, China has to pay the price of environment degradation.

> The environment in Beijing is incredibly bad. But I think it is unavoidable. It cannot be avoided in the process of industrialisation of any country. [...] Those developed countries also encountered similar or even more serious problems in the early stage of their industrialisation process and economic development. It is hard for China to avoid taking this route. (I-06)

The other side of the same coin is that the consequences of environmental devastation are taken into account in its economic value. An excessive exploitation of the natural environment for the purpose of economic benefits results in serious environmental problems. As the same time, environmental devastation is addressed with respect to its real and potential economic losses. From this perspective, environmental protection and devastation are all seen as essentially economic issues.

> Having engulfed great expenses of cultivated land, submerged numerous houses, and threatened many important industrial cities, the surging floods have resulted in gigantic economic losses. (*Press Digest*, 14/01/1999)

The instrumental approach is also exemplified by the rural-to-urban migration. The less polluted villages are associated with fewer economic resources and opportunities; while the more polluted urban areas are associated with greater economic opportunities and a better material life. The interviewees at Yangjiasan village cherish their living surroundings, green hills, fresh air and tranquillity. They claim that they live closer to nature than do residents in Beijing. However, most of them still wish that they could move into urban areas.

7.5.2. Expressive Approach

The distinctive feature of the expressive approach is that QOL depends on a harmony between humans and the natural environment. Humans and environment are inextricably bound together. QOL is actualised when there is a harmony between humans and environment or *vice versa*. The root of this approach lies in the Chinese ancient ideology about nature (Kang & Havercamp, 1994) and is similar to the organic representations of nature discussed by Gervais (1997) in which humans are an integral part of nature, and there are no rigid boundaries between nature and humans. The emphasis of this approach is the existential merits, rather than the economic implications, of nature for QOL.

> People live in the natural environment and biosphere. All things in the natural world, such as plants, flowers, grasses, animals and people are interrelated and interacted. [...] Quality of life is created by a harmonious relationship amongst all kinds of living beings in the natural world. [...] People must maintain a harmonious relationship with nature in order to improve their quality of life. (I-05)

From this expressive perspective, pollution and environmental degradation are attributed to the dissolution of harmonious relations and balance between humans and nature. "People live in nature. If not co-ordinated with nature, people will be punished by nature, according to the Chinese tradition" (I-05). Furthermore, such dissolution is blamed as human overexploitation of environment for maximising the economic growth. "China's economic development is at the cost of important environmental sacrifice" (G2-01).

The harmony between humans and environment, and the dissolution of such a harmony, also carries emotional meanings As a manifestation of the harmony, beautiful scenes, such as green mountains, pure rivers, singing birds, fragrant flowers, white clouds drifting through the blue sky, make life enjoyable, which enhance QOL. On the contrary, environment degradation and pollution, such as deforestation, dark rivers and dirty air, not only raise enduring concrete feelings of discomfort, disgust, depression and despair, but also destroy much enjoyment and beauty in life itself. In the following excerpt, an interviewee contrasts the joys derived from the harmony between mankind and environment with the sorrows aroused by recent pollution.

> The rivers used to be very clean. Children could play in these rivers in the past. My husband learned to swim in a river in his hometown when he was a little boy. But it is impossible now. The industry has created massive pollution. The river near my home is now a stinky ditch. You will feel uncomfortable when you pass there. The smell there is really disgusting. [...] I remember when I first got to Beijing in 1994, the sky in Beijing was so blue that I thought Beijing was such a beautiful city at that time. But now it is completely different. We can hardly enjoy white clouds drifting through the blue sky in Beijing. [...] The climate now makes people only feel cold and hot, the past feelings of four seasons have disappeared. I often become impulsive when seeing dirty air and dark rivers. (I-06)

As mankind is seen as an integral part of nature, the quality of environment is thought to be linked intrinsically to the health of the individual. Interviewees at Yangjiasan Village believe that the air in their mountainous area is very fresh, so they live longer and healthier than urbanites. On the contrary, interviewees in Beijing complain that dust storms constitute a serious health hazard, and they are more likely to suffer from respiratory diseases, such as tracheitis, asthma and even lung cancer. In the meantime, interviewees at Yangjiasan Village acknowledge that the utilisation of fertilisers and pesticides, rather than farmyard manure, for the purpose of raising the crop output, eradicates the ecosystem balance, and causes various diseases.

> There are a great variety of diseases, and people die of all kinds of diseases. Some people die in sleep, and some people die of broken blood vessel. [...] Some diseases are connected with fertilisers and pesticides on farm crops. If fertilisers and pesticides were not used, the grain output could not be raised. In the past, we used farmyard manure only, rice tasted better and there were not so many serious diseases at that time. (I-11)

Furthermore, the environmental issue in the data is also associated with its social consequence: the survival of the Chinese nation and human beings as a whole. To save the natural environment for its own sake is to ensure the existence of mankind. Environmental protection is praised as a "philanthropic act of devotion to our offspring and human beings" (*Press Digest*, 19/07/1998); while environmental devastation is blamed as "consuming the legacy inherited by our ancestors and committing sin to our offsprings and fellow human beings" (*Press Digest*,

14/01/1999). Clearly, the environment links QOL in the local with QOL in the global, the QOL of the present generation with the QOL of future generations.

In brief, the instrumental approach emphasises the economic implications of the environment towards QOL and the expressive approach highlights the existential merits of the environment towards QOL. Both approaches co-exist in Chinese society.

7.6. Conclusion

QOL for ordinary Chinese people is embedded in five distinct but interrelated life domains: health, the family, work, social relations and the natural environment. These domains have diverse ramifications in relation to QOL. QOL in China is socially expressed as an all-around harmony within the body of the individual, within the family, between the individual and society, and between humans and the environment. Imbalance or the dissolution of harmony in any of these critical life domains jeopardises QOL. The instrumental and expressive approaches permeate across these critical life domains, and link them with QOL in a diverse way. The instrumental approach attaches economic implications to these domains, and posits them as resources to be possessed and consumed by the individual. The expressive approach emphasises enjoyment derived from these life domains, and attaches existential merits to these domains. The instrumental and expressive approaches are linked, respectively, to the having and being orientations discussed in Chapter Six.

8

TO HAVE OR TO BE:
IN PURSUIT OF QOL IN A HETEROGENEOUS IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

One of the key theoretical arguments of this thesis is that understanding QOL in Chinese society requires an careful articulation of the relations between the self and others, and between the individual and society, and that the examination of these relations must be explicitly related to the socio-cultural and historical context within which they emerge and which they, in turn, contribute to create. Thus, the focus of this chapter is an empirical examination of the ways in which rapid and radical social, economic and political changes taking place in China are restructuring both the relations between individuals and their family (filial piety) and between the individual and the state (loyalty), how ordinary Chinese people frame these transformations – based on the competing value systems of Confucianism, Marxism and capitalism – as either opportunities or constraints in terms of their own QOL, and how "having" and "being" are expressed in the ways in which people actually pursue their QOL this context. Section 8.1 explores how self-other relations are changed with the family context as a function of societal transformations, thereby create dilemmas in relations to QOL. Section 8.2 explores how the relations between the individual and the state are changed in the course of transition to a market economy, and thereby create dilemmas in relations to QOL.

8.1. Filial Piety and QOL

Filial piety is a powerful indigenous concept that dictates the slope of relations between the self and family (Lee, 1991). Close family relations have always been a cornerstone of Chinese culture (Hsu, 1949). Unlike in the Judeo-Christian world where one's existence is attributed to a transcendent creator, in the Confucian Chinese world, one's life is solely credited to one's parents (Hwang, 1999). Family members are thus conceptualised as one body. The ideal family in the Confucian ideology is

characterised as a paternal and extended family. In such a family, the obligations of filial piety, including continuing the family line and caring for family elders, are assigned to the sons. As discussed in Chapter Seven, giving birth to male children ensures both the perpetuity of the family lineage and the material security of the elderly. Traditional Chinese culture cherishes the extended family, spanning a multitude of generations based on a bloodline. However, the transition into a market economy, intertwined with the introduction of the one-child-per-couple policy, is profoundly restructuring the traditional Chinese family values and family relations, and this, in turn, has a significant impact on QOL. From a social psychological perspective, this raises key questions: How do ordinary Chinese people reconcile the conflicting traditional and modern values in their daily life? What opportunities and threats in association with QOL have arisen from the transition?

8.1.1. QOL, Family Values, and Market Economy

8.1.1.1. Common Destiny in Economic Acquisition

Max Weber's (1930) monograph *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* sketches the way in which the agentic features of man's psyche rose to dominance in the historical movement towards capitalism throughout the Industrial Revolution in the Western world. The continual accumulation of wealth for its own sake, rather than for the material rewards that it can serve to bring, comes to dominate everyday life, as it becomes interpreted as a sign of one's divine "election", and of one's salvation "Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs" (Weber, 1930, p.53). This, according to Weber, is the essence of the spirit of modern capitalism.

This capitalist ethos has also spread into Chinese society in the course of China's reform and opening-up. With the transition into a market economy, materialism, the dominant theme in Western industrial societies, is unfolding into Chinese society. As discussed in Chapter Six, money and material possessions, as well as the pleasure and symbolic meanings consequent upon such possessions, are being seen essential to

QOL. Further analysis, however, reveals that materialism and individualism, two inextricable notions in modern capitalism, are dissociated in contemporary Chinese society. Instead, materialism gets associated with the values of family. Economic acquisition is generally pursued for the sake of the collective good of a family rather than the good of the individual alone. The widespread belief in the omnipotence of money is strongly associated with the cultural imperatives of family values.

> I have been trying every means to make money. I have both parents and a son to support. As a person in-between, I have to work hard to subsidise them. It is my duty to provide for my parents, to support my son for education, and to build a house the son's future marriage. (I-15)

As the restriction on the rural-to-urban mobility is relaxed in the reform era, some tens of millions of villagers rush to work in urban areas, both pushed by the poverty of rural areas and pressed by the opportunities of economic advancement in urban areas. The data shows, the "gold rush" of these migrant labourers is always linked to the fulfilment of family obligations. The purpose of earning money is primarily not for the individual him/herself, but, by and large, for his/her family. The media data show that the rural-to-urban migrant is recurrently associated with "keeping family supplied with provision" (*Press Digest*, 18/07/1999), "supporting parents" (*Press Digest*, 04/06/1998), "supporting brother/sister for schooling" (*Press Digest*, 06/08/1998), "earning dowry" (*Press Digest*, 04/06/1998), and "repaying the family debt" (*Press Digest*, 02/08/1998). For urbanites, with the elimination of the lifetime employment in the reform era, unemployment has become a widespread phenomenon. As the data show, being an unemployed is not only a misfortune for the individual his/herself, but also a tragedy of the entire family. It involves the sadness of the whole family and a great loss of the family finance. Conversely, "a whole family's life will be secured if a laid-off worker is to be reemployed" (*Press Digest,* 18/07/1999).

The rise of materialism is also linked with a modern way of married life. It seems that material possessions were less attached to a marriage prior to the reform era. I was told by an old interviewee (I-02) in Beijing that they had few material expectations when she got married in the 1960s. They just lived in the small room borrowed from their *danwei*. There was no sofa, and no cabinet. They just pooled small amount stuff together and started their married life. To them, a small room was big enough to live,

plain clothes were good enough to keep warmth, and simple food sufficed to fill their stomach. However, with the rise of materialist values from the late 1970s onwards, material possessions have been strongly associated with marriage. For instance, a big banquet, or a luxurious travel, has become a mundane licence for marriage in both urban and rural areas. I was told at Yangjiasan village that there are normally 18 or 20 courses at a wedding ceremony, shared by hundreds of relatives and friends. Such a big banquet is a "semiotic object" which mediates between a wish for prospective affluence and a newborn family.

The above discussion seems to suggest, it is an economic acquisition that brings sanguineous relations together to share a common destiny, for good or for bad. Having and being, the two divergent orientations towards QOL, are thus integrated in the sphere of family in contemporary China.

8.1.1.2. Common Destiny and Individual Autonomy

The extended family was highly cherished in traditional culture. Members of an extended family included grandparents, their immediate offspring, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, and, in some fortunate cases, even great grandchildren. In such a family, several generations were expected to live in the same house. This was known as "four generations under the same roof". As Chu and Ju (1993) note, a man's most cherished wish was to live long enough to have not only grandsons, but also great-grandsons living in the same house. "Four generations under the same roof" indicated the prosperity of the family and was regarded as the greatest possible accomplishment for the elderly. In comparison, other achievements were less important. This study finds that the ideal of "four generations under the same roof" is still highly admired by old rural people. Life for the elderly is enjoyable when they can share the weal and woe with their extended offspring within the same household.

> I-11: My oldest grandson is 26 years old. He is married, and has a child.
> I: Does it mean that you are living in an extended family?
> I-11: Yes. "Four generations under the same roof" is a very happy thing. In this village, only few people at my age live such a very enjoyable life. Some people who are over 80 years old do not have the fourth generation. Sometimes other people praise me. I feel very proud.

However, for most Chinese people in both rural and urban areas, the practice of the extended family has virtually disappeared. At Yanjiasan village, I was told that a young couple would not like to live with their parents in the same house when they get married. They normally move into their own house nearby and start their nuclear family. In urban areas, the nuclear family is becoming the norm. Some young people even prefer to live apart from their parents before getting married.

An interesting question arises here: Why are people willing to break up with the traditional Chinese way of the extended family, and go into a typical Western style of the nuclear family? The analysis of the data indicates that the shift from an extended family mode to a nuclear family one is intertwined with the current economic and ideological transformations in Chinese society. In an economic sense, the improvement of ordinary people's living standards and the exit from the era of scarcity bestow Chinese people with the possibility of switching into a nuclear family mode. "Constrained by a limited budget, all generations of a family had to live in the same household in the past"(I-03). In an ideological sense, the decline of the extended family is closely linked to the rise of Western individualist values such as freedom, individual rights and independence. As discussed in Chapter Six, freedom, a taken-for-granted value in Western culture, was negated in Chinese society as it is conflicted with Confucianism and Marxism. These values, however, have penetrated in the sphere of family life along with China's transition into a market economy. With the assimilation of the values of personal freedom, the extended family is perceived as a constraint upon individual freedom, while the nuclear family is associated with the greater opportunities for personal choice. It seems that, for young people, life is more enjoyable when they can follow their own preferences, and maintain themselves, in the context of the nuclear family.

> I don't like to live in the same home together with my parents. They always want to restrain my personal choice. If I live far away, they do not have the opportunity to control me. [...] Most parents hope that their children should live according to their will. I have got a lot of experience in this respect. I wanted to become an athlete when I was a little boy, but my parents resolutely opposed this idea. (I-08)

> Compared with old people, young people have a different language, different hobbies and different life habits. For example, young people like eating good food, while old people avoid certain food. Old people

> are different from young people in terms of the life concept. Old people live a thrifty life for their whole life, and they think that young people live an extravagant life. If old people and young people live in the same house, conflicts may occur easily. I think that young people should live separately from their parents, thus we will not disturb each other. (I-16)

The endorsement of a nuclear family mode does not necessarily mean the negation of the traditional values of family togetherness. Rather, the values of family togetherness have transformed from "being together under the same roof" to "being associated materially and psychologically" without necessarily living together. "Although I live far away from my parents, the geographic distance cannot cut off the psychological bond between us" (I-06). The close family interaction, as discussed in Chapter Seven, is articulated in the parents' wishes and efforts for their children's future, and in the adult children's financial and emotional support for their elderly parents.

A significant implication derived from the above discussion is the Chinese conception of the self and its link to QOL. With the transition into a market economy, the meaning of the self in contemporary Chinese society has not been straightaway transformed into the Western notion of an "independent entity", the "self with a sharp boundary that stops at one's skin and clearly demarks self from non-self" (Spence, 1985, p.1288). Rather, the long-established Chinese view of the independent self in relation to significant others anchored in a blood bond is not wiped out by capitalism, but still firmly accommodated in Chinese society. The denotation of significant others, however, is not rigid but fluid. It may refer either to the extended family members in terms of a common destiny in a more traditional sense, or to the mere nuclear family members in terms of personal choice in a more modern sense. The symbiosis of these conflicting values of common destiny and of personal choice is a characteristic of the contemporary Chinese mode of the self. It seems that the spirit of capitalism has been reformulated as it is incorporated or endorsed into Chinese culture. The bedrock of traditional Confucian family values, which emphasise the interdependence of family members and the subjugation of the self to promote family harmony, is dynamically retained when adopting the spirit of capitalism. This Chinese conception of the self is crucial for understanding QOL in the context of social transition.

8.1.2. The One-Child-Per-Couple Policy and its Implications for QOL

China is the most populous country in the world. According to the Fifth National Census, by 1st November 2000, China's population had reached 1.29533 billion (Qing, 2001), making up approximately one-fifth of the world's population. The current overpopulation in China resulted partly from a pronatalist policy implemented during the 1950s and the early 1960s. From the perspective of the Chinese government, this pronatalist stand originated from Marxist outlook towards population. China's pronatalist policy was, to a great extent, sanctioned by Marx's (1883/1976) view that the elimination of the existing capitalist system and the establishment of a socialist system would create more room for population growth. Birth control was accused of betraying Marxism at that time. However, faced with the pressure of overpopulation, in 1979 the Chinese government adopted an extreme measure: the one-children-per-couple policy. These diametrically opposed population policies are strongly linked to ordinary people's thinking about QOL, their conflicting demands create dilemmas – opportunities and constraints – which are not easily resolved.

8.1.2.1. Opportunities

It seems that older people tend to interpret both the pronatalist policy and the one-child-per-couple policy from a view of Communist ideology: people should unselfishly contribute themselves to society as a whole. For them, both policies raise opportunities for the common good of society as whole. From this perspective, the pronatalist policy is as understood and accepted as a measure for strengthening the state. A large population was thought to be a great asset in China, as people were considered as producers rather than consumers. I asked an old interviewee, father of five children, the following question: "Why did you choose to give birth to five children?" He replied:

> At that time, Chairman Mao called on us to make a contribution to the state by giving birth to more children. Our newspapers praised publicly the Soviet Union's family policy: a three-child woman was called as a glorious mother; and a five-child female was called as a hero mother, who could be awarded a medal. My wife was qualified for being awarded a medal according to the Soviet Union's model. [...] The idea at that time

was that the more people China had, the more powerful China would be. (I-03)

The current antithesis, the one-child-per-couple policy, for the older generation, once again provides a unique opportunity to strengthen the nation and improve the QOL of Chinese people as a whole. They believe that QOL relies on the balance between the population and natural resources and between the population growth and the national economic development. China's enormous population has exceeded the reasonable amount and violated the balance. As a consequence, the benefits of economic development are largely consumed by an ever-growing population. In addition, as an interviewee (I-02) stated, overpopulation results in a number of social problems, such as huge pressures on employment opportunities and crowding. Hence, there seems to be no alternative but the implementation of birth control to achieve the common good of the whole Chinese society. Facing the conflict between QOL in the public sphere and QOL in the private sphere in terms of birth control, the older generation uphold that ordinary people should be willing to sacrifice the interests of the individual and the family for the interests of society as a whole.

From the perspective of the economic well-being of the individual and his/her family, the one-child-per-couple-policy is considered as a way to breaking away from the current impoverished economic situation in rural areas. At Yangjiasan village I was told that they traditionally prefer to have a son rather than a daughter. However, with the rise of free market values, giving birth to a son is seen as a massive financial burden for the parents, and thus as a limitation to material possessions for the parents themselves. It has been a tradition at the village that it is the parents' obligation to build a house for their son's future marriage. Building a house costs some 50,000 *yuan* at the time of my fieldwork. It is a bulky capital for these ordinary villagers given the fact that a family's annual income was normally less than 5,000 *yuan*.

> It is now a very big burden for me to bring up my son. I have to build a house for him and help him get married. At least 50,000 *yuan* are needed to build the house. I have to suffer a lot to make money. I will have to borrow money if I don't earn enough. Without that money, my son will not have the opportunity to get married. I could not shoulder such a heavy burden if I had two sons. (I-15)

This financial pressure is at odds with the traditional Chinese notion according to which "the more sons you have, the happier you are". In this line, the policy provides a compulsory solution to the conflict between the preference to a son and the huge financial burden that arises from building a house for the son.

8.1.2.2. Constraints

However, the one-child-per-couple policy, as White (2000) suggests, has forced ordinary Chinese people to face the dilemma between two types of hegemonic discourse: a "socialist" one emphasising an individual's duty to the state, and a traditional one focusing on one's filial obligation to family and ancestors. The implementation of the one-child-per-couple policy thus encounters a resistance from ordinary Chinese people, especially people living in rural areas. The policy generates much anxiety in relation to filial piety, since it may well entail the termination of a family line, which, in turn, is interpreted in Chinese culture as a severe lack of basic filial piety to both parents and ancestors. Intent on bearing a son to continue a family line, some rural families do not hesitate to pay huge fines for breaking the family planning policy. The following excerpt describes a rural family's anxiety about the perpetuity of the family lineage caused by the restriction of the family planning policy.

> Mr Ju, a villager in Sichuan Province, was unhappy with his first child, a baby girl born in 1980. He named his daughter as Ju Zhao Di[15] and expected that her lucky name could bring a son to the family. The family planning policy at that time was that "for a couple, one child is encouraged, the second child is permitted, but the third one is prohibited". Unfortunately for Mr Ju, the second child was still a girl. "I will not stop bearing until I get a son", vowed Mr Ju. He sought various secret recipes and witchcraft to beg for a boy. His wife was pregnant again in 1983. She had to hide out in a relative's home in Shanxi Province, because unplanned birth was not permitted by the local birth control organisation. When his wife came back home with their third baby, he was anxious to check the sex of the kid. When he found that the baby had no "root"[16], he was so upset that he got a serious disease. He could not bear life without a son. (*Press Digest*, 06/08/1998)

Given that ancestral rootedness is an essential part of the Chinese sense of being, and an integral constituent of QOL, as discussed in Chapter Six, the worry about

[15] "Zhao" in Chinese means "bring", and "Di" means "brother".
[16] The "root" here implies the penis.

"rootlessness" captures a Chinese family's long-term anxiety and psychological disturbance about the termination of their ancestry position in the universe, and thus constitutes an indisputable threat to the QOL of the family without a son.

In traditional Chinese ideology, there is a strong interdependence and reciprocity between parents and their offspring. This is explicitly articulated in an interviewee's words: "You have done everything for your children so they will take care of you when you are too old to work. [...] You look after your children while they are young, and they take care of you while you are old" (G3-05). The care for the elderly by their children is constitutionally mandated in Chinese culture. However, with the implementation of the one-child-per-couple policy, there is a great transformation in both family structure and functions. This is manifested in the rise of a nuclear family and the fall of the family's caring function for the aged. The transformation engenders a great public anxiety around the "4-2-1" dilemma, premised on a couple have to take care of their four parents as well as their own child. The traditional type of caring for the elderly is slowly eroding.

From the perspective of young people, traditional and modern lifestyles and values exert pulls in opposite directions. Young couples are expected to act simultaneously as father/mother, husband/wife and caregivers to their old parents. They must negotiate the considerable and conflicting demands of looking after their aged parents single-handedly, of taking care of their own new nuclear family, and of handling work outside the home. Failing to achieve a compromise will bring opprobrium on the couple themselves and their parents. Couples who send their parents to homes for the elderly are deemed to offend traditional Chinese morality and to lack filial piety. In this sense, it is believed that the one-child-per-couple policy violates the Chinese traditional values of family and life-styles, thus constituting a threat for the QOL of a family.

> G2-01: It is cruel that a couple is only allowed to have one child.
> G2-02: It also brings about a big problem for taking care of the aged. It is our tradition that children take care of their parents in their old age. But it is infeasible now, because it is impossible for a couple to look after their four aged parents.

From the perspective of the elderly, the family-based support system is a conventional way of receiving their children's filial devotion and assistance. Throughout Chinese history, like Simmons's (1945) observation on nonindustrial societies, "the family has been the safest haven for the aged. Its ties have been the most intimate and long lasting, and on them the aged have relied for greatest security" (p.176). The disassociation from such an institution raises the prospect that aged parents lose their sources of emotional, financial and physical support from their children. Combined with the increasing ageing population in China (Kwan & Chan, 1999), the care for the elderly is likely to become a very serious problem in the future. In this sense, the one-child-per-couple policy constitutes not only a threat for the QOL of the elderly, but also a prospective risk for the QOL of the adult in the near future.

> With the implementation of the one-child-per-couple policy, [...] and rapid ageing population, [...] the tradition of family-based support for the elderly is being challenged. [...] Loneliness, distress and the anxiety about helplessness from our children will befall most of us in the near future. (*Press Digest*, 22/10/1998)

8.2. Loyalty and QOL

Loyalty is a key obligation in traditional Chinese culture (Lau, 1991; Lee, 1991). Although implying a total submission of subordinates to the Emperor in its original sense, loyalty signifies the liability of the individual to the state. As the repository of deep-rooted beliefs, the notion of loyalty was extensively used to promote state consciousness and social unity in Chinese history (Lee, 1991). As a consequence, Chinese people had developed a strong rhetoric about their bonds to the state. The transition from a planned economy to a market economy has dramatically shifted the conventional relationships between the individual and the state. The transition has raised a number of questions: Whose interest should take precedence: the state's or the individual's? Who should take the responsibility for each person's QOL: society or the individual? What opportunities and threats have such transitions brought about in relation to QOL?

8.2.1. Whose Interest Should Take Precedence?

Since the Chinese Communist Party came to power, loyalty to the state was substantiated. The cultivation of state consciousness was an essential part of the Party's revolutionary scheme (Hoston, 1994). The practice of a socialist planned economy functioned as a major strategy for sanctioning such cultivation. Under the system of planned economy, an individual's loyalty to the state was created, maintained and reinforced by the social organisations of *danwei* and People's Commune. In urban areas, most people worked in a state-operated *danwei*, and were taken care of by the state, which exercised a "cradle-to-grave" welfare package managed through a *danwei*. In rural areas, peasants became members of People's Commune, earning the right to work and hence a means of subsistence. The distribution of income, the provision of collective health, education and other welfare services allowed peasants access to basic amenities, albeit at very low levels compared to urban residents. These social organisations not only fulfilled instrumental functions, they were also central in shaping a very strong relationship between individuals and the state because they encouraged ordinary Chinese people to feel that they were part of the state machinery. In this sense, *danwei* and People's Commune constitute the institutional basis of a social belongingness and a loyalty to the state.

The sense of social belongingness and loyalty to the state, for the older generation, is a point of departure for thinking about QOL. Indeed, for the older generation, there is an inextricable connectedness between the self and the state. The self is inherently and fundamentally connected to the state. A normative principle is that Chinese society functions as a collective whole rather than as an aggregation of independent individuals, and the basic unit of survival is the state rather than the individual. The implicit assumption here is that QOL is realised when China is strong and its people feel proud and noble as Chinese citizens. In other words, at least amongst the older generation, it is the state, rather than the self, that is used as the primary basis to make judgement about QOL. The supremacy of social interests is profoundly grounded not only in the collectivist nature of traditional Chinese culture in which the value of loyalty was formulated, but also in the instilment of Marxist ideology which promoted the creation of a collective-based communal ownership and a shared goal of common

good. This supremacy of social interests was also intensified by the fact that China was a relatively weak state and thus humiliated repeatedly by Western and Japanese firepower since the middle nineteenth century. This sense of humiliation is at the forefront of older people's consciousness and it further reinforces their view that their own well-being is dependent on that of China as a whole.

> What is quality of life? If the country does not have its own sovereignty, it makes no sense to talk about quality of life. Many young people have not experienced the period that China did not have sovereignty. When the Japanese troops invaded China in 1937-45, many Chinese civilians were killed cruelly by the Japanese army. They took away all of our Chinese coals and forests which they were able to exploit. [...] I still remember that when I was young once an American soldier's car struck a Chinese person dead in central Beijing, without holding any legal responsibility. I had to lower my head on the street at that time. [...] Thanks to the Chinese Communist Party, China is becoming more and more powerful. As a Chinese, I am able to work and live with dignity, and hold my head up when walking on the street. (I-03)

The emphasis on state interests does not entail a denial of the self, but an insistence on the duties and obligations of the self to the state. The self, as an active and reflective entity in Chinese culture (King & Bond, 1985), is fostered culturally to achieve particular collective goals and to participate in certain socially valued activities. For the older generation, it is the obligation of an individual to altruistically contribute to others and to the common good of society or the state. Work is seen as a major avenue through which the self is able to make such a contribution. It is in the process of making such a contribution that QOL is actualised. The emphasis on the contribution to the state by no means rejects personal gain, including both the joy and the material returns drawn from the process of contribution. However, priority is given to the state, rather than self, interests. In other words, QOL is activated in the course of an individual making his/her contribution to the state.

> Concerning quality of life, our old generation always puts the contribution to society as the first priority. ... Before I retired, I always hoped to work well because work is the primary way of realising my life value, that is, to make my contribution to society and the state. I always put this as my top priority. (I-01)

However, the sense of belonging to the state is waning with China's transition into a market economy. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) note, radical changes in the social structure may result in concomitant changes in psychological reality as there is a dialectic relationship between social structure and psychological reality. The transition from a planned to a market economy has given birth to plural forms of ownership and substantially transformed the relationship between the individual and the state. In urban areas, lifetime employment in state-operated *danwei* has been replaced with labour contract in diverse forms of ownership. In rural areas, People's Communes have been replaced by family farming. These changes have turned the sense of social attachment to the state into market relations. The breakdown of the institutional basis of social belongingness and loyalty to the state fosters greater independence from the state. In the meantime, the validity and authority of Marxist ideology and Confucianism have been challenged by the market economy itself. The Western capitalist ideology appears to have made deep inroads in the minds of Chinese people. The move away from communal ownership towards private ownership seems to have fundamentally devalued the state-collective mentalities and already produced a strong individualistic ethos.

The younger generation has grown up in a social environment where China is in such a transition. As a consequence, they tend to be more individualistic when thinking about QOL. For this generation, the self, to a great extent, is no longer seen as an indispensable part of the state machinery, but as an independent individual. The sense of "we" consciousness, in connection with the state, is weakening and the sense of "I" consciousness is rising. The new individualistic ideology, according to which the individual strives first and foremost to feel good about the self (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus & Nisbett, 1998), is gaining widespread acceptance. From this perspective, the contribution to the common good of the state is no longer perceived as an essential part of QOL by the younger generation. Instead, they tend to perceive personal gains as crucial to QOL. The emphasis on the self does not entail a disinterest in the state interests. The priority, however, is given to self gratification.

> The crux of quality of life depends on how you see life is. I think life is a game, and one should seek for fun in this game. Most of my classmates and friends have similar feelings to mine. (I-08)

There are three different approaches towards work in respect with QOL: the dedicative, instrumental and expressive approaches, as discussed Chapter Seven. In terms of the relationships between the self and the state, the dedicative approach puts emphasis on how the self makes contributions to the state, while the instrumental and expressive approaches draw attention to how the self gains some material return or enjoyment from society by means of work. The data analysis indicates the implications of work in Chinese society are being shifted from the dedicative approach to the instrumental and expressive approaches. This is illustrated in the excerpt: "Two decades ago, when a young person began to work, it meant he/she started to dedicate his/her life to the benefits of other people" *(Press Digest*, 15/04/1999). The location "two decades ago" suggests the fading of the dedicative approach as a prevalent view, and implicitly indicates the rise of the instrumental and expressive approaches.

Yet, we are not witnessing the straightforward disappearance of state loyalty and its unproblematic replacement by a sole preoccupation with self-interests. Both concerns co-exist and create a dilemma for individuals who seek to position themselves in a heterogeneous normative field. The topic is exemplified in the conflict between loyalty to the state and filial piety to family. Although fostering both loyalty and filial piety, traditional Chinese culture promoted a transfer of filial piety to loyalty for dissolving the conflict between the interests of the state and those of the family. The state was considered as the foundation of families and families would not exist without the state (Lee, 1991). Following Engels (1884/1972) view that the modern family originated in the development of private property, the Chinese Communist Party merely propagandised loyalty, but not filial piety. This explains why the older generation is often enthusiastic about sacrificing their own individual and family interests for those of the state. With the weakening of state consciousness and the rise of capitalist and individualistic values, the younger generation tend to be reluctant to devote themselves to public interests at the expense of their private interests. These contrasting perspectives are illustrated from the following excerpts from an old interviewee (G1-02) and a young interviewee (I-05).

> I used to be a manager in a state-owned farm with several thousand people and scores of departments. Although the work there was very hard

> and I earned little money, I was in my element and very happy. I had not asked for one day off even when my father was seriously ill and eventually died. Because at that time I was involved in a central heating supply project which had never been done before at this farm. If I were to take care of my father at that time, nobody would have been able to replace me. I felt happy that I could use my knowledge to contribute to society. (G2-02)
>
> I really don't appreciate the episode praised in the newspaper that somebody who is busy with work has no time to see his dying father. I think this kind of person does not deserve to be praised. I really cannot understand this. To me, showing filial respect to parents is very important matter in one's life. (I-05)

It can be seen from these excerpts that the older generation pays more attention to the state or public interests, while the younger generation pays more attention to private interests, in respect with QOL. It seems that, in the course of the transition into a market economy, the location of QOL has gradually shifted from the public sphere to the private sphere, from the common good of the large, even national collective to the good of the individual and family.

8.2.2. Whose Responsibility?

The other side of the same coin in connection with the relationship between the individual and the state is who should assume responsibility for QOL: the state or the individual. This issue is associated with beliefs about what are the most powerful sources controlling one's life chances, and about the extent to which the individual is responsible for his/her own life. Although there are multi-causal explanations concerning the issue, the data suggest two paramount accounts: one is state-directed, and the other is self-directed.

Loyalty in traditional Chinese culture was not on a partial, but a reciprocal, basis (Lee, 1991; Tu, 1991). The emphasis on mutuality and harmony in society is an important characteristic of Confucianism. The undivided connectedness between the individual and the state entails not only the individual's obligations to the state, but also the state's duty to the individual. The endeavour of the Chinese Communist Party was to establish an equal and harmonious society on the basis of reciprocity between the

individual and the state. Ordinary people were expected to unselfishly contribute themselves to the state. The state, in return, assumed responsibility for the entire well-being of all its citizens through the operations of *danwei* and People's Commune. This reciprocity essentially constitutes a part of the "psychological contract" (Alevsson, 2000, p.1106) between the individual and the state. In this way, the omnipotent state became an inviolable norm of the Chinese way of life. The creation and reproduction of state-dependent individuals therefore took place within this socio-psychological reality.

However, the shift from a planned economy to a market economy suggests a transition from state-directed to self-directed responsibility. The termination of the system of lifetime employment and the mercerisation of the old socialist welfare system have cut off the strong link between the individual and the state, and impelled urban residents to take responsibility for their own life. In the same way, the abolishment of the People's Commune and the inauguration of a "household responsibility system" force rural residents to take responsibility for their own livelihood. The very individualistic notion that the self is, by and large, in control of, and autonomously responsible for, his/her own life (Ichheiser, 1949; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus & Nisbett, 1998) is being in this way incorporated in Chinese society. This recently emerged assumption about the individual and his/her relations to the state, although it is still not explicitly articulated in Chinese society, constitutes a brand new frame of reference by which individuals make sense of reality, justify life events, and give explanations for the liability for QOL.

Given the ongoing reality of social transition, there is an inevitable conflict on the issue of responsibility between the two generations. Rooted in the legacy of state socialism, the older generation often exhibits more traditional values and holds a state-directed view. Brought up under the sway of capitalism, the younger generation tends to hold more modern values and a self-directed view. The following excerpt illustrates the different senses of agencies underpinning concerns about QOL in both generations.

> When I made up my mind to leave my previous *danwei* and to set up my own business, my stepfather pulled me inside the room after dinner. He

> persuaded me with his hoarse voice: "Staying at the stated-owned *danwei*, you don't need to worry about your livelihood. You are also entitled to be dependent on the state in old age. Don't be silly and give up this comfortable and secure life". I said: "I am unable to tolerate earning only several hundred *yuan*'s wages a month for all my life". The stepfather could not change my determination. From that day he started to save money secretly for me. (*Press Digest,* 23/12/1999)

As can be seen from the above excerpt, the older generation firmly believes that affiliation with a state-owned *danwei* provides an individual with rock-solid support, which guarantees at least a minimally good life. Although the old all-inclusive welfare is waning, they still stick to the notion of the entitlement to a cradle-to-grave security from the state. In this sense, the state is perceived as a benefactor and protector. However, for the younger generation, the individual is a choice maker and agent of his/her own life, and individual struggle is a promise of a good life. They anticipate personal wealth from an active participation in the market economy. They consider themselves the kind of person capable of authenticating and securing their own QOL. They are entrepreneurs and risk-takers

It is found that, for the older generation, the state has an active role to play in providing life chances. The old interviewees at Yangjiasan village hold a notion that QOL is bound up with the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the government's regulations. On the one hand, they attribute the improvement of their QOL to the "good" policies of the "household responsibility system" at present; on the other hand, they ascribe their bitter life to the failure of the collective farming in the past. It seems to them that the leadership of the Party is crucial for achieving a better QOL. Although self-effort does not disappear from their discourses of QOL, primacy is given to the responsibility of the Party and government.

> As we have good leadership from the Communist Party, our life has been greatly improved. Without good leaders, you cannot live a happy life. Good leaders are preconditions of a good life. [...] In the 1960s, the collective economy was carried out, and we ploughed the land for the collective. We did not have enough food to eat. Sometimes we had to eat maize shaft, barks, and porridge. Children were always hungry. Most people had a pale face. The collective economy had been controlling people for quite a long time. [...] Now the Party allows us to be contracted to the land. The food crops we harvest are not only enough for our family to eat, but also can be sold. [...] In the past, there was

> nowhere we could make money. Now the state encourages individuals to become rich. The government has also carried out loan schemes to support us. (I-12)

However, the young interviewees at the same village hold a quite different image of the "household responsibility system". For this generation, the new system activates more freedom from the state control, and entails a growing sense of personal control and individual responsibilities. Therefore, the significance of personal traits, such as health status, education attainment, ability and individual effort, are highlighted for QOL. In other words, for the younger generation, the view of the self as an agent for advancing his/her life becomes visible.

> We now carry out the "household responsibility system". The more you do, the more you get. ... If you are in good health, you can go farming or do business, or do whatever you like to do. Nobody cares. To have a better life, you have to make your efforts to do things. ... In our rural areas, if you are an educated person, you can make money more easily than those illiterates, because you can consider things from many angles and you are good at calculation. ... If you are really capable, you don't need to worry about your life. (I-15)

The disparity between the two generations on the issue of the state/self-directed responsibility does not mean that the older generation is unresponsive to the increasingly individual responsibility for QOL associated with the China's transition into a market economy. Rather, the argument here is that the continuation of this generation's commitment to the state remains their unassailable priority. They have devoted, and they are willing to keep on devoting, their life to the state. In return, they believe they are entitled to be cared for by the state. Yet they also acknowledge the increasing emphasis on individual responsibility for QOL, and stress the significance of personal traits in their descendants' life.

> Once I went climbing, and encountered some laid-off workers. They often get together, cursing and making troubles. [...] They are really pitiful. They have contributed almost all their time and energy to the state-owned factories, but were eventually abandoned by the factories and by the state because they are not very capable in their work. [...] Only those who have strong capability can live a better life. [...] If you are really capable, you can give full play to your talents in your career and in your life. Qualification and ability are all very important for pursuing a better life. [...] I often think that I must cultivate well the generation of

> my grandchildren. They will be the crisis-ridden generation because they have to be self-reliant for survival. (I-02)

The issue of state/individual responsibility is also linked with social class and class identification. Chinese culture puts great emphasis on hierarchical and unequal relations. The value of the maintenance of hierarchical relationship was built and cemented in China for several millennia (Hsu, 1949). The structural principles which engender social stratification have been dramatically changed over the past half-century. Nowadays, Chinese people take complex relations with social class which manifest clearly the tensions between the complementary but rival ideological systems which slope contemporary Chinese culture. On the one hand, the Chinese Communist Party devoted itself to the elimination of class and class exploitation and to the establishment of socialist public ownership. On the other hand, the equalitarian practices created a bureaucratic principle of social stratification. Instituted by the *hukou* system, Chinese society was divided into an urban-rural dualistic configuration. The transition into a market economy now shrinks the *hukou* system, and it introduces a meritocratic principle of social stratification.

The old interviewees at Yangjiasan village believe that they live at the bottom of the social ladder, struggling to make a decent living. On the one hand, the origin of their inferior status is considered not to be individual peculiarities but a social problem caused by the bureaucratic principle of social stratification. They see great impersonal forces shaping the course of their life. On the other hand, they appeal to upward social mobility in the next generation to escape from their current inferior status.

> G3-03: Rural people are different from urban people. If an urban person dies on duty, his family will get subsidies. ... Our farmers are not entitled to access such a subsidy system. My father and daughter died on duty when they built a reservoir for the People's Commune, but my family did not get any subsidies from the government. It seems that the government discriminates against rural people.
> G3-01: Farmers always belong to the lowest social strata in China. Farmers will not get even one penny if they are old and cannot work any more. That is the reason why our farmers hope our sons will study hard and become officials in the future. We will be happy even if they become urban workers and can get pensions after retirement.

However, for the young interviewees at the same village, the origin of the inferior status is no longer conceived as determined by a bureaucratic principle of social stratification. Rather, they become aware of the introduction of the meritocratic principles of social stratification in the course of reform and opening-up. They aspire to personal success through their own ability and self-effort.

> Now *Hukou* doesn't make any sense. Even you are an urban person, you cannot get a job if you are really unskilful. I think it does not matter whether or not the state gives you a job. If you are skilful, you can make money anywhere. (I--15)

Trust, as Giddens (1991) argues, is "basic to a 'protective cocoon' which stands guard over the self in its dealings with everyday reality" (p.3). Giving a prominence to personal traits and self-effort reflects the weakening in the trust in protection from the state, and the upsurge in the trust in individual strivings. This suggests that individualistic norms are gradually being accepted in Chinese society.

8.2.3. The Advent of *Dagong* and the Removal of the "Iron Bowl of Rice": Their implications for QOL

Some of the most salient aspects of the new relationship between the individual and the state are associated with the tide of rural-to-urban mobility and the breakdown of the so-called the "iron bowl of rice". The new social reality entails both a range of opportunities as well as a series of constraints ordinary people's life, with complex implications for QOL in contemporary Chinese society.

8.2.3.1. The Advent of *Dagong*: Opportunities or Constraints?

The collapse of the People's Commune was associated with the relaxation of the state control over the rural population. Some tens of millions of villagers rush to work in urban areas with the weakening of strict control on rural-to-urban mobility. This unprecedented surge in migration is phenomenal. These rural labourers engage mainly in arduous positions as unskilled construction workers, manufacture workers in non-state factories, self-employed peddlers, and nursemaids in private home.

With this modern form of the "gold rush", the term "*dagong*" gained its currency. *Dagong* refers to the positions held by people who were originally farmers and but now work and settle in urban areas without the urban *hukou*. *Dagong* is neither a farming work nor a "full" job as discussed in Chapter Seven, but it is located in-between. As a new status of work and new sense of identity, *dagong* is paid, unlike farming work, but it involves no lifetime employment, and no entitlement to major social warfare provided by the state. Young male and female rural migrants working in the city are nicknamed as "*dagong* boys" and "*dagong* girls" in daily language. With the stigma of being of rural origins, they work in the city but are not urban residents in the normal sense.

This newly emerging socio-economic reality has brought about an increasing autonomy and more opportunities of pursuing economic rewards for people of rural origins. *Dagong* is seen as a vehicle for these migrant labourers to exit from the poverty of rural areas and to pursue their livelihood in urban areas. It can be seen from the following excerpt that the exigencies of making a living compel rural people to move into the city to seek better economic returns. In this sense, *dagong* represents novel economic opportunities for rural residents.

> We do not have irrigated land here. If there are a lot of rains in a year, we will have a good harvest; otherwise, the harvest will be really bad. [...] We do not like to go farming, because grains are very cheap to sell. [...] Now the policy is good, many young people go to cities to earn money. (G4-2)

Yet at the same time, *dagong* also introduces new risks and anxieties to these migrants. Unlike those rural youth who enter into the city via the university, shed their agricultural *hukou* and obtain jobs following legal procedures, these *dagong* boys and *dagong* girls are virtually segregated from their urban host population by the *hukou* system. They remain classified as agricultural *hukou* registrants regardless of the place where they live and the work that they do. They leave their familiar contexts, but it is almost impossible for them to settle a new life in an unfamiliar context with the restriction of the *hukou* system. Without the urban resident identification, they retain significant ties, socially and psychologically, with their home villages, and move backwards and forwards between the cities where they work and live in

temporally and their home villages where they belong permanently. As a consequence, it is not unusual that they experience a sense of discontinuity with their past and their enduring identity (Marshall & Firth, 1999) as well as a sense of uprootedness.

> We are marginal persons. In the eyes of urban people, we are rural persons; in the eyes of rural people, we are urban persons. There is no space for us in this world. (*Press Digest*, 04/06/1998)

These rural migrants encounter aggression and discrimination in their urban work. They find no opportunities for self-expression and joy through work. Their painful experiences are expressed in such lexicons as "suffering indignities without a protest", "enduring contempt", "hot and bitter tears", "miserable", "being ruthless exploited", and "being discriminated against". A *dagong* boy who works at a construction site verbalized his miserable experiences as follows:

> The labour contractors have been intensifying their efforts to exploit us: they extend our work hours wantonly, and increase our work intensity, and embezzle our wages. Every person here works for more than 14 hours a day. It is not rare that we work for three days non-stop. (*Press Digest,* 01/11/1998)

From the viewpoint of urban residents, *dagong* boys/girls are considered as "invaders" to their life and thus are "dangers". In their eyes, rural migrants further restrict job opportunities for the urbanites and are a source of pollution. In addition, criminal cases reported in the mass media are sometimes associated with these rural labourers. The rural labourers are thus categorised by urban residents as "dangers", they are stigmatised and feared. The discrimination against rural migrants in urban areas is rooted in the images of "invaders" and "dangers".

> These vegetable peddlers who come from remote rural areas to Beijing to sell vegetables here, they take some job opportunities away from our Beijingers. [...] They throw miscellaneous things like rotten vegetables and white plastic bags into the Great Canal. The Canal has become turbid. (I-01)

> I was always worried that the nursemaid would steal my home properties in league with her fellow-villagers. (*Press Digest*, 20/09/1998)

The rural-urban mobility grants *dagong* boys/girls more economic opportunities, but this comes at a high social and psychological cost. The QOL of these rural migrants is thus polarised: with greater opportunities for "having" and fewer opportunities for "being".

8.2.3.2. The Removal of the "Iron Bowl of Rice": Opportunities or Constraints?

In the period of planned economy, following a Marxist view of public ownership, labour was defined as the commonwealth and production resource of the state, but not as a private property of the individual and commodity (Bian, 1994). The Chinese government thus practised a centralised distribution of the labour force and monopolised urban employment. The government guaranteed the employment of urban residents, and forbade enterprises from recruiting labour from the countryside. For individuals, being assigned to a job by the state planners meant entering the state sector, either a state-owned enterprise or a government department, for lifetime employment. This was referred to metaphorically as owning an "iron bowl of rice", a secure livelihood for the individual and his/her family. This state-guaranteed security with respect to basic material needs was a decisive aspect of the Chinese way of life.

The transition into a market economy inevitably introduces plural forms of ownership and restructures the employment system. Accordingly, the state abandons monopolistic control over the labour force. Labour is not longer regarded as the commonwealth and production resource of the state; rather, the individual appears to be the owner of his/her own labour force. For urban residents, the change has significantly reshaped the relationship between the individual and the state. It shifts the employment structure from a single option, that is, the state sector, to multiple choices. Increasing numbers of urban residents now either start their employment in private businesses or foreign-owned enterprises, or switch out of the state sector into these sectors on their own initiative.

Private enterprise used to be synonymous with capitalism and was cut off as the "scrap of capitalism" in the period of planned economy. It re-emerges in China as a direct consequence of reform and opening-up. Mr Jiang Wei's case, disclosed in the *Press Digest* of 15 April 1999, is the epitome of the growth of private business in

China. Mr Jiang was demobilised from the military service and sent back to his hometown, Dalian, in the Northeast Province of Liaoning, in 1980. After waiting in vain for eight-months to be assigned a job, he decided to become self-employed. His parents admonished, "to be self-employed is the equivalent of being jobless, please be patient and wait for a job assignment from the government". But his parents' words could not stop him. With 400 yuan borrowed from his sister, he started a small photo shop in front of the Dalian Zoo. Soon, his family was surprised by his earnings, 500 *yuan*s a day, which was ten times a worker's monthly salary at that time. On April 13, 1984, Mr Jiang Wei formally received a business licence from the State Administration of Industry and Commerce. This legally marked the reappearance of the private economy that had vanished in mainland China for 30 years. Through his continuous efforts, he became the owner of a large-scale private company with several branches in Beijing and Dalian in 1999. This case demonstrates a crucial aspect of the dialectic of the individual and society, that is, the individual is not mere passive entity, determined by societal influences, but as active constructor of his/her life and, consequently, ultimate contributor to the course of social change (Giddens, 1991; Noack, Hofer & Youniss, 1994). Like Mr Jiang, the majority of private entrepreneurs in the early stage of the reform emerged from a socially marginal group, such as self-employed persons or street traders. Although they enjoy no social warfare, their success in the market has enabled them to access housing, education, pension, and healthcare, which were formerly allocated bureaucratically, as these things have gradually been commodified.

The gaining attractiveness of the private sector due to its success in the market, and the tarnishing image of the privilege in the state sector due to the elimination of both cradle-to-grave welfare package and lifetime employment, have put existing employees in the state sector in an untenable position. More and more urbanites, including officials, academicians, and workers in state-owned enterprises, are eager to forsake their ties with the state, and to set up their own business. The term *xiahai*, with all its ideological implications, thus gains its currency. *Xiahai*, literally means "going into the sea". It signifies the abandonment of the "iron bowl of rice" in the state sector, and the commitment to the opportunities of the private sector. *Xiahai* represents a particular gateway to commercialise individuals' wisdom and labour in the market. with respect to QOL, *xiahai* denotes both the personal wealth and

individual autonomy of the newly emerging private entrepreneur class. "Millionaire" is the nickname of these private entrepreneurs, an upper-range car such as BMW or Mercedes Benz is their badge, and lavish consumption is their idiosyncratic lifestyle. In the meantime, liberated from the stifling control of their *danwei*, these private entrepreneurs not only work for themselves, but also have the ability to affect significantly the lives of others. They relish the liveliness of their endeavour, the joy of their undertaking and the challenge of their self-determination. Both the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards derived from *xiahai* contribute hand in hand to a better QOL. In the following excerpts, the first one highlights the personal wealth associated with *xiahai*, and the second one highlights the autonomy associated with *xiahai*.

> Graduated from Peking University, Ms Zhang Chan did not work in the government department as most of her classmates did. She chose to *xiahai*. [...] As a big boss, she now owns more than 40 company branches in the fields of computer, biotech, and real estates, with net assets exceeding 400 million *yuan*. She often drives a red Mercedes Benz. (*Press Digest*, 29/03/1998)

> Mr Cheng Zhanghua started his business as a junk dealer ten years ago after quitting his post as an engineer in a state-owned steel company. He now owns a big company specialising in computer sale and repair. [...] He says, "I started my own business from the very bottom. Whenever I took one step, it was a step up. If I were still working in my previous work unit, the vexing problems would still be the same. But now I can do everything according to my own will with a very high efficiency. Although with a lower starting point, every day is developing forward. I delight in the joy of my success. I feel cheerful, purposive and find new meanings in my life. I like this feeling". (*Press Digest*, 17/06/1999)

Although *xiahai* attracts lots of urbanites with its promise of a better QOL, it is not the sole exit for those who desire to quit their employment on the state sector. Restrained by their limited personal resources, many prefer to find employment in private enterprises or in foreign-funded firms. Employment in these sectors is normally on a short-term contract basis, and the pay level is generally higher than that of the state. In the public discourse, employment in these sectors is not considered as a "full" job, but also as *dagong*, because it breaks the ties with the government. In this way, *dagong*, a term initially regarding rural migrant labourers' work, enters to the lives of urbanites. For urbanites, "*dagong*" differs greatly from the "iron bowl of rice". *Dagong* is driven exclusively by possibility of financial rewards. Apart from economic interests, there is

little reciprocal obligation between employer and employees. Unlike the "iron bowl of rice", *dagong* is associated with the lack of sense of obligation and belongingness to the state.

> The feeling of present *dagong* is completely different from the feeling of my previous job in the state-owned factory. Work now is assigned to me, which I must do well. Sometimes, I propose my opinions to the boss. It does not matter if the boss does not take it. I do not have a feeling of being the master here. I only make my money here, and what I have done should deserve the money I earn. I only do work which I should do. It is quite different from my former formal job, for which I felt that I was the master of the country, and the master of the enterprise, and I was always willing and eager to do extra work there. (I-02)

However, the removal of the "iron bowl of rice" does not only offer opportunities, it also bring novel problems and anxieties for urbanites. The ongoing state-owned enterprises (SOEs) reform, in the context of the elimination of lifetime employment, creates massive lay-offs. The SOEs reform, characterised by the transfers from the "social-economic entities" to "purely production units" (Wong, 1999) and from the heavy industrial productions to consumer one (Goodman, 1999), has brought about extensive mergers and the bankruptcy of many inefficient enterprises and, subsequently mass unemployment.

From the viewpoint of those who have experienced unemployment themselves, being unemployed, unlike the voluntary withdrawal from employment in the state sector, is a depressing and embarrassing experience as well as a great loss of family finance. The sharp demotion from being the "master" of the enterprises to being on the dole, and the sudden break from long-term security provided by the state, generate a sense that they are "abandoned" by the state (*Press Digest*: 02/05/1999), and deep resentment. This new class of unemployed workers consider themselves incapable, powerless, and forgotten by society. The partial social security system and premature market-oriented reemployment mechanism force the unemployed to live in poverty, which, in turn, causes them to suffer from malnutrition and illness (*Press Digest*, 18/07/1999), brings about the discontinuation of children's education (*Press Digest*, 14/06/1998), and often family instability (*Press Digest*, 25/06/1998). As the "biggest losers" in the new relationship between the individual and the state, the unemployed constitute the new marginal group in Chinese society. Like all socially excluded

people, their QOL is extremely poor. A 56-years-old unemployed woman who was formally a manual worker in a state-owned factory stated:

> After being laid off, I do not have a stable job, which is a great loss to a family in terms of family finance. That is definitely the case. [...] I can think nothing without a solid financial basis. I want to go out playing, but I have no money; I want to go shopping, but I do not have enough money. I can only fill my stomach. At my age, it is difficult to find another job. Even if I find a job, I will be fired very quickly. It is not because I do not like the job, or I cannot do the job well, it is because I am too old for the job. Nowadays, jobs in society are all short-term. Once I was asked to do the promotion for a commodity. I worked only for one month and was then fired. I was thought unsuitable for the job. [...] A formal job has a sense of stability both financially and psychologically. Working in a stable enterprise also makes one feel a sense of dependability. [...] Being unemployed, I have psychological pressure for sure. I feel depressed when seeing others who have stable jobs. I think that my QOL is threatened by unemployment. (G1-06)

As can be seen from the above discussion, the advent of *dagong* and the removal of the "iron bowl of rice" are intertwinedly associated with "having" and "being". The structural shift in the relationship between the individual and the state is conceptualised as a promise of more socio-economic opportunities. It grants people with freedom from the state control and prospect for social and economic upward mobility. Yet, the shift is also conceptualised as a threat which creates a strong sense of social and economic insecurity.

8.2.3.3. Coping with Uncertainties

Facing such pervasive and rapid social transformations, Chinese people experience unprecedented uncertainties about their future. To cope with social change which stretches out well beyond the individual's control, people are inclined to appeal to money as an "agent" to mediate the relationship between changing society and the increasing insecurity in their subjective experience. In this sense, money is conceived to be crucial not only for QOL at present, but also for QOL in the uncertain future. This is particularly reflected in the Chinese belief and practice on savings. Jonathan Spence (1999), an American journalist, was astonished by the Chinese attitude to saving: "Given the modest income of Chinese families, their resilience and thrift is impressive. The savings rate in China puts America to shame – at roughly 16% of

mean household expenditure, it's the second-biggest monthly expense, after food and before rent" (p.21). Industriousness and saving were traditionally valued as highly moral in Western society (Lunt & Livingstone, 1992; Tucker, 1991). It was the same in traditional Chinese society. Saving in contemporary Chinese society, however, has acquired new meanings. It is now about securing some degree of QOL for possible hard times ahead.

> The country is undergoing various reforms, for example, the medical service system reform. It seems to be an unknown matter and a threat for us. For people of my age, illness can occur any time. If we don't save some money, what shall we do if we get major diseases? (I-02)

> My family earns a decent income, but still, we feel some hidden dangers, and we cannot sit back and relax. There will be many unknown factors in the future. [...] My husband owns a company now, but it is hard to say if the company will not close down some day in the future. [...] Without savings, I do not have a sense of security, and my mind cannot rest, and my quality of life in the future will not be secure. (I-06)

> Why do our rural people like to save money? Both production and livelihood need a lot of money. We need money to buy seeds in spring. If my donkey dies today, I have to buy another one tomorrow for cultivating the land. If a total crop failure is encountered in a bad year, we need savings to buy flour and rice, and to maintain daily life. The People's Commune has been abolished. If we do not have any savings, who will help us? (I-15)

With the decollectivisation and decentralisation of the national economy over the past two decades, the predominant state ownership has transformed into a pluralistic one, People's Communes have been replaced by family farming, lifetime employment has been substituted by a job market, and healthcare and other social welfare systems have increasingly turned into a remuneration service. This social transition towards modernisation entails both opportunities and dangers for an individual, and increases both individual freedom and personal responsibilities (Giddens, 1991). On the other hand, the social security system, an organic component of a market economy, is still in its embryonic form in China. It seems that life gives hard knocks and is essentially unpredictable. The uncertainty with regard to the distant future thus spreads in the daily life of Chinese people. As manifested in the above excerpts, savings are a strategy for coping with the uncertainty, and an instrument to increase certainty in an uncertain world. Money is no panacea, but saving money acts as a buffer against

unforeseen incidents. Saving is not the negation of consumption in seeking for QOL, but is the split between the pleasure promptly gratified and the sense of security in the distant future. In this sense, savings secures QOL for the possible troublesome days ahead.

8.3. Conclusion

Chinese society has been undergoing a massive and rapid transition. This transition has not only been associated with far-reaching transformations to the economy, politics, and ideology of the state, it has also modified the life-world of ordinary Chinese people and reorganised their conventional ways of life. With respect to QOL, the transition is particularly associated with the reshaping of the identities of the individual, and his/her relations to both the family and the state. The symbiosis of the competing value systems of Confucianism, Marxism and capitalism provides a framework within which lay people frame these transformations as both opportunities and constraints for their QOL and develop their aspirations. For ordinary Chinese people, the transition into a market economy promotes the common destiny within a family by endorsing an economic advancement, and it shrinks the traditional value of "four generations under the same roof" by encouraging personal freedom and choice. The one-child-per-couple policy is implicated with the common good of society for older urbanites who committed themselves to Marxism, with a potential or tangible anxiety of terminating a family line for most rural people who committed themselves to traditional Chinese ideology, and with a way to breaking away from the impoverished economic situation for those who live in poverty and start to endorse individualistic values. The social psychological association between the individual and the state is weakened in the course of the transition into a market economy. The location of QOL is shifted from the common good of the state into the good of an individual and family. Correspondingly, personal responsibilities, rather than the state's obligations, for the QOL of an individual and family, are increasingly accentuated. The transition entails both opportunities for upward economic mobility, individual autonomy and social engagement for those who succeed in the market, but it also conveys anxiety and poverty for those unable to secure a position in this market.

"Having" and "being", the dyadic orientations of QOL, are expressed in the day-to-day life of ordinary Chinese in this context of social transition.

9

CONCLUSION

The aim of this final chapter is to integrate the theoretical arguments and empirical findings of the thesis. Section 9.1 summarises, and further clarifies, the theoretical standpoint of the thesis. Section 9.2 draws together the principal empirical findings of the research, and discusses some of their theoretical implications. Section 9.3 discusses some limitations of the present study, and suggests several possible developments for further research on the topic.

9.1. Theoretical Framework: QOL as a Social Representation

Underpinned implicitly by a dualistic Cartesian paradigm (Marková, 1982), the mainstream literature on QOL is based upon a sharp dichotomy between the "objective" and the "subjective" dimensions of QOL. It either defines QOL as a set of explicit standards of life evaluated by the researcher (objective models), or as satisfaction with or happiness in life, as appraised by the individuals themselves (subjective models). More recently, some holistic models have considered QOL as a multidimensional phenomenon comprising both objective living conditions and subjective judgements, but they do not transcend the false separation between subject and object in the study of QOL. The major problems inherent in all of these conceptual models are that they virtually ignore the dialectical relationships between subject and object as well as between the individual and society (Himmelweit & Gaskell, 1990; Jovchelovitch, 1996; Marková, 1982; Moscovici & Marková, 1998), and the socially constructed nature of QOL. The mainstream literature on QOL strives to develop a general theory of QOL which would transcend any given sociocultural or historical context. The consequences of this endeavour, paradoxically, are both chauvinistic (Taylor & Bogdan, 1990) and ethnocentric. The chauvinistic stance is manifested in the fact that the criteria or components of QOL are set essentially from the researcher's own suppositions, which reflect the priorities and interests of each individual researcher, rather than those of ordinary people. The divergences in

perspective between observers and actors (Farr & Anderson, 1983) are entirely disregarded. Such chauvinism leads a failure to address the life-world of ordinary people, and thus is irrelevant to ordinary people whose QOL it is supposed to reflect. The ethnocentric stance is demonstrated in its ignorance of the intrinsically cultural and historical embeddedness of QOL. As individualism is a unique cultural product in Anglo-Saxon societies (Farr, 1991; Spence, 1985), the theoretical models of QOL developed in Western culture are mainly shaped from the perspective of the individual. However, in non-Western societies, in China at least, individuals do not define themselves as detached from significant others, and from their obligations to sustain harmony between the individual and society as a whole. One's own QOL is unthinkable outside that of significant others. These theoretical models of QOL are thus particularly problematic when transposed to a Chinese context.

To overcome the limitations of the mainstream literature on QOL, this thesis proposes an alternative theoretical framework to study QOL: a social representational approach. To achieve the desired theoretical reformulation, a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1962) seems necessary. The thesis therefore suggests that the Cartesian dualistic paradigm be supplanted by a Hegelian paradigm (Marková, 1982). The theory of social representations commits itself to a Hegelian paradigm (Farr, 1987; Purkhark, 1993; Wells, 1997), and it seeks to surmount the false separation between subject and object, and between the individual and society. It uniquely focuses on both the power of social structure and the agency of social subjects, and clearly articulates the dialectical relationship between the two (Marková, 2000). This is advantageous to overcome the shortcomings found in the QOL literature. Moreover, the theory of social representations is explicitly concerned with common-sense knowledge. Moscovici, its originator, was motivated by a desire "*to rehabilitate common thinking and common knowledge*" (Moscovici & Marková, 1998, italics in original) into the research of social psychology. The theory not only draws attention to the social origins of common-sense knowledge in communicative practices, but also stresses the structural relationship between specific social conditions and their corresponding forms of knowledge (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990b; Flick, 1994, 1998a). The theory of social representations therefore provides a viable theoretical framework from which to embark on a study of how ordinary Chinese people are involved in the construction of contemporary societal understandings of QOL in their everyday life.

Based on this theory, the thesis re-conceptualises QOL being itself as a social representation. QOL is used as a generic concept to encompass the key values and preoccupations which organise the lives of ordinary Chinese people. It is socially shared knowledge about what counts as "the good life" in specific socio-historical and cultural milieus. QOL in this sense is a system of symbols and meanings, constructed in daily interactions, and structurally bound up with the context which it emerges and circulates. The context, in this thesis, is contemporary Chinese society. Starting from Moscovici's (1961/1976) classic work on the social representations of psychoanalysis, most empirical studies conducted within the framework of social representations endorse the mode of "social representations of X", for instance, social representations of health and illness (Herzlich, 1973), of intelligence (Mugny & Carugati, 1989), and of the Euro (Meier & Kirchler, 1998), to list but a few. Moscovici was right in phrasing "social representations of psychoanalysis" since psychoanalysis is a body of social scientific knowledge which exists "out there", and its diffusion in French society constitutes the subject matter of Moscovici's research. However, the mode of "social representations of X" does not apply to QOL since there is no so-called QOL "out there" which is detached from the life-world of ordinary people. In other words, there is no an objective referent or "thing-in-itself" which could be called QOL and in relation to which people would elaborate different social representations. Rather, QOL emerges through the negotiations, relationships and communicative practices of ordinary people in their milieus. It is socially constructed, and is thus inherently historical and cultural. It is produced by the dialogical interactions between subject and object, between the individual and society. The representation QOL is coextensive with the social process that produces it. This does not deny that once the representation QOL is created it comes into existence as actuality (Moscovici, 1998), which provides a symbolic thinking environment upon which people organise their daily life, establish their priorities, and compromise over their competing demands in order to reach a better life. The point here is that the "out-there-ness" of the representation is the consequence of the constructive activity of ordinary people rather than its cause. In this sense, OQL and its representation are not two, but one and the same thing. The rationale of QOL as a social representation constitutes the basis for the theoretical standpoint of the thesis, and it also explains why a seemingly atypical

expression "the social representation QOL", rather than a more conventional one "the social representation of QOL", is used throughout the thesis.[17]

Drawing on Blumer's (1969) distinction between definitive concepts and sensitising concepts, the thesis recasts social representations in general, and QOL in particular, as a sensitising, rather than definitive, concept. By recasting social representations as a sensitising concept, some of the confusions regarding such issues as the versatility /specificity of the concept of social representations or the distinction between the consensual and reified universes, have been clarified without sacrificing the theory's "openness". The theory is thus gained greater significance, as it enables researchers to pursue more fruitful and diverse lines of enquiry (Hoonaard, 1997), guided by some fundamental and reasonable questions. More particularly, this recasting allows the present research to explore how ordinary people "theorise about" QOL in the sociocultural context of Chinese society, and to examine how these "theories" enable them to develop legitimate aspirations and to choose particular courses of actions. In this way, the meanings of QOL both reflect, and contribute to create, the empirical terrain. This constructive aspect of the representation QOL is simply never addressed by either the objective, subjective or holistic models discussed in the early sections of this thesis.

9.2. Empirical Integration and Theoretical Implications

This section integrates the empirical findings on the genesis, structure and content of the representation QOL, and discusses some of their theoretical implications. The discussion clarifies some theoretical issues, but it also raises more questions both for the theory of social representations and for the study of QOL.

9.2.1. An Empirical Model of QOL as a Social Representation in China

[17] In the same vein, Philogène (1994, 1999) refers to the expression "African American" as a social representation, rather than the social representation of "African American".

Rather than attempting to reiterate the main findings discussed in the previous four empirical chapters, Figure 9-1 presents a graphical illustration of QOL as a social representation in Chinese society which has emerged from this research.

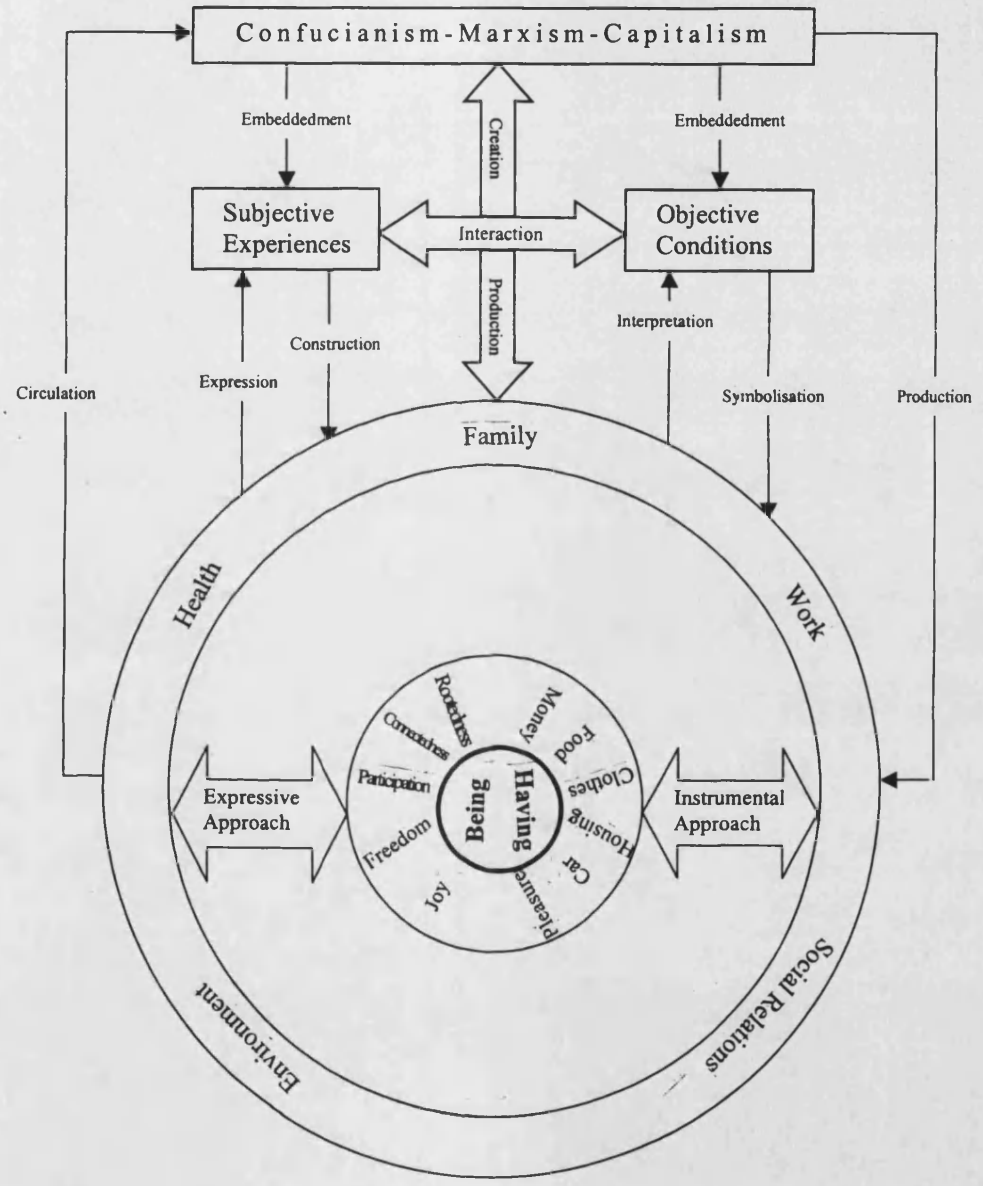

Figure 9-1: An empirical model of QOL as a social representation in China

This empirical model is the substantiation of the theoretical model presented in Figure 3-1, on the basis of the principal empirical findings. Specific dimensions of this empirical model will be discussed in relation to their implications for theory development in the subsequent sections.

9.2.2. The Thema of Having/Being and the Dynamics of the Social Representation QOL

A recent development in the theory of social representations is the introduction of the concept of the themata (Moscovici, 1993; Moscovici & Vignaux, 2000; Marková, 2000). According to Moscovici and Vignaux (2000), social representations are generated from basic pre-categorisations, called themata, many of which are embedded in the collective memory of a society and transmitted from generation to generation. This thesis shows that the binary thema of having and being is one such basic thema. The social representation QOL in contemporary Chinese society is generated from this thema.

9.2.2.1. The Structure of QOL: Central Core or Thema?

A critical issue in the study of social representations is the organisation of a representation. The theory of the central-peripheral system is authoritative in this respect. Abric (1993, 1996) argues that a social representation is made of a central core and an ensemble of peripheral elements. Being the main element of a representation, the central core generates the overall meaning of the representation (its generating function) and determines the structure of the representation (its organising function). The peripheral system gives the concrete form of the core by serving as the interface, or buffer, between the representation and reality. Flament (1994) further elaborates the notion by distinguishing the criteria in determining the central core of a representation: quantitative salience and qualitative necessity. A substantial body of research, for instance, social representations of war and peace (Wagner, Valencia & Elejabarrieta, 1996), seems to have demonstrated the fruitfulness of this approach to the analysis of the structure of social representations.

However, the theory of the central-peripheral system has to be challenged, both theoretically and empirically, with respect to the study of QOL in China. Theoretically, given its ignorance of the socio-dynamic aspects of a representation (Molinari & Emiliani, 1996), this theory can hardly guide the present research to explore how QOL is structurally bound up with the cultural and historical context of Chinese society. Empirically, the theory encounters some difficulties when referring to our data. By re-conceptualising QOL as a social representation which is held by social actors, this research adopts a series of open-ended methods, including word associations, individual interviews, focus group discussions, and the content analysis of a Chinese newspaper, which allow the respondents to freely express their feelings, understandings, views and opinions of QOL in their own terms. The analysis shows that the respondents' expressions of QOL are frequently ambiguous, incoherent and inconsistent, involving different levels of abstraction. For instance, when lay people acknowledge the significance of work to QOL, they may implicate "earning money", "contributing to society" and/or "seeking for joy and fulfilment". At the same time, it is not unusual that their expressions simultaneously involve both abstract notions such as material possessions, and concrete objects such as a house, and foodstuff. These abstract notions and concrete objects are not mutually exclusive. It is thus pointless to ascribe the representation QOL as the assembly of elements, but to ignore their social embeddedness and their complicatedly internal organisation. A representation cannot only be reduced to a number of elements although it is associated with a number of elements in word associations. Nevertheless, the pivot of the theory of the central-peripheral system lies in the elements of a representation. If we follow the logic of the central-peripheral system, it would lead to a view that the representation QOL is a multifaceted, but vague and amorphous, construction consisting of a number of semantic elements in varying orders of priority.

Indisputably, we need to distinguish between the manifest elements and the underlying "law" which organises or structures these elements, in relations to social representations. Throughout the history of psychology, as Searle (1974) suggests, there has been a fundamental opposition between the conviction which supposes that progress is to be made by a rigorous observation of manifest behaviours and the conviction which supposes that such observations are valuable only in so far as they reveal hidden underlying law. Behaviourism is in the former class, and psychoanalysis

is in the latter. One may argue that the same tension can be found at the heart of research on social representations, with the approach to the central-peripheral system being in line with the former, and the concept of themata being in line with the latter. The introduction of the concept of themata into the theory of social representations, with the aim of responding to the demands of a structural analysis, promises a shift from an elemental description of a representation in a reductive manner into an exploration of the underlying deep structure of a representation in a non-reductive way (Moscovici & Vignaux, 2000). The analytical function of themata in social representations is, to some extent, analogous to Sigmund Freud's (1929, 1933) notion that the speech errors and slips of tongue are not at all accidental, but expresses the deeper logic of the thought.

Themata, according to Holton (1978, 1996), are ancient and long lived preconceptions or presuppositions. Most themata are dyads or triplets in form, such as mind/body, man/woman, *yin/yang*, or past/present/future. By re-analysing the empirical findings of Herzlich (1973) concerning health and illness and of Herzberg *et al* (1959) concerning job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction, Farr (1977 a, b) points out that there is a tendency, as Heider's (1958) theory of social attribution concerning success and failure highlighted, of attributing the positive pole to the self and the native pole to the non-self. The same structure holds across the representations of success/failure, of health/illness, and of job satisfaction/job dissatisfaction. It seems to me that this analysis captures the constructive role of the themata of self/other, and of positive/negative, in the formation of social knowledge. Moscovici and Vignaux (2000) clearly link the genesis of social representations with canonic themata: "every social representation returns therefore to the reiterated expression in discourses of these exchanges of locally or more universal negotiated *theses* or themata" (p.179, italic in origin). Marková (2000) further clarifies the socio-cultural embeddedness of themata and the constructive role of the themata in forming social representations: "The concept of themata, more than any other, not only shows the socio-cultural embeddedness of social thinking, but also provides a basic starting point for generating social representations" (p.442).

The concept of themata appears to provide a viable conceptual framework for integrating the empirical findings of this research. In light of the concept of themata,

the representation QOL is not an unorganized mass, but a polymorphous construction. This polymorphous construction of QOL is organised around a central thema opposing having and being. This dyadic thema permeates the discourses concerning QOL and underpins the major aspects of QOL, thus constituting the thema of the representation QOL. [18] The subsequent sections on the origins, characteristics, semantic artefact and spillover across life domains, of this thema, will further substantiate the conviction of having and being as the thema of QOL.

9.2.2.2. Social and Historical Origins of the Thema

The thema of having and being, like other themata such as *yin* and *yang*, is firmly embedded in the collective memory of Chinese society. In traditional Chinese society, the lust for earthly possessions was regarded as the symptomatic of the corruption of the soul, while contentment in poverty and devotion to spiritual pursuits were thought to be moral virtues. It is not to say that there was no room for materialism in traditional Chinese culture, but asceticism was disseminated by Confucianism in the name of the common good. For Confucianism, spirituality resides in the cultivation of the self, the union of the family and the harmony of society as a whole.[19] To this end, individuals must fulfil the duties and obligations inherent in their status. In this sense, spirituality has a concrete day-to-day existential meaning. This traditional Chinese folklore – which celebrated the spirit in opposition to, and above, material wealth – was essentially unquestioned for more than two and half millennia.

With the seizure of power in mainland China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party determined to adopt Marxism at its guiding ideology. For Marx (1983/1976), luxury and poverty are the twin cardinal sins of capitalism, both alienating men form their work, their co-workers and their own identity. To remedy the social ill of capitalism, Marxism prophesies a communist society in which private property is vanished, work is but an avenue to widen and enrich the existence of man, and mankind itself leaps

[18] Although other themata, such as *yin/yang*, health/illness, male/female, and rich/poor, to list but a few, also appear on the data, they are not the major source of ideas about QOL, and do not underpin the major aspects of QOL. They are thus not the thema(ta) of the representation QOL.

[19] Spirituality and religion are often interchangeable terms in some highly religious societies, such as Anglo-Saxon and Indian ones. Spirituality in Chinese culture, however, is largely independent of religious allegiance, as China has never been a highly religious society due to the deep-rooted influence of Confucianism (Tang & Zuo, 1996).

from "the realm of necessity" to "the realm of freedom". On this basis, the endeavour of the Chinese Communist Party was to establish an equal and harmonious society on the basis of reciprocity between the individual and the state. Ordinary people were expected to unselfishly contribute to the state. The state, in return, was obliged to look after its people, from the cradle to the grave, in all aspects of their lives. In other words, the Marxist injunction of "to be" rather than "to have", was operationalised into a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the state, and institutionalised such relationship as *danwei* and the People's Commune.

However, the transition into a market economy from the late 1970s onwards, has broken down this reciprocal relationship between the individual and the state, and de-sublimated communist utopianism into materialism and hedonism (Ci, 1994). This entails both opportunities for individual autonomy and economic prosperity, and the dangers of social exclusion and the loss of family finance. The introduction of the one-child-per-couple policy opens opportunities for the prosperity of society as a whole and relieves families from some of the family financial burden of raising children, but it also creates the dangers that an individual may fail to fulfil his/her twin filial obligations of continuing the family line and of caring for the family elders. "To have" or "to be" have become a social dilemma, which interpolates individuals and asks them to position themselves in uncertain conditions but in the full knowledge that each decision made may have radical personal, family and economic consequences. The dilemma between "having" and "being" is acute precisely because both options are sustained institutionally and ideologically by strong coherent but incompatible systems. This ideological mix has fewer parallels in the world today. It is far-reaching and becomes thematised in the entire fabric of everyday life.

9.2.2.3. The Characteristics of the Thema

The analysis shows that the representation QOL which circulates in contemporary Chinese society, is organised around a central thema opposing having and being. On the one hand, having and being, as oppositional taxonomies, are antinomic orientations. The most distinctive characteristic of the having orientation is that QOL is framed as possessions. The ownership of material things is conceived as the pivot of life. The possessive relationship of subject towards object lies at the very heart of

this orientation. QOL arises from the integration between "me" and "mine", and it makes no sense to talk about QOL when there is a detachment between "me" and "mine". In others words, the having orientation casts QOL in material terms, gives priority to how subject instrumentalises object as resources to be possessed and consumed. By contrast, the most distinctive characteristic of the being orientation is that QOL is framed as spiritual subsistence. Spiritual well-being is conceived as the pivot of life. The authentic relationship between the self and the outside world lies at the very heart of the being orientation. In other words, the being orientation casts QOL in terms of the existential values of life.

We have seen, however, that having and being are also dialogically interdependent. Neither the having orientation nor the being orientation is found to exist in their pure form. Rather, they coexist dynamically, in rival or complementary ways. A hybrid of the having orientation and the being orientation is the most notable feature in the discourses on QOL. The hybrid nature of having and being is twofold. Firstly, almost all subjects in this study draw on both orientations to construct QOL, but the relative importance accorded to each aspect varies from one individual to another, from one life domain to another, and from one conversational context to another. Secondly, the acknowledgement of the disparity between these two orientations does not necessarily reject the interdependence between the two. From the having orientation, possessions are deemed to be the crux of life, while spiritual sustenance is seen as derivative from such a possession. From the being orientation, spiritual well-being is perceived as the pivot of life, while possession is seen as mere means for survival. To live we need to be, and to enjoy life we need to have things. On the face of this, it seems absurd to talk of "having" versus "being" as alternatives but as dialogical interdependence. As Marková (2000) points out, common thinking is dialogical, taxonomies of oppositional nature are dialogical interdependence, and the theory of social representations is underlined by dialogical epistemology. It is the synthesis of opposites between having and being that generates the social representation QOL.

Themata, as Moscovici and Vignaux (2000) note, are "archetypes" of common-sense knowledge, and they come to operate as "first principles", "compelling ideas" or "source ideas" of social representations. The analysis of social representations should therefore seek to identify these themata. Indisputably, the dialogical opposite between

having and being is such a thema. This thema is the underlying deep structure of the representation QOL. It is generative on the one hand, and acts as the organising principle of the entire fabric of the representation on the other. In this sense, a thema is similar to Abric's (1993,1996) central kernel. Indeed, Abric (1996) proclaims the overlap between a central kernel and a thema, "it is within the central core that we will find the 'canonic' themata" (p.79). A thema, however, is more than a central kernel in a twofold sense. Firstly, a thema is an antithetical couple, having and being in the case of this thesis, which are dialogical interdependent. It highlights the dialogical oppositional nature, and thus the generative and organising functions, of the deep structure of a representation. Secondly, a thema is rooted in, and expresses, the history, culture and reality of a given society in question. It is both cognitive and socio-historical in the sense that it is "intricately interwoven with a certain collective memory inscribed in language" (Moscovici & Vignaux, 2000, p.182). As discussed above, the thema of having and being is deeply rooted in the history, culture and current reality of Chinese society. It is thematised because "to have" or "to be" has become a social dilemma now that China is undergoing a rapid and massive social economic, political and ideological transition.

The thema of having and being, as the deep structure of the representation QOL, by definition, is not amenable to direct observation. Social representations, as Molinari and Emilliani (1996) claim, cannot be investigated only through the analysis of the declarative knowledge of a social object. The scientific study of a social representation must reveal implicit "law" governing the whole representation. As Bronowski (1956) notes, "the scientist looks for order in the appearances of nature. [...] For order does not display itself; if it can be said to be there at all, it is not there for the mere looking. There is no way of pointing a finger or a camera at it; order must be discovered and, in a deep sense, it must be created. What we see, as we see it, is mere disorder"(p. 24). The relationship between "what we see" and "what we do not see", in the field of the social representation QOL, applies to the links between the thema and its semantic artefacts.

9.2.2.4. Semantic Artefacts of the Thema

The acknowledgement that the underlying structure of a representation is not definitively attainable does not necessarily mean that a thema is enigmatic and indecipherable. Rather, a thema is expressed in its semantic artefacts[20]. Semantic artefacts are concerned with the content and meanings of a thema in given cultural and historical circumstances. It is within semantic artefacts that a thema converts itself into a set of lexical repertoire and denotes specific items. This set of lexical repertoire and specific items are directly derivable from either observation or analytical considerations.

The analysis shows that the thema of having and being in contemporary Chinese society entails two different, but interrelated, sets of semantic artefacts. Having is mainly manifested in the possessions of money and material objects. Money is perceived as a superordinate possession in the sense that it is an expression of a possessive relationship of subject over material objects, it participates in gender relation and acts as a "deputy agent" of security. In this sense, the possession of money not only designates the ownership of material things, but also dominates interpersonal relations, and entails an existential meaning. In addition to money, having is mainly articulated in four types of material objects: food, clothing, a housing unit and a car. These material objects are not only simply material things but also deeply symbolic objects. They are related to QOL in complex and multi-faceted ways. Take food as an example. At its most basic, food is essential for survival; the ever-prevalent threat of famine in China means that its value is recognised by all. Food is also related to QOL via the mediation of good health. As an unalienable possession that pertains to one's body and to one's self, food is also used as a signifier of social status, which in turn, seems to establish the worth of the self. Thereby, QOL is framed as possessions, and thus endorsed with monetary values.

For Chinese people, being is established through rootedness, connectedness, participation and freedom. Rootedness focuses on one's "vertical" belonging and is articulated in both natural and ancestral rootedness. Connectedness characterises one's "horizontal" belonging, and refers to the establishment and maintenance of a

[20] The term "semantic artefacts" here is equivalent to Moscovici and Vignaux (2000) term "semantic domains". To avoid the unnecessary confusions between "semantic domains" in the theory of social representations and "life domains" in the study of QOL, the thesis prefers to use the term "semantic artefacts".

union between the self and others in a diverse social matrix. Participation concerns the importance of taking part in activities that provides individuals with a sense of commitment, direction and purpose. Freedom, for Chinese people, involves the removal the restrictions of personal choices. It is through this set of semantic artefacts that the being orientation casts QOL as spirituals subsistence and endows QOL with existential values.

It seems that the empirical manifestation, or the partial reconstruction, of a thema through its semantic artefacts is a dynamic and continually evolving process which is dependent upon the processes of anchoring and objectification. In their original meanings, anchoring and objectification referred to the processes by which social representations are created, maintained and changed, and by which "the world in which we live" and "the world of thought" are interconnected and transferred (Moscovici, 1984a). It seems that a thema reveals itself in semantic artefacts through both processes of anchoring and objectification. Anchoring as an inner-directed process, integrates new and unfamiliar phenomena into existing knowledge, and enriches the meanings of a thema.[21] On the other hand, objectification as an outer-directed process turns abstract notions of a thema into reality, and gives a thema its concrete form in the semantic artefacts.[22] In the process of transference from a thema into its semantic artefacts, anchoring and objectification are complementary to each other, as Marková (2000) notes that every process of anchoring involves objectification. In this sense, the social representation QOL is a dynamic process, operating towards both stability and change.

9.2.2.5. The Spillover of the Thema Across Critical Life Domains

The social representation QOL is not only made up of the thema and its semantic artefacts, but also involves a number of life domains. The issue of life domains is a "classical" subject matter of the study of QOL. Almost all empirical studies of QOL encompass certain life domains, which are considered important to overall QOL. The

[21] For instance, private ownership and freedom are both relatively new ideas in Chinese society, which have penetrated in China via Western culture. They are contextualised in QOL when they are anchored to the thema of having and being.

[22] For instance, having and being are objectified and concretized as the ownership of a car and freedom, amongst others.

mainstream QOL literature tends to set life domains based on the suppositions of the researcher rather than those of lay people. Guided by the perspective that QOL as a representation is held by the social actors themselves, the current research identifies the domains of life from the point of view of lay people. On the basis of the analysis of the data collected from word associations, in-depth individual and group interviews, and public discourse in the newspaper, the research finds that QOL in Chinese society is related to five major domains of life: health, family, work, social relations and the natural environment. These domains of life are related to QOL in two different manners: an instrumental approach and an expressive approach. These two approaches are derived from the antinomic thema of having and being on the one hand, and link the domains of life with the thema on the other.

The instrumental approach constructs each life domain through a set of economic consequences and posits them as resources leading to material possessions. Within this instrumental approach, health is represented as a "money-earner", and illness as a "money-waster". In the domain of family, the parent-child tie is interpreted as the relations of mutual financial support, and marriage is framed as a pathway towards better living conditions. Work is valued for its direct material consequences. To be employed means to earn money, and to be laid off implies to live in poverty. Social relations are seen as an instrument to facilitate access to various visible benefits. In the same vein, the natural environment is seen as a repository of resources to fulfil human material needs, and environmental devastation is seen as an inevitable cost for the sake of immense gratification in intensive consumption. Within the instrumental approach, therefore, an "economic logic" dominates in the domains of life, and these domains are instrumentalised as means to the end of "having".

The expressive approach confesses existential meanings to the same life domains, and emphasises the joy derived from them. Within the expressive approach, health is represented as joy and active involvement in life, and illness is associated with mourning and idleness. In the domain of family, the parent-son tie is interpreted as a necessary part of family life chain, which merges a momentary life into a timeless life; marriage is framed as romantic love, intimacy, and a sense of spiritual partnership. Work is valued for the enjoyment, productiveness, challenge and achievement inherent in work itself. Social relations are seen as the source of

emotional support, warmth and attachment. In the same vein, the harmony between humans and nature is highlighted. Environmental devastation is blamed as consuming the legacy inherited by our ancestors and committing sin to our offspring and fellow human beings, and the environmental protection is praised as a philanthropic act of devotion to both our contemporaries and descendants. Needless to say, within the expressive approach, it is a very "existential logic" that dominates in the domains of life, and "being" is located within these domains.

It is worth noting that Chinese people are reluctant to separate out various domains of QOL. Rather, they consider that these domains are intermingled and fused with each other. For instance, the less polluted villages are associated with fewer economic resources and more limited employment opportunities; while the more polluted urban areas are associated with greater opportunities and a better material life. Health is conceived as an important personal resource to keep one's job, maintain one's proper interpersonal relations, and support one's family; on the contrary, illness is seen as the cause of the loss of employment and aggravates a huge financial pressure on the patient's family, which, in turn, serves as the cause of family instability. The separation of the complex fabric of QOL into life domains is for an analytical purpose. For lay people, these domains are mutually constructive aspects of QOL. Thus, QOL is seen as a general, all pervasive harmony cutting across these critical life domains.

The above discussion raises two questions. The first question is why having and being are identified as the antinomies of the thema, while health, family, work, social relations and the natural environment as the domains of life. This question is primarily concerned with the components of QOL. Indeed, some QOL researchers, for example, Renwick and Brown (1996), argue that having and being are two separate domains of life amongst many other domains. However, this research suggests that the representation QOL is organised hierarchically and consists of both superordinate and subordinate subsystems. The former refers to the thema, and the latter refers to the domains of life. There is no parallel relationship between the two. The thema of having and being, as the superordinate subsystem, is the deep structure of QOL; while life domains, as the subordinate subsystem, is the supportive structure of QOL. The thema of having and being spills over the entire fabric of the representation QOL across various life domains, by an instrumental approach and an expressive approach,

respectively. In other words, the thema of having and being acts as an "interpretive key" (Moscovici and Vignaux, 2000) for organising the meanings of the domains of health, family, work, social relations and the natural environment, and gives meanings to these domains of life. These domains of life are activated to contribute to QOL through both an "economic logic" and an "existential logic", which are embedded in the thema of having and being.

The second question is more theoretical, with respect to the theory of social representations. The question is whether the supportive structure of a representation is comparable to Abric's (1993,1996) peripheral system. It seems to me that the priority of a structural approach to social representations should not be the simple and arbitrary composition of different elements, but the existence of relationships inside a whole. In the case of the current research, the domains of health, family, work, social relations and the natural environment are certain embodiments of the thema of having and being, because these domains are activated to contribute to QOL only through the channels of an instrumental approach and an expressive approach. It is through these two approaches that various life domains are integrated into the thematic idea of having and being on the one hand, and the thema is expressed in these domains on the other. In other words, a structural approach to social representations must pay more attention to the dialectical interdependency of the thema and the supportive structure, of a representation.

9.2.3. Cognition, Affection, and Action: The Three Inseparable Dimensions of QOL

A social representation simultaneously comprises three distinct but interrelated dimensions: cognition, affection, and action (Jovchelovitch, 1996). This is the case for the representation QOL. If the above discussion on the thema of having/being, its semantic artefacts, and life domains reveal the different layers of the representation QOL, vertically, the three dimensions of QOL – cognition, affection, and action – bring to light its different aspects, horizontally.

The cognitive dimension of a representation is widely acknowledged. The theory of social representations is a social psychological theory of everyday knowledge. It

firmly rejects the standpoint of cognition individualisation which lies at the heart of classical cognitive theories, and strongly advocates a socio-cultural perspective on cognition (Flick, 1994, 1998a; Marková, 2000; Moscovici, 1988, Wagner, 1996). With respect to the representation QOL, cognition refers to the wealth of folk knowledge pertaining to "the good life", which is diffused in society, embedded in institutions, and communicated and negotiated between the members of society. When people talk about QOL, they are at one and the same time telling a great deal about their society, its way of looking at their life, its concerns and preoccupations. There are two different modes of knowledge, corresponding to the having orientation and the being orientation. The having orientation emphasises the socially shared meanings of possessions. In this respect, possessions are more than just the fulfilment of utilitarian needs, they are part of communicative genres (Moscovici & Marková, 1998). By endowed with symbolic values, possessions reflect, and reproduce, the owner's self-images and his/her status in relation to others; they are actively used to communicate the owner's comparative standings in social and economic relations. The being orientation emphasises the collective elaboration of the relationship between the self and others, between the individual and society, and between humans and nature, and its existential implications.

The affective dimension of a representation refers to the emotional meanings with which a social representation is endowed. The current research shows that QOL conveys a positive emotional connotation in general, as revealed by the semantic differentials task. This positive emotional connotation is expressed as pleasure in the having orientation and as joy in the being orientation. Having is particularly imbued with pleasure. The hedonistic potential of possessions is highlighted by the having orientation. Pleasure is derived both from the accumulation of wealth and from the consumption itself. QOL, from this perspective, is deliberate pleasure, and the absence of pain. Being is particularly imbued with joy. Unlike pleasure which is extrinsically aligned with the possessions of financial and material resources, joy is built in the harmony between the self and others, between individual and society, and between humans and nature. When people realise their positions in the chain of their family lives, in a social matrix and in nature, and when they are absorbed in valued activities, they genuinely experience a great joy and thus the emotional appearance of QOL. In this line, Moscovici (1998) argues, "all the symbols retained and living in a

society obey a logic of the intellect as much as a logic of the emotions. [...] We should not hesitate, therefore, to treat representations as intellectual constructions of thought, while relating them to the collective emotions which accompany them or which they arouse" (p.222). This research substantiates this assertion. The emotional dimension of social representations highlights that social representations depend upon both subjectivity and sociality of people, and in this way, social representations are set apart from ideologies.

Social representations also involve actions, or more precisely, practices (Duveen, 1994). Jodelet's (1991) empirical study of the social representation of madness at a French village is a speaking example. The social representation of madness, as Jodelet vividly describes, is dominated by the fear of contagion and the loss of distance from mental illness. It is perpetuated through daily practices at the village, such as the separation of crockery, waters and physical space between the mad and the remainders of the Ainay-le-Château residents. The current research shows that the representation QOL also comprises an action dimension, which is expressed in the ways in which lay Chinese people actually pursue "the good life" in everyday life. There are two different modes of practices, corresponding to the having orientation and the being orientation. The having orientation tends to entail practices oriented towards extrinsic rewards. For instance, in order to make better material benefits, officials and academicians in urban areas are eager to forsake their ties with the state and set up their own business, and rural residents migrate to work in urban areas even at the expense of some considerable existential and spiritual loss. By contrast, the being orientation tends to entail practices oriented towards intrinsic rewards. For instance, individuals actively commit to leading a purposeful or meaningful life, by integrating themselves with nature, by bringing honour to their ancestors, by relating themselves with others in close and enduring relationships, and by exercising free choice and self-determination. It seems that in light of the theory of social representations, the conventional view of the separation, and logical independence, between cognition and practice, should be challenged, and both cognition and practice should be viewed as the same, but different aspects of, a representation. As Wagner (1993, 1994) argues, representations cannot be considered as the causes of practice, and both contents of a representation and practices must be seen as illustrations of the same representational contents.

The three different dimensions of the representation QOL, cognition, affection and action, are inextricably inseparable. They are intertwined with each other, and bound together in a circular process. As discussed in the previous chapters, a crucial aspect of QOL is what forces control the life chances of the individual: the self or the state. The issue simultaneously involves the three facets of QOL, cognition, affection and action. The transition into a market economy suggests a shift from a state-directed to a self-directed responsibility. For the younger generation, knowing the implications of the shift towards the life chances of the individual (cognition) entails an emphasis on self-reliance, self-effort and active participation in the market economy (action). The participation itself is accompanied with joy (affection), and brings the individual personal wealth, which provokes pleasure (affection), which, in turn, reinforce the understanding of the opportunities from the market economy (cognition), and further personal struggle (action). Therefore, it is the network of cognition, affection and action that comes into play in the manufacturing of the representation QOL. The distinction between cognition, affection and action, as Jovchelovitch (1996) suggests, is only significant for the purpose of analysis and maintenance of complexity, and it should not become the basis for constructing the dichotomies when accessing human experience.

9.2.4. How the Representation QOL is "Shared" in Chinese Society

The defining characteristic of social representations is that they are collectively elaborated and thus socially shared and communicated by the members of a group, society or culture. Moscovici (1988) distinguishes the three ways in which representations can be shared. They can be hegemonic, namely, they are shared by all members of society and thought unquestionably; they can be emancipated, with a certain degree of autonomy with respect to the interacting segments of society; or they can be polemical, held by only some groups in society, while other groups hold opposite views. The argument developed by Moscovici is that any one representation may be either hegemonic, emancipated or polemical. From this perspective, representations can be distinguished in the forms of their distribution and in the degree of consensus they generated. However, this thesis seems to suggest the

representation QOL simultaneously involves these three different ways of "sharing" in a complementary manner.

The thema of having and being seems to be shared in a hegemonic way by the entire Chinese population. China was a relatively homogeneous society in the sense that Confucianism was a taken-for-granted philosophy and way of life in traditional Chinese society for millennia. Recently, ordinary Chinese people have also witnessed the transformations of their society into communism formerly and capitalism afterwards. The thema of having and being reiterates itself, in different fashions, in the process of the transformations as discussed in the foregoing sections. This thema is thus inherent in Chinese history, culture and reality, and open to all. It functions as a symbolic resource for Chinese people to construct their QOL. Moreover, themata, as basic pre-categorisations that are profoundly anchored in the collective memory of a society, are shared by the entire population, and transmitted from one generation to another. Themata are thus, by definition, shared in a hegemonic way.

On the other hand, the thema of having and being is always "filtered through the discourses of others, the experiences in which we live, and the collectives to which we belong" (Moscovici & Vignaux, 2000, p.161). When the thema gets expressed in its semantic artefacts and spills over various life domains, some disparities come to light between different sectors of society. In Chinese society, the *hukou* system has created rigid boundaries between rural and urban sectors. Although the semantic artefacts of the thema and different domains of life generally apply to both sectors, they are elaborated in a different way by the two sectors. As discussed in the previous chapters, rural parents usually prefer to have a son rather than a daughter. This preference is both expressive and instrumental in the sense that a son is expected to provide proper care for the parents in old age and a son can carry on the family line. For urban subjects, the parent-child (irrespective of the child's gender) tie is mainly expressive in the sense that it is regarded as the psychological or emotional interdependence between the two generations. Rural residents customarily make a distinction between farming work and a "job". The distinction implies an instrumental approach to work. Urban residents tend to hold the instrumental, expressive and dedicative approaches towards work concurrently, and alternate between them. The links between health and food, and between health and physical activities, are also elaborated in a different way

in these two sectors. For urban people, health is linked to consuming fresh fruits, vegetables, and coarse food grain, and to practice physical exercise regularly. For rural people, health is associated with eating more "nutritious" foodstuff, such as meat, milk, eggs, rice and wheat, and with doing farming work everyday. For rural residents, natural rootedness implicates the proper choice of *yin/yang* sites based on the notion of *fengshui* so as to bring luck to the dead, and to make a family live a happy and peaceful life. For urban residents, it implies travelling into countryside and away from the noisy city. These particulars indicate that the disparities in different aspects of the representation QOL coexist in the rural and urban sectors of Chinese society in a complementary way. These disparities in different aspects of the representation QOL are intrinsically linked to the different social positions of rural people and urban people in the fabric of social life, by which the representation is intertwined with the process of identity construction (Elejabarrieta, 1992) on the one hand, and is structurally bound up with the material circumstances of the two sectors, on the other. From this perspective, some aspects of the representation QOL are shared in an emancipated way.

Also, the representation QOL is somewhat shared in a polemic way. This research shows that, in the context of China's transition into a market economy, there is an obvious conflict on how to achieve the good life between the older and younger generations. This issue involves opposite views on the relationship between the individual and society. For the older generation, QOL is activated in a harmonious and reciprocal relationship between the individual and the state. Both "having" and "being" are grounded in the individual's altruistic contribution to the state and in the state's active role in taking care of its every citizen. However, the younger generation pays much attention to the independence of the individual from the state, and considers QOL as the goodness of the individual and family rather than the common good of society as a whole. Both "having" and "being" are rooted in the active efforts of the individual. In other words, the older generation holds a collectivist view towards QOL, while the younger generation holds an individualistic view towards QOL. This polemical dimension of QOL is generated in the symbiosis of the competing value systems between Confucianism, Marxism and capitalism coexisting in the midst of China's social transition.

Moscovici's distinction between hegemonic, emancipated and polemic representations, in its original sense, implies that different social representations may be socially shared in different ways. This research seems to suggest that the three ways of "sharing" simultaneously apply to the same representation QOL in a complementary manner. In other words, we may not conceive of social representations as distinct "units" in the way implied by Moscovici. Rather, a representation is generated through hegemonic, widely shared thema(ta), but it also involves more emancipated and polemical aspects. The emancipated and polemical aspects of a representation expresses the particular societal conditions of the actors who activate them their specific context and in relation to diverse life spheres. They reflect, in China specifically, the broadly social, economic, political and ideological transition. Thus, a representation may be, at one and the same time, hegemonic, emancipated or polemical. Different layers of a representation entail different ways of sharing. The organisation of a representation and the ways of it is shared are dialectically interrelated to each other.

9.2.5. Values and the Representation QOL

The term values is frequently used in social sciences. Deth and Scarbrough (1995) note that there are two different meanings of values in the Cartesian tradition: values as a psychological concept and values as a sociological concept. In the former case, the term refers to a "modality of selective orientation", which is linked to individual-level preferences, motives, needs, and attitudes. In the latter case, the term is an equivalent to norms, customs, manners, and ideologies. Mainstream literature on QOL is highly relevant to values in either case. For instance, in line with the former, Hörnquist (1982) argues that human needs are the foundations for QOL and that QOL is the degree of satisfaction of those needs; in line with the latter, Oishi (2000) argues that QOL is the reflection of particular social norms or ideologies. However, by equating QOL as values, Durkheim's (1898/1953) dichotomy opposing individual and collective representations is revitalised in the study of QOL.

There is more to the story with respect to QOL, and this concerns social representations. The theory of social representations provides a solution to the

problem posed by Durkheim, because social representations are intermediate between individual and collective representations (Farr, 1998). This thesis reveals that QOL refer neither to mere satisfaction of needs, nor mere cultural imperatives, but to a synthesis between the world of the individual and dynamics of social and cultural imperatives. In other words, QOL a dynamic construction through social interactions. As discussed previously, the thema of having and being is infused with strong personal meanings, which are nevertheless shaped by society. The transition into a market economy and the introduction of the one-child-per-couple policy, which entangled the symbiosis of the competing value systems of Confucianism, Marxism and Western capitalism, entails a range of opportunities as well as a series of restraints to either "having" or "being", depending on an individual's social position. For instance, the removal of the "iron bowl of rice" implies individual autonomy for those who succeed in the market, but it conveys anxiety and poverty for those who are unable to secure a position in this market. The one-child-per-couple policy is implicated with the common good of society for older urbanites who committed themselves to Marxism, with a potential or tangible anxiety of terminating a family line for most rural people who committed themselves to traditional Chinese ideology, and with a way to breaking away from the impoverished economic situation for those who live in poverty and start to endorse individualistic values.

Undoubtedly, the representation QOL not only takes personal or social values into consideration and reflects these values, but also, more importantly, involves the interdependence between psychic reality and social reality. It captures the subjectivity of people and, at the same time, builds upon the sociocultural patterns of Chinese society. In this line, Moscovici (1990) clearly states, social representations are "social creations, constructed via mental process, that acquire reality" (p.76). It is on the basis of a dialogical interaction between the individual and society that the representation QOL is constructed. In this sense, the thesis provides a viable resolution to what Diener and Suh (2000a) called unresolved issue that how QOL arises from both meeting inherent human needs and acquiring cultural imperatives.

9.3. Prospect for Future Research

No research has ever been done without limitations; the present study is no exception. The present research is exploratory in the sense that, to the best of my knowledge, there is virtually no research that has applied the theory of social representations to the study of QOL. The theoretical synthesis I proposed therefore remains just a tentative proposition whose main function is to open up new avenues for research, to question the routine approaches to QOL, to shed a different light on empirical phenomena. The limited ambition of the current research, however, cannot entirely excuse some of the problems of the study.

The most apparent limitation in this research is the sampling problem. The size of the sample for word associations and semantic differentials is relatively large. But the respondents were approached in terms of their accessibility, rather than some of more thoughtful segmentation. Most of them were urban young adults. Here, the large sample size was achieved at the expense of the typicality of the sample. The sample of individual interviewees and focus group participants was more typical and diverse. It included both rural and urban residents, men and women, and members of both the younger and the old generations. But the size of the sample is relatively small, including only sixteen individual interviews and four focus group discussions. Here, the typicality of the sample is reached at the expense of the quantity of the sample. The newspaper articles for the content analysis were produced for purposes other than this research. They were related to the research topic of QOL in an oblique and indirect way. How the articles relate to the concept of QOL is a matter of analytical reconstruction on the part of the observer. The data sets, therefore, cannot be subjected to statistical analysis. In this sense, much of the argument presented in this thesis remains suggestive, and the findings must be treated with some caution. Further studies based on representative samples are needed to substantiate or qualify the findings in this thesis. Yet, the present research provides a valuable baseline for developing a more structured word associations task, interview schedule and even a questionnaire, to enhance an understanding of QOL in China. Moreover, the findings uncovered seem to resonate in much of the social scientific literature.

Social representations are dynamic, ongoing, and always open to revisions and changes. Gergen (1973) emphasised the historicity of social psychological knowledge and described social psychology as history rather than as natural science. In taking a

historical point of view, it is essential to examine how significant changes concerning the object of study occur over different historical epochs, and to explore the trends and the reasons behind these transformations. The thesis intended to examine the representation QOL within a wider historical dimension in two manners: the comparisons of the statements from different cohorts of generations, and the comparisons of the public discourse in the media across the periods of planned economy and of reform. Unfortunately, it was found that it is unfeasible to conduct a content analysis of media documents concerning QOL in the period of planned economy. In that period, the mass media of communication in China acted strictly as the Communist Party's official organ of propaganda for class struggle. It is only in the late 1990s that tabloid newspapers started to voice the life-world of lay people. The comparisons of the statements from different cohorts of generations may compensate, to some extent, for this deficiency. However, the issue that how significant changes concerning the representation QOL occur over different historical epochs, which is influenced by, and reflected in, the mass media of communication, remains to be the agenda of the future studies.

Appendix I Questionnaire for Word Associations and Semantic Differentials Tasks

I-1: Chinese Version

生活质量问卷

_____：您好：

目前，我正在从事“中国人如何看待生活质量”这一课题的研究。恳切希望您能协助完成本问卷。您所提供的信息对本研究是非常重要的。

填写本问卷不需要任何专门的知识，不要求您署名，您只用5分钟左右即可完成。谢谢您的合作！

一、当看到“生活质量”这一概念时，在您脑海中首先浮现出的5个词或词组是：

1．_____ 2．_____ 3．_____

4．_____ 5．_____

二、综合考虑所有因素，您认为影响一个人生活质量的主要因素是什么？

1．请列出这些因素，列出的因素越多越好；

2．请用1、2、3、4、5、6等数字分别标出这些因素的重要性（1表示最重要，依此类推）。

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

三、以下是与生活质量有关的25组反义词，每组反义词按其程度分为7个等级（1和7表示“非常”，2和6表示“比较”，3和5表示“稍微有点”，4表示“中性”）。请根据您的第一印象，用数字分别标出每组反义词与生活质量的关系。

例1：对于“复杂 - 简单”这组反义词，如果您觉得生活质量的含义与复杂有“比较”密切的联系，就在数字2上划圈。 复杂 1:(2):3:4:5:6:7 简单

例2：对于“客观 - 主观”这组反义词，如果您觉得生活质量的含义与主观有“非常”密切的联系，就在数字7上划圈。 客观 1:2:3:4:5:6:(7) 主观

依此类推。每组反义词只选一个数字。

1．好	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	坏	2．成功	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	失败
3．丑	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	美	4．自由	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	约束
5．有意义	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	无意义	6．有趣	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	无趣
7．年轻	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	年老	8．被动	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	主动
9．变化	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	稳定	10．支配	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	服从
11．幸福	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	悲伤	12．有价值	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	无价值
13．愉快	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	不快	14．疾病	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	健康
15．轻松	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	紧张	16．合群	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	不合群
17．干净	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	肮脏	18．乐观	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	悲观
19．公平	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	不公平	20．贫困	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	富裕
21．动荡	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	和平	22．现实	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	空想
23．友善	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	敌意	24．安静	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	嘈杂
25．弱	1:2:3:4:5:6:7	强			

四、您的年龄、性别和职业和专业：

年龄：_____ 性别：男___ 女___ 职业：_____ 专业_____

非常感谢您的合作！

I-2: English Translation

Dear Friend,

I am currently conducting a research project on how ordinary people conceive their quality of life. Now I would like to enlist your collaboration by completing the following questionnaire, which is an important part of the project. Filling in the questionnaire requires no specific knowledge, and should be a true reflection of how you feel. It will take you only a few minutes. All information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential. Your response will be highly appreciated.

I. Please write down the first 5 words or phrases, which come into your mind when you think about "quality of life".

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

4. _____ 5. _____

II. All things considered, what do you think are the most important factors influencing a person's quality of life?

a). Please list as many key words or phrases as possible;

b). Please marks these factors in the order of importance by using 1, 2, 3, ...

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

III. Below you will find a list of attributes which may apply to "quality of life". Please indicate the position which best describes your understanding of "quality of life" by marking a grade (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). The figure 1 or 7 stands for "extremely", 2 or 6 for "quite", 3 or 5 for "slightly", and 4 for "neutral".

Example 1:
If you feel that the meaning "quality of life" is "quite" related to complex in the "complex – simple" continuum, please circle the figure "2", as illustrated as below:

complex 1–(2)–3–4–5–6–7 simple

Example 2:
If you feel that the meaning "quality of life" is "extremely" related to subjective in the "subjective – objective" continuum, please circle the figure "7", as illustrated as below:

objective 1–2–3–4–5–6–(7) Subjective

1.	good	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	bad
2.	successful	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	unsuccessful
3.	ugly	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	beautiful
4.	free	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	constraint
5.	meaningful	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	meaningless
6.	interesting	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	boring
7.	young	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	old
8.	passive	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	active
9.	changeable	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	stable
10.	dominant	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	submissive
11.	happy	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	sad
12.	valuable	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	worthless
13.	pleasant	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	unpleasant
14.	sick	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	healthy
15.	relaxed	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	tense
16.	sociable	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	unsociable
17.	clean	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	dirty
18.	optimistic	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	pessimistic
19.	fair	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	unfair
20.	poor	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	rich
21.	ferocious	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	peaceful
22.	realistic	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	unrealistic
23.	friendly	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	hostile
24.	quiet	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	noise
25.	powerless	1–2–3–4–5–6–7	powerful

IV. Your personal information

Age: _____

Gender: male __ female __

Present occupational status: _____

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix II: The Characteristics of the Sample for Word Associations and Semantic Differentials Tasks

		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
NATURAL GROUP	Middle School Student	79	24.7
	University Student	107	33.4
	Continuing Education College Student	134	41.9
GENDER	Male	178	55.6
	Female	142	44.4
AGE *	12 – 25.3	211	65.9
	25.4 – 72	107	33.4
CITY	Beijing	170	53.1
	Changchun	150	46.9
TOTAL		320	100

* Two respondents' information on their age was missing

Appendix III: Coding Scheme for Word Associations

SEMANTIC ELEMENTS	RELATED WORDS AND PHRASES
Money	finance/money/income/salary/saving/richness/wealth
Family	family/family harmony/happy family/family members/ marriage/children/parent/spouse/partner /family life/family background
Housing	Housing/house/apartment/housing unit/accommodation
Happiness	happiness/happy/ have a good time/merry heart/ harmony/ satisfaction
Education\ Knowledge	knowledge/knowledge structure/book/educational attainment/ education/learning/the degree of education
Leisure	leisure/entertainment/fun/holiday/cultural activity/hobby/ interest
Health	health/health state/physical health/mental health
Work	work/job/employment/enjoyable job/meaningful job/ working environment/career/occupation
Food	eating/food/drink/beer/fruit/meat/nutrition
Environment	natural environment/ environment/pollution/city construction/ area of residence
Personal Network	friend/friendship/guanxi/interpersonal relations
Society & State	national power/national economical development/GNP/science and technology/governmental policy/legal system/social environment
Life Attitude	attitude toward life/outlook on life /aim of life/optimistic/positive
Spiritual Life	spirit/spirit life/spirited/richness in spirit
Material Life	material/material sufficiency/material life/material benefit/domestic appliances/standard of living/economic well-being /Engel' coefficient
Commitment	substantial in life/substantial/meaningful/ interesting/enjoyable/changeable/full of variety
Ability	ability/personal ability/clever/intelligence/IQ/ competency/disposition/efficiency/
Personality	personality/character/kindness/self-regulation/ habit/ life habit/good habit/thrift
Clothing	dressing/clothing
Social Service	consumer market/public service/price index/sport facility/medical service
Car	car/private car
Success	achievement/sense of achievement/success/success in undertaking/ self-actualisation/ self-value
Social Position	social position/status /official rank/ respect/respected by others
Self-Effort	effort/striving/enterprising spirit/competition
Consumer Goods	durable consumer goods/consumption level/shopping/computer
Love & Affection	affection/love
Opportunity	good fortune/luck/opportunity
Security	security/safety /stability
Freedom	freedom/independence
Sex	private life/X life

Appendix IV: The Characteristics of Respondents in Individual and Group Interviews

IV-1: Interviewees in the Individual Interviews

SUBJECT	AGE GROUP	RESIDENCE	GENDER	OCCUPATION
I-01	50 - 65	Beijing	Female	Professional
I-02	50 - 65	Beijing	Female	Retired
I-03	50 - 65	Beijing	Male	Manual Worker
I-04	50 - 65	Beijing	Male	Factory Leader
I-05	20 - 35	Beijing	Female	Student
I-06	20 - 35	Beijing	Female	Office Worker
I-07	20 - 35	Beijing	Male	Student
I-08	20 - 35	Beijing	Male	Professional
I-09	50 - 65	Yanjiesan	Female	Farmer
I-10	50 - 65	Yanjiesan	Female	Farmer
I-11	50 - 65	Yanjiesan	Male	Farmer
I-12	50 - 65	Yanjiesan	Male	Farmer
I-13	20 - 35	Yanjiesan	Female	Housewife
I-14	20 - 35	Yanjiesan	Female	Farmer
I-15	20 - 35	Yanjiesan	Male	Farmer
I-16	20 - 35	Yanjiesan	Male	Farmer

IV-2: Participants in the Focus Group Discussions

GROUP	SUBJECT	AGE GROUP	RESIDENCE	GENDER	OCCUPATION
I	G1-01	50 - 65	Beijing	Male	Manual Worker
	G1-02	50 - 65	Beijing	Male	Factory Leader
	G1-03	50 - 65	Beijing	Male	Professional
	G1-04	50 - 65	Beijing	Female	Professional
	G1-05	50 - 65	Beijing	Female	Retired
	G1-06	50 - 65	Beijing	Female	Unemployed
II	G2-01	20 - 35	Beijing	Female	Professional
	G2-02	20 - 35	Beijing	Female	Professional
	G2-03	20 - 35	Beijing	Male	Student
	G2-04	20 - 35	Beijing	Male	Professional
	G2-05	20 - 35	Beijing	Male	Student
III	G3-01	50 – 65	Yanjiesan	Male	Farmer
	G3-02	50 – 65	Yanjiesan	Male	Farmer
	G3-03	50 – 65	Yanjiesan	Male	Farmer
	G3-04	50 – 65	Yanjiesan	Female	Farmer
	G3-05	50 - 65	Yanjiesan	Female	Farmer
IV	G4-01	20 - 35	Yanjiesan	Male	Farmer
	G4-02	20 - 35	Yanjiesan	Male	Farmer
	G4-03	20 - 35	Yanjiesan	Female	Farmer
	G4-04	20 - 35	Yanjiesan	Female	Farmer
	G4-05	20 - 35	Yanjiesan	Female	Housewife

Appendix V: Index System Created from the Interview Data

(1)	/base data
(1 1)	/base data /gender
(1 1 1)	/base data /gender/male
(1 1 2)	/base data /gender/female
(1 2)	/base data /generation
(1 2 1)	/base data /generation/old
(1 2 2)	/base data /generation/young
(1 3)	/base data /living area
(1 3 1)	/base data /living area/urban
(1 3 2)	/base data /living area/rural
(2)	/possession
(2 1)	/possession/finance
(2 1 1)	/possession/finance/savings
(2 1 2)	/possession/finance/basic for survival
(2 1 3)	/possession/finance/market economy
(2 1 4)	/possession/finance/buying goods
(2 1 5)	/possession/finance/status
(2 1 6)	/possession/finance/self-value
(2 1 7)	/possession/finance/pleasure
(2 1 8)	/possession/finance/link to health
(2 1 9)	/possession/finance/link to family
(2 2 10)	/possession/finance/link to job
(2 2 11)	/possession/finance/to earn money
(2 2)	/possession/eating
(2 2 1)	/possession/eating/for health
(2 2 2)	/possession/eating/link to family
(2 2 3)	/possession/eating/for status
(2 2 4)	/possession/eating/for pleasure
(2 2 5)	/possession/eating/Chinese tradition
(2 2 6)	/possession/eating/as social media
(2 2 7)	/possession/eating/as standard of living
(2 3)	/possession/clothes
(2 3 1)	/possession/clothes/identity
(2 3 2)	/possession/clothes/living standard
(2 4)	/possession/car
(2 4 1)	/possession/car/pollution
(2 4 2)	/possession/car/who owns car
(2 4 3)	/possession/car/symbolic meaning
(2 5)	/possession/housing
(2 5 1)	/possession /housing/reform
(2 5 2)	/possession /housing/own housing
(2 5 3)	/possession /housing/allocated house
(2 5 4)	/possession /housing/location
(2 5 5)	/possession /housing/for marriage
(2 5 6)	/possession/housing/for private
(2 6)	/possession/other things
(2 7)	/possession/knowledge and ability
(2 8)	/possession/standard of living
(3)	/spirituality
(3 1)	/spirituality/meanings/
(3 1 1)	/spirituality/ meanings/rootedness
(3 1 2)	/spirituality/ meanings/autonomy and freedom

(3 1 3) /spirituality/ meanings/enjoyment
(3 1 4) /spirituality/ meanings/connected with others
(3 1 5) /spirituality/meanings/dominance
(3 1 6) /spirituality meanings/achievement
(3 1 7) /spirituality/meanings/commitment and activities
(3 2 1) /spirituality/causes/work
(3 2 2) /spirituality/causes/leisure
(3 2 3) /spirituality/causes/family
(3 2 4) /spirituality/causes/society
(3 2 5) /spirituality/causes/fengshui
(3 2 6) /spirituality/causes/ancestors
(3 2 7) /spirituality/causes/knowledge
(4) /Work
(4 1) /Work/images
(4 1 1) /Work/images/lose self
(4 1 2) /Work/images/achievement
(4 1 3) /Work/images/self-identity
(4 1 4) /Work/images/benefits
(4 2) /Work/motivations to work
(4 2 1) /Work/motivations to work/for survival
(4 2 2) /Work/motivations to work/for the state
(4 2 3) /Work/motivations to work/for pleasure
(4 2 4) /Work/motivations to work/for challenge
(4 2 5) /Work/motivations to work/self-actualising
(4 3) /Work/retire
(4 3 1) /Work/retire/freedom
(4 3 2) /Work/retire/inanity
(4 3 3) /Work/retire/recovery of self
(4 3 4) /Work/retire/threaten
(4 4) /Work/unemployment
(4 5) /Work/dagong
(4 6) /Work/xiahai
(4 7) /Work/farming work
(5) /Health
(5 1) /Health/image
(5 1 1) /Health/image/absence of serious illness
(5 1 2) /Health/image/long life
(5 1 3) /Health/image/feeling well
(5 1 4) /Health/image/vigour
(5 1 5) /Health/image/beauty
(5 2) /Health/function
(5 2 1) /Health/function/earning money
(5 2 2) /Health/function/cornerstone of daily life
(5 2 3) /Health/function/happy
(5 2 4) /Health/function/enjoy life
(5 3) /Health/illness
(5 3 1) /Health/illness/cause
(5 3 1 1) /Health/illness/cause/pollution
(5 3 1 2) /Health/illness/cause/bad emotion
(5 3 1 3) /Health/illness/cause/malnutrition
(5 3 1 4) /Health/illness/cause/over-nutrition
(5 3 1 5) /Health/illness/cause/idle
(5 3 2) /Health/illness/as excuses
(5 3 3) /Health/illness/effect
(5 3 3 1) /Health/illness/effect/idle life
(5 3 3 2) /Health/illness/effect/feeling badly
(5 3 3 3) /Health/illness/effect/poverty
(5 3 3 4) /Health/illness/effect/losing job
(5 3 3 5) /Health/illness/effect/divorce
(5 4) /Health/health practices

(5 4 1) /Health/health practices/open-mind
(5 4 2) /Health/health practices/healthy food
(5 4 3) /Health/health practices/physical exercise
(5 4 4) /Health/health practices/labour
(5 4 5) /Health/health practices/super-nature
(5 4 6) /Health/health practices/healthcare system reform
(6) /family
(6 1) /family/parent-child relation
(6 1 1) /family/parent-child relation/strong link
(6 1 2) /family/parent-child relation/realise own dreams
(6 1 3) /family/parent-child relation/filial piety
(6 1 4) /family/parent-child relation/harmony
(6 1 5) /family/parent-child relation/birth control
(6 1 6) /family/parent-child relation/boy or girl
(6 1 7) /family/parent-child relation/for others
(6 1 8) /family/parent-child relation/give money
(6 1 9) /family/parent-child relation/conformity
(6 1 10) /family/parent-child relation/living together or not
(6 1 11) /family/parent-child relation/kid's education
(6 1 12) /family/parent-child relation/extended self
(6 1 13) /family/parent-child relation/return to parents
(6 2) /family/marital relations
(6 2 1) /family/marital relations/sex
(6 2 2) /family/marital relations/compromise
(6 2 3) /family/marital relations/arranged marriage
(6 2 4) /family/marital relations/ideal partner
(6 2 5) /family/marital relations/self in marriage
(6 2 6) /family/marital relations/pursuits
(6 2 7) /family/marital relations/love
(6 2 8) /family/marital relations/divorce
(6 2 9) /family/marital relations/for birth
(6 3) /family/housing
(6 3 1) /family/housing/reform
(6 3 2) /family/housing/own housing
(6 3 3) /family/housing/assigning
(6 3 4) /family/housing/location
(6 3 5) /family/housing/for marriage
(7) /environment
(7 1) /environment/as resources
(7 2) /environment/harmony between human and environment
(7 3) /environment/pollution
(7 3 1) /environment/ pollution/source of illness
(7 3 2) /environment/ pollution/source of unpleasant
(7 4) /environment/environment protect
(7 4 1) /environment/environment protect/significance
(7 4 2) /environment/environment protect/practice
(7 4 3) /environment/environment protect/conflict with reality
(7 4 4) /environment/environment protect
(8) /social life
(8 1) /social life/identity
(8 1 1) /social life/identity/urban and rural
(8 1 2) /social life/identity/stratum
(8 1 3) /social life/identity/social comparison
(8 2) /social life/interpersonal relations
(8 2 1) /social life/interpersonal relations/instrumental tie
(8 2 2) /social life/interpersonal relations/expressive tie
(8 3) /social life/social regime
(8 3 1) /social life/social regime/fair
(8 3 2) /social life/social regime/freedom
(8 3 3) /social life/social regime/sovereignty and dignity

(8 4) /social life/security
(8 5) /social life/whose interests
(8 5 1) /social life/whose interests/self
(8 5 2) /social life/whose interests/family
(8 5 3) /social life/whose interests/the state
(8 6) /social life/whose responsibility
(8 6 1) /social life/whose responsibility/the individual
(8 6 2) /social life/whose responsibility/the state
(8 7) /social life/reform and new policy
(8 7 1) /social life/reform and new policy/employment system reform
(8 7 1 1) /social life/reform and new policy/employment system reform/as opportunities
(8 7 1 2) /social life/reform and new policy/employment system reform/as constraints
(8 7 2) /social life/reform and new policy/rural-to-urban mobility
(8 7 2 1) /social life/reform and new policy/rural-to-urban mobility/as opportunities
(8 7 2 2) /social life/reform and new policy/rural-to-urban mobility/ as constraints
(8 7 3) /social life/reform and new policy/one child policy
(8 7 3 1) /social life/reform and new policy/one child policy/as opportunities
(8 7 3 2) /social life/reform and new policy/one child policy/as constraints
(8 8) /social life/Chinese culture

Appendix VI: The Selected Article From *Press Digest*

NO.	ISSUE DATE	TITLE
001	08/01/1998	The Legendary Life of Wan Liu, the Descendant of the New Fourth Army
002	11/01/1998	Comments on the Story of Wang Bolin, Who Helps 10,000 Laid-off Workers Get Re-employed
003	18/01/1998	A Farmer's Ten-Year Lawsuit
004	22/01/1998	Where Are You, Mom?
005	25/01/1998	Cannot Standing Humiliation, Li Hongmei, A Female Boss Safeguards Her Dignity with Law
006	01/02/1998	The Beijing Girls in Air France
007	08/02/1998	Fun or Not – Computer Games are Changing Life
008	22/02/1998	Female PhD Students difficult to Find their Love
009	26/02/1998	The Legendary Story of Zhou Yuelin, a Female Cadre of the Red Army, Suffering Injustice for 25 Years
010	01/03/1998	Humanity Sinking and Emerging in the Ocean of Securities
011	05/03/1998	The Perplexed Love
012	08/03/1998	For 15 Million Poverty-Stricken Mothers – Ms Wang Guangmei and Project Hope
013	19/03/1998	Why Does a 16-year-old Boy, Who Used to Be a Hero Famous for Fire Fighting in Sichuan Province, Wander about in the Street?
014	22/03/1998	Sisters Creating Miracles of Life
015	29/03/1998	Life After Being Expelled from Peking University
016	02/04/1998	Realising Today's Dream with Tomorrow's Money
017	05/04/1998	Real Roses, Artificial Roses
018	12/04/1998	The Years in the Marriage Certificates
019	16/04/1998	Get Justice Back with Blood and Life
020	23/04/1998	Du Yu Wins Lawsuit with the Hong Kong Magazine Frontiers
021	26/04/1998	Ordinary People Helping Ordinary People
022	30/04/1998	The Embarrassing Marriage Certificate in Yibin, Sichuan Province: Complicated and Confusing
023	03/05/1998	Gain Justice back for Children
024	07/05/1998	Emergent Pursuit and Capture of Wang Baosen's Paramour
025	10/05/1998	The Rescue in the "Snow Ocean" of Death: A Report on Rescusing1,000 Passengers Held in Snow in Xinjiang
026	21/05/1998	Who Accelerates the Ripening of "Green Apples"?
027	24/05/1998	A Story of Abandoned Wife Caused by Donations of 100,000 *Yuan*
028	28/05/1998	Walking into the Final Habitat of Pandas, the Most Treasured Wild Life in the World
029	31/05/1998	Betting on Soul
030	04/06/1998	Dagong Sisters: Suspended Love
031	07/06/1998	A Special Love for My Crazy Mother
032	11/06/1998	The Ceramics Here Can Talk
033	14/06/1998	In the Days Leaving my Father: An Account of Jiao Shouyun, Daughter of Jiao Yulu
034	18/06/1998	The Frustrating Life of China's Only Special Meritorious Combat Heroine
035	21/06/1998	The Hero Waiting for Judgement
036	25/06/1998	Dagong for Farmers
037	28/06/1998	The Three Letters of Last Words by a Drug-Taking Man
038	02/07/1998	A Private Businessman Bought the Title of Secretary of Puning District Committee of Political Science and Law, Jieyanyang County

039	05/07/1998	Li Tiemei's Family Life: Trials and Hardships
040	09/07/1998	Chinese Sports: Where Are You Going?
041	12/07/1998	A Female's Complaints and Callings for Two Young Sisters
042	16/07/1998	From Mayor to Prisoner: Yang Shanxiu in the Defendant's Seat in Court
043	19/07/1998	Can the Northeast Tigers Become the Defendant?
044	23/07/1998	Poverty and Prosperity: How Do Modern University Students Face Poverty?
045	30/07/1998	The Ins and Outs of the Class-Dividing Incident
046	02/08/1998	Love Fraught with the Atmosphere of Hatre
047	06/08/1998	Sisters' Bitter and Astringent Feelings
048	09/08/1998	Fallen, but Forever Burning Roses
049	16/08/1998	I Am Your Teacher
050	20/08/1998	Playing the Music of Youth
051	30/08/1998	The Contending Spirit Recorded Through the Eyes of the Journalists
052	03/09/1998	The Youngest Female Vice Squad Captain in China
053	10/09/1998	The Living and the Dead
054	20/09/1998	The Sense of Public Security of Modern People
055	24/09/1998	An Unjust Verdict of Two Sweeping Young People
056	27/09/1998	Zhou Liguo: The Navigator of Life
057	22/10/1998	How Will We Provide for the Aged Tomorrow
058	25/10/1998	The Fantastic Story of an Aristocratic Family Good at Cricket Fighting
059	29/10/1998	The Story Behind the Transfer of the Deputy Party Secretary of Houma City, Shanxi Province
060	01/11/1998	In the Days of Dagong
061	08/11/1998	From a Hero Rescuing a Beauty to A Beauty Killing the Hero
062	12/11/1998	The Death of A 13 Year-Old Boy
063	19/11/1998	The Rarely Known Stories Behind the Flood Combat
064	26/11/1998	An Overbearing "Lover's Logistic" of a Female Mayor
065	03/12/1998	A Baby-Sitter Suing Her Foreign Master
066	10/12/1998	The Farmer Casting the Bronze Statue for Liu Shaoqi
067	13/12/1998	The Soul-Stirring Six Days
068	17/12/1998	A Sad and Joyful Story Caused by A Female Police Officer Who Helped Save Life of A Tourist from Singapore
069	20/12/1998	The Famous Actress Song Dandan Becomes A Step-Mother
070	24/12/1998	Stories of Young People: Living by Oneself, Living with Friends, or Living with Lovers
071	07/01/1999	The Innocent Prisoner
072	10/01/1999	The Special Operations of the Special Forces
073	14/01/1999	The Crying Primitive Forests
074	17/01/1999	Dealing with "Demons" – An Account of a Labour Contractor
075	21/01/1999	Stories of the Connoisseur of Curios Wang Ning
076	24/01/1999	Fifty-one Chinese Women of Character Decoyed Shock Kuweit
077	28/01/1999	Girls from Outside Beijing: Coming into Beijing to Realise Their Dreams of Becoming Movie Stars
078	31/01/1999	Experiences of Looking for Jobs
079	04/02/1999	The Road of Degeneration of Xu Mingsong, An Official at Provincial Level in Guangxi
080	11/02/1999	Let My Father and Mother Cut the Ribbon at the Opening of My Photography Exhibition
081	14/02/1999	Discussions on Saving the Spring Festival
082	25/02/1999	The Love Story of Qing Zhonghui, the World Champion of Table Tennis
083	04/03/1999	What Are You Going To Do Today Next Year?
084	11/03/1999	Looking at the Changes of the Times from the University Life: 1950s, 1960s and 1990s
085	21/03/1999	Why Can't a Master-hand of Pickpockets Hunter Become a Policeman?
086	28/03/1999	A Photographer's Adventure
087	01/04/1999	My Teacher Xiao Qian
088	04/04/1999	Husband Falls down under her Pistol -- An Interview Account of the 12.7 Pistol

		Case at Hohhot, Inner Mongolia
089	08/04/1999	Teacher Yang and Her Students
090	11/04/1999	The Eight-year Soul Course of A Fugitive
091	15/04/1999	The Bumpy Road of Employment – The First Private Businessman in China
092	22/04/1999	Appreciate Your Children
093	25/04/1999	The Girl Willing to Be Reformed through Labour
094	29/04/1999	Tell the World People the Historical Truth
095	02/05/1999	The Blood Veins Which Cannot be Cut Off: Stories of Pan Lanying, the Trade Union Chairman
096	09/05/1999	The Juvenile AIDS Patient
097	13/05/1999	Experience the Artillery Fire
098	27/05/1999	The Life of Nightmare in the USA: A Story about a Chinese Students with a Masters Degree
099	30/05/1999	Sang Lan: I Will Learn to Take Care of Myself
100	17/06/1999	The Lowest Starting Point
101	20/06/1999	The Three Tube Babies of My Home
102	27/06/1999	"I Love You, Dad, Please Do Not Die!"
103	04/07/1999	The Genius Writer Beautifully Answers Questions by a Journalist
104	08/07/1999	Cannot Forget the Emotions – A Self-Account of School Graduates from Shanghai
105	18/07/1999	The Poor Families Working in Mines in Pubai, Shaanxi Province
106	27/07/1999	Selections of Outstanding Compositions from the National University and College Entrance Examination
107	01/08/1999	The Life and Death Fate between a Chinese Doctor and an English POW During the Korean War
108	08/08/1999	The Female Pilots in the Early Stage of China
109	12/08/1999	The Love Story of a White-collar Beauty
110	22/08/1999	A Sad Melody of Supporting the Poverty-stricken County by an Old School Graduate
111	29/08/1999	Twin Sisters: In the Face of Death
112	02/09/1999	The Female Boss Dealing with the Man Who Killed Her Husband
113	09/09/1999	The Mother of 150 "Prodigals"
114	12/09/1999	The Bumpy Life of A Swimming World Champion
115	16/09/1999	My University
116	23/09/1999	Perspective on Studying Abroad of The Chinese Primary and Secondary School Students
117	26/09/1999	Because We Know Nothing
118	07/10/1999	Revolutions in Clothing
119	17/10/1999	"The Marriage between Mainland China and Taiwan Is Too Tiring" – An Interview with Ling Feng and He Shunshun
120	21/10/1999	From a Nurse to the Dagong Emperor
121	24/10/1999	On-the-Spot Report on the 72-hour Survival on Internet
122	28/10/1999	Bei Yuming's Suspense of the Capital
123	31/10/1999	Zhang Lirong and Gong Hanlin: The Mother-Child Love Inside and Outside the Play
124	07/11/1999	A Chinese Girl Killed in the United States
125	11/11/1999	Stories of Cai Zhenhua, Cheif Coach of Chinese Table Tennis Team
126	25/11/1999	I and Father Ma Ji
127	28/11/1999	Walking to the Hall of Marriage, While Holding Hands of Previous Step-mother
128	09/12/1999	Bai Yansong: Painful But Happy
139	12/12/1999	He Houhua Answering Yang Lan's Interview Questions with Smile
130	16/12/1999	Why Did a Mercedes Benz Drive into the Campus of Peking University
131	23/12/1999	A Son's Repent to the Death of His Mother
132	30/12/1999	Sons Coming out Suddenly
133	13/01/2000	Cold Thinking over "the Heat of Century Babies"
134	16/01/2000	A Poor Student's Dream of Entrepreneur
135	27/01/2000	Yang Lan: Habitual Evasion

136	30/01/2000	How was Ah Tai Promoted?
137	03/02/2000	What is the Value of Flying Across the Yellow River by Motorcycle – The Inside Story of Zhu Chaohui's Flying Across the Yellow River
138	13/02/2000	Tracking Down the Heroes: Where Are the Previous Women Volleyball Players?
139	20/02/2000	Cui Jian: 13 Years of Rock and Roll
140	24/02/2000	The King of Rubbish in the Capital Beijing
141	02/03/2000	My Mother
142	09/03/2000	Why Did not the Knowledge Heroes Go Back to Their Hometown
143	16/03/2000	How Do Bosses Spend Their Spring Festival
144	19/03/2000	True Love Like Water: the Story of Niu Qun and Liu Shu
145	23/03/2000	The Fantastic Story in the Capital of Beijing: One's Sound of Crying Wares Can Also Be Sold

Appendix VII: Index System Created from the Media Data

(1)	/base data
(1 1)	/base data/gender
(1 1 1)	/base data/gender/male
(1 1 2)	/base data/gender/female
(1 2)	/base data/age
(1 2 1)	/base data/age/old
(1 2 2)	/base data/age/young
(1 3)	/base data/residence area
(1 3 1)	/base data/residence area/urban
(1 3 2)	/base data/residence area/rural
(1 3 3)	/base data/residence area/abroad
(2)	/possession
(2 1)	/possession/money
(2 1 1)	/possession/money/meanings
(2 1 1 1)	/possession/money/meanings/freedom
(2 1 1 2)	/possession/money/meanings/success
(2 1 1 3)	/possession/money/meanings/security
(2 1 1 4)	/possession/money/meanings/family relations
(2 1 1 5)	/possession/money/meanings/for education
(2 1 1 6)	/possession/money/meanings/aim and means
(2 1 1 7)	/possession/money/meanings/charity
(2 1 1 8)	/possession/money/meanings/good feelings
(2 1 1 9)	/possession/money/meanings/for honour
(2 1 2)	/possession/money/how to earn
(2 1 2 1)	/possession/money/how to earn/dagone
(2 1 2 2)	/possession/money/how to earn/xiahai
(2 1 2 3)	/possession/money/how to earn/work
(2 1 2 4)	/possession/money/how to earn/improvement in knowledge
(2 1 2 5)	/possession/money/how to earn/stock market
(2 1 3)	/possession/money/savings
(2 1 3 1)	/possession/money/savings/for family members
(2 1 3 2)	/possession/money/savings/for security
(2 1 4)	/possession/money/worship for money
(2 2)	/possession/car
(2 2 1)	/possession/car/who own a car
(2 2 2)	/possession/car/as symbols
(2 3)	/possession/clothes
(2 3 1)	/possession/clothes/changing fashions
(2 3 2)	/possession/clothes/symbols
(2 3 2 1)	/possession/clothes/symbols/political identity
(2 3 2 2)	/possession/clothes/symbols/economic levels
(2 3 2 3)	/possession/clothes/symbols/social changes
(2 4)	/possession/food
(2 4 1)	/possession/food/basis of life
(2 4 2)	/possession/food/cultural identity
(2 4 3)	/possession/food/pleasure
(2 4 4)	/possession/food/health
(2 4 5)	/possession/food/family union
(2 5)	/possession/housing/
(2 5 1)	/possession/housing/privacy
(2 5 2)	/possession/housing/establishing a family
(2 5 3)	/possession/housing/independence
(2 5 4)	/possession/housing/conflicts
(2 5 4 1)	/possession/housing/conflicts/buying and allocating

(2 5 4 2) /possession/housing/conflicts/income and price
(2 5 5) /possession/housing/housing system reform
(2 6) /possession/own a person
(2 7) /possession/knowledge and education
(2 7 1) /possession/knowledge and education/vehicle for wealth
(2 7 2) /possession/knowledge and education/job pass
(2 7 3) /possession/knowledge and education/move into urban areas
(2 7 4) /possession/knowledge and education/study abroad
(2 7 4 1) /possession/knowledge and education study abroad/who
(2 7 4 2) /possession/knowledge and education study abroad/why
(2 8) /possession/other things
(3) /spirituality
(3 1) /spirituality/rootedness/
(3 1 1) /spirituality/rootedness/natural rootedness
(3 1 2) /spirituality/rootedness/ancestry rootedness
(3 1 3) /spirituality/rootedness/uprootedness
(3 2) /spirituality/joy
(3 2 1) /spirituality/joy/sources
(3 3) /spirituality/participation
(3 3 1) /spirituality/participation/work
(3 3 2) /spirituality/participation/leisure
(3 3 3) /spirituality/participation/knowledge/education
(3 4) /spirituality/connectedness
(3 4 1) /spirituality/connectedness/family members
(3 4 2) /spirituality/connectedness/friends and colleagues
(3 4 3) /spirituality/connectedness/social isolation
(3 5) /spirituality/freedom
(3 5 1) /spirituality/freedom/categorises
(3 5 2) /spirituality/freedom/sources
(4) /health
(4 1) /health/implications
(4 1 1) /health/implications/money
(4 1 2) /health/ implications/joy
(4 2) /health/illness
(4 2 1) /health/illness/effects
(4 2 1 1) /health/illness/effects/lose meaning of life
(4 2 1 2) /health/illness/effects/poverty
(4 2 1 3) /health/illness/effects/divorce
(4 2 1 4) /health/illness/effects/lose job
(4 2 2) /health/illness/cause
(4 2 2 1) /health/illness/cause/poverty
(4 2 2 2) /health/illness/cause/overwork
(4 2 2 3) /health/illness/cause/physical or mental suffering
(4 2 2 4) /health/illness/cause/malnutrition
(4 2 3) /health/illness/as excuse
(4 3) /health/practices
(4 3 1) /health/practices/counteract bad luck
(4 3 2) /health/practices/fighting poison with position
(4 3 3) /health/practices/inside body cleaning
(4 3 4) /health/practices/food is homogeneous with medicine
(4 3 5) /health/practices/medical system reform
(4 3 6) /health/practices/physical exercise
(4 3 7) /health/practices/long life
(4 3 8) /health/practices/and family
(4 3 9) /health/practices/money for treatment
(4 3 10) /health/practices/expensive, exported medicine
(4 3 11) /health/practices/nutrition
(5) /family
(5 1) /family/relations
(5 1 1) /family/relations/vertical

(5 1 1 1) /family/relations/vertical/with or without a child
(5 1 1 2) /family/relations/vertical/parents' responsibility
(5 1 1 3) /family/relations/vertical/parents' ambitions for kids
(5 1 1 4) /family/relations/vertical/birth control policy
(5 1 1 5) /family/relations/vertical/filial piety
(5 1 1 6) /family/relations/vertical/family reunion
(5 1 2) /family/relations/horizontal
(5 1 2 1) /family/relations/horizontal/romantic
(5 1 2 2) /family/relations/horizontal/practical
(5 1 2 3) /family/relations/horizontal/conflict between romantic and practical
(5 1 2 4) /family/relations/horizontal/compromise
(5 1 2 5) /family/relations/horizontal/rediscovery of self
(5 1 2 6) /family/relations/horizontal/exclusiveness
(5 1 2 7) /family/relations/horizontal/identity
(5 1 2 7 1) /family/relations/horizontal/identity/urban-rural
(5 1 2 7 2) /family/relations/horizontal/identity/gender identity
(5 1 2 7 2 1) /family/relations/horizontal/identity/gender identity/male
(5 1 2 7 2 2) /family/relations/horizontal/identity/gender identity/female
(5 1 2 8) /family/relations/horizontal/re-marriage
(5 1 2 9) /family/relations/horizontal/co-inhabit
(5 1 2 10) /family/relations/horizontal/wedding ceremony
(5 1 2 11) /family/relations/horizontal/ruin of family
(5 1 2 12) /family/relations/horizontal/buying and selling marriage
(5 2) /family/functions
(5 2 1) /family/functions/child: a renewed life
(5 2 2) /family/functions/raise son for one's old age
(5 2 3) /family/functions/as harbour
(5 2 4) /family/functions/have a son to continue one family line
(5 3) /family/housing
(6) /work
(6 1) /work/meanings
(6 1 1) /work/meanings/for money
(6 1 2) /work/meanings/for self-actualisation
(6 1 3) /work/meanings/for contribution to other people/society
(6 2) /work/achievement
(6 2 1) /work/achievement/conditions
(6 2 1 1) /work/achievement/conditions/volition
(6 2 1 2) /work/achievement/conditions/co-operation
(6 2 1 3) /work/achievement/conditions/government support
(6 2 1 4) /work/achievement/conditions/confidence
(6 2 1 5) /work/achievement/conditions/hard working
(6 2 1 6) /work/achievement/conditions/law
(6 2 1 7) /work/achievement/conditions/opportunity
(6 2 2) /work/achievement/signs
(6 2 2 1) /work/achievement/signs/car
(6 2 2 2) /work/achievement/signs/money
(6 2 2 3) /work/achievement/signs/transcending self
(6 2 2 4) /work/achievement/signs/transcending colleagues
(6 2 2 5) /work/achievement/signs/standing out from the crowd and bringing honour to the ancestor
(6 3) /work/as a tie between self and the state
(6 3 1) /work/ as a tie between self and the state/state owned danwei/
(6 3 1 1) /work/as a tie between self and the state/state owned danwei/positive images
(6 3 1 2) /work/as a tie between self and the state/state owned danwei/negative images
(6 3 1 3) /work/as a tie between self and the state/state owned danwei/xiahai
(6 3 2) /work/as a tie between self and the state/foreign-funded
(6 3 3) /work/as a tie between self and the state/private sector
(6 3 4) /work/as a tie between self and the state/farming work
(6 3 5) /work/as a tie between self and the state/rural-to-urban mobility
(6 4) /work/unemployment and reemployment
(6 4 1) /work/unemployment and reemployment/unemployment

(6 4 1 1) /work/unemployment and reemployment/unemployment/causes
(6 4 1 2) /work/unemployment and reemployment/unemployment/effects
(6 4 2) /work/unemployment and reemployment/reemployment
(6 4 2 1) /work/unemployment and reemployment/reemployment/causes
(6 4 2 2) /work/unemployment and reemployment/reemployment/effects
(6 5) /work/right for work
(6 5 1) /work/right for work/hukou
(6 6) /work/retired life
(7) /social life
(7 1) /social life/interpersonal network
(7 1 1) /social life/ interpersonal network/guanxi
(7 1 1 1) /social life/ interpersonal network /friendship
(7 1 1 2) /social life/social relations/ways of promoting network
(7 2) /social life/status
(7 2 1) /social life/status/in Chinese culture
(7 2 2) /social life/status/hukou
(7 2 2 1) /social life/status/hukou/work permits
(7 2 2 2) /social life/status/hukou/marriage
(7 2 2 3) /social life/status/hukou/origination and change
(7 2 2 4) /social life/status/hukou/ jump out of countryside
(7 2 2 4 1) /social life/status/hukou/jump out of countryside/admission from university
(7 2 2 4 2) /social life/status/hukou/jump out of countryside/back to city
(7 2 2 4 3) /social life/status/hukou/jump out of countryside/farmer turning to worker
(7 2 3) /social life/status/identity
(7 2 3 1) /social life/status/identity/urban-rural
(7 2 3 2) /social life/status/identity/political
(7 2 3 3) /social life/status/identity/economic
(7 2 3 4) /social life/status/identity/educational achievement
(7 2 4) /social life/status/equality
(7 3) /social life/sense of security
(7 3 1) /social life/sense of security/cultural background
(7 3 2) /social life/sense of security/influencing factors
(7 4) /social life/comparisons
(7 4 1) /social life/comparisons/social comparisons
(7 4 2) /social life/ social comparisons / self comparisons
(8) /environment
(8 1) /environment/as resources
(8 2) /environment/ecological balance
(8 3) /environment/environmental degradation
(8 3 1) /environment/environmental degradation/causes
(8 3 2) /environment/environmental degradation/effects
(8 4) /environment/environment protection /
(8 4 1) /environment/environment protection /significance
(8 4 2) /environment/environment protection /practices
(8 4 3) /environment/environment protection /conflict with tradition
(9) /collectivism and individualism
(9 1) /collectivism and individualism/collectivism
(9 1 1) /collectivism and individualism/collectivism/social responsibility
(9 1 2) /collectivism and individualism/collectivism/sacrifice oneself to save others
(9 1 3) /collectivism and individualism/collectivism/go through thick and thin together
(9 1 4) /collectivism and individualism/collectivism/between family members
(9 1 5) /collectivism and individualism/collectivism/society as big social family
(9 1 6) /collectivism and individualism/collectivism/losing self
(9 2) /collectivism and individualism/individualism
(9 2 1) /collectivism and individualism/individualism/self responsibility
(9 2 2) /collectivism and individualism/individualism/re-discovery self
(9 3) /collectivism and individualism/modernisation
(9 3 1) /collectivism and individualism/modernisation/towards individualism

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