Remembering Thirty Years:

An Exploration of the Changes in Values Experienced over Three Decades by Three Chinese Laid-off Workers

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Contents

Abstract

This study uses a life history qualitative methodology to explore the changes in values of Chinese who belonged to a special group—the glorious workers of the 1970s who were once thought of as the proud owners of the country. However, in late 1980s, after the Opening and Reforming Policy in China, these workers were laid off. This study traces the lives of three participants who attempted to adapt to the drastic social and economic changes that took place in China over a 30-year period, from Mao's era, to Deng's era, to present day China. The study contains excerpts from more than 10 interviews with the three participants, translated (from Chinese to English) and transcribed; some interviews lasted as long as 10 hours. Distinctive to the study's methodology is the combination of photo elicitation interviews with life history interviews, supported by the researcher's field notes, reflective field notes and narratives. The study is organized chronologically, starting with the participants' youth in Mao's time, their middle age in Deng's time, and their present lives.

The phenomenon of laid-off workers, as a product of the Opening and Reforming Policy, has aroused the interest of some scholars, but little research has focused on the changes in their personal values based on their life histories. This study has highlighted a complex pattern of interactions between the life history and changes in values of the participants who experienced an abrupt and highly contrasting social status in a changing China. Thus, this dissertation addresses the influences on a lifetime of living in rapidly changing historical eras impacted by the contrasting values of collectivism and

individualism, traditional and modern (Western) values, and situates its findings within the recent work in curriculum studies.

Résumé

Cette étude use d'une méthodologie qualitative d'histoire biographique pour explorer les changements des valeurs de Chinois qui ont appartenu à un groupe particulier: les glorieux travailleurs des années 1970 qui ont été considérés comme les fiers détenteurs du pays. Toutefois, vers la fin des années 1980, après les politiques de réforme et d'ouverture en Chine, ces travailleurs furent mis à pied. Cette étude se penche sur la vie de ces participants qui tentèrent de s'adapter aux drastiques changements sociaux et économiques qui eurent lieu en Chine sur une période de trente ans, de l'ère Mao, à la Chine contemporaine, en passant par l'ère Deng. Cette étude contient des extraits tirés de plus d'une dizaine d'entrevues avec trois participants, traduits (du chinois à l'anglais) et retranscrits, certaines entrevues durant jusqu'à dix heures. La combinaison de la « photo elicitation interview » avec les entrevues de récit de vie constitue le caractère distinctif de la méthodologie de cette étude, supportée par les notes du/de la chercheur (euse) recueillies sur le terrain, les notes réflectif de recherche et les narratifs. Cette étude est organisée chronologiquement, débutant par la jeunesse des participants au temps de Mao, leur âge moyen à l'époque de Deng et leur vies présentes.

Le phénomène des travailleurs mis à pied, en tant que produit de la politique des réformes et d'ouverture, a suscité l'intérêt de certains chercheurs, mais peu de recherches ont porté sur les changements des valeurs personnelles en se basant sur l'histoire de vie. Cette étude a souligné un processus complexe d'interaction entre l'histoire vécue et les changements dans les valeurs des participants, qui ont expérimenté des status sociaux

hautement contrastants au sein d'une Chine changeante. Cette dissertation adresse les influences sur toute une vie provenant du fait de vivre à une ère historique de rapides changements portant l'empreinte des contrastes entre les valeurs de collectivisme et d'individualisme, valeurs traditionnelles et modernes (occidentales), et situe ses conclusions au sein des récents travaux dans le domaine des études de curriculum.

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Finally, to Dr. Chaoliang Wang, my husband, thanks for your never ending support and belief in me. I am thankful always.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents and my big-family members.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Value provides the frame within which people can determine where they stand on questions of what is good, or worthwhile, or admirable. If they lose their commitment or identification, they would be at sea as it were; they wouldn't know anymore, for an important range of questions, what the significance of things was for them.

— Charles Taylor (1989)

1.1 Research Background

In 2003, when I was a visiting scholar at the University of Alberta, I lived with a Canadian family. One day, I asked the son of my landlord what he wanted to do when he was a grown man. Without any hesitation, he answered that he wanted to work as a carpenter because he admired his father who was a carpenter. Seven years later, when I contacted my former landlady in 2010, she told me that her son had already become a carpenter, and he enjoyed his life. I was surprised by his decision, and I felt puzzled at the same time because in China today "no one wants to be a worker in the Chinese 'workers' state any more" (Won, 2004, p. 86), especially the younger generation, since they prefer to be professionals like "doctors, computer engineers, state officials, athletes, actors, and scientists" (p. 86). The reason is very clear "… workers in the new modern, market-oriented China do not make much money. Nor do they have much political power" (p. 86). The main goal of the younger generation is to earn more money rather than to devote

their lives to the construction of the future of China. They have no idea of what "glorious workers" contributed to the building of the new China.

However, more than 30 years ago, when I was a child, I admired my brother's life as a worker. In that period, workers were regarded as the true owners of the country and as the leading class politically and socially. For example, in the early 1980s, a film called Kuai le de dan shen han (Happy Bachelor) (Liang & Song, 1983)[1] painted a portrait of the happy lives of factory workers of that era. Workers "enjoyed the benefits of secure employment, adequate housing, social insurance, opportunities for education, plus well-planned and organized facilities for recreation" (Priestley, 1964, p. 7). At that time, workers like my brother were leading enterprising lives. The Communist Party guaranteed workers job security (Zhao, 2004) and simultaneously promoted what Ronald Inglehart (2005) has called non-materialist values, such as loyalty and self-esteem, which reinforced workers' loyalty to the Party. Workers knew they should follow Maoist philosophy and work hard to help construct socialism. The main values held by the vast majority at that time were thrift and commitment to the construction of socialism.

The 3rd Plenum of the 11th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CCP), held in Beijing in 1978, was a turning point in the history of China. Deng Xiaoping was commonly (e.g., in the popular media) referred to as the "senior designer" of China's development blueprint. He launched the Opening and Reforming movement and stressed

[1] The film Kuai le de dan shen han was directed by Chong Song and produced by Shanghai Film Studios in 1983. At the time of the printing of this dissertation, the film was available online at http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0382066/.

that the main task was to develop the economy. From then on, China began to transform from a planned economy to a market economy. As a result, "the outcome of reform strategy has been the most explosive and long-sustained period of economic advance that the world has ever seen" (Nolan, 2004, p. 9). This dramatic economic development has enabled China to change from "one of the most insulated economies in the world to a major international power" (Jacob, 2004, p. 32), and the reform in China has created one of the "most impressive economic growth records in the last 150 years" (Fukuyama and Kangdan, as cited in Jacob, 2004, p. 188). However, Campbell and Converse (1972) have argued: "affluence is not the total answer to society's problems" (p. 2). Its side effects cannot be ignored. Economic data is not the only measure of a nation's prosperity.

1.2 Studies on Change for Chinese Workers

As Weil (2006) has noted, while China has been experiencing explosive economic development, this also has produced a series of extremely challenging problems, for example, urban unemployment. As China changed from a planned economy to a market economy, privatization has led to the bankruptcy of many state-owned factories, causing workers to lose "virtually all of the related forms of social security that were part of their work units: housing, education, health care, and pensions, among others" (p. 1). According to Solinger (2005), "… privatization has brought about a rapid surge in unemployment, which leapt from three million in 1993 to a cumulative total of 25 million by the end of 2001, with internal sources giving figures as high as 60 million" (as cited in

Lee & Selden, 2007, p. 10). Among the millions of laid off [2] workers, many were let go without any support from the society or the government at that time. Instead they joined the bottom echelon of society. This transformation has caused a conflict between the new market ideological orientation and the ideology of the CCP (the Communist Party of China), as a socialist party that had regarded workers as the owners of the county (Zhao, 2004). In Mao's time (1949–1976), the Communist Party of China represented the working class (Won, 2004; Zhao, 2004). Before market reform in China, the Party had arranged everything for workers, so they just needed to follow what the Party told them to do. As a consequence, these workers did not develop an understanding of market driven competition. In China today, the "Three Represents" ideology promoted by ex-president Jianzemin (1997–2003) holds that "the party must represent the foremost production forces, represent the most advanced culture (like Western, Anglo-European countries), and represent the broad interests of the masses (not just workers, but everyone)" (Won, 2004, p. 86). Won (2004) went on to argue that the new ideology meant that the CCP must change from being the party of workers to represent professionals like "engineers, entrepreneurs, managers, and capitalists" (p. 86), that is, a party that prioritizes professionals over workers (Won, 2004). As a result, workers have not only lost the honourable leading-class status that they had enjoyed but have become marginalized and dispossessed: "they have felt betrayed by the broken promises of

[2] Workers began to be laid off in China in the 1990s. In the Mandarin Chinese language, the word for 'laid-off' is xiagang (下岗), which implies "to step down from one's post, to be off-duty" (Won, 2004, p. 74). Therefore, xiagang workers are those who are laid off because the work-unit is in financial difficulty or because the work unit has been sold (Won, 2004).

socialism, namely the promise of workers as the owners of the country" (Won, 2004, p. 84).

Some of these workers worked in factories for more than 20 years, since the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Moreover, the majority of laid-off workers, similar to my research participants, were in middle age and facing competition in the labour market for the first time in their lives. They had to compete in a market-driven context based on a new ethic of "survival of the fittest" (Won, 2004, p. 82). As previous socialist workers, some still experienced nostalgia for the past securities of socialism. In such a dramatically changing social context, they felt at a loss. To survive, the market system required them to hold new values quite the opposite to those they once held.

1.3 Research Questions

"A conventional life history research project typically involves a small group of participants (traditionally referred to as 'subjects' or 'informants') whom the researcher studies in considerable depth" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 13). Considering China's geographical size and diverse economic and cultural conditions, as well as the diverse situations of laid-off workers, I chose to select a few individuals, to trace their lives and explore how they adapted to social and economic changes and what values helped them to do so.

In my study, I explored the life histories and value changes of three laid-off workers in a changing social context: my acquaintances Ping and Gao and my brother Quan. They all belonged to the same generation that was born in China in the early 1950s and grew up in the 1970s. They were taught to love the Party, socialism, and Chairman Mao in their process of growing up. They were encouraged to shoulder the social responsibility to build a new China by subordinating their personal interests to the benefits of the collective (L. Xu, 1995). My research participants' minds were shaped by the tenets of Mao's ideological values and ethics. They were trained to become the potential successors of socialism, and they showed their great loyalty to Mao and a commitment to the revolution. When my research participants reached the age to attend university, they did not take that opportunity for different reasons (I will discuss this in Chapters 4 and 5). Instead, they became "glorious workers" in state-owned enterprises. My brother Quan and my friends Ping and Gao were attracted by the social status of the working class as the leading political class. They were proud to become workers. Moreover, Mao emphasized that "anybody could become working class regardless of one's economic class position, by transforming one's ways of thinking according to the socialist party's definition of correct thought" (Won, 2003, p. 61). My research participants were excited to be members of the working class, and they were proud of their identity. However, as the Opening and Reformation Policy gradually transformed China from a planned to a market economy, my research participants suffered the same fate as tens of millions of other laid-off workers and had to leave the factory to compete in the marketplace, with little help from the state or work-units. They had to change their

values to adapt to the new social environment. I asked the following initial research questions: In encountering this difficult situation, how did they address it? Where did they find support? In family values formed through the influence of family members? In traditional values that have influenced the Chinese people generation after generation? Or in political ideology that has influenced the Chinese people during Mao's time and Deng's Time? Ultimately, my research questions became:

- How do individuals who have become laid-off workers experience their changing society?
- How has their changing social status impacted their values?
- How do they face the challenge of economic survival after losing all their social security overnight?
- What factors helped them to adapt to their new social context?

1.4 Outline of the Dissertation

Research on Chinese "laid-off" workers' life histories and value changes has not been systematically undertaken to date. To properly address my research questions, I drew on a conceptual framework informed by value theory. Since my research is based on a historical review of Confucian and Maoist political ideologies, it positions a modern-day study of values within a historical context, and thus sheds light on the recurrence and transformation of the Chinese people's values. Thus, I address: Chinese Confucianism—beliefs that have influenced the Chinese people for thousands of years and that remain relevant in contemporary China;—Maoist political ideology, which has affected the Chinese people for generations (although its influence is fading); new values—individualism as an influence from the western world. My goal is to better understand how the earlier Chinese values and new values have influenced the Chinese people throughout the development of modern China. The theoretical framework is the focus of Chapter 2. Chapter 3 addresses the research methodology: life histories pertaining to values and/or workers and/or change and Chinese workers. Chapter 4 is about Ping and Gao's life histories based on interviews in Canada. Chapter 5 is about my brother Quan's life history based on interviews in China. Chapter 6 discusses the implications and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework: Value Theory and Value Change in a Changing Social Context

2.1 Value Theory and Value Change

Value theory has been discussed extensively in the social sciences, e.g., in anthropology, education, history, philosophy, political science, social psychology, and sociology, and is exemplified in the work of such scholars as Kluckhohn (1951a), Rokeach (1973), Feather (1975), Wilson, Wilson, and Greenblatt (1979), Kahle (1983), Taylor (1989), Schwartz (1992), David (2001), Steyn and Kotze (2004), Lim (2007), and Goel and Goel (2008). According to Rokeach (1973), human beings possess values influenced by the development of "culture, society and its institutions, and personality" (p. 3). The subject of values, he said, is "worth investigating and understanding" (p. 3). Rokeach continued, arguing that:

> When comparing the relative power of the value concept as against others concepts, that by focusing upon a person's values "we would be dealing with a concept that is more central, more dynamic, more economical, a concept that would invite a more enthusiastic interdisciplinary collaboration, and that would broaden the range of the social psychologist's traditional concern to include problems of education and re-education as well as problems of persuasion. (as cited in Rokeach, 1973, p. 5)

Thus, I used value theory to understand how earlier Chinese values and new values have influenced the Chinese people throughout the development of modern China.

When we measure values, we need to be concerned about the relationship between intrinsic value and instrumental value. To distinguish intrinsic from instrumental value, we need to understand whether something has value in itself or whether something leads to something else that has intrinsic value. Intrinsic value is something that has value in itself. The value or worth that it has is inherent in its very existence. For example, most people would say that love is something that has intrinsic value. Something that has instrumental value is only valuable in that it leads to something else that has intrinsic value (Brahm, n.d.).

Rokeach (1973) defined value as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct (instrumental value) or end-state of existence (terminal value) is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (p. 5). In other words, values are beliefs that one mode of conduct or state of existence is preferable to others (see also Taylor, 1989). Hug and Kriesi (2010) have summarized the key elements of Rokeach's definition of human values as follows: "Values are cognitions (beliefs)" "values are relatively stable" and "values can be ordered in terms of their importance, either personally or socially" (p. 4). Although values are regarded as "enduring beliefs," change is inevitable due to evolving social contexts (Hug & Kriesi, 2010).

Wilson et al. (1979) argued that value change has long been a main topic in the field of social science. Rokeach assumed that "human beings will generally prefer to change or adapt when confronted with conflict or inconsistency" (Rokeach as cited in

Wilson et al., 1979, p. 253). In the process of value change, while the components of old values may lose their definitive roles, some may continue their influence in value systems (Kluckhohn, 1951a; Rokeach, 1979; Van Deth & Scarbrough, 1995). That is, as Rokeach has argued, as a society changes, it may bring a new value orientation that could affect existing values. The "durability [of values] depends on how central and pervasive the values are, and the sanctions associated with departures from them. The more central and pervasive a value is, the less amenable it is to change" (Shobo, 2011, p. 40). Van Deth and Scarbrough (1995) also have argued that the processes of value change are complex:

> the processes of value change are not characterized by a rather straightforward replacement of existing value orientations. Rather, elements in traditional value orientations are gradually losing their authority or relevance, while other elements retain their force. At the same time, the fading old elements are slowly, but only partly, being replaced by elements from new value orientations. Value priorities are derived from social experience and consequently change with changing social circumstances. (pp. 537–538)

Van Deth and Scarbrough (1995) have argued that value change is dependent on "particular populations in specific national contexts" (p. 537). Usually, when people experience value change, an accompanying conflict is involved. For example, when the competitive marketing policy was introduced to China, my research participants had to change from being reliant on the Party to being self-reliant in the competitive market. In the process of adopting new values, their self-identities as honourable workers were

interrupted. In the case of my brother Quan, he wanted to go into the market directly, but his decision conflicted with my father's values. This created family discord. My example illustrates Rokeach's point that despite differing subjective experiences, we also form our values within a shared context (Van Deth & Scarbrough, 1995).

2.2 Value Change in a Changing Social Context in China

As China changed from a planned economy to a market economy, it has "generated rapid and sustained economic growth and unprecedented increases in GDP and living standards, and [has] transformed one of the world's most insulated economies into a major international power" (Jacob, 2004, p. 32). As a result, the Chinese people have been involved in dramatic social change. In such a process, value change is inevitable. Rokeach (1979) argues that "values operate as constituents of dynamic systems of social action because of their interconnectedness" (p. 21), Thus, value change cannot be produced over night, and even though new values may affect existing values, the components of old values may still remain strong (Van Deth & Scarbrough, 1995). However, the interdependencies within value systems can retard the change rate, causing the existing value system to block to some extent the reception of new values (Rokeach, 1973). An individual can adapt his/her value system to new values (Rokeach, 1979), but he/she might have value preferences (Feather, 1975) because "when values serve as criteria for selection in action… [i]ndividuals do prefer some things to others" (Rokeach, 1979, p. 16). In other words, one is likely to maintain a hierarchy of values. When new

values override the old value system, some of the old values may remain, although they will fade slowly.

According to Goel and Goel (2008), "No ideal, ideology, institution or religion is self-operative. It is through human agency alone that ideals and institutions established for their realization are made operational" (p. 39). Often, ideals are influenced by social and educational institutions such as family, society, and schools (Rokeach, 1973). During the dramatic social changes in modern China, the Chinese people have been involved in unprecedented life changes. L. Xu (1995) has argued that, due to the Opening and Reforming Policy, the Chinese people changed from "being passively mobilized by the Party's political calls to participating actively in social life of their own free will" (p. 196). Thus, as my research participants were confronted with massive social transformations, what might we expect to find with respect to value change? Did traditional values such as Confucian thought continue to evolve during Mao's time? What about during the participants' present time? Did Mao's ideology survive after 1978? If so, in what form(s)?

In my study, I explored the factors that affected value change in a certain social context in China. I have examined how such factors as the Chinese traditional values of Confucianism and Mao's ideology may have influenced the formation of values, how these values relate to a certain social-historical context, how they were acquired, and how they changed. In the current context of the drastic transformation in economic and social life in China, Su (2009) argued that ordinary people felt the loss of traditional spiritual

belonging, which resulted in a loss of value orientation. Although the Opening and Reforming Policy to some extent helped the Chinese people to have more freedom to pursue their personal interests, it also made them feel a consequent loss of social and moral orientation. Before the Opening and Reforming Policy, Confucianism had formed the Chinese people's ethical norms generation after generation. Even during Maoism, Confucianism had an influence (Tu, 1979a; L. Xu, 1995), and people showed their loyalty to the country by sacrificing their personal interests for the benefit of the collective. They lived with values widely applicable throughout society, which guided their behaviour. The Opening and Reforming Policy introduced "individualism" to the Chinese people's lives, and this emphasis conflicted with their previous collective values. Thus, in my research, to better understand Chinese culture and society, I examine how Chinese traditional values, as exemplified by Confucianism and Mao's ideology, influenced the formation of my participants' values. In addition, I compare traditional values with the "new" values (individualism) increasingly dominating the scene since the 1980s, and analyze the individualistic or self-centered trends that have emerged. An exploration of the issues experienced by my research participants may be only a drop of water in a sea, but through this drop, we may gain a clearer picture of the sea-change in values experienced by many workers in the same period. My work is intended to benefit both Chinese scholars and other social scientists studying value change in relation to social change.

2.3 From Confucianism, and Maoism to "Individualism"

According to Anita Shetty (as cited in Goel & Goel, 2008),

> values are those standards or codes of conduct conditioned by one's cultural tenets, guided by conscience, according to which one is supposed to conduct himself and shape his life pattern by integrating his benefit, ideas and attitudes to realize the cherished ideals and aims of life. (p. 18)

Similarly, Kahle (1983) has concluded that values are related to one's social-cultural background. As the product of social, cultural, economic, and political influence on the formation of individuals, values are crucial for understanding the individual and the society in which the individual lives (Feather, 1975). In general, in different social, economic, and political contexts, each culture reflects the value preferences adopted by individuals in the process of their personal self-realization. Social institutions such as the family, schools, and society play important roles in the self-formation of individuals and the process of value transmission (Goel & Goel, 2008). According to Rokeach (1973):

> If it is indeed the case that the maintenance, enhancement, and transmission of values within a culture typically become institutionalized, then an identification of the major institutions of a society should provide us with a reasonable point of departure for a comprehensive compilation and classification of human values. (p. 25)

If Rokeach is correct, then various social institutions such as the family, school, and society should provide avenues to the study of the generational transmission of values. In the context of Chinese society, Confucianism has been the main philosophy to influence the ethical norms of the Chinese people. During Maoism, Confucian-centered values still held influence (Tu, 1979a; L. Xu, 1995). The value system of Mao's ideology emphasized a revolutionary spiritual ideal, which helped to form the revolutionary generation to which my research participants belonged. L. Xu (1995) argued that the main theme of both Confucianism and Maoism was an emphasis on morality. Thus, in the Chinese tradition, moral education has been a major concern, and morality was regarded as the foundation for realizing self-development for the entire value system, at least before the Opening and Reforming Policy. In the following subsections I explore Confucianism, Maoism, and Individualism and discuss their relevance to my research.

2.3.1 Confucianism

According to Confucianism (Dietz, 2010; Muppathinchira, 1999), the day a man/woman comes into this world does not mean that he/she already is a real human being. Learning to be human does not simply mean to make efforts to acquire academic knowledge. It emphasizes what Pinar (2011) refers to as "everyday experience" (p. 2), and reflection on the truth of these practices is the key to gaining self-realization. Learning to be a real human is a lifelong cultivation (Dietz, 2010; Muppathinchira, 1999). Muppathinchira (1999) points out that Confucianism emphasizes that in the process of lifelong learning, jen (humanity), li (propriety), i (righteousness), hisao (filial piety), and chung (loyalty) are the important virtues to follow.

The following descriptions of the four virtues of Confucianism are summarized mainly from Muppathinchira (1999), Van Norden (2002), and Dietz (2010). In the following, man is understood to mean a human being (male or female).

Jen (humanity) can be understood as "benevolence, love, kindness, human-heartedness, perfect virtue, true manhood, altruism, charity, compassion, goodness, humanness and humanity" (Muppathinchira, 1999, p. 89). Van Norden (2002) explained jen in terms of an "ethical ideal" (p.53), although Muppathinchira (1999) emphasized that the main meaning of jen is love, which is the key concern of Confucian humanism. Muppathinchira (1999) also noted: "making jen a quality applicable to all human beings is an important contribution of Confucius" (p. 91). To exercise jen is to practice the love of all people. Everyone has the potential to possess jen (Muppathinchira, 1999; Salen, 2008; Dietz, 2010), and everyone should foster a sense of humanity based on his/her persistent effort.

Li (propriety). When we talk about jen, li is always related because they are two concepts central "to Confucius' ethical thinking, as reported in the Analects" [3](Van Norden, 2002, p. 53). Van Norden (2002) pointed out that li refers to "certain traditional norms that govern human conduct" (p.53). It also means the proper way to connect an individual to the world around him/her (Muppathinchira, 1999). According to Tu (1979b),

[3] In Chinese, Analects means "lunyu" (论语), referring to "selected sayings" (Van Norden, 2002, p. 13). It "is divided into twenty 'books' (really the size of chapters), which are further divided into 'chapters' (ranging in length from brief quotations to short dialogues)" (p.13). The Analects is a compiled record of Confucius' teaching philosophy (Yan, 2011). According to Van Norden (2002), "the present Analects is a work composed by many hands, with various agendas, over the course of many years" (p. 13).

"Li has developed to include all norms and standards of proper behaviour in a social, ethical or even religious context" (p. 6). Thus, li provides the standards to fulfill the realization of jen (Dietz, 2010). Muppathinchira (1999) also argued that jen can only be fulfilled through li because li provides the norms to realize this internal quality (Van Norden, 2002). Only when we set up a harmonious relationship with the environment and the people around us based on li, can we fulfill our value. Thus li provides the solid basis for our moral development. Regarding Confucian values, Muppathinchira (1999) has stated that to be a man of jen is to love all people, to have a concern and human care for the well-being of all humans regardless of their origin. In short, "Jen and li are related concepts. Propriety is important in the process towards perfection (Analects VIII.8), and jen is presented as a basic condition for li (Analects III.3)" (pp.114–115). When a man/woman is cultivated based on li, he/she will lead a well-organized and fulfilled life (Muppathinchira, 1999).

I (righteousness). In the Analects, "I means righteousness, right conduct, justice, loyalty, morality, and duty" (Lee, 1992, p. 249). I refers to the right behaviour of human beings. With respect to I, being faithful and loyal to one's role in society is advocated (Muppathinchira, 1999). Dietz (2010) has argued:

> Humanity is the metaphysical foundation in original Confucianism, and righteousness is the primary practice of humanity in the world. The other important functions of Confucianism spring forth from these two… Humanity,

> righteousness, and sincerity are keys that open up understanding of Confucian philosophy. (p. 40)

When we pursue personal goals in life, we have to understand "righteousness." No matter what we pursue, we have to think about what is right. Confucius insisted that: "A superior man, in the world, does not set his mind either for anything, or against anything; what is right, he will follow" (Analects IV. 10 as cited in Muppathinchira, 1999, p. 235). Thus, an authentic man must be a man of right behaviour to achieve what he wants. We have to always remember that as human beings, we should be moral, and show concern for others. If we go against our nature to get what we want, our achievement will be meaningless. Thus, the importance of righteousness in a human being's life is clear: "Riches and honours are what men desire. If they cannot be obtained in the proper way, they should not be held" (Analects IV.5 as cited in Muppathinchira, 1999, p. 236).

According to what I have just discussed, li and I act as moral principles to realize jen in a human being's life. Meanwhile, if human beings can follow li or I, they will be restrained in their inclination for evil, and it will be helpful for the individual and society to reach a harmonious relationship (Muppathinchira, 1999).

Hsiao (filial piety). Hsiao means "to be respectful to the ancestors, to take care of parents and be obedient to them" (Muppathinchira, 1999, p. 124). Confucius considered hsiao "to be the root of all other virtues and characteristics; it is fundamental and radical. Hsiao is the beginning and foundation for practicing humanity" (Muppathinchira, 1999, p. 122). In my family, we were told that parents not only give life to us, they also give us

love, which is like an ever-flowing waterfall. Even if we show our filial love to our parents, it can never repay all that they have done for us. Thus, filial piety also is a lifelong practice by which we show our love of our parents. However, hsiao does not mean that we blindly follow our parents. Rather, it is a respectful compliance between parents and children based on li and jen (Muppathinchira, 1999). When we abide by the practice of filial piety, we can overcome selfishness and show our respect to our ancestors and our parents. For Confucius, hsiao is especially significant among all the virtues. Especially in the family, filial piety is considered the foundation and starting point of all virtues. Only if we learn to hsiao, can we put caring for others into practice. Thus, the family is the origin of virtues, the model for all human relationships:

> The family is the place where each of us can learn the way of humanity, human relationships and work to the great benefit of others: our siblings, spouses, parents, and children. When all people have good and nourishing families, the country will be well governed. When the country is well governed, it will function as a beacon of peace to the entire world. (Dietz, 2010, p. 207)

Wong (1989) has elaborated:

> It is within the family, for instance, that the individual first learns to realize general ethical principles and concepts in his or her ways of thought, feeling and acting, and that is part of the reason why the family is such a prominent topic in Confucianism. (p. 255)

In the family, each member plays various roles. When an individual learns to fulfill her/his role to show respect to each member in the family, he/she will extend this respect to others in the wider human community. Family initiates self-realization, and parents are the first teachers. Chich (1981) argued: "The family is commonly considered to be the basic component of the greater society in which one lives" (p. 333). Family was regarded as "the center of all social, spiritual, and transcendental spheres of life" (Chich, 1981, p. 334) in the eyes of the Chinese people. Although Max Weber (1984) questioned Confucian ethics for not sufficiently allowing for individual autonomy and argued that these ethics hindered the development of capitalism and therefore the modernization of China, he could not deny the positive influence of Confucianism, which has influenced the Chinese people generation after generation, especially with respect to filial piety. If we can advocate for hsiao as a virtue instead of being merely an act of obedience, then hsiao can become an important avenue to effective communication within the family and beyond.

Chung (loyalty). According to Peister (1995), loyalty means "doing one's best in cultivating the self-realization within the person… doing one's best in being sincere in our relation with others and in our involvement in the society" (p. 15). Muppathinchira (1999) has interpreted loyalty as showing "loyalty to rulers, sincerity to friends, faithfulness in one's duties" (p. 127). In other words, when we show loyalty to ourselves, we cultivate self-realization. When we are sincere in all relationships with others, we learn how to be involved in society. In the interpretation of the Chinese character of chung "忠" "the upper character means centre, and the lower character means mind or

heart. Thus, chung suggests that the mind or heart is centered" (Wattles, 1996, p. 17 as cited in Muppathinchira, 1999, p. 128). Only if we are loyal to ourselves, can we hear the true words from our heart, which will dictate our actions and our attitudes toward the world. The Chinese people have held loyalty in high esteem. When one practices loyalty, wherever one goes, one is honoured.

In the past in China, loyalty meant to be loyal to the imperial family of different dynasties, whereas in socialist China in Mao's time, it implied loyalty to the state, the central government of the CCP, and to the people. In the socialist period (1950s–1970s), as "communist" values penetrated the hearts of the Chinese people, Confucian-centered values still influenced Chinese people's lives (Tu, 1979a; L. Xu, 1995). In Mao's time, Chinese philosophy still regarded morality as the main concern of the entire value system, and it has played an essential role in the cultural life of the Chinese people. In the following section, I explore Maoism in which Confucian-centered values still held a key position.

2.3.2 Maoism

When Mao Zedong was young, he was influenced by his teacher Yang Changji, "who was a sincere Confucian scholar and guided his students to become Confucian practitioners" (Lu, 2009, p. 86). From that early influence, Mao continued to believe that "an individual could change history by cultivating himself spiritually" (Lu, 2009, p. 90). Although Mao never called himself a Confucian scholar, the Confucian influence had already marked his thought (Tu, 1979a). Tu (1979a) has argued:

> Despite the apparent total negation of Confucianism… Mao himself is ambivalent towards the Confucian Heritage. It is true that Mao has repeatedly attacked intellectual elitism, academic scholasticism, and bookish knowledge devoid of an experiential basis. Yet, this does not entail that he is consistently critical of Confucianism itself. He may think more highly of revolutionaries, inventors, poets, and folk heroes than of Confucian scholars, but there is no evidence of any systematic effort at eradicating the Confucian influence in his thought… Mao has time and again acknowledged that six years of Confucian education in his youth have had a profound influence in shaping his world view. (p. 35)

Thus, during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), although Mao criticised the doctrines of Confucianism, he didn't reject it entirely. Once when Mao had an "informal conversation" with some scholars, he "made a few references to the Confucian 'six arts' (ceremonies, music, archery, carriage-driving, writing, and mathematics). He expressed regret that the 'main stream' (chu-liu) of Confucianism had been lost and urged his followers not to throw away the Confucian heritage" (Tu, 1979a, p. 35). We might question to what degree Mao renounced Confucian values. For instance, according to Tu (1979a), Mao insisted that the individual should cultivate spirituality. In his thinking, morality was an important way to harmoniously bind the individual and society. Mao's ideology stressed "social practice, class struggle, mass line, and continuous revolution" (Tu, 1979a, p. 33). According to Tu, the philosophical basis of social practice for Mao:

> Superficially resembles the notion of engagement in modern existentialism, but since its philosophical basis is not individualism but collectivism…In Maoism, a person is perceived as an integral part of a collectivity; his real worth, as it were, can be fully manifested only by a process of objectification through which selfishness is overcome and unity with the "great self" (ta-wo) achieved. The idea that one's inner truth can be discovered by probing the ground of spiritual subjectivity is completely alien to this mode of thinking. Practice in Maoism must be empirically verifiable and socially recognizable. It is intended to subordinate the needs of the part to the needs of the whole. It aims at a total solution, rather than an individual response to a partial situation. (p. 33)

I will address the concept of individualism in greater detail shortly.

Mao believed that only if we abandon the ego can we achieve the collective. Thus, loyalty has to be proposed again because it "was a virtue that the ministers, officers and people had to be loyal to their rulers and the states" (Muppathinchira, 1999, p. 127). Loyalty does not mean blind devotion. Rather, it means to be faithful to the country, sincere to friends, and committed forever to the ideal. In Maoism, the "mass line meant as long as the masses were mobilized with great moral enthusiasm, any miracle could happen" (Lu, 2009, p. 91). Mao always emphasized that we come from the masses, and we go to the masses. Lu (2009) has discussed that the individual in Mao's time was equipped with revolutionary "heroism," "idealism," and "romanticism." (L. Xu, 1995, p.15). The people in that period were encouraged to be a moral example. Since the

strength of the moral example is endless, when individuals were firmly united, they could contribute to the national development mobilized by the revolutionary spirit (Lu, 2009). Lu described Mao's position: The whole nation would become stronger and would not need to fear any aggressor. Further, any challenge to achieving national prosperity, long pursued by the Chinese people, could be overcome.

I still remember clearly that when I was young (30 years ago), during my schooling in primary school in the late of 1970s, "serving the nation or serving the people" still was regarded as the highest value. Before the year of my schooling, in Mao's time, the self-centered individual was excluded from the revolutionary team. The people in that period received an exclusive education. They shaped their minds based on the revolutionary guide post that pursuing righteousness was more important than material profits; pursuing the spiritual ideal was more important than human desires (Xu, 1995). All the people at that time led a simple, plain life but were rich in spirit. In addition, everyone was encouraged to be loyal to the state and the Party as one's duty.

Mao's ideology characterized as revolutionary "idealism," "romanticism," and "heroism" lasted until the Opening and Reforming Policy. L. Xu (1995) noted:

> Most people firmly believed that devotion to the Communist cause was the centre of their lives; submitting their individual needs to the higher interests of society was their duty; and self-restraint (and self-criticism) was the virtue of socialist new persons. (p. 201)

Commitment to the benefits of the state and CCP was endorsed as a measurement of a person's value orientation. L. Xu (1995) noted further:

> As for the objectives, the people were educated to weigh Communist ideals over material needs, spiritual pursuit instead of secular interests, and the future of humankind rather than individual happiness in the present. Submission to the will of the whole and obedience to the authorities were defined as "collectivist" values that were to guide people's behaviour. Among social ideals, equality and egalitarianism were seen as a higher level of social justice to pursue at all costs. (p. 201)

This means that, in that period, people were encouraged to show great loyalty to the People and the Party; they should subordinate their own interests to those of the whole society and the whole nation as the way to realizing their own value. Thus, before the Opening and Reforming Policy, it was moral ethics such as righteousness, loyalty, and self-sacrifice, rather than utilitarian ideas that played a leading role in influencing the formation of the virtues of the Chinese people (L. Xu, 1995). Although Confucianism was officially overthrown during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the philosophy still affected the general population. The Chinese people have been influenced deeply by Confucianism (Hall & Ames, 1987). Tu (1979a) has argued that although Confucianism was discouraged during the Cultural Revolution, its influence could not be overcome by "intellectual critiques" (p.38) alone. Mao's ideology emphasized morality, the spiritual ideal, and loyalty, and these values were consistent with previously-held Confucian

values. In the history of China, moral education has been the main theme (Muppathinchira, 1999). However, as China experiences a change from a planned economy to a market economy, traditional values exemplified by Confucianism and Maoism are facing unprecedented challenges.

2.3.3 "Individualism"

As a result of the economic reform since 1978, China has been transformed into "a major international power" (Jacob, 2004, p. 32), and the Chinese people have been involved in a dramatic historical, economic, and social transformation. When human beings are confronted with changing social conditions, they usually respond by changing their values (Wilson et al., 1979). However, values have durable characteristics as well, which play an important role in the process of social change (Kluckhohn, 1951a; Rokeach, 1979; Van Deth & Scarbrough, 1995). Value change cannot be produced overnight. That is, the interdependencies of values retard the change rate (Rokeach, 1973). In short, an individual's values change when confronted with conflict, but slowly (Feather, 1975).

When the Chinese people became involved in the historic dramatic change from a planned economy to a market economy, they were dragged into a whirlpool of values transmission (L. Xu, 1995). For example, the late president Deng Xiaoping provided his "cat theory": "It does not matter if it is the white cat or black cat, the one that can catch rats is the good cat" (Zhang, 2009, p.7). In other words, the predominant value, as espoused by Deng Xiaoping, was utilitarianism, and it is fostered by a focus on

individualism. As a result, China has embarked on a nationwide campaign for making money (Zhang, 2009). According to Kruger (2001):

> The concept of contemporary Western individualism rests in large part on classical political and economic liberalism and emphasizes the importance and rights of individual persons, rather than the status of monarchy, state or church. (p. 22)

Individualism emphasizes "the dignity, self-development, and empowerment of individual persons" (Kruger, 2001, p. 23). As a product of the French Revolution, the concept of Individualism pays more attention to "self-sufficiency and self-glorification" (Triandis, 1995, p. 26). The culture of individualism emphasizes rights as a priority by stressing concern for oneself, and it encourages independence and highlights personal accomplishment (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individualism has achieved a new status in the rapidly changing economic and social context of modern China.

According to L. Xu (1995), under the influence of the marketization in China, the Chinese people started to change from focusing on the good of the collective to realizing personal practical interests and from "being passively mobilized by the Party's political calls to participating actively in social life of their own free will" (L. Xu, 1995, p. 196). Thus, Chinese value orientations were affected as China transformed from a planned economy to a market economy. The emphasis on the independent individual has combined with de-traditionalization (Inglehart, 2005). As a result, the virtues that had influenced the Chinese people generation after generation were beginning to lose their

influence. Zhang (2009) argued that this change has resulted in people idolizing those who have money, whether this money was gained in a moral way or not. Righteousness became worthless, as has the Confucian motto: "riches and honours are what men desire. If they cannot be obtained in the proper way, they should not be held" (Analects IV. 5 as cited in Muppathinchira, 1999, p. 236). According to Zhang (2009), those heroes who sacrificed themselves for the nation and the country were ignored by society. When people use every means to maximize their personal interests and individual goals, they eliminate all the obstacles that hinder their pursuit of profits.

Zhang (2009) argued that in the contemporary context of China, "Individualism legitimizes the satisfaction of personal needs as the priority and motivation for social action" (p. 13). For the contemporary Chinese people then, the challenge is to balance personal needs with due regard for others, so as not to be "indifferent to the needs of others" (Zhang, 2009, p. 13). In general, when the "decline of morality" (Zhang, 2009, p. 13) pervades the whole nation, people live in an atmosphere of self-centeredness: "It seems that people have never been as clear about what they want as they are within this market mechanism. To reach the goal of what they want, they can be whoever the goal needs them to be" (p. 13). Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier (2002) have argued: "individualism is often presented as a worldview that centralizes the personal—goals, interests, and control" (p. 5). Individualism is only relatively concerned with self-importance (Schwartz, 1990). However, if an individual cares only about the realization of his/her personal profits as a final goal, how far he/she can go?

Throughout the history of China, with respect to Confucianism or Maoism, "loyalty" and "righteousness" have been regarded as virtues. Loyalty, either to oneself or to others, even to the nation, has been considered to be of prime importance to moral development (Muppathinchira, 1999). Nevertheless, even in the Maoist era, individualism, in one sense, had instrumental value. It was important that individuals harness their own preferences and internal goods to those of the collective. However as China has become increasingly influenced by the spread of globalism, the status of individualism has gradually transitioned into an increasingly prominent "intrinsic value"—that is, , the emphasis has turned from Mao-inspired instrumentalism to individual success for its own sake.

In consideration of the present values of extreme individualism in China, it seems that learning to be human may become an outdated preoccupation. Certainly, traditional values are not the solution to all the problems the Chinese people are facing in a changing social context. One has to resolve problems in one's own way based on one's unique life experience in different social contexts. However, Confucianism may prove effective for those who still follow Chinese tradition. The life histories of my research participants Ping, Gao, and Quan show the effects of living through different historical eras that have been changed by the impact of the contrasting values of Maoism and individualism, and the influences of traditional Confucian values. As workers, Ping, Gao, and my brother were proud of their social status. They perceived communist ideals as their highest values in life. They were encouraged to combine their personal interests with the construction of socialism to realize the values of their lives by fighting for the future of nation. After

becoming laid-off, they suffered a deep inward struggle, although they were still profoundly influenced by their traditional roots.

In the following chapters, the life histories of Ping, Gao, and my brother Quan illustrate how they saw themselves as situated within particular historical, cultural, and social contexts, and how they experienced personal change over three decades. The following chapter describes the methodological approach used in the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

My research explores the changes in values of laid-off workers in a changing social context in China. In the process of doing my research, I conducted a literature review to better understand value theory, traditional values, individual values, social change, and value change in China after the Reforming and Opening Policy was established. As I discussed in Chapter 2, value change is influenced by more than one factor, but the social, cultural, and historical contexts are vital contributing influences. According to Feather (1975), "values may be seen as the products of cultural, institutional, and personal forces acting upon the individual" (p. 11). That is, an individual's experiences and values are connected to the social context in which she/he exists. Feather (1975) also argued that:

> in understanding how values develop, one must also allow for the biological makeup of the person and the basic needs involved, and for the unique life experiences to which he has been exposed—experiences that set problems of adjustment that he must resolve in his own way. (p. 11)

Therefore, personal life experiences play important roles in shaping an individual's values as well. The researcher's challenge is to find a way to investigate those connections. Life history "offers a way of exploring the relationship between the culture, the social structure and individual lives" (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 9). Life history is thus the study of mutual action between individual experience and the

settings in which an individual exists. I have chosen life history as my research method to explore the value changes experienced by my research participants.

Goodson and Sikes (2001) proposed that the research approach we select reflects the social meaning of our research practice. According to Coffey, "Different projects will have their own features and requirements and each researcher is likely to have their own personal style and a unique emotional engagement with any particular project" (as cited in Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 19). The research I did was linked to the meanings that my participants ascribed to values in a changing social context. Thus I chose a life history approach for the methodology of my study. What follows is a review of the literature around life history, its relationship to life story, and the place that photo-elicitation can play within life history.

3.1 Life History

Cole and Knowles (2001), Dollard (1935), Goodson and Sikes (2001), McIntyre (2006), and Mclaughlin and Tierney (1993), among others, have contributed to the development of life history as a research method. In this chapter, I use their contributions to discuss the nature of life history, and why it is important for the researcher to be involved in the process of life history research. I use life history to investigate people's lives and their attendant values not only to record emerging individual stories, but also to show how these private lives are part of a larger social phenomenon.

According to Cole and Knowles (2001), a life history is an "epistemological construct illuminating the intersection of human experience and social context" (p. 9).

Given that life history research is concerned with the ways of illuminating the intersection of human experience and social context in which people exist, it offers possibilities to discover "how people make sense of their experiences and of the world around them" (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 20).

The criteria for the study of life history developed by Dollard (1935) was one of the best early attempts to make an analysis of "the methodological basis of the life history method" (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 8). His work remains relevant today. He argued that detailed studies of the lives of individuals make it possible to reveal new perspectives on the culture as a whole. He also identified life history's linking of past, present, and future (Goodson & Sikes, 2001): "Life history attempts to describe a unit in that linkage: it is a study of one of the strands of complicated collective life which has historical continuity" (p. 9). Thus, life history research makes it possible to have a complex study of the historical account of life experience that other research methods cannot achieve (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). To address this complexity, the method generally involves selecting a few individuals for in-depth interviews, thus providing multiple perspectives (Cole and Knowles, 2001).

In general in life history research, the researcher is involved in the research and is encouraged to infuse "her [his] work with her [his] own reflexive presence" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 14) to develop the relationship between the research and the participants, and to make that reflexive presence apparent in the research. "Who the researcher is, and the vantage point from which she [he] operates, is important

information for the reader of a research account" (Cole and Knowles, 2001, p. 14). I will say more about the importance of researcher reflexivity in this study later in this chapter.

3.2 Life History and Life Story

When life history is used as a research method, life story is always an indispensable part of it (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Some similarities exist between life history and life story, but some differences exist as well. For example, life history and life story are both related to personal experiences. But life story is based on a first-person narrative, which is personal and private. Life history, on the other hand, is the result of a dialogue between the researcher and the participant(s). The researcher recounts the story in the third person, and the result is more socially and historically contextualized and publicized (Yow, 1994; Atkinson, 1998; Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

Life histories have been used to convey individual experience "with all the ambiguity, variability, and even uniqueness that such experience usually implies" (Plummer, 1983, p. 65). Thus, "life history research advocates, first and foremost, a concern with the phenomenal role of lived experience, with the ways in which members interpret their own lives and the world around them" (Plummer, p. 67). However, life story is "a first-person narrative, with the researcher removed as much as possible from the text" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 2). Regarding life history, "there are many ways of getting at the phenomenology of experiences, but in the end there is probably no substitute for spending many hours talking with the subject" (Plummer, 1983, p. 67) to gather their

stories. In life history research, the involvement of the researcher is an important step in the process of the research.

Regarding the relationship between life history and life story, Tierney (1999) elaborated that life histories "encompass a wide genre of writing" (p. 307), with life story narrative being a tool to assist in the articulation of the themes of continuity and meaning of life histories. Life stories are regarded as the starting point of life history (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). "A life story is the essence of what has happened to a person, it can cover the time from birth to the present or before and beyond" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8). Telling a life story can be a way to transfer enduring values to generation after generation. Life story also can be helpful for understanding the past and the present, and a powerful means to "leave a personal legacy for the future" (Atkinson, p. 8). Atkinson (1998) also argued that life stories provide a personal, private, but partial picture, whereas life histories, as described by someone else, try to position life stories within a broader historical context. The intention of both life story and life history research is to make sense of the themes of life using storytelling, which provides the common root of both:

> Storytelling, in its most common everyday form, is giving a narrative account of an event, an experience, or any other happening. We can tell of these happenings because we know what has happened. It is this basic knowledge of an event that allows and inspires us to tell about it.
>
> What generally happens when we tell a story from our own life is that we increase our working knowledge of ourselves because we discover deeper meaning in our

> lives through the process of reflecting and putting the events, experience, and feelings that we have lived into oral expression. (Atkinson, 1998, p. 1)

Storytelling helps us to discover who we are by integrating an understanding of our experience. As individuals, we develop ourselves every day, and the stories we tell about ourselves with feelings and meanings accumulate everyday as well. But life historians, as researchers, always are involved in others' stories in the process of their research (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). In my research, I have tried to keep that important connection in mind.

In my study, I merged life stories with life history. Each person has his/her unique and rich life story, and my participants' capacity for interpretation and action through storytelling is an important contribution to our understanding of the individual's life history against the background of their experience of societal transitions. Plummer (1983) has argued: "reading the life stories and life histories of others who have similar characters, backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions can be empowering and emancipatory because we researchers feel that we are not alone" (as cited in Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 101). Thus, the researcher of life history finds it necessary to "explore how individuals or groups of people who share specific characteristics, and personal and subjective experiences make sense of and account for the events that happen to them" (p. 39). However, people's different life experiences produce different interpretations of different realities:

> Indeed, it is hard to imagine that anyone would even consider using life history if they did not have some sympathy with the concept of multiple realities and did not, therefore, see informants and researchers as being each engaged in interpreting the world from their own various perspectives. (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 39)

My research has focused on a distinctive group of participants who were born in the 1950s in China. At the time of the research study, my research subjects were all in their fifties. Their accounts of their life experiences thus provided unique perspectives on the development of change in China from a planned socialist economy to a market economy.

When we reach a certain age, looking back on our past experience is a spontaneous part of our lives, and it is essential to our human life (Fivush, 2008). Remembering the past helps us to form our perceptions of the present, and may involve nostalgia if the past is remembered positively. Personal nostalgia can also be an effective and relevant way to connect with the past (Holbrook, 1993). The word "nostalgia is from the Greek nostos, to return home, and algia, a painful condition—thus, a painful yearning to return home (Davis, 1979, p. 1). Therefore, the term *nostalgia* reflects not only the past: "It is a past imbued with special qualities, which, moreover, acquires its significance from the particular way we juxtapose it to certain features of our present lives" (p. 13). According to Davis (1979), we generally express our nostalgic experience through agency. As life history researchers, we can offer an interpretation through writing and

articulating nostalgia based on both the tellers' stories and the researchers' interpretations of these stories (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). In my study, I will clarify how I, as a life history researcher was involved in various ways in my participants' lives, and thus have attempted to arrive at a better understanding of changing Chinese values. These insights are woven into my participants' narratives at certain points, and included drawing on nostalgia.

In the process of thinking about the methodologies to use in my research, I also considered using a visual component, since I have had a longstanding interest in photography. This visual component is described next.

3.3 Life History Methodology Combined With Photo-Elicitation

Sinner (2006) has argued: "combining traditional qualitative methods with arts-based inquiry is a way of doing research" (p. 2). Sinner (2006) further noted:

> Arts-based inquiry offers an alternative approach to research that may include narrative writing, autobiography, multi-media, visual arts, performance, photography and/or poetry. By placing creative, imaginative and artistic processes at the centre of such inquiry, there is a potential to develop different ways of seeing and sensing when researching. Arts-based inquiry can bring into focus what is sometimes overlooked or discarded in more traditional research analyses and renderings. (p. 8)

As a photography lover, combining photos with my research feels natural. As a life history researcher, when I include photos to illustrate the events and experiences of both my research participants and myself, I gain a deeper understanding of my research.

Photo-elicitation is a methodological tool that uses photographs as part of an interview to elicit viewers' responses (Hurworth, 2003). In the photo-elicitation interview, according to Smith and Woodward (1999) "researchers asked informants for accounts first, and only then to respond to the photos and, lastly, to discuss their own photographs of life in the area. This approach provided a means of verification and allowed the roles of researcher and subject to be reversed" (as cited in Hurworth, 2003, p. 2). Thus, the use of photographs is a more powerful way to elicit viewers' experiences than just interviews alone (Harper, 1998). In addition, in the process of eliciting the information from the photos, photo-elicitation can help us to make sense of the events that have happened in our lives, can provide a way to garner an understanding of the social context within which our experiences occur. Photos can help us to make sense of what is present in memory but physically absent, and thus the use of photos is one of the best ways to assist in the construction of personal history.

On the relationship between memories and photos, Sturken and Cartwright (2001) suggest:

> Since its invention, the camera has figured centrally in the desire to remember, to recall the past, to make the absent present. Photographic, cinematic, and video images are the raw materials used to construct personal histories: events

> remembered because they were photographed, moments forgotten because no images were preserved, and unphotographed memories that work in tension with camera memories. The memories constructed from camera images are not only personal, but also collective. (p. 1)

Our memories, by themselves, may provide silent records of particular moments, but photos may help both the researcher and participant to "gain access" to those memories (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998，p. 119). Photos connect individuals and their subjective experience within the context of society. That is, as personal photographs make a record of an individual's life, they also reflect the social situations in which subjective experiences occur (Harper, 2002).

At the same time, a researcher must be aware of the constraints as well as the power of personal photographs. Weiser (1993) has observed that "sight-based" information is one of most important parts of our experience, and thus there is "a strong visual component to our experiences, and to our memories of them" (p. 1). Clarke, Hanson and Ross (2003) have explained: "photographs, in particular, seemed to bring the person's biography alive for all concerned and provoked strong memories, which may otherwise have been difficult to appreciate" (p. 702). At the same time, personal photographs try to show people "as they would wish to be seen" or "how they have chosen to show themselves to one another" (p. 121), and are often used as a record of "happy memories" (Holland, 2001, p. 147), thus potentially linking with fondly remembered events, people, and places. When viewers look at photographs, they may

interpret the meaning that may not be the one "that the photographer originally intended to convey" (Weiser, 2010, p. 2).

In general, viewers will re-interpret the meaning of the photographs based on their own specific life experiences. That is, photographs reflect a particular attitude towards their depicted object or event. As Weiser (2010) notes, every snapshot we take reflects "people and places that were special enough to be frozen in time forever" (p. 1) … "These photos make visible the ongoing stories of that person's life, serving as visual footprints marking where they have been (emotionally, as well as physically) and also perhaps signalling where they might next be heading" (p. 1). The exercise prompts them to recall "their own inner life and its stories" (p. 1).

In the process of research, the use of photographs makes it possible for the researcher and participants to create a friendly atmosphere that might provide a new window for a researcher by which she/he can enter the lives of his/her participants and create more "additional layers of intimacy than regular face-to face interviews" (Clark-Ibanez, 2004, p. 1518). Thus, I combined photo-elicitation with life history as my research methodology. I was lucky to meet Ping and Gao, who kept a quantity of photo albums as a record of their life experience. They provided me with the perfect opportunity to use photographs to accompany and enhance the study of life histories through participant-driven research.

3.4. Data Collection

My data sources include semi-structured qualitative interviews, photo elicitation interviews, artifacts and documentation, previous research conducted by myself, participant observation, my field notes and reflective notes. I collected the data between March 2011 and April 2012 in Canada and China. I conducted all the interviews (more than 10 interviews with my participants) in Chinese and transcribed them, then translated them into English. I organized the collected information chronologically, starting with my participants' youth in Mao's time, their middle age in Deng's time, until their present life.

According to Huberman and Miles (1994), "Normally, the immediately collected information is not immediately available for analysis, but requires some processing" (p. 430). When the raw data collection was complete, I initially drew some tentative conclusions, maintaining space for revision until I formed a final conclusion after analysis. For the storage of my research data, my process was as follows: I created a secure file for the different interviews, which were dated; filed the documents such as the ethical review and the informed consent agreement along with my notes made during the interviews and the field notes that I made subsequent to each interview; and I dated and filed the photographs, some of which I re-photographed to support my research interviews. I put the audio recordings, field notes, and document files in secure storage. I also stored the interview transcriptions and field notes electronically on multiple hard drives.

3.4.1 Research Participants

According to Cole and Knowles (2001), "A conventional life history research project typically involves a small number of participants (traditionally referred to as 'subjects' or 'informants') whom the researcher studies in considerable depth" (p. 13). I selected my participants because they belonged to a special group—the "glorious workers" of the 1970s in China and because of their capacity to speak to the change in values experienced from Mao's time to Deng's time to the present. Their struggle for survival motivated me to follow their change in values over time to better understand how they adapted to the changing society in China over a 30-year period. As Sanders (1982) suggested, "The persons to be investigated are those who possess the characteristics under observation or those who can give reliable information on the phenomena being researched" (p. 356). Thus, the sampling techniques I employed were purposive in nature. In my study, I explored the life histories of three laid-off workers: the married couple Ping (wife) and Gao (husband) and my brother Quan. I selected my participants because they had experienced being honourable workers and being laid-off, and they struggled with their new stresses as they moved towards self-reliance. The value changes they have experienced for more than 30 years may reflect how traditional values, Maoism, and individualism influenced their values in their changing social context.

3.4.2 Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured with the questions planned in advance (see Appendix B [1] and Appendix B [2]). I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation interviews with three participants over a period of approximately 1 year in Canada and China. I spent 3 weeks in intensive interviews with Ping and Gao in Montreal, Canada during March, 2011. I conducted the interviews with my brother Quan over the course of 1 year when I was in China, from April 2011 to April 2012. Typically, I dated the interviews and later translated and transcribed them. One of the purposes of the interview is to understand "the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2013, p. 3). In the process of the interview, the involvement of the researcher and the research participants in a dialogue is necessary (Kvale, 1996). When the researcher and participants engage in semi-structured interviews, their mutual involvement makes possible the exploration of questions in depth (Seidman, 2013). According to Seidman (2013), the semi-structured interview is based on "open-ended questions" presented in a friendly atmosphere in which both the interviewer and the interviewee are encouraged to explore topics in more detail. Based on the three-interview series, the interviewer can "put the participant's experience in context" (Seidman, 2013, p. 11) by encouraging her/him to answer the questions. Then, the interview concentrates on "the concrete details of the participants' present experience in the topic area of the study" (p. 11). Finally, the interviewer asks the participants to "reflect on the meaning of their experience" (p. 12). As a researcher, during the interview process, I encouraged my research participants to describe their life stories, which helped

them to explore the relevant topics. I also used photographs as part of the interview, asking my research participants to discuss the meaning of the photos. When my interviewees saw the photos, their memories were triggered, and they added more comments, and we gradually moved on to more specific questions. The process of reviewing the photographs together created a friendly atmosphere and helped build trust and rapport between my interviewees and myself. Since my research participants had unforgettable memories of being honorable workers, the photos taken while they were workers triggered them to engage in longer, more detailed interviews and stimulated them to share more life stories with me. During the interviews, my research participants, especially Ping, acted as an informant, to lead me back to their life history. Ping's spontaneous elaborations on many photos enabled me to achieve more first-hand in-depth resources for my research. Without my participants' help, it would have been impossible for me to collect such rich data.

3.4.3 Photo-Elicitation and Photo-Elicitation Interviews

Since photographs and photograph albums make it possible to record the life history of people's experiences, the combination of life history with the use of photo-elicitation in my study provided opportunities to capture my research participants' life experiences in the context of this unforgettable time of their lives. I conducted this portion of my research by examining the various archival holdings of the albums owned by Ping and Gao. I also collected my brother's photos from my relatives. I thoroughly searched the photo albums to understand, through pictures, the lives that my research participants experienced. With respect to the albums and photos, I regrouped the photos

under the themes that related to the beliefs and values that helped shape their conduct in a changing social context: the loss of their social status after the Opening and Reforming Policy; rebuilding their identity by means of self-reliance; and merging individualism with traditional values. Using photos as an intermediary tool helped to make clear the main themes. Meanwhile, I verified the themes through further discussions with my participants and uncovered the changes in their lives and the value shifts in a changing social context over more than 30 years.

3.4.4 Artifacts and Documentation

According to Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997), "Documentation… is essential as a record of how we shape the data. Additionally, it is through revelations of this type that we establish our trustworthiness as researchers" (p. 34). I wrote, diaries, and reflective field notes in the process of the interviews and used them for the data analysis. I also included narratives that I had written for graduate courses (e.g., for a special course on Memory Methods given in the Fall of 2008). Meanwhile, my research participants shared with me artifacts collected from their experiences during different social periods—the blue working uniform, Gao's old coat from Ping, an old-fashioned wind-up gramophone, and some old yellow and faded photos—for what these could say about the stories embedded in them. The artifacts and documentation—such as letters, photographs, and old clothes—helped to validate the richness and truth of the stories told.

3.4.5 Previous Research Done by the Researcher

I interviewed my brother Quan regarding his childhood when I did my M.A. thesis narrative research (Wang, 2008). Portions of that data have been cited in the current study. The present doctoral study develops a life history methodology more explicitly and extends my previous study of Quan's life by collecting data on the interviews with him about his present life.

3.4.6 Participant Observation

According to Atkinson and Hammersley (1994), "Participant observation is not a particular research technique but a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers" (p. 249). It is hard for researchers to "study the social world without being part of it" because "all social research is a form of participation" (p. 249). As a researcher, besides conducting regular interviews with my participants, I participated in some events in person. For example, I followed the whole process of my nephew's wedding, which lasted for two months, including its preparation and celebration. As a sister and a researcher, I observed my participant (my brother Quan) as a father, when his son was married. I tried to capture some complicated feelings he held that surfaced around this event, and I also had conversations with my participants' family members and shared some photographs with them.

3.4.7 Researcher Field Notes

As human beings, our memory generally fades very quickly, and so writing field notes is an important way for researchers to keep a record of interviews (Lofland &

Lofland, 1999). During the interviews, I used a notebook to jot down questions when some ideas occurred to me. For example, Ping and Gao emphasized that they preferred to lead a plain and thrifty life. So I was shocked when Ping showed me the photo taken with her car, a Jaguar. I put a question mark after the word Jaguar. I needed to know more about the stories behind this luxurious car. In addition, when the participants described their experiences (all these interviews were audio taped for transcription), I wrote my reflections about what I saw, felt, and experienced during the interviews. For example, in one of my reflective notes I wrote:

> Ping emphasized her grandmother again today. Long-time stay with her grandma, Ping was influenced by her grandmother to abide by some virtues as hard work, endurance, and independence, which gave her strong support when she was in a difficult situation after being laid-off. I never knew that Ping was a shy person; she told me that she was a shy girl when she was young and didn't like to speak in public even when she was grown up. She strictly followed three obediences and four virtues, which helped her to form womanly character, constrained her to show herself to some degree. That's also part of the reason why she always feels shy in public. That may be called the side effect of the constraints of "traditional values." (March 21, 2011)

Huberman and Miles (1994) recommend dating field notes, which is a convenient way for a researcher to reconnect with the data of a time and place. I followed the process of dating my reflective notes. I also checked my interpretations of their lives with my participants.

3.5 Data Analysis and Researcher's Reflections

"Data analysis is going on from the outset—based on what the researcher brings with her to the inquiry" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 30). My research methodology is mainly based on life history. Inevitably, it explored individuals' experiences within social contexts, which "draws on an individual's experiences to make broader contextual meaning" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 20). Thus, personal lives cannot be separated from social contexts, and social contexts play an important role in understanding individuals' lives. The study of life history is a way to "integrate the meaning and significance of the past as it influences the present and the future" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 20). Thus, life history inquiry helps us to gain "insights into the broader human condition by coming to know and understand the experiences of other humans" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 11) as they happened in a historical context. Cole and Knowles (2001) also have argued that life history "places us with a small number of individuals for an intensive exploration, rather than with a large number for more superficial engagement" (p. 70). Based on my research with Ping, Gao, and Quan, the research data not only was a foundation for an interpretation of their lives but also exemplified their lives in the changing social context of 30 years before and after the Opening and Reforming Policy in China.

At the time I met with Ping and Gao, I was attracted by their nostalgia for their past lives. As a researcher, I already had some personal insight into the kind of

experiences Ping and Gao had initially described because my brother Quan had been a worker during my childhood, and I had witnessed his life being torn apart after the Opening and Reforming Policy. Ping's and Gao's stories, interwoven with my brother's story and elements of my own, simultaneously motivated me to conduct a life history inquiry. I also wove into their stories some of my own reflections from my field notes, themes, and autobiographical narratives, particularly in my brother's story, which begins with my story of childhood memories, which were significantly coloured by nostalgic memories of my brother as an honorable worker. The stories told by Ping，Gao, and Quan revealed their changes from honorable workers to being dispossessed, and then to self-reliant persons. In my research, I developed the structure of their particular stories within a changing social context and the meanings attributed to that experience. I also interwove reflections from my own life, especially in relation to my brother's story, which intersected with my own.

My research explores the transformation of lives within a changing social, economic, and historical context. To tell my participants' stories, I sought to connect with and understand the complexities of their lives. I collected a range of data in various forms as I mentioned in the section on data collection: unstructured qualitative interviews, photo elicitation interviews, artifacts and documentation, previous research that I conducted, participant observation, and my field notes and my reflective notes.

Initially, conversations with my participants were relaxed and friendly, but when I started to use audio recording, all of them felt uncomfortable with it, so I put the

recorder away under the table, although it was still recording, and focused on making field notes during our interviews. Fortunately, our interviews were carried out in the context of common interests with tacit agreement. When I pointed out the photos to my participants, they took the lead in the interviews. When Ping, Gao, and, Quan explained the photos taken while they were honourable workers, they always had smiles and were nostalgic about wearing their blue working uniforms. It was a reminder of their revolutionary legacy as honourable workers, and their reflections on their identity as owners of the country. The photos brought them back to a search for a collective socialist dream—an idealized and romanticized socialist past. With respect to the difficult moment when they were laid-off, no photos were taken. All data was based on the verbal interviews. When their social status changed overnight, they felt lost and rejected by their society. When Gao shared with me his difficult experience of having to live with the pigs after he was forced to leave his hometown to find work opportunities in a city far away from his wife and daughter, I became emotional and had to stop our interview again and again. My final impression was one of admiration for Ping，Gao, and Quan, for their indomitable spirit and the virtues they relied on as they adapted to their new changing social context. "Every in-depth exploration of an individual life-in-context brings us that much closer to understanding the complexities of lives in communities" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 11).

I cherished the words they shared, appreciated the thoughts they had, and recorded them in my notebook. Throughout the process of data analysis, I tried to present my participants' life experiences in their own words; I also included my reflections on their life stories. Based on my participants' life history related to historical contexts, I

generated themes for my data analysis. Finally, I read and re-read my field notes, listening for and jotting down repeated or key themes.

3.6 Analysis of Themes

During the process of data analysis, "building categories is important to subsequent thematic analysis" (Ely et al., 1997, p. 207). In my research, I tried to build categories to draw out the meanings of the materials I gathered during my data collection. In the process of data collection, I first categorized the data according to historical contexts in a changing China: Mao's time, Deng's time, and Present China. Butler-Kisber (2010) has argued that it is useful to "give code names to the categories," which "can help push the analysis further and get at the insider/emic perspectives" (p. 31). Butler-Kisber (2010) also suggested that "working back and forth across the categories expanding and contracting them as the analysis proceeds" (p. 31) helps the researcher to tease out themes and discover their relationships. Ely et al. (1997) argued: "an analysis for themes is one of the most frequently mentioned analytic approaches used by qualitative researchers" (p. 230). An analysis of themes:

> …involves a process of sorting through the fabric of the whole for our understanding of the threads or patterns that run throughout and lifting them out—as a seamstress lifts threads with a needle—to make a general statement about them. (Ely et al, 1997, p. 206)

I assembled my categories in an attempt to do just that. Under each category based on historical context, I started to identify themes: glorious experience as workers in Mao's time; marginalized experience as laid-off workers in Deng's time; self-reliance at the

present time. Under each theme, further sub-themes emerged: memory of blue uniform; loyalty to the factory; nostalgia of welfare for the workers in Mao's time; suffering as laid-off workers; struggling for self-reliance; repositioning during Deng's time; leading an independent life at present. Nostalgia was a central theme in my own autobiographical narrative (my childhood memories of my brother as honourable worker).

To support each theme, I wrote reflective notes. These helped to make a record of my research process and clarify the meaning of the themes by expanding and contracting categories as well. My first reflective note was:

> When Ping and Gao brought me to their basement, I was shocked by the huge collection of their albums. When they moved all the albums from the bookshelves to the table, I opened them one after another, and began to read their life through time and space. Gao kept explaining the background when some photos were taken. After 6 hours, I felt so tired and stopped browsing the albums, but I decided to select some photos and re-photograph them, and then I asked Ping and Gao to give me detailed elicitation. I found something so precious today. It was predetermined that these rich data resources would help my research. (March 13, 2011)

In the process of my research, I re-photographed some selected photos that could show the historical theme, and arranged these photos and their life history experiences chronologically. Then, I showed them to my research participants to prompt them to narrate their stories from the perspectives of differing social contexts, and then I took

notes and started tying them to the emerging themes in the transcriptions. For example, in my second reflective note, I wrote:

> Gao showed me his coat today, which was the gift from Ping when they were workers at the factory 30 years ago. I felt so surprised at their collection of such an "old" coat. When Gao lifted the coat with his hand, he was so careful. It seemed that he would not endure a bit of damage of his precious coat. In my eyes, it was not only an old coat; it was a nostalgia for the past. Gao was not afraid of damaging his coat; on the contrary, he would keep his intact memory of his life as an honorable worker. When Ping saw the coat, she could not help smiling. It seemed the coat brought them back to that period when they were workers. After high school graduation, Ping refused to go to university to receive higher education and became a member of the glorious workers. The reason was simple—because she admired the worker's blue uniform! From Ping's account, it is easy to see that when they were in their early 20s, their life (in the 1970s and 1980s) as workers was pure in heart. Their task as workers was to work in the factory, and they could feel totally relaxed after their work was done for the day. In my view, the "blue uniform" and the "old coat" symbolize a simple but secure life in that period, and that must be the reason why Ping liked the blue uniform so much and Gao still kept the old coat as precious as a treasure. (March 15, 2011)

According to Ely et al. (1997):

> Practically speaking, with themes as with categories, we may list many, go through processes of refining and combining them, and in the end select those that seem most salient, or most relevant to the story we have chosen to tell. Throughout the literature, there are many descriptions and prescriptions for coding and categorizing, and we have worked at discussing what we consider to be the essential features of the process and some approaches to it. (p. 206)

After the interviews with Ping and Gao, I could draw the conclusion (under the category of my participants as honorable workers in Mao's time) that they had wonderful memories of their lives as honorable workers when they were in their 20s. Most workers, including my research participants, firmly believed that their contribution to the construction of socialism was the main goal of their lives. When the Communist Party guaranteed workers job security (Zhao, 2004), it also reinforced workers' personal interests in submission to the benefits of the collective. Workers knew they should follow Maoist philosophy to meld their personal interests with the social and show their commitment to the construction of the future of the nation.

Ely et al. (1997) have argued, "countless themes are embedded in any one body of data" (p. 206). Moreover, "it probably goes without too much saying that we will be concerned with statements of what are to us important meanings, essential to understanding what is perceived as the heart of the culture or experience being studied" (p. 206). For example, in one of my reflective notes, Ping emphasized that in her long-stay

with her grandmother during her childhood, her grandmother had influenced her in two by strict indoctrination to the three obediences and four virtues, which helped her womanly character, but constrained her to show herself to some degree. From Ping's account, it is evident that her grandmother influenced her deeply in forming her traditional virtues. However, regarding the subthemes, such as the constraints of Ping's grandmother on her, I didn't examine them in my dissertation. After I identified the themes, I began tying things together. I went back to the recorded interviews and drew meanings from the "raw" data, and then I selected some recorded interviews to develop a narrative.

Given that life history is organized chronologically, I structured the chapters according to the respective decades of Ping, Gao, and Quan's life, which illuminated the core themes we discussed. My responses to Ping, Gao, and Quan's value changes in a different social context are integrated through the text by my interpretation. Since parts of Quan's stories are based on my interpretation, I became a participant in my own research project.

In the following chapters, I offer the histories and the voices of individuals in an attempt to "paint a portrait" of their experiences. I also wove into their stories some of my own reflections (from my field notes and memoirs), particularly in my brother's story, which begins with my story of childhood memories. In addition, I highlight the themes that are of concern to this study and connect them to the practices of Confucianism, Maoism, and Individualism that may influence the Chinese people's thoughts. To this end,

I have used story-telling and photos to illustrate my participants' life histories. Furthermore, I discuss values, family, social background, and social change to explore the cross influences of these significant factors on the life changes of my research participants.

Chapter 4: Ping and Gao's Life Histories—Interviews in Canada

4.1 Interviews with Ping and Gao

My encounters with my research participants Ping and Gao were actually initiated through photos. The first time I met Gao was in 2006 on the website "Quebec through my Eyes" (www.sinoquebec.com), a forum for Chinese people from Montreal to post interesting photos and write comments on them. By chance, a photo taken by Gao attracted me, and I wrote some comments about it. After reading my comments, Gao felt that I had special perspective to understand his photos, and we began to exchange our photos online. So we first came to encounter one another as fellow amateur photographers. Unexpectedly, soon after, Gao invited a handful of people, including me, to his home to have dinner with his family members. I accepted his warm invitation. Over the course of the evening, I admired his photographs, and soon became fascinated with the stories behind them. Gao and his wife Ping had been workers in China from the 1970s to the early 1980s. They were the same age as my older brother Quan. In my Masters' thesis, I had examined value change in contemporary China through the eyes of one family member—my brother—and one family—my own. With this background and my own interest in life history, I grew curious about Ping and Gao's lives and how they had successfully transitioned into the white-collar world of business after their struggle with being laid-off workers. After a long time of struggling in China, eventually, in 2003 Gao and Ping decide to immigrate to Canada, and when I met them in 2006, they were

running two restaurants in Montreal. I immediately recognized the potential for Gao and Ping's story to contribute to my ongoing exploration of life history within the context of the transformation of Chinese society, and further, the opportunity to use photo elicitation as a visual methodology to explore their life narratives. After obtaining their verbal permission to become my research participants that evening, I did not meet with them again for some time.

In early 2011, after finishing my doctoral comprehensive exams, I had planned to collect data for my dissertation research in China. While I was waiting for my ethics review approval from McGill University, I prepared to leave for China to carry out further interviews with my brother. Hearing that I was leaving for China, Ping and Gao invited me to their house again to have dinner together. That day, we started to talk at about 6 pm, and when I left at midnight, it seemed that they still had a lot more to share. After leaving their house on my way back to my apartment in Montreal, an idea occurred to me—I would change my flight plans and start my interviews with Ping and Gao, depending on their consent and availability. After receiving my ethics review approval in March 2011, Ping and Gao agreed to begin the three-week interview process.

On March 15, 2011, I arrived at Gao and Ping's home around 1:00 pm and the first interview lasted for ten hours, during which time we stopped and enjoyed a dinner together. At the beginning, when I told Ping and Gao that I would start my interview after a short talk with them, especially when I turned on my laptop to make some notes, Gao began to feel a little nervous. So Ping suggested that we look at some pictures together

first. Gao carried a number of photo albums from the basement to the sitting room (See Figure 1). I observed his almost immediate sense of ease in the presence of the photo albums. He began to show me the photos they had taken during different periods of their lives. All the pictures shown about their lives in this study are from their photo albums.

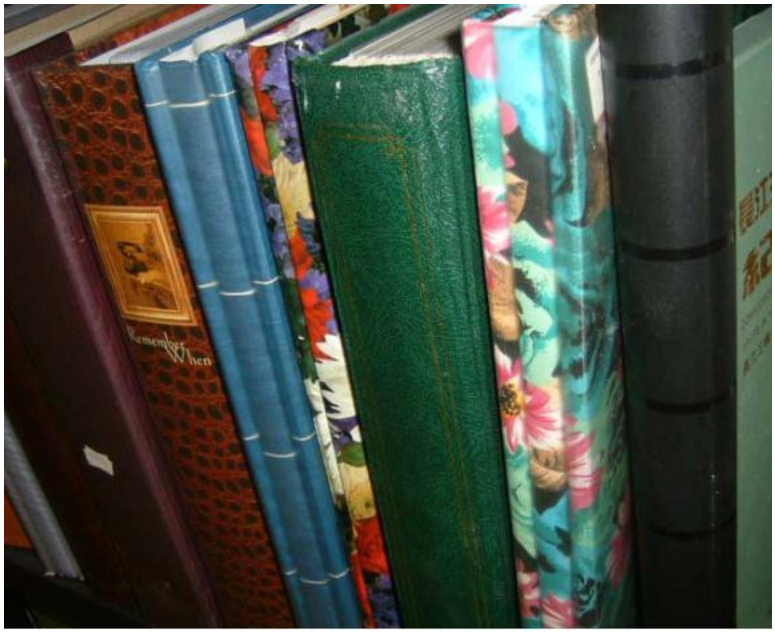

Figure 1: Gao and Ping's photo albums.

Photo elicitation has the potential to enable researchers to access their interviewees' lives by means of photos (Harper, 2002). Atkinson (1998) also argued that when a researcher conducted his/her interview through photo elicitation, the interviewees' selection of "some of their favourite photographs would help them look back and freeze time and relive what [was] there in black and white (or color)" (p. 29). When I was physically present at Ping and Gao's home, I had the chance to access their huge collection of family photo albums. The albums shown in Figure 1 were only a small

selection from their huge collection. Because the photos from the album were created by my interviewees, they were very familiar with the material. Thus, the photos helped evoke my interviewees' feelings and memories. Ping and Gao had many pictures of themselves as children, although I was more interested in their lives as workers and later as business persons. So, after obtaining their permission, I rephotographed some of their photos to illustrate their life history as adults. Collier Jr. (1967) argued that when researchers take photos during the interview process, it might consume more time, but in the end the photos help them to enter their participants' lives more effectively. When I showed the rephotographed pictures reassembled in chronological order, Ping and Gao's memories were stimulated in different ways. Ping began to recall their young age with a sweet smile while Gao sat beside her quietly.

4.1.1. When Ping and Gao Were Young (1970s–1980s)

The Beautiful Age

Figure 2: Ping, Gao, and their colleagues (in honour of their life as workers).

When Ping and Gao saw this picture (Figure 2), they could not help but open the doors of their memories to the 1970s and early 1980s. Ping explained:

> Qian, if you scrutinize it, you can see that both Gao and I were in the picture. I was the third one from right on the first line, and Gao was in the middle of the second line. This photo was taken in honour of our entrance to the factory. I cannot remember the exact day it was taken, but I do remember that beautiful age. In fact, Gao entered the factory earlier than me, but I felt so proud to be a worker. After my high school, I gave up my chance to go to university to receive higher education, but tried every means to become a worker. I admired these workers

who wore the blue uniform, and I imagined that someday I could wear it as well. But my mother disagreed with my decision. When she forced me to change my mind about becoming a worker, I chose to escape from my home. Finally, my mother gave in, and I became a worker! Our factory manufactured a TV set named JinXing (Golden Star, 金星), which was the first national TV product made in China. Our factory was like a big family; we workers united and got together frequently. Whenever we were together, I found a guy who didn't like to speak but accomplished his work beautifully, and I began to pay more attention to him. Gradually, I found that I was falling in love with this guy. Very soon, we got married. Although we led a comparatively poor life materially at that time, we were rich spiritually. During the daytime, we concentrated on our work, but we felt totally relaxed after working. Because the workers were regarded as the leading class at that time, we were guaranteed job security and welfare security. There was no need for us to worry about being "laid-off." Every day, Gao and I went to the factory together, and before entering the gate, the porter would ask us to say one or two of Mao's quotes. We carried Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung every day to the factory. You may feel funny when I talk about it now; in fact, at that time, it was a holy thing, frankly speaking. I love Mao's quotes, and I still remember some such as:

Be resolute, fear no sacrifice, and surmount every difficulty to win the victory.

Wisdom and genius are produced by experience.

Therefore, having and not having arisen together.

Difficult and easy complement each other.

Long and short contrast each other.

High and low rest upon each other.

Voice and sound harmonize each other.

Front and back follow each other.

The journey of a thousand li starts from where one stands.

(Interview with Ping accompanied by Gao, March 15, 2011)

From Ping's account, when they were in their early 20s, their lives as workers were pure at heart. Their task was to work in the factory, and they felt totally relaxed after their work was done for the day. In that period, workers were regarded as the true owners of the country, as the leading class politically and socially. According to Priestley (1964), the Chinese Constitution, adopted in 1954, emphasized that the Communist Party of China was the party of the workers: "The People's Republic of China is 'a People's Democratic State led by the working class'" (p. 7). In that period, the workers working for the state-owned factories were guaranteed by a lifelong permanent position and welfare. Most workers were convinced that devotion to the construction of socialism was the main goal in their lives: "Submitting their individual needs to the higher interests of society was their duty. Self-restraint (and self-criticism) was the virtue of the new

socialist individual" (L. Xu, 1995, p. 201). At that time, commitment to the benefits of the state and CCP was endorsed as a measurement of a person's value orientation. According to L. Xu (1995):

> Submission to the will of the whole and obedience to authority were defined as the "collectivist values" that were to guide people's behaviour. Among social ideals, equality and egalitarianism were seen as the higher levels of social justice, to be pursued at all costs. In other words, people were encouraged and required to meld their existence and interests with the social whole and to realize the value of their lives by fighting for the future of the nation. (p. 201)

Under the influence of collectivist values, Ping and Gao thought that they would be workers for their whole lives, and they combined their passion with the construction of socialism and industry development as their life goals. Although in relation to their present, their lives have changed dramatically, their earlier lives exemplified Mao's vision. Even today when Ping quotes his words, she is full of pride and admiration for Chairman Mao. Ping and Gao may still have a yearning for their unforgettable youth.

Figure 3: Gao and his colleagues (photo taken in the early 1980s when Gao did an internship in the factory).

When Ping and Gao showed me the preceding photo (Figure 3), they told me that their colleagues were like their brothers and sisters. They always called each other ShiXiong (师兄，brother) or Shijie (师姐，sister) and felt united as one family. When Ping and Gao asked me whether I had ever heard of the song "Our Workers Have Strength," which was popular in the period, my memory traveled back to my own childhood. When I was a child, I often heard this song sung by my brother who was a worker at that time! He not only sang it, sometimes he acted as a conductor for my sisters and me, to direct us to sing it. When Ping and Gao learned that I also knew this song, they felt so excited, and they began to sing it softly at first and then louder, and I joined with them. The English version goes like this:

We workers have strength, Yeah!

We workers have strength!

We are busy working everyday

Every day is filled with our hard work!

We build up high buildings and large mansions

We establish railways and mines

We mould the world by our hard work.

Machines rumbling!

Hammers ringing up!

We produce hoes for more production

We make guns for the front

Our face shining with happiness

Our sweat down flowing with hard work

Why do we do this?

Why do we do this?

For seeking liberation

For the thorough liberation of the whole China[4]

[4] "Zan men gong ren you li liang" (咱们工人有力量, "Our Workers Have Strength") was composed by Ma Ke (马可) in Mandarin Chinese in 1947 (see http://baike.baidu.com/view/2915467.html?goodTagLemma, accessed June 1, 2011). It was the first song to reflect the passion of the Chinese working class's struggle to establish a new China. This is my English translation of the original.

This song illustrates how the young workers of that period (Mao's era) regarded themselves as the owners of the country. They were full of passion to build a beautiful future for China!

Plain Clothes but Pure in Heart

Figure 4: Ping and Gao's wedding picture taken in the late 1970s.[5]

[5] Since the picture was old when I re-photographed it, it looks blurry.

Even though the photo (Figure 4) was a picture of their wedding celebration, Ping and Gao were not wearing wedding clothes. They were outfitted in their plain clothes. As workers, they clung to their blue color uniforms, which were representative of their identity. Even when they took their wedding picture, they preferred to wear their working uniforms. Because the parents felt embarrassed about them wearing their working uniforms as wedding clothes, they changed to plain clothes. It was a wedding photo, after all.

Before the Opening and Reforming Policy in China, the Chinese people were encouraged to lead a plain but hard-working life. If people were money-oriented, they were looked down on as having corrupted ideals. I remember a story I heard when I was young. Once in 1980s, a Canadian Chinese took a train in China, and during his trip, he tipped the waitress who served him on the train. She got so angry that she threw the tip out the window. The waitress believed that it was an honor to serve people, so being rewarded by money was an insult. In that period, the value system of young people was characterized by "serving the nation or serving the people" as a glorious act. Leading a thrifty life was encouraged all over the country at that time.

4.1.2 When They Were Middle Aged During Deng's Time (mid 1980s–mid 1990s)

Bitter Middle Age

Figure 5: Ping, Gao, and their daughter's childhood pictures.

When late President Dengxiaoping launched the Opening and Reforming Policy, China began to change from a planned economy to a market economy. Although the marketization of China has brought economic growth, millions of workers became laid-off overnight because of the introduction of privatization. Thus, Ping and Gao, like millions of others, changed from honourable workers to marginalized people in this swiftly changing social context. When I interviewed Ping and Gao about their experiences during this period, they had complicated feelings to share. Ping started to describe her memories of the photo collage (Figure 5):

Can you imagine who they are? The little girl who is standing in the picture is me. The boy is Gao. The cute girl lying down is our daughter. For sure, the pictures were taken in different periods. However, we three have experienced hardships, since Gao and I were laid off in mid 1980s. For most of the time during these years, we three were separated, but these pictures always accompanied me wherever I went. In mid 1980s, one day we were notified that the factory had gone bankrupt, and if we wanted to keep our status as workers in the factory, we had to submit our pay to buy shares in the company. We didn't have much money to buy shares, and we decided to leave the factory without any payment. The mid 1980s to mid-1990s were the hardest time for our family. When we learned that Guanzhou in southern China was at the forefront of the reform in China, Gao had to leave our hometown to go there—one thousand miles away—to gain more opportunities to develop a business. However, although Gao worked very hard, life was still rough. Whenever he recounts this period, he always laughs at the memories, explaining that while he was the boss during the day, in the evenings, he slept on the floor (bai tian dang laoban,白天当老板 wanshang shui diban晚上睡地板). In order to save every penny he earned, Gao always slept in public places, such as a railway station, parks… it is hard for you to imagine that he has also slept in pigsties. There are three members in our family, but we stayed in different places. For ten years, Gao and our daughter and myself led separate lives. Because Gao's business failed, I had to raise our daughter by myself while

running a small grocery store to afford our lives in our hometown. (Interview with Ping accompanied by Gao, March 17, 2011)

The 3rd Plenum of the 11th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CCP), held in Beijing in 1978, was a turning point in the history of China. Deng Xiaoping was commonly referred to as the "senior designer" of China's development blueprint. He launched the Opening and Reforming movement and stressed that the main task was to develop the economy. From then on, China began to transform from a planned economy to a market economy. As a result, "the outcome of reform strategy, has been the most explosive and long-sustained period of economic advance that the world has ever seen" (Nolan, 2004, p. 9). Jacob (2004) acknowledged that the unprecedented economic increase has kept China in a state of transition. However, while China has been experiencing explosive economic development, this progress also has produced a series of extremely challenging problems, for example, urban unemployment (Weil, 2006) and the conflict between the new market ideological orientation and the old ideology of socialism held by the CCP (the Communist Party of China) (Zhao, 2004). As I discussed in my M.A. thesis (Wang, 2008), being a laid-off worker was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the bankruptcy of the factories caused workers to become dispossessed and marginalized. On the other, it pushed workers to compete in the competitive market and exert their potential. According to L. Xu (1995), after the Opening and Reforming Policy, the Chinese people started to pursue personal practical interests. Ping and Gao struggled to accept these new values as a means to move beyond their hardships in the competitive market, but this was a difficult experience, as Gao recounts:

When Ping's brother learned that Ping and I were in a hard situation, he persuaded us to join his business in Hong Kong. In the beginning, I was unwilling to lose my identity, and I refused his benevolence, but he suggested that we could run an independent computer consumable's branch in Guangzhou to realize our own potential, and I agreed to have a try at the business. In the early 1990s, the computer was fairly new to the Chinese people, and the computer business was very profitable. We began to explore the potential market in mainland China for selling computer consumables. The famous computer newspaper in China, the "World Computer Newspaper," did a story about our business in 1988, which made us famous in the computer business in mainland China. Naturally, our living standard improved as well. The following pictures were taken in the early 1990s in honor of our wedding anniversary after ten years of struggle in our business. (Interview with Gao accompanied by Ping, March 19, 2011)

Culture Shift: Ten Years in a Split Second

Figure 6: Ping and Gao's photo taken in the early 1990s in honour of their 10th wedding anniversary.

Generally speaking, after the Opening and Reforming Policy, one of the most important changes was the emphasis on "economic development and individual incentives, which gave impetus to the revival of private business" (Liu, n.d.). L. Xu (1995) argued that the new slogans such as "getting rich is glorious" (p. 98), "letting some people get rich first" (p. 98) started to replace the old values of "becoming well-to-do together" (gong tong fu yu) (p. 98) based on collectivism. Facing the new social economic situation, China enacted a new economic policy to establish special economic zones (SEZs) in the south-eastern coastal areas. Guangzhou City was one of them because of the fast economic development in Guangzhou. Following the trend of "jumping into the market sea" to find opportunities to make money, Gao left for Guangzhou. As economic growth in China brought about the transformation of values from the old to the new, people like my research participants never forgot to maintain their values, and enhance their basic sense of self-esteem and self-regard. Even though Ping and Gao had experienced hardships, they looked for and found more opportunities and possibilities in Guangzhou, finally with the help of Ping's brother, within the context of these new reforms. They believed that they could accomplish their life goals by their efforts, which over time proved to be true.

When Ping and Gao showed me the photo taken in honour of their 10th wedding anniversary, they had mixed feelings. Ten years is just like a split second; it is short, but it is long as well. Only they, the couple, could feel the hardships they have experienced. Ping never forgot that even when she gave birth to their daughter, Gao could not accompany her because he had to struggle for his business in Guangzhou. Although they

survived and adapted well after ten years of hard work, Ping called the experience "stained with blood." When Gao suggested they take a photo to celebrate their wedding anniversary, the blue uniform and plain clothes had become the past tense. Ping and Gao chose to wear wedding clothes this time. In fact, the wedding culture has been a vital part of Chinese tradition. During Mao's time, if a young couple had a wedding with frilly wedding gowns and banquets, they were judged to be the descendants of the bourgeois. For sure, at that time, for the ordinary family, it was hard to afford a lavish wedding ceremony. Ping and Gao had a very simple wedding at that time. However, since society was changing, values were changing as well. In the 1990s, when some Chinese first became rich, they started to follow Western customs. The bride and bridegroom prepared rings for each other to exchange during the wedding ceremony. Some of the new couples had their ceremonies in church. Although the Chinese people had regarded the colour white as taboo for a wedding ceremony, under the influence of new values, it became popular for the bride to wear a Western-style white dress with a long train. Ping and Gao also followed that trend, although they only rented the dress from a photographic studio to take the photo, which was not only evidence of their following new values but also bore witness to the start of their promising life after a ten-year struggle.

As just mentioned, from the late 1980s to 1990s, a new value shift occurred towards Western customs, and "get rich first" replaced the "frugal life and spiritual quest of the past" (L. Xu, 1995, p. 100). Collectivism that had influenced revolutionary generation was losing its authority, instead, the new values of materialistic pursuit started to dominate the main value system. The former values of devotion to collective interests

were largely replaced by concerns with individual needs. More and more people tended to agree with "working subjectively for oneself and objectively for society" (L. Xu, 1995, p. 68). Although a "new" value system was being constructed, it was far from being integrated, which caused an uneasy and often confused coexistence of conflicting values.

After ten years of hard work in China, Ping and Gao have amassed a fortune. To a large degree, they have realized their monetary goals, but since their interests surpassed a mere pursuit of money, they began to pursue something more spiritual. Since they have had money, their dream was to travel all around China and beyond to the whole world.

Seeing the World

Figure 7: Ping and Gao took this photo during their first trip to Tibet.

Ping described her memories of the photo:

This picture was taken in Tibet. We had been to Tibet several times; the first two, we drove with our friends to the provincial capital, Lasha, and then we rode horses to the villages around the city. The road was very steep, and once my horse got scared and reared up, and I fell off. Fortunately, I got tangled in some bushes at the top of the cliff. At that special moment, a brush with death forced me to think more about my life and about all these things after my death. I was so fortunate that the local people helped to save me at risk to their own lives. Then, they took me to the hospital. After recovering, I thought I could face death directly. Meanwhile, I had a deep feeling of connection with these local people. Even today, I don't know their names or remember what they looked like. I mean the people who saved me, but later after the accident, I spent more time organizing friends who wanted to join with me to buy books, notebooks, stationery, and food for Tibet and to distribute it all with big Jeeps. We always drove aimlessly, and gave all the books and food to the children along the road until these offerings were gone. The kids may never have known who we were, but my friends and I have done this many times whenever we had the time to drive in Tibet. (Interview with Ping accompanied by Gao, March 21, 2011)

Figure 8: Ping and Gao took these photos during their later trips to Tibet.

Even though Ping and Gao's acts of kindness might seem trivial when compared with large development projects, "the meaning of life is in contributing, not taking." This quote from Ping's brother partly reflects the persistence of a long-held Chinese cultural tradition. As human beings, we are social by nature; we cannot exist independently. When we receive from society, we should always remember to return more. Only if we do this is it possible for us to preserve our culture and tradition and transmit positive energy to each other. From what Ping and Gao exemplify, we can see that they consider the most enlightened people to be not those who have more money or intellect or higher status. What really matters to them is whether one has been kind and helpful to others. Ping and Gao pursue the cultivation of this spiritual state.

As our interview process unfolded, I kept asking myself, how did Ping and Gao come by their values? From their account in the following paragraphs, we can see the positive influences of their families on their values.

The Influence of Family

Figure 9: Ping's family photo taken when she was a child.

Ping described her memories of her family (Figure 9):

I was born into a big family. The girl standing in front is me, and the older lady beside me is my grandmother. You might be interested in knowing where my

grandfather is. In fact, I am curious about this as well. I heard from my grandmother that my grandparents had an arranged marriage. Ever since they were married, my grandfather wanted to escape from it. I dare not say that he didn't love my grandmother, but after my father was born, my grandfather escaped to Holland even though his parents sent security guards to watch him at home because they were afraid that he would leave them to escape from his arranged marriage. I don't know how he went to Holland from China, but I heard that he eventually became rich. I met him once. During the 1950s, our China was characterized by widespread poverty, especially during the "three bad years" of 1959, 1960, and 1961—we Chinese people didn't have adequate food, clothing, or housing.

When I was 10 years old, in 1965, my grandfather returned to China once because he had donated money and food to our country. When he came to our town, he was regarded as an honourable guest. When we didn't have adequate food and clothing, my grandfather already had led a life in which he could afford to wear elegant ties, expensive leather shoes, and western-styled suits. When he walked down the street, the local people stared at him as if he were a foreigner. He bought lots of beautiful coats and shoes for me and some gifts for my family members, and also left some money for us when he said farewell. However, I seldom had the chance to wear the beautiful fashion clothes that he bought for me, since my grandmother disciplined me to lead a thrifty life.

Since my grandfather had been in Holland for almost 30 years, my grandmother raised my father alone. When I was young, because my grandmother was lonely, my parents asked me to stay with her. Thus, I grew up with my grandmother. She was a thrifty person and never allowed me to waste a penny. During the days I lived with my grandmother, I could see that she was a strict woman who followed the three obediences and four virtues of the Chinese woman: first, womanly character; second, womanly conversation; third, womanly appearance; and last, womanly work (女德女言女行女工). She always warned me that womanly character was very important; as a woman, she may not have talents but she should know to behave in a modest way with good manners; she may not have extraordinary eloquence, but she should know when to speak and what to speak; she might not have a pretty face, but she should know how to keep herself clean and neat in dress. My grandmother was an ordinary Chinese woman: when she was unmarried, she was to live for her father, and when married, she was to live for her husband; and when her husband left her, she was to live for her son. I cannot totally agree with the three obediences and four virtues, but I was influenced by my grandmother, and I formed the habits of hard work, endurance, and independence, but not blind obedience. In fact, my grandmother's spirit is still influencing me today. I dare say that I am not poor now, but I still lead a thrifty life. Every year, Gao and I pay a visit to China to see our parents in WenZhou, ZheJiang Province. In our town, each household owns two or three top brand cars, and when one person buys a Mercedes Benz, their neighbour will buy

an even more expensive car. The women wear the top designer clothing, but I prefer to wear simple and comfortable clothes.

Last night, I went swimming at the YMCA. While I was having a break, I could not help but remember my grandmother. As you know, I immigrated to Canada a few years ago, and even though my grandmother passed away a long time ago, I always think of her. In her whole life, she never lived for herself, but always as a good daughter, a good wife, and a good mother. How I wish she were still alive, so I could offer her a better life. (Interview with Ping, March 21, 2011)

When Ping's eyes filled with tears, I stopped the interview. Values do not arise independently. The background of our experience plays an important role in shaping our personal values. Ping's grandmother never received a formal education, and her actions were guided by Chinese tradition and the society in which she lived. As a Chinese woman who was born before the establishment of new China, her values were influenced by traditional values exemplified by Confucianism, even though her husband left her and re-married, she lived alone and raised her children on her own. Ping's grandmother was strict in her adherence to the Three Obediences and Four Virtues. In her whole life, she did not live for herself. Rather, she lived as a good daughter, a good wife, and a good mother. When Ping grew up with her grandmother, "learning takes place formally and informally" as a result of family influence (Sinner, 2004, p.1). The virtues of her grandmother were deeply rooted in her experience, as she attested. Family also played an important role in her personal growth. According to Goel and Goel (2008), family is the

first influence on the formation of our values. The greatest gift that Ping said that her family gave to her, especially her grandmother, was a sense of discipline, which was important to forming her personal philosophy, and also influenced the development of her personality. During the process of experiencing life change, Ping received benefits from what she had learned from her family. Thus, when Ping looked back at her life, she was full of gratitude.

On March 22, 2011, I decided to phone Ping to ask whether we could continue our interview. She agreed without hesitation, and the following interview lasted for 10 hours, portions of which are excerpted here:

> Qian, I have heard of the name Confucius, but frankly speaking, I don't know what Confucianism (rujiao,儒教) is. According to what you have explained to me, I think what I have done totally abides with Confucianism. When I was young, my grandmother told me to be a real human being. No matter where and with whom we live, we should be benevolent. We should know the right way to connect with others around us. Being moral, being human, being other-concerned always guides my action. We have experienced a difficult period in China, but even during the worst times, I never lost faith in life. We felt lucky to get help from our brother. Gao and I struggled and moved beyond our difficult period as laid-off workers. We never gave up our principles to love others, to treat people well.
>
> In 2003, Gao and I decided to immigrate to Canada because I wanted to have a different life experience. Although Gao didn't want to give up our business

> in China, our curiosity about Canada motivated us. Before coming to Canada, we knew nothing about English and French, as you know, since we hadn't received higher education in China. But our successful navigation of our difficult period of being laid-off helped us gain more confidence. When we decided to immigrate to Montreal in our 40s, we had already had the psychological preparation to begin a new life. Another unexpected thing was that we not only have learned these two new languages (English and French) well but also run two successful restaurants in Montreal! Perhaps the most impressive thing is that after successfully running two restaurants in Montreal, we have never forgotten our tradition of "benevolence." These are the gratitude letters from the Montreal Police, Fire & Emergency Departments. (Interview with Ping, March 22, 2011)

When Ping showed me the letter from the Montreal Police, Fire and Emergency Departments, I saw they were addressed to her because of her annual donation to these departments. Ping's smile was full of pride. Suddenly, Ping and Gao became giants in my mind. I had to show my deep admiration for them in turn. Feather (1975) argued that values are "the products of cultural, institutional, and personal forces acting upon the individual" (p. 11). Even though it appears that more and more people tend to be "looking only at money" (yiqie xiang qian kan) (L. Xu, 1995, p. 1) and that Chinese traditional symbols have been ridiculed and discredited, Ping and Gao would seem to have maintained the essence of Confucian power-benevolence.

4.1.3 Ping and Gao's Present Life

I conducted my last interview with Ping and Gao on March 25, 2011. When I was wondering whether it was inconvenient to carry out our interview in the evening, Ping burst into hearty laugher and told me not to worry about the time, since she and Gao didn't need to get up early now that their daughter had taken over their business. Ping felt an irresistible impulse to talk about their present life:

> I am very satisfied with my life now. My daughter was married last year, and we had wedding ceremonies for her in China and Canada. The one held in China was very special. We invited all our friends from our hometown to participate in our daughter's wedding ceremony. We didn't want anybody to buy gifts, and we provided all the food and wine for free. The wedding ceremony lasted almost for a whole day, and we all had a good time. We only have one daughter so after she was married, we transferred our two restaurants to her and her husband, although we still help to run them. Sooner or later, they have to know how to run a business after all, since Gao and I cannot accompany her for her whole life. When my daughter and her husband began to learn how to run the restaurants, we had more time to do some entertainment activities. At present, Gao and I don't need to get up early to go to work, so we can sleep later and do some sports activities. I have learned how to skate, ski, and swim. Meanwhile, I have more time to participate in community activities, and I feel happy to help others. I enjoy my life now. (Interview with Ping accompanied by Gao, March 25, 2011)

Gaining More Confidence: Learning the Language

Figure 10: Ping (the fourth one from right) and her classmates from the French program offered by the Quebec government for new immigrants to Canada.

When Ping and Gao immigrated to Canada, Ping was already in her forties. Although they were psychologically prepared to begin a new life in a new land, even if they imagined needing to work as babysitters, they did not bow to fate. When they found out that the Quebec government offered language training programs, they actively pursued the opportunity. They worked hard with their language training, and they never expected that in their middle age, they would grasp two additional foreign languages (English and French). Figure 10 is the picture that Gao made for Ping and her classmates from the French language-learning program offered by the Quebec government for new immigrants. After learning English and French, Ping gained more confidence, and she

began to learn to skate and ski. The following photo (Figure 11) shows Ping and her family skiing at the Mont Tremblant ski resort in Canada!

Remaining Revolutionary

Figure 11: Gao, Ping and Gao's son-in-law, Ping and Gao's daughter, and Ping (from left to right) at the Mont Tremblant ski resort in Canada.

After learning more sports activities, Ping felt proud of herself. In general, not many women in their forties would risk learning to skate or ski if they had no previous basic skills, yet Ping challenged herself. As Ping said, when you conquer yourself, you vanquish your enemy. Whenever I interviewed Ping and Gao, I often heard Ping's hearty laughter. So, we might say that she remains "revolutionary"— her optimistic spirit and laughter is the evidence!

Indulging

Figure 12: Ping and her new Jaguar.

When I first saw this photo (Figure 12), I assumed that Ping was visiting a car exhibition; but instead, she told me that it was her car (a gift from Gao), which indicated that they had not only survived in Canada but had made a very successful transition. I felt embarrassed when Ping told me this Jaguar was her car because in daily life, she was thrifty, and she always drove me to their restaurants with an ordinary black car. I never associated a famous brand car with Ping. They generally did not flaunt their success, and practiced thrift and humility in their daily life. Obviously, there can be occasional exceptions to one's usual habits, but Ping and Gao did not exaggerate their wealth.

According to Wagner-Martin, ordinary people's stories tend to be ignored because their life experiences are not regarded as important as those of public figures (as cited in Goodson & Sikes, 2001). McLaughlin and Tierney (1993) argued that life history

methodology, as a record of life stories within historical contexts, makes it possible for ordinary individuals to describe their lives. Denzin (1970, 1989) suggested that the life history method is "designed to elicit the story of an individual, a family or a group as they interpret their experiences" (as cited in McIntyre, 2006, p. 23). In addition, life histories can be used as "a tool of history, defining the past and reflecting on one's own socio-economic and cultural diversity within a particular period of time" (Batey, 1999, p. 44). Ping and Gao's photos taken over the years—in the late 1970s and early 1980s as factory workers in China, in the mid-1980s and 1990s struggling to run a business, and in the 2000s exploring new business opportunities in Canada—provide perspectives on different periods of their lives. They were revolutionary, optimistic, and honourable workers in their youth, leading thrifty lives (Mao's time). They struggled when their social status as honourable workers disappeared overnight in their early middle age (Deng's time). After a long struggle, they not only survived but led a good life, even prospering (present time).

Rapid social change in China continues to transform social relationships and individual lived experience, especially the social status of Chinese workers. Narrative and life history does not aim to generalize, so Ping and Gao's story cannot represent all the workers in China. However, such qualitative approaches have the potential to particularize, to reveal that over the course of their lives, Ping and Gao never gave up when facing difficulties, but united as one, faced their hardships and struggles with a positive outlook, and ultimately, pursued their potential to be adventurers. The photos helped to reveal that in whatever period, whether they were workers or business people,

in China or in Canada, they recognized the significance of each small achievement, and created photographs to honour the moment, often in a two-person group picture. The photos revealed that their love for each other and their family was a source of support that contributed to their success in whatever social challenge they faced. Throughout the interviews, Ping also emphasized several times that her brother was always there to support her in times of trouble. When life threw difficulties in her path, her brother helped her to walk on her own.

The phrase family values has different interpretations in different cultures. In China, family values have been influenced by Confucianism: the ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, friend and friend. With respect to these five relationships, each family member has a specific duty to fulfill. The process of fulfilling these duties is a way to realize fulfillment, which will influence family members throughout their lifetime. When a family acts well, it creates a safe, positive, and supportive environment for all its members to be nourished. As China transformed socially, strong family ties helped Ping and Gao to utilize resources and live together in a healthy manner. Whether they were workers in the 1970s and 1980s or successful business people in the 1990s or new immigrants to Canada in 2003, Ping and Gao struggled together as a unit to strive for their future. Family life was at the heart of their success. From Ping's account, her brother set the tone for their family: "We were both raised with the primary value that if you have more than you need, you give back." Whatever the situation, their feelings of being loved, belonging to the group, and being nurtured by the family never changed. When Ping and Gao were confronted by

difficulties, they worked together to solve their problems without blaming, criticizing, or finding fault with each other. Thus, the family had a strong spiritual base in times of stress.

During my interviews, Ping and Gao's daughter, was sitting with us as well. I found that all the family members in Gao's home felt a freedom to express themselves naturally. I observed that the main emotional tone of their family was a readiness to reach out to help others, including those outside of their extended family. I remembered Ping's brother's words: "We were both raised with the primary value that if you have more than you need, you give back", which resonated deeply with me when I thought about my interviews with Ping and Gao—I did not offer them any payment or bonus to participate in the interviews, and yet they always cooked delicious meals for me and treated me as their friend (Figure 13).

Researcher as Friend

Figure 13: The meal cooked by Ping and Gao when I had the last interview with them.

Chapter 5: My Brother Quan's Life History—Interviews in China

After my interviews in Canada, I received a phone call from my parents to tell me that my nephew would be getting married soon. I was so happy for my brother. If it were not for my brother and his experience as a laid-off worker, I would not have had the good fortune to meet Ping and Gao and explore their stories. I felt relieved that my brother's son had grown up and soon would lead an independent life. I phoned my brother as soon as I got the news to say congratulations. My brother knew that I wanted to continue my interviews with him, and he agreed without hesitation and expected me to be back home as early as possible. On my side, I also was longing to fly back to my family members as soon as possible.

As usual, whenever I returned to Beijing from Montreal, all my family members would meet me at the airport with beautiful flowers, and then my parents would treat us all to a big dinner to welcome me home. As we talked, waiting for my brother Quan to join the gathering, we received a call from the hospital informing us that he had had an accident. My sisters and I immediately drove to the hospital. My brother-in-laws stayed with my parents to comfort them. When I ran into the ward, I saw my brother was covered with bandages. Tears filled my eyes, and when I called out to him, he did not say anything but tried to extend his hand to touch mine. It was difficult for him to speak, but I

could feel that he was glad that I was with him. I kept asking the doctor about the seriousness of Quan's situation, and when he did not answer me clearly, I began to beg him to save my brother. At that moment, any lingering prejudice towards my brother becoming a laid-off worker completely disappeared. Some parts of the following sections are based on my memories, while some of the italicized indented quotes are from my Master's thesis.

5.1 A Memory Upon Seeing My Brother in the Hospital

My brother was my hero when I was a little girl. His blue uniform was the symbol of his leading class social status. In Figure 14, my brother is sitting in the front row on the right.

Happy Time (When we were together)

Figure 14: My brother Quan and his colleagues (the photo taken in 1980 in honour of their friendship as workers).

When my brother was in his 20s, I was a little child. I remember that after class during my first year of primary school, every day my routine was to pass by my brother's factory to wait for him, so we could walk home together. While I was waiting, I had a chance to enjoy the collective life in the factory. I liked the atmosphere. At the end of the day, some workers played chess or musical instruments in the entertainment room. Some played basketball or soccer on the sports field, and some spent time in the factory library. In brief, their life was rich in experiences. At that time, most factory workers were from urban families. They chose to be workers. Even intellectuals were considered to be workers. Most of them worked very hard during the day and totally relaxed after work. In their minds, they never thought about being laid off. Sometimes, on weekends, I went to the Inn with my brother and his co-workers. I went to see movies with them. I went hiking with them. My whole impression of their lifestyle can be summed up by the word happy. The Chinese film Kuai le de dan shen han (Happy Bachelor, 1983) painted a portrait of the happy lives of factory workers at that time. I still remember some beautiful lines spoken by the workers in the film: "Come over, come over, all the days, all the days! I will weave you into my life, with the golden threads of my youth, with the embroidered tassel of my happiness!" The film presents an image of happy, well-fed, enthusiastic workers who enjoyed their life due to the benefits of secure employment. They felt so proud of their identity as workers.

My brother's honourable status as a worker made my childhood special. I was always proud of my brother. To some degree, he was like a big umbrella to protect me

from life's storms during my youth. Compared to mine, my brother's childhood could be described as "miserable." When he recalled his childhood, he had complicated feelings:

> The day when I was born, I was labelled as 'xiao si lei fen zi'[6], and the day when I went to primary school, I had to fill in the forms for registration. In one column, it was about category of origin. When I wrote down my origin as "landlord," my desk-mate screamed it out, and my classmates didn't like to play with me because of my "bad" origin, and some kids teased me as a descendent of "exploiters." I thought it was funny. All our family, including our grandpa, depended on our father's salary. I didn't wear silk or fur, instead, ordinary clothes. How could they regard me as the exploiting class? From 1966–1976 during the Cultural Revolution, there was sharp conflict between Capitalists and Proletariats. As a descendent of a landlord, I was regarded as one member of capitalism, and I was insulted by my peers who belonged to the Proletariat. I had no friends in class, but I had my own friends: my dog and my cat, which I picked up in the street, and I played with them after my studies. What impressed me most was that I had to accompany our mother and grandfather to meetings to be criticized because they had a "bad" origin. Our mother got sick frequently, and since our father had to go to the countryside to train the bank staff and our grandfather was old, I was the main "labour" in the family. I enjoyed taking care of our mother and our grandfather. (Wang, 2008, p. 38)

[6] "Xiao si lei fen zi" means "little four categories." During the Cultural Revolution 1966–1976 in China, the dictatorship targeted four categories of people: "the unreformed landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, [and] bad elements and rightists as resolutely [opposing] communism" (Watson, 1984, p. 38).

During my brother's childhood, "people [were] still categorized and ranked by a set of class labels which they … inherited (in the patriline) from their fathers and grandfathers" (Watson, 1984, p. 4). Thus, each individual in that society was given a class attribute. This phenomenon lasted until the 1980s after the Opening and Reforming Policy. During my brother's youth, those labelled as landlords, rich peasants, and capitalists were criticized as the "exploiting class." Those poor and lower middle peasants and urban workers belonging to the exploited class were to be protected (Watson, 1984). The Communist Party represented the interests of the proletariat. My mother thought that these class labels would follow a person throughout his/her lifetime. Since my grandfather's family were "landlords," my mother was identified with "bad" class origins. Unfortunately, my brother hadn't shaken the yoke of inauspicious start, and he was labelled as xiao si lei fen zi. In earlier days, my mother's family had been very proud of their origin in honour and wealth. The following excerpts (in italics) are from my Master's thesis:

> My grandfather's forefather passed the imperial examination in the last dynasty in China—the Qing Dynasty (in the late 19th century)—and was awarded the title Xiu-Cai (秀才 , scholar). This position brought the whole family honour and wealth because of the rewards from the royal court. From then on, my grandfather's big family became rich and was identified as "landlord." According to my brother's memory, when he was young, our grandfather told him that every year when my great-grandfather was the landlord, he appointed one day annually to open his granary to distribute free food to the local people. My

> brother also told me that our great-grandfather enjoyed his benevolence to his fellowmen. In many ways, my grandfather's family led a rich and peaceful life before the "land reform." (Wang, 2008, p. 39)

The "Land Reform" was launched by the Communist Party of China (CPC) from 1950–1952. According to what my mother has recalled, at that time, the fate of landlords changed overnight as the goal of "Land Reform" was to give back the land to the landless peasants. For a while, many peasants owned their piece of land for the first time ever. (Wang, 2008)

> The worst event for our family during the Cultural Revolution 1956–1966 was the day my grandfather was named "si lei fen zi" (four categories), and all his properties were confiscated by the government. During this time, people were categorized and ranked by a set of class labels that they had inherited from their fathers and grandfathers. For example, the day my brother was born, he was labelled as "xiao (little) si lei fen zi," rather than being prepared to enjoy a rich life as a descendant of a landlord. On these days, it was quite common that my grandfather and my mom endured mental insult and could not eat anything because of their stress. At the time, my mother had lost hope that our family would have a good future and thought that the label of a descendent of "si lei fen zi" would accompany her for the rest of her life. After these stressful days filled with criticism, my brother would cook simple food for my mother and grandfather, and even though the food was not tasty, it comforted them. Often, when my mother

> recalls the past, she never forgets to mention that it was my brother who gave her the strength to live until the day in 1979 when the central government announced that class labels were no longer to be emphasized. (Wang, 2008, p. 40)

Whenever my mother mentions my brother to our family members, she always reminds us, "Not One Less." We know what she means. Mainly, this is a reference to my brother, who is the eldest and only son in our family. He had been the main support for my mother when our family was experiencing perhaps its most difficult time:

> When my sisters were young and my parents were struggling for life because of my mother's "bad" origin, my brother always shouldered the burden of hope for the whole family. However, the label of descendent of "si lei fen zi" made my brother miss his opportunity to go to university because during that period, children whose families were farmers were given the top priority to receive a higher education. Facing this reality, my brother had to give up his dream to enter university, and instead, he chose to be a worker as a profession. (Wang, 2008, p. 41)

After being labelled as the descendent of "si lei fen zi" (little four categories) for quite a long time, the profession of being a worker re-established my brother's social status, and the whole family was proud of him. For a while, my brother also enjoyed his life as a worker. In the 1970s, the nationalization of industry in China initiated the era of the honourable worker. In his early writings, Mao Zedong stressed that "people could indeed change their class nature by adhering to party discipline and by accepting a new

world view" (Watson, 1984, p. 7). Finally, my brother was on the same side as 95 percent of the people in China. He had become a worker in a state factory producing carpets. The whole family began to see a smile on his face that had been absent for quite a long time. Even though in his mind my brother still had a dream of being a university student, my father always said that real gold will shine anywhere. Encouraged by this, my brother began to concentrate on his work in the factory.

5.2 My Memories of My Brother's Hard Life During His Middle Age (Deng's Time)

After just a short time of enjoying being an honourable worker, my brother was involved in a storm of layoffs. After the Opening and Reforming Policy was instituted, the introduction of privatization undermined the survival of state-owned factories. When most of state-owned factories went bankrupt, workers lost their job security and began to suffer from severe market competition. When my brother was laid-off, he not only lost his social status and all the rights he had previously enjoyed as a member of the leading political class, he also had to cope with the conflict between his longstanding experience of job security and the new conditions of severe market competition, which forced him to adapt to "the survival of the fittest" (Won, 2004, p. 82). Like the majority of laid-off workers in China, my brother also was middle-aged when he was laid-off. For the first time in his life, he had to compete in the labour market. Moreover, being a laid-off worker seemed to be a disaster and a blessing in disguise. On the one hand, he was a victim of the transformation of China from a socialist society into a market-driven economy, and on the other, the changing social context inspired him to develop his potential in other directions.

My brother Quan was unwilling to accept the fact that he had lost social security and become a laid-off worker. Although he missed the life he had led before when he worked in the factory, he attempted to find a new way to make a living. He went directly to the market to look for new opportunities. My brother's decision contrasted sharply with my father's values, which created family discord for a while. My father had served in, and been loyal to, the Communist Party his whole life. My father's name, "HuiMing," was given to him by the Communist Party. In Chinese, "Hui" means "will" and "Ming" means "bright," which suggested that my father and all the people of China would have a bright future. My father had participated in the Anti-Japanese War, the Liberation War in 1940s, and the Korean War in 1950s. The traces of many wounds cover his body even now—the proof of his struggle and contribution to his Nation and his People. My father always said that the Communist Party saved him and helped him to realize his value in society. According to him, we have to be loyal to the Party and follow what it tells us to do. Thus, my father thought my brother should not do anything but wait for the rearrangement of the Communist Party.

In Wenzhou, China, in the early 1990s, when 70 percent of the 40,000 "small-business entrepreneurs reported that they had been originally laid-off workers from state-owned enterprises"(Won, 2004, p. 80), the Chinese media gave high praise to them as models of survival without much support from the government. They were praised as "self-reliant, risk-taking entrepreneurs and an example of modern market-oriented individuals whom workers in other areas should emulate" (Won, 2004, p. 80). However, the day my brother announced to our family that he had been laid-off and wanted to find

a new opportunity to run a business, no one in the family could accept the reality that he, once our pride and joy, was no longer an employed high-status worker. With respect to our family, he changed from our moral support and role model to an "outsider." Fortunately, my father changed his view when he realised that the present day society was different from the one in which he had lived his younger days. He began to sponsor my brother's business. However, this metamorphosis did not occur without a struggle. Although my brother ran a small company, he had to work every day, and he had no concept of the difference between weekdays and weekends. He also lost the happiness of working with his workmates.

5.3 My Brother Quan's Present Life

After a few days, I returned to the hospital, and in my brother's hand was a scarf, the gift that I brought to him when I returned to Beijing after receiving my M.A. degree at McGill University. Even when he fell asleep, he grasped it tightly in his hand. I guess in my brother's heart, his little sister was still the one he loved. When I reminded him that I wanted to research more of his life history and do more interviews, he agreed without any hesitation, although he emphasized that I should not write any bad words that could ruin the reputation of China. I smiled at him and said that I was his sister and at the same time a researcher, and that I was only interested in his life history and how his values had changed when he was confronted by the Opening and Reforming Policy in China, especially his life changes after my last interview in 2008. I assured him that I had no intention to ruin anything. After his recovery, we held our first interview.

Figure 15: My brother Quan was hurt in an accident (the photo reveals that he still has some scars on his face).

Quan tells his story of struggle:

My life is getting harder as I am getting older. I work very hard every day. Generally, I get up at 6:00 in the morning, and I go to open the shop around 7:00 a.m. before ordinary people's working time at 8:00 a.m. Selling goods is becoming more difficult as more shops open in my area. Fortunately, I started my business a little earlier, so I have regular customers… sigh… although my profit is getting smaller. The money I earn daily is so easy to lose. As you see, I was in the hospital for two weeks, and I spent almost 3000RMB (equal to 500 CAN$) there. In ordinary times, even if I get sick and it is not serious, I do not dare go to the hospital, since I have no health insurance. This time, it was inevitable. I think the money I have earned, I will need to give to the hospital, sooner or later, when

> I get sick in my old age. Life is becoming harder; your nephew has grown up, and he will get married soon. I have to save money for his wedding…. (Interview with Quan, April 5, 2011)

As I recorded my brother's interview, my heart was touched repeatedly. His face had more wrinkles, his hair was greyer—he was older now. His sense of insecurity was becoming stronger. Even though he worked hard every day, he still worried that the amount of money he earned would not support him if he had health problems. As his sister, I felt so helpless. Following are his words:

> I felt so relieved that your nephew has found his love finally. According to our traditional custom, I think we should celebrate it. In China today, a high wedding cost is inevitable. Usually, the parents have to spend 300,000 Yuan (44,000 CND$). I am not sure whether his fiancée needs me to buy them an apartment, and if so, it will be hard for me to afford it. When I was married in the early 1980s, the cost of marriage was only the standard "three big things"— a television set, a refrigerator, and a washing machine. It was hard to imagine buying a house; it was common for couples to live together with the husband's family or get a house from the units we worked for; but nowadays, the house has become a must-have for a newly-married couple. However, the price of apartments in Beijing is ridiculous; they cost around 30,000 to 40,000 Yuan (around 5,000CND) per square meter. I think I cannot even afford to buy a toilet at those prices. If they want a car, I can give them all my savings to buy it. Qian,

as Wei's aunty, can you give him a hand as well? (Interview with Quan, April 8, 2011)

According to a report in the China Daily USA (J. Xu, 2011), in 2007 the price was around 5,000 Yuan (800 CND$) per square meter for an apartment in Beijing's fourth north ring road, however, by 2011, the price in the same area had increased to 30,000 Yuan (5,000 CND$) per square meter on average—a 600% rise in four years. For an ordinary resident, it is impossible to afford such a high-priced apartment. For young couples who are getting married, buying an apartment is a headache for the families on both sides. My nephew and his fiancée had an almost "naked marriage" (luo hun, in Chinese, 裸婚, is a common expression in China, and refers to a marriage with as few expenses as possible), which meant that they only would pay nine Yuan (1.5CND) to the Ministry Affairs Bureau for the legal marriage registration fee without owning anything else, such as their own apartment or a car.

I felt guilty, although my nephew's marriage was his own private affair. I still remember that the Chinese people led thrifty lives in the 1970s and that my brother bought my first doll for me. I was born into this world in the 1970s, and my brother had just become a worker after celebrating his 18th birthday. He was very excited that he had a new little sister, and he spent almost all of his first-month salary to buy a doll from the Beijing Friendship Store. At that time, this store was the only place sanctioned to sell imported foreign goods in China. It was also expensive. My doll was a "foreign" girl with long blond curly hair with a white blouse, red skirt with black lines, and beautiful shoes.

When I laid her down, her big eyes with their long black eyelashes would close softly; when I sat or stood her up, her eyes would open again. In the 1970s, owning a foreign doll was rare in China. I grew up with this precious gift. Whenever I told my playmates that the doll was a gift from my brother, they all admired me for having such a good brother. Sometimes they hugged my doll to share the happiness with me. It was incredible just how happy I was at that time. Wherever I ate, played, or even slept, this doll always accompanied me.

I cannot remember a time when my brother asked me to do anything for him, and today, I knew he was in a difficult situation. As a doctoral student, I survive on a scholarship rather than making a high salary, so I felt ashamed that I could not help him financially with the wedding. I addressed this issue when my family members and I got together. For a thousand years in China, getting married has been regarded as a family issue rather than an intimate arrangement between two individuals. However, my parents never expected that one day the family would have to spend such a huge amount of money on an apartment to earn a granddaughter-in-law. Thirty years ago, before the Opening and Reforming Policy, when a couple got married, if they had a job, the unit they worked in generally would assign them an apartment. Now, the dream of buying a house is out of reach for most young Chinese who earn an average wage and live an ordinary nine-to-five life. Although my nephew and his fiancé are finally living in a 3,500 Yuan (600 CND$) rented house, our family members still raised over 250,000 Yuan (40,000 CND$) for their wedding expenses.

Figure 16: Photo taken during my nephew's wedding day.

From April to June, our family spent almost two months preparing for my nephew's wedding ceremony, and during the ceremony many family members shed tears of emotion. When my brother became laid-off, he had to find a new way to support his life, and he had little time to take care of his son. At the age of eight, my nephew began to live with my parents, and he stayed with them through primary, middle, and high school. During this period, my brother tried every means to earn enough money to help my nephew lead a better life. I could not help thinking about Ping and Gao's daughter, when her parents were in a difficult situation as laid-off workers. During the interviews, when her daughter was concerned, Ping had told me more than once that most of the time her daughter stayed at home alone, and once when her daughter was sick, she went to the

hospital by herself. When Ping rushed to the hospital, her daughter was lying in a bed on the ward with an intravenous drip in her arm. At this sight, Ping's eyes filled with tears.

When Ping, Gao, and my brother Quan faced difficult times, their children also suffered. Fortunately, both Ping's daughter and my nephew have grown up healthy and both are married. All my family members were excited to be part of my nephew's wedding ceremony. We were proud that he was being married and that he had finished his higher education and received his M.A. degree last year. We all love his wife who is a beautiful, caring lady from Beijing. All my family members drank, danced, and sang lots of songs during my nephew's wedding ceremony. Although my brother has experienced hardship, he was not alone, since our big family kept giving him their strong support. My nephew's successful wedding ceremony proved again that our family could pull together to provide not only emotional support but financial support as well. When one member of the family is in a difficult situation, it is not a personal issue. Rather, it is a family issue. Thus, we always are surrounded by care and love for each other.

After my nephew's wedding, it seemed that my brother experienced a release. For the first time in his life after being laid-off, he invited all of our family members to a big dinner. During the dinner, when my brother bowed to give thanks to all family members, I made this photo (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Family gathering paid for by my brother Quan after Wei's wedding ceremony.

After our big dinner together, I interviewed Quan who said the following:

I never thanked our family members, but I always remembered what you all have done for me. I would like to pour a glass of tea for you to show my gratitude to you for helping Wei to have such a successful wedding ceremony, since you like tea very much. I got to know this from our mother. For a long time, I led a life with much stress. Some colleagues who worked with me in the factory have passed away, and for those who still are living, their situation is not optimistic. Sometimes, I have to give material assistance to my previous colleagues who are laid-off now. I want to help all of them, but my strength is weak. I felt my life was hard because I didn't like my present living situation, even though I could make a

> living. I hope I can go outside to take some photos and spend more time enjoying life. The pity is that I cannot do that now because I don't have enough time; I need to spend even more time running my business. (Interview with Quan, June 10, 2011)

Since my brother became laid-off, he has struggled to find a way to manage his life, and even though he has done a better job than most of his previous colleagues, he still carries a lot of insecurity. He is getting older and will reach the age of "retirement" soon, so he has to think about health insurance. During the interview, I learned that my brother had to pay these insurances without any support from the government. As a researcher, the only thing I could do is give him a voice. The final interview was a special one, as my brother changed from interviewee into interviewer:

> Qian, what is life like in Canada? You have been in Canada for a couple of years, but it seems that you seldom mention your life there. I heard the people there lead a very relaxed life. The government pays the family if they have babies. Do they have laid-off workers as well? I also heard that the workers there have a good pension. When people get old, do they have endowment insurance and health insurance? (Interview with Qian by Quan, July 5, 2011)

After the interviews, we had dinner several times to talk about my life in Canada. My brother never told me before that he admired me for going abroad to study and enjoy multicultural life in Montreal. He paid close attention to Canada's culture and life (especially Montreal) through reports on TV and in newspapers and some magazines. On

one hand, he was curious about life in a distant country, and on the other, Canada was attractive to him because I studied and lived there. When I was in Canada and far away from home, my brother was always with me.

5.4 My Reflections as a Researcher

Alford (1998) wrote, "You start a research project with a problem: a theme, issues, or concern and problems grow out of a combination of personal experience" (p. 24). From the first day I started my academic journey as a graduate student at McGill University, when we touched on issues about the working class or childhood, I wrote in my journals, and my brother became the protagonist of these writings. During this process, I uncovered the deep love that I have for him. Our past is real and cannot be forgotten. I wrote about how my brother was the psychological and emotional support for our big family through the love he has given us. Time passes, and the past cannot be changed. My present life is an accumulation of my past, and my brother is one part of it. Cole and Knowles (2001) argued: "'researchers' definitions of life history research are influenced by their epistemological orientations and by their professional or scholarly autobiographies" (p. 11). Since Ping and Gao's experiences paralleled my brother's, their lives inspired me to study them. When I told Quan about Ping and Gao's life stories, he said he was happy that they were from his generation and that they had shared so many experiences with me. He asked me about their life in Montreal. I told him that Ping and Gao are more or less living like retired people now. They do not need to go to work every day, but they help to run two restaurants that they have turned over to their daughter and her husband to operate. I also told him that Ping and Gao have their own cars, a Land

Rover and Jaguar, and they spend more time on sports now. I could see my brother's eyes were full of envy and admiration. In his heart, he also dreams that someday he will emigrate to Canada or lead a secure life. I hope that his dream can be realized in the very near future.

The inspiration for my research into the value changes of my research participants, Ping, Gao, and Quan, comes from my childhood memories of workers as an honourable class and my deep impression of their happy life in the factory. After the Opening and Reforming Policy in China, their social status changed from honourable leading class to a marginalized social group, which made me worry about their lives and drove me to explore how they struggled to adapt to a changing social context. In the case of Ping and Gao, I became their friend, and in the case of my brother, I am his sister. Thus, my background of life experience has contributed to this merger of life history and life stories. I, as a researcher-cum-storyteller, have sought to be as faithful as possible to my friends' and relatives' life stories as I discovered how they underwent their value changes when experiencing new conflicts or inconsistencies based on their particular and subjective personal experiences in a changing social context.

5.5 Discussion

My study used life history and visual methodologies to investigate the changes in values of laid-off Chinese workers. The age of my research subjects was almost the same as the age of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and their experiences matched the history of the PRC. My research participants were born in the 1950s. Due to their

revolutionary education at their young ages, their thoughts were deeply marked with the characteristics of that age, for example, to show love and concern for family members and the people around them instead of being indifferent; to lead a thrifty life instead of pursuing pure material satisfaction; and to be committed to righteousness instead of profits. The traditional virtues exemplified by Confucianism and their values formed in Mao's time still held an important place in their minds. During the interviews, they kept mentioning their lives as young workers, which indicated they still had some nostalgia for Mao's time. Before the Opening and Reforming Policy, values stressing righteousness, spiritual pursuit, dedication, loyalty, and self-sacrifice dominated the value systems of Ping, Gao, and my brother. As the change from honourable workers to laid-off workers progressed, collectivism became part of the past as individualism spread in China within the context of the rapid development of the market economy. However, my research participants never gave up and actively insisted on their pursuit of spirit over material satisfactions.

Feather (1975) has indicated that man is a "social actor" who is "moulded by his culture and its social institutions," and "with the distinctive characters of societies or cultures and the process of social change that occurs within them" (p. 2). My research participants, as social actors, were influenced by the historical times in which they lived. Thus, the ideals and values appeared to be still imprinted with an overwhelming righteousness and loyalty that continue to affect my research participants to this day. Reality forced them to re-examine the tenets that had shaped their minds and souls. They struggled, especially Quan my brother, when his decision to be self-reliant was

questioned by my father. He suffered an inward struggle. He drank and almost gave in. Ping and Gao led a life "stained with blood" whenever they recalled their hard ten-year struggle after the Opening and Reforming Policy. However, Ping, Gao and my brother Quan did not rule out an awareness of social responsibility. They were by nature a revolutionary generation trying to find a balance between themselves and society. With traditional culture deeply rooted in their minds, they struggled to adapt to the values of the individual, but their efforts towards self-realization were more or less affected by their revolutionary spirit, which put the interests of society and the family before those of the self. When my research participants experienced their initial loss of societal status, especially Ping and Gao, they didn't give up but united as one to overcome adversity. My brother would not give in because, in his mind, family is his big rock to rely on; the family is his ultimate support. Similarly, Ping and Gao received help from Ping's brother. My research participants were fortunate. When they experienced change in their lives, their families were always behind them to extend a helping hand.

Chich (1981) argued that "[t]he family is commonly considered to be the basic component of the greater society in which one lives" (p. 333). For the Chinese people, family is regarded as "the center of all social, spiritual, and transcendental spheres of life" (Chich, 1981, p. 334). Since family is the basic building block, society can be compared to an enlarged family (Chich, 1981). As I discussed in Chapter 2, one of the core values of Confucianism is filial piety, which emphasizes the importance of family life and encourages individuals to be ethical. The Chinese people never regarded Confucianism as an organized religion, but it has deeply influenced their lives both spiritually and

politically. In China, Confucianism has been recognized as a core practice of living, as jen (benevolence, humanity), i (righteousness), li (Propriety), chih (Wisdom), hisao (Filial Piety) are recognized as the cores of education. In Chinese culture, family is strongly emphasized. The function of family not only gives emotional and financial support to its members. More importantly, its members care about and help each other and tend to extend this respect to others in the wider human community. Thus, society has long been referred to as an enlargement of the family.

The purpose of my focus on family influences was to provide insight into the nature of China during its current changing values. Thus, the records of Ping and Gao's life history and my brother's life, along with photo elicitation, are sound ways to understand the current value transformations in China. As my research participants experienced the shifts from collectivism to individualism, the family played an important role in facilitating this transition. Without the support of Ping's brother, it would have been impossible for Ping and Gao to create a successful business. If our family had not financially supported my brother, he would not have been able to fund his business. Although a conclusion cannot be fairly drawn that the family was their sole saviour, it certainly played an important role in supporting their life changes. My exploration into my research participants' value changes over the course of their lives was a way to preserve their life stories and family history as gifts to ourselves, and those we love, now and in the future.

While I emphasized the function of family, my mind flashed back to an image of an old woman. That was in 2011, the last year I did my data collection in China. By chance, I met an old woman cooking and selling Dabing (大饼，pie) in a squalid hovel in an unknown street in Beijing. The old lady looked to be in her 70s. I was curious as to why she was still working at such an old age. After chatting with her, I got to know that she had to support the whole family even though she was not supposed to work at her age. She had been a worker in the factory like Ping, Gao, and Quan before the Opening and Reforming Policy. She had three sons. All of them had worked in the same factory. Due to the bankruptcy of the factory, the old woman and her sons were laid-off. Her sons' unhealthy situation added misfortune to the family. Even though the old woman was in her 70s, she had to cook and sell Dabing to support the whole family. Regarding her present living situation, when she told me that even a kilogram of meat was beyond her means, a wry smile tugged at the corner of her mouth as if carried away by wretchedness and frustration. In the process of our chatting, I wanted to take a photo for her when she was cooking Dabing, but she refused. She said that her shabby clothes didn't look decent. She felt embarrassed about being photographed, but she insisted that one day, she could lead a life in which the whole family could afford to buy meat. Even now, I cannot name the old woman, but her image made a deep impression on my mind. How many families in China have shared the same fate as this old woman's family? Ping, Gao, and Quan were fortunate. They received help from their families when they were in difficult situations. How about all the others who were/are in a worse situation? Whenever I think about this old woman and others who are in this same boat, an image of a thirsty,

breathless dragon stranded in the sand appears in my mind. He is desperate to drink some clean water, especially as he grows old. However, this old lady was not the only one who needs clean water. Millions of laid-off workers in China share her thirst. It seems that they "further the purposes of continuity of identity by reassuring the new self that it is 'as it was then': deserving, qualified, and fully capable of surmounting the fears and uncertainties that lie ahead" (Davis, 1979, p. 39). So, what can their family members do for them? What can their society do for them? What can their nation do for them?

Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) asserted:

> Beginning with a respect for ordinary lived experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only a valorizing of individuals' experience but also an exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted—but in a way that begins and ends that inquiry in the storied lives of the people involved. (p. 42)

I have used life history and photo elicitation to explore the transformations in values of my research participants based on their life experiences. It is a process that has also given meaning to my life as a researcher. The most meaningful part has been the quest to answer questions posed in my mind for a long time, since childhood, but latent, about where the "glorious workers" had all gone. I had moved from being an insider to factory life (as my brother's sister) to being an outsider to my brother's new laid-off status. Through life history research, I sought to understand the change from "honourable worker" to "laid-off" from my participants and my own perspectives. As I sought to

animate the details of my participants' lives with understanding (through the interviews), I found myself feeling happy when they talked about feeling happy in their younger years. I felt sad when they suffered and struggled after being laid-off. I tried every means to place myself and my work in a context of the meaning of their experiences. As a researcher, meaning is not found in an existential vacuum, but is in relation to one's research participants, here as a sister and as a friend. Bruner suggests: "We are a species whose main purpose is to tell each other about the expected and the surprises that upset the expected, and we do that through the stories we tell" (as cited in Charon, 2002, p. 8).

The storytelling and photos offered by my research participants emphasize that their stories are potentially a means by which to re-think experience—their own and our own.

5.6 Conclusion

The phenomenon of laid-off workers, as a product of the Opening and Reforming Policy, has aroused the interests of some scholars, but little research has focused on the changes in their personal values based on their life histories. For example, Zhao (2004) studied laid-off workers by examining the relationship between State-owned enterprise reform and unemployment. He tracked down the processes of China's state-owned enterprise reform, exploring the questions that existed during the reform, and suggested changing the present state-owned enterprise power structure to encourage workers to realize "self-organization and self-management" (p. 275). Won (2003), a Korean scholar, also articulated a concern for laid-off workers by exploring the transformation of labor

relations in China in his study of the policy of xiagang (laid-off) and the re-employment project. Won criticized the policy of reemployment as not being as effective as expected. Both Won (2004) and Zhao (2004) showed great concern for the fate of laid-off workers in their analyses of the transformation of labor relations in urban areas, arguing that workers from the old state enterprises felt marginalized and struggled to get out of their difficult situations as laid-off workers.

However, little research has paid attention to the evolution of the values of this special group of people as laid-off workers, especially, the research based on individual cases. This present study has highlighted the complex pattern of interactions between life history and changes in the values of my participants who experienced contrasting social status in a changing China. It discussed the influences of a lifetime of living in different historical eras impacted by the contrasting values of collectivism and individualism and the influences of traditional values. My research participants experienced various hardships—an isolated childhood because of family background, missed opportunities to receive higher education, and lost jobs in middle age. These experiences shaped them to become a special generation that thought and acted independently to achieve a proper balance with their changing society. To some degree, their multifarious experiences have made them broaden their minds to accept the difficulties in their lives and to take advantage of opportunities to move on. During the interviews with my brother, he mentioned several times that I should not slander the reputation of Communist Party or our homeland China. Although he became an "outsider" to society when he became a

laid-off worker, he still belongs to a generation with one foot caught in history and the other stepping into the future.

Meanwhile, family is emphasized as the basic cell that constitutes society, and the first school where an individual learns to behave properly. Thus, the family is the first place for an individual to form his/her values. Family nourishes the individual to grow into who one is (Muppathinchira, 1999). Through Ping, Gao, and my brother Quan's life histories, the influence of family in the process of their transition from workers to laid-off workers to self-employed businessmen/women became apparent, which helped to highlight the importance of family to their growth in this changing social context.

In addition, in the changing social context in China, the extent of value change and the process of how and what social experiences impact values is part of my research. Since Wilson et al.'s (1979) research on value change in Chinese society during the 1970s, the gap has widened with respect to contemporary Chinese values. My research builds on Wilson et al.'s work by addressing value change in China since the 1970s. In the current context of the drastic transformations in economic and social life in China, it is good to see that people are gaining more and more freedom than before, but they are confused at the same time. In Mao's time, the Chinese Communist Party meant everything to each individual, and each followed the guidelines of the CCP. In that period, people's minds were shaped by sets of values to guide their lives, such as self-sacrifice, submission to the good of the collective, and loyalty to the Party. All of these formed the relatively stable value system in Mao's time. However, after the Opening and Reforming

Policy, the introduction of Western individualism, which emphasizes individual importance, broke down these collective values, and conflicts began to appear. As a result, long-accepted values gradually began to lose their authority, and the new values produced in the changing social context started to make progress. In this value transition period, the Chinese people were/are struggling to find a new spiritual support.

In my research, I have explored the factors affecting value change within a certain social context in China. For example, to better understand Chinese culture and society, I examined such factors as how Chinese traditional values and Mao's ideology have influenced the formation of values in China and Eastern value theory as exemplified by Confucianism. In addition, I have compared traditional Confucian values with the "new" values increasingly dominating the scene since the 1980s, and analyzed the individualistic, pluralizing, and secularizing trends that have emerged. I have emphasized these trends as a basis for understanding the value changes of the workers who have escaped the status of the laid-off in modern-day China. Therefore, my research has made an attempt to assess value change in China over the period between the 1970s and the present, which represents an effort to further the convergence of the social science disciplines and study of China in such a way as to benefit both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars.

However, my research cannot cover all aspects of a subject as broad as value change. Rather, the present effort is a study of a couple and my brother Quan, who were born in the 1950s and who were workers in the 1970s in China. My study should help to

further elucidate the general question of value change. I have explored the values that they hold, which have helped them to successfully adapt to a changing social context. Moreover, I have addressed the question of value change from a unique perspective, using life history merged with photo elicitation. Thus, I hope my exploration of the evolution of the values of my participants contributes to a better understanding of contemporary Chinese values.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

According to Cole and Knowles (2001), a qualitative life history is an "epistemological construct illuminating the intersection of human experience and social context" (p. 9), which makes it possible for individuals to interpret their own lives and the social context in which they exist. This type of life history can be used as "a tool of history, defining the past and reflecting on one's own socio-economic and cultural diversity within a particular period of time" (Batey, 1999, p. 44).

From the beginning of the Opening and Reforming Policy to the present, thirty years have passed, and even though older workers in China have experienced and been influenced by the collectivism of Mao's time, and even though they still harbour nostalgia for the past, they have to face their new reality. When my research participants were laid-off, they received little help from the state or work-units. This lack of support forced them to drop their unrealistic ideals and face reality. While adding new values to adapt to the social situation, they still kept some values, especially the traditional Chinese values that already were deeply rooted in their minds and hearts. Thus, social changes do not often result in a total rejection of old values.

Confucius believed that as a social being, each individual existed not independently; he/she was connected with various networks of relationships because each one exists in a context (Dietz, 2010). Moreover, as Toews (2004) pointed out, "Marx insisted that the emergence of the self-constituting individual could occur only historically" (as cited in Pinar, 2011, p. 135). Thus, an individual will not achieve self-

development outside of history. In a related view of the importance of history to individual development, Pinar (2011) offered a definition of currere:

> Currere emphasizes the everyday experience of the individual and his or her capacity to learn from that experience; to reconstruct experience through thought and dialogue to enable understanding. Such understanding, achieved by working through history and lived experience, can help us reconstruct our own subjective and social lives. (p. 2)

Therefore, currere, as a result of lived experience, is similar to "Confucian philosophy's emphasis on the practical matters of daily life, particularly the importance of simple and integral self-cultivation" (Dietz, 2010, p. 9). Both emphasize the importance of daily life practice. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) further indicated that "for Dewey, education, experience, and life are inextricably intertwined. In its most general sense, when one asks what it means to study education, the answer is to study experience" (p. 415). Thus, daily life practice is an important way to fulfill the need for education. Moreover, educational experience makes it possible to enable "subjective and social reconstruction" (Pinar, 2011, p. 416). This perspective emphasizes the importance of experience. My participants' average education level was junior high school, so their strongest educational influence has been the impact of the social environment and family influence. Confucian philosophy emphasizes that self-cultivation is a search from within, a process to cultivate self to gain self-realization (Muppathinchira, 1999). When one cultivates oneself based on daily life experience, that experience also becomes a way

to learn about "humanity, humankind and humaneness, world, objectivity, the general" (Pinar, 2011, p. 72). It is true that education enables "an enlargement of the self, that is, a more cosmopolitan self, which is attuned to inclusion" (p. 141). However, the aim of education is not just simply schooling, since the "world that emerges from curriculum is always in conversation with the world outside schooling" (p. 141). Confucian philosophy and Pinar both stress that a process to study the world is also a process to shape self-formation. Pinar (2011) argued that for "the curriculum to come alive, it must be embodied, spoken from the moment as experienced" (p. 143). Thus, only when education is integrated into daily life practice, can it reach its goal to cultivate human beings.

As Silverman suggested, "while we usually think of the curriculum as divided into different courses and concepts, we also can think of it as a 'totality,' as a 'vast, unauthorized book' still being written" (as cited in Pinar, 2011, p. 5). Thus, as I discussed in the earlier chapter on value theory, self-cultivation or self-realization cannot be fulfilled over night. Rather, it is a lifelong dedication. Wang points out that for "Confucius self-cultivation was an 'end in itself' and that 'self-realization is imminent in every person's effort to achieve humanity'" (as cited in Pinar, 2011, p. 112), and that all enable "both individual and social transformation" (p.112). When my research participants Quan, Ping, and Gao experienced their changes from being honourable workers to laid-off workers, they had to cultivate themselves—based on their daily life practices—to adapt to these changes.

My research participants belong to a special generation that grew up under the red flag, and who experienced dramatic social change in their middle age that shaped their individuality. Based on my interviews with my participants, it seemed that they were not only recalling their past life experience when they showed me their pictures taken in different eras, but also that they were trying to regain their honourable identity. Whatever difficulties they met in their lives, they never gave up. Further, when they struggled for survival, they still lived for their ideals. After a long period of hard work, Ping and Gao finally left behind their difficult situations of being laid-off, and began to enjoy their free life in Canada, and they did not forget to help those who were in need, for example, by donating money to different communities. My brother Quan remembered to give material assistance to his previous colleagues, even though he felt insecure about his old age and worked hard every day. Ping, Gao, and Quan, in their own minds, were still developing their spirit.

Taylor (1989) argued: "If people lost their commitment or identification, they would feel at sea, as it were; they wouldn't know anymore, for an important range of questions, what the significance of things was for them" (p. 27). Even though at times my research participants were overwhelmed by a sense of being abandoned by their society, feeling uncertain about the future in the context of the drastic transformations of their economic and social lives, they struggled to reconstruct themselves while pursuing something new. Still, they still kept some important influences: for example, even though Ping was not really knowledgeable about Confucianism, from her interview accounts, she has followed the foundations of Confucian philosophy that

were rooted in her blood and influenced by her family. She continued to practice simplicity based on daily life experience to benefit herself and the people around her. She practiced humanity and righteousness rather than purely the pursuit of profit. Although my brother could make a living by running a small company, he still felt lost. He was longing for something more spiritual, more or less like he felt when he was a worker, to serve the country and serve the People. All my research participants, when they maintained their own values, were still seeking spiritual practice. Ping, Gao, and Quan were nostalgic about the past. They had gotten used to their "central authority." However, when confronted by massive social transformations, they had to learn to become "self-reliant," and they survived by adapting to the social situation, aided by their values, especially the traditional Chinese values that already were deeply rooted in their minds and hearts.

In China today, as a result of the Opening and Reforming Policy, laid-off workers have become a historical page to be turned, and the new social phenomenon is that more and more people are focusing on the brands of cars and clothes, things they use in their daily lives, the size and location of their apartments or villa. Today the majority of Chinese people have an unprecedented and inextinguishable ardour for profit. When I collected my data for my dissertation in China, my friends asked me how much I could earn by pursuing my doctoral study. I felt embarrassed to answer this question. I do remember that when I was in middle-school, the political textbooks taught us that the rotten ideas of capitalism bred the worship of money, which should be absolutely avoided. However, in the China of today, money worship

seems to be a dominant trend. When a woman is looking for her Mr. Right, a popular sentiment is expressed by the following: "I would rather cry in a BMW than smile on the back of my boyfriend's bicycle." It seems widely accepted that money is the way to solve all problems. Thus, economic achievement has become the sole general pursuit of the whole society. Once, a professor from a Chinese university stated with regret that in current Chinese universities, students care only for themselves. With the advent of materialism, the young Chinese appear to regard wealth as the criteria to evaluate success. It has replaced commitment to the benefits of the state and the CCP as the measurement of a person's value orientation before the Opening and Reforming Policy. If so, this shift in values may influence a new generation to take a wrong direction that will affect the fate of the nation in the future.

It might be called an "identity crisis":

> an acute form of disorientation, which people often express in terms of not knowing who they are, but which can also be seen as a radical uncertainty of where they stand. They lack a frame or horizon within which things can take on a stable significance, within which some life possibilities can be seen as good or meaningful, others as bad or trivial. The meaning of all these possibilities is unfixed, labile, or undermined. This is a painful and frightening experience. (Taylor, 1989, pp. 27–28)

After thirty years of economic reform during which the Chinese people have enjoyed much greater economic growth, I fear that, despite these improvements, when

the generation that has grown up in this reforming period recall their past, their only memory will be of money. If we only pursue profit, material riches will not be the sole solution to all problems. The state of the nation cannot be determined by looking at economic data alone. The soul of a nation should be supported by something more that resides within. At present, the Chinese people are more or less trying to blindly cross a river by stepping on slippery stones, uncertain of what is ahead. We may need to spend more time thinking profoundly about what happened before.

I still remember a sentence given by the Italian philosopher Croce cited by our historical teacher when I was in high school: "every true history is contemporary history." It reminds me what has happened historically will help us to think about the future. I used life history to explore the changes in the values of my participants Ping, Gao, and Quan over thirty years. They had been glorious workers, then marginalized and dispossessed overnight, but they never gave up their pursuit to regain their identity. A powerful inner strength supports them whenever they are in a difficult situation. My research may provide some enlightenment as to the reality of present day China, since when the new generation is so focused on the struggle for material needs, educators need to provide timely food for thought.

Future research will require a close examination of the intersections of current events and past traditions and how that intersection influences the struggle to cross the river by stepping on the right stones. We need to devote more time to understanding values as an important ingredient to help the next generation to learn how to deal with

difficulties as part of the process of their growth as human beings. The current generation of young Chinese grew up during the era of reform and opening-up when they were constantly influenced by materialism. Moral guidance has been ignored. Thus, considering that this group grew up after the Opening and Reforming Policy, an exploration into their value changes and life experience in different periods needs further research. In addition, the emphasis of Confucianism in Chinese education as a moral education system also should be a matter of consideration for further research.

According to Pinar (2011):

> History makes clear that all of us are historical, that what we experience is in part a function of time, and that we are both different and similar to those who have preceded us and from those who will follow. The recognition and reconstruction of such difference enables an understanding—an educational perspective—of our experience. (p. 13)

Wang (2004) has argued that for Confucius, selfhood is a "lifelong project" and an "unfolding process" of "continuous transformation" and "becoming" (as cited in Pinar, 2011, p. 111). My exploration into Ping, Gao, and Quan's life histories addresses the idea that life has historical continuity. Their unique histories and actions are important factors to understand with respect to transitions within a society. I sincerely hope that Ping, Gao, and Quan will continue their pilgrimage as rich spiritual travelers after fulfilling their basic economic needs. Although when they look backwards, they certainly have experienced hard times, they also are reminded that they have a past. Their experience as

honorable workers is a reminder of their revolutionary legacy, and their reflections on their honorable identity as owners of the country. Their experience, as a way to fulfill their self-cultivation with spiritual ideals, is a process to recall their collective socialist past, and a dream infused with traditional Chinese values. In their minds, Ping, Gao, and Quan will always belong to a generation shouldering the responsibility to move forward into the future.

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Appendix A

Research Ethics Approval (renewal)

(Not included in the thesis, submitted separately)

Appendix B (1)

Interview Questions—Chinese

1）签署采访同意表（2份）。重申研究目的、保密条款、采访时长（60-90分钟）。

2）准备好录音设备，笔记本。

3）灵活调整问题顺序.

本采访所设计的问题参照 Atkinson, R (1998). The life history interview

所有采访设计的问题以时间顺序为准

毛泽东时期，您作为工人阶级一分子曾经经历的光辉岁月：

作为七十年代的工人，您最难忘的记忆是什么？

当时中国的状况是怎样的？

请描述当时作为工人一天的生活是怎样度过的。

您当时的形象是什么？能描述一下吗？

作为工人，让您最留恋的部分是什么？您有什么样的感觉？

当时作为工人面临的困难和挑战是什么？

孩提时，你有什么理想吗？您梦想成为一名工人吗？

中国改革开放以后，作为下岗工人的艰苦生活：

您是怎么被告知成为下岗工人的？

请描述一下成为下岗工人以后的生活。成为下岗工人以后，您的生活发生了什么样的变化？

当时作为下岗工人一天的生活是怎样度过的？您的生活发生了什么样的变化？

请描述当时作为下岗工人的形象是什么？

作为下岗工人为了在社会上生存下来，您都做了那些不懈的努力？

作为下岗工人失去相应的社会保障，您有压力吗？

您当时作为下岗工人的经历是什么？

下岗以后，您自己自谋出路开始做生意，在这期间，您得到家人的帮助还是反对？

家庭对您来说，给与您最多的是哪些方面？

家庭对您来说重要吗？为什么？请详细讲述。

您是怎样克服曾经遇到的困难的？从中学到了什么？您认为是什么价值观帮助您克服难关的？

当时有让您感觉美好的时光吗？

您有被背叛的感觉吗？

对您来讲，生活中最难得的是什么？

当前生存情况：

您当前的生活状况怎样？您现在一天的生活是怎样度过的？

自己做生意以后，经历过一些难忘的事情吗？您的生活发生了什么样的变化？

您现在面临的问题是什么？

您现在最关注什么？您感觉最欣慰的是什么？

您现在仍然有压力吗？是什么样的压力？

您依旧怀念您的工人生活吗？

现在回忆您当时当工人最快乐的事情是什么？

您现在和当时作为工人，作为下岗工人的生活有何不同？

从精神层面来讲，您认为那些方面对您来说最重要，孔子的儒家哲学思想还是毛泽东思想，还有其他方面吗？比如说家庭价值观的影响？

展望未来：

是什么给了您巨大的希望？
什么样的未来对您来说比较完美？
您还有什么愿望吗？
您仍有怀有一些让您永远难以忘却的记忆吗？
您多未来的展望是什么？

后续采访

在整个采访的过程中您觉得您对自己的描述确切吗？还有什么补充吗？

您对本次采访以及谈到的相关话题有什么意见吗？

谢谢您接受本次采访！

Appendix B (2)

Interview Questions—English

1） Sign Consent Form (2 copies). Repeat the purpose of the study, ethical issues, and the length of the interviews (60–90 mins).

2） Check the recorder, laptop, and notebooks.

3） Reorder the following questions.

The questionnaires are adapted from Atkinson, R. (1998). The life history interview.

All the interview questions were designed according to the chronological order of the laid-off workers experience.

The period when you were a young worker who belonged to one of leading political and social classes in China:

1. What memories do you have of being a worker in 1970s China?
2. What was it like then in China?
3. Describe a day (a week) in the life of a worker.
4. Describe an image of yourself at that time that shows how you looked and felt.
5. What were the best parts of being a worker? What values did you have at that time?
6. What were the challenges or difficulties?

7. Did you have any dreams or ambitions as a child? As an adolescent? What were they? Did you envision yourself as a worker?

The period when you became a laid-off worker:

1. You were laid off. How did it happen? When did it happen? How did you find out?
2. What did you feel at that moment?
3. Describe a day (a week) in the life of being a laid-off worker?
4. What were some of your daily struggles? How did you feel?
5. Did you feel pressure? If yes, where did it come from?
6. Describe yourself as a laid-off worker (in writing or drawing). How did you change?
7. If you were to choose an image of something that described how you saw yourself as a laid-off worker, what would it be?
8. What forms of support did you have at that time? Who or what could you turn to? What resources (inner, outer) did you have?
9. Did your family support you? If yes, what kind of support?
10. What were the greatest difficulties? What were the worst times? How did you overcome them?
11. What times were better than others?
12. What did you learn from the experience of being laid-off? From the experience of overcoming being laid-off? What helped you overcome your ordeal?

The present situation:

1. What are you doing right now? Employment? Describe a day in your life now.
2. Describe yourself as self-employed. How have you changed from being a laid-off worker?
3. What are some of your daily struggles?
4. What matters the most to you in your life? What gives you the greatest satisfaction or happiness?
5. Do you experience any stresses? If yes, what are they?
6. Do you miss your life as a worker?
7. What times do you best remember about being a worker?

8. How is your life now different from: Being a worker? Being laid-off? How are you changing?
9. What values are most important to you now?
10. Is a sense of family important to you? Why or why not?

Future:

1. What gives you the most hope?
2. What are your dreams and aspirations for yourself? For the future?
3. Is there anything unfulfilled that you would still like to achieve?
4. What are some things you hope you will never forget or lose?
5. What do you expect for your future?

Post-Interview:

1. Do you feel you have given an accurate picture of yourself over the course of these interviews? Would you change anything?
2. What are your feelings about this interview and all that we have covered?

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix C

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Remember "that"? Thirty years before/after: An Exploration into the Changes in Values Experienced by Three Laid-off Workers in a Changing China.

Preamble:

My research explores the evolution of values of one segment of the population of workers in China. That segment concerns those born in the 1950s, the age when the new China was just emerging, In their early adulthood, these workers had been part of the leading social class. After China's 1978 Opening and Reforming Policy these workers were laid off. Their struggle for survival has motivated me to investigate how they have adapted in a changing Chinese society and economy.

Since the establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Constitution, adopted in 1954, emphasized that the Communist Party of China was the party of the workers. "The People's Republic of China is 'a People's Democratic State led by the working class'" (Priestley, 1964, p. 7). Before the Opening and Reforming Policy in China, being a permanent worker for the state meant gaining lifetime employment and a welfare package that included health care, housing, and generous retirement benefits (Lee, 2007). However, after the introduction of a market economy in

the 1980s, the state-owned factories went bankrupt. The workers lost not only their jobs but their social security overnight and were faced with the challenges of surviving without any government support. Thus their lives changed economically and socially. That is, prior to their job loss, their status was as "honourable workers" in a privileged social class within a socialist society. Following their job losses, they became part of a marginalized group in a competitive market economy, a group who had to struggle to survive. My hypothesis is that an examination of my participants' life histories will provide insight into changing priorities and values in present-day China. Specifically, the change of values required for this group to survive can offer a vivid picture of social change in China, and its impact on politics, economics, and education as China has evolved from a planned economy to a market economy.

My research questions are the following:

Since social change in China continues to have an impact on individual lived experience, especially the social status of Chinese workers, I intend to explore the following questions in my study:

1. How do individuals who have become laid-off workers judge their changing society?
2. How has their social status impacted their actions and behaviour.
3. How are they facing the challenge of economic survival after suddenly losing all their social security?
4. What factors (traditional values, family values, or social values) have helped them to adapt to their new social context?

Appendix D

Consent Form

MCGILL UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Participant Consent Form

Date

Dear

My research explores the value evolution of workers in China. Your participation in the research will help others understand your experiences and contribute to an understanding of the evolution of values of the Chinese people after the Opening and Reforming Policy in China in 1978. This research can benefit you by providing regular opportunities for you to reflect on your experience individually.

If you volunteer to participate, I would like to arrange face-to-face interviews at your convenience. The interviews will address questions about your life before being a laid-off worker, your experience of struggling for survival after being laid-off, and your present living situation. After finishing the transcription, I will send you a copy of the transcript to ask you if the transcription accurately reflects what you wanted to say. All the data will be kept in a secure, password-protected place. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time without suffering any consequences. If you withdraw from the study, your data will be destroyed and not used in the study, unless you agree otherwise in writing. In the process of the interview, if you don't want to answer some questions, you have the right to refuse. I plan to have four to five interviews with each of you. Each interview will take approximate one hour and a half or two hours. If you are interested in some particular questions during our interviews, we can spend a longer time on them. To assure myself that you are continuing to give

your consent to participate in this research, I will ask you during the interviews whether you have concerns or questions, and if so, how you wish to have them addressed.

Confidentiality will be assured to keep your identity anonymous. I will use pseudonyms and other means to disguise your identity. The focus of this research is to learn more about the value evolution of workers in China based on your life history, not to report on any one individual.

The date from the audio recordings will be used in my study to help others to know the evolution of values of Chinese workers or the Chinese people after the Opening and Reforming Policy. It also will be possibly used as the basis for conference presentations and writings intended for publication. If you are interested, I will offer to share with you the drafts of any conference presentations or manuscripts and invite your input on them.

The research data will be destroyed within five years after the end of the study. Prior to that time, it will be kept in a secure location. The transcripts and tapes will be kept on a password-protected computer in a locked cabinet. The data will be accessible only to myself and will be protected by passwords.

The researcher for this study is Qian Wang who is completing a dissertation for a doctoral degree in the Society and Education program within the Department of Studies in Education (DISE) at McGill University. The supervisors are Dr. Teresa Strong-Wilson and Dr. Boyd White. If you have any questions regarding this study, do not hesitate to contact the researcher by email at qian.wang3@mail.mcgill.ca or by phone at 514-792-8815.The supervisors can also be contacted by email at teresa.strong-wilson@mcgill.ca; boyd.white@mcgill.ca

You can verify the ethical approval of this study by contacting Lynda McNeil, Research Ethics Officer, Research Ethics Board Office, McGill University, Tel: 514-398-6831, email: lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

Your signature below indicates that you understand the conditions of participation in this study and you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

I agree to be audio-taped. Yes: _ /No: _
I agree with the use of photographs for the purpose to the interviews. Yes: _ /No: _
I agree with the use of certain photographs in the discussion, publications and conferences. Yes: _ /No: _

Initials: _____

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

A copy of this letter will be left with you and a copy will be kept by the researchers.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Qian Wang

For further information, please contact:

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