Stress, satisfaction and resilience: the psychological aspects of life for elders in a Chinese setting

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Abstract

Little research to date has focused on personal accounts of psychological aspects of the aging process of elders and their relationship with adult-children in an urban Chinese setting. The present study aimed to explore such aspects in Chinese elders. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 3 varied samples of elders (aged 70 to 87), with those living with their family (study 1), those in a residential setting (study 2) and those in a sheltered community (study 3). Grounded Theory, was used as the method for data collection and analysis, and in addition to the interviews, focus groups and a written account also provided materials for qualitative analysis. The overarching theme of "family communication" was highlighted in the studies, reflecting the central position of participants' concerns with their relationship with adult-children, and their understanding of their roles in the family. The variety of responses seemed to be connected with whether the person was self-reliant or dependant as well as with individual personality. The study's findings suggest that this small sample of older people in a large urban city in China generally live closely with their families and take great pride in retaining their independence and supporting families and friends. The sample of older people in a residential institution, gain life satisfaction and self-esteem from their personal health-maintenance activities and social activities with peers, and some participants living in the residential setting admitted that they were able to reestablish a comfortable position in their relationship with their children despite being at a distance from them.

Key words: well-being, parent-children relationship, adaptation, ageing family,

Dedicated to my grandparents:

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Chapter 1 Introduction

As the population ages rapidly throughout the world, more research attention is directed toward understanding the functioning, living conditions and well-being of older people. The elderly population in China is growing at an unprecedented rate: According to the Basic Population Data of China (China Population Development and Research Center，http://www.cpirc.org .cn/) the proportion of persons aged 65 and older increased from 6.97% (88 million) in 2000 to 8.3 % (109 million) in 2008. In recent years dramatic social-economic changes have taken place in China, and it is important to understand how these changes impact on elders' well-being. More specifically, how older people cope with the issues of ageing as well as changes in the various areas (particularly the reform of the welfare system that has impacted upon the elders' income, accommodation and medical insurance, and restructuring of industry which has led to a high level of unemployment, affecting many adult children of the elders). This thesis aims to explore psychological aspects of the ageing process of elders and their relationship with adult-children in an urban Chinese setting, in a sample of Chinese elders. Taking a cultural psychology approach, the researcher also aims to develop understanding of elders' experiences of becoming older, and the issues of elders' identity, well-being, stress and satisfaction.

1.1 Psychological theories

I started by reading the theory of psychological ageing before I conducted my own studies. The principle theories that informed my research were those outlined in key

texts on lifespan development and ageing (Atchley, 1989, Baltes & Baltes, 1990, &

Henry, 1961 etc.) and are outlined briefly in table 1.

Table 1: theoretical background

Life-span development	In the life-long process of development, no age period is dominant in determining the nature of personal development, and both continuous (cumulative) and discontinuous (innovative) processes are present at all stages of the life span (Baltes, 1997).
Continuity Theory	According to Atchley (1989), in middle or later stages of life, based on the weight of past experiences, adults tend to use continuity as the primary strategy of coping with changes related to normal ageing. The continuity strategy involves both inner psychological continuity and outward continuity of social behaviour and circumstances.
Disengagement theory	Cumming and Henry (1961) postulated that normal ageing is a mutual withdrawal or disengagement between older adults and others in the social system to which the person belongs, and when the disengagement is complete, the balance that existed in earlier stages of life between individual and society has given way to a new balance characterized by greater distance and a changed basis for solidarity
Sense of coherence	Antonovsky (1987) suggested in the Salutogenic Model that, a sense of coherence is the essential determinant in the maintenance of health and prevention of damage in health. The sense of coherence has three components: comprehensibility (the extent to which stimuli from one's external and internal environment are structured, explicable and foreseeable), manageability (the extent to which resources are available to a person to meet the requirements posed by these stimuli), and meaningful (the extent to which these requirements are challenges worthy of investment and engagement).
Selective optimization with compensation	The selective optimization with compensation (SOC) theory of successful aging (Baltes & Baltes, 1990) proposed that individuals have the capacity to face changes and adapt as they age through selecting activities, optimizing skills, and compensating for losses.
Attachment theory and Bereavement theories	Attachment is defined by Bowlby (1969) as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings". Bereavement theories concern psychological responses when attachment bonds are severed by death, and include concepts such as grief work, continuing bond, and the nature of detachment and how families make sense of death.
Death Anxiety	According to Tomer (2000) there are three direct determinants of death anxiety: past-related regret, future-related regret, and the meaningfulness of death.

Bearing these theories in mind, I looked at the issues of Chinese elders with curiosity

about understanding the essence of development, continuity and the consistency of

each person's previous history. In the view of continuity theory, I am interested in how older people's past experiences influence the person's mode of thinking and coping, making judgments and decisions, and how they interpret what happens in their current lives in relation to the past. Disengagement theory intrigued my curiosity in studying a person's willingness to join a peer group in different life stages. The theory of Selective optimization with compensation informed me of the important concept of adaptation, which offered me a new angle to study people's behaviours.

Attachment theory and bereavement theories provided me with the idea of the need to pay attention to the bonds between people, the relationship between the spouse, the parents and adult-children. Both death anxiety and bereavement theory are concerned with the sensitive issue of death, which is in many cases a taboo. From reading these theories, I bore in mind the importance of offering older people opportunities to talk about death openly, and paying attention to the sign of death anxiety and grief.

1.2 The Chinese Context

My research interest in studying older people in urban China was also inspired by recent reports of their living conditions against the background of reforms in the welfare system. In recent years more attention is being paid to the well-being of elders, however unlike the younger generation who accept more the idea of talking about stress and exploring their emotions, the ideas of older generations remain unclear. Thus the researcher is interested in studies which explore the elder's experience in

their own words. Some of the key cultural influences and also the key changes in

welfare that have taken place in China within the past 3 decades are outlined briefly in

Table 2 for the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the Chinese cultural

context. It was with this backdrop that current studies took place.

Table 2: Background in Chinese context

Spirituality	The Chinese commonly value a way of life that promotes harmony, with this being influenced by the philosophical background of Confucius, Tao and Buddha. The general idea of these 3 influences is digested and interpreted in the sense of normal life, and has great influence on many Chinese elders' idea about how to live, and how to cope. Although most Chinese elders are not religious people, they search for the meaning of life in their own way.
Filial piety	The Chinese word "Xiao" has a literal translation of "filial piety", but actually refers to a more complex cognition that is hard to translate in a single phase. Adapted from Confucius's ideal of filial relationship, now it is a widely appreciated "virtue" shown by an adult-child who fulfills his or her duty of obeying and taking care of his or her parents and parents-in-law
Income	The elders in urban areas in China who previously worked in an organization owned by the government receive a pension after their retirement. The pension covers the cost of basic living and varies in different geographic areas.
Housing	Due to the high population density and the limited supply of estate in urban China, the price of private-owned estate is high in most of the urban areas in China. The majority of older people live in an apartment allocated to them by the former employer of themselves or their spouse. It is common that parents co-reside with their adult-children and grand-children in a long term arrangement in their allocated apartment.
Health and Medical care	Limited welfare benefits used to be provided to certain categories of the population, mainly urban workers and residents (Crollindignant 1999). However there has been a gradual shift away from nearly universal medical care coverage in urban areas in recent years such that many people do not now have free medical care.

1.3 Summary and Synopsis

In this chapter I have tried to set the general context for this thesis both in terms of

psychological theories pertinent to ageing that influenced my research and in terms of the cultural backdrop. The theories had an influence on the guides used in my qualitative research, whilst the cultural context needed to be understood to appreciate the nature of interaction as well the content.

Leaving this broad context to one side, I now go on to a systematic review of research on psychological aspects of ageing in Chinese samples in Chapter 2. In the following chapters, I will talk about the three qualitative studies I conducted in two cities (Guangzhou and Wuhan) in China. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 report the three studies with three samples. Chapter 6 is a short chapter which provides an analysis of a written account from a particular participant. Chapter 7 discusses the theoretical implications of my analysis and findings and Chapter 8 focuses on further thoughts about the methodological issues which arose in every step of the conduct of the research process. Finally in Chapter 9, I summarise the contributions and limitations of my studies and make some suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2 Systematic review of studies on psychosocial aspects of aging in Chinese society

2.1 Aim of review

In recent years, social and psychological research interested in Chinese elders has increased. The aim of this review is to identify and to evaluate up-to-date research findings on the issues of aging in Chinese society of studies in social and psychological domains. Research areas focus on understanding health related quality of life, subjective well-being, life satisfaction and psychological distress. The literature review sought to identify both the research method (sampling, data collection strategies and data analysis) used in the social and psychological studies, and current findings regarding Chinese older adults.

Before moving to the body of the review, I shall give definitions of the key outcomes that are the focus in this review. Health related quality of life is the term used to measure the effects of one's physical state on the person's day-to-day life; subjective well-being and life satisfaction measure an individual's perceived level of well-being and happiness; psychological distress measures the person's psychological symptoms.

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Inclusion

The following domains were used to establish inclusion criteria: focus, population, types of studies, and source.

Focus

Studies need to be concerned with social and psychological aspects of ageing in Chinese society.

Population

The participant samples included in the review are individuals of Chinese origin residing in the Mainland of China, Hong Kong or Taiwan, in community or institution. Studies are with participants aged 50 and above.

Types of studies:

Studies of any design (both qualitative and quantitative) were included that evaluated or presented primary or secondary analysis of data from social surveys or research projects.

Source

A range of international journal papers were included. They had to be published in

English-language peer reviewed journals, in psychological or social science domains.

2.2.2 Exclusion Criteria

Some papers aimed to carry out a cross-cultural comparison using samples of both the Chinese elders and other population groups. These were excluded. Those using a specialised sample from the hospitalised population were also excluded from the selection.

2.3 Search strategy

The researcher searched the international literature from the OvidMED and PsycINFO databases for papers published from 2001 to August week 2 2009, with keyword terms: Chinese and ag*, or successful ag*, or quality of life, or health related quality of life or life satisfaction, or subjective well-being, or depression. Reference lists of retrieved articles were also searched.

In the first stage, the researcher reviewed 360 abstracts of English-language articles identified by the searches, retrieved 96 papers meeting the inclusion criteria after the screening of title and abstracts; in the second stage, 60 papers were excluded for meeting the exclusion criteria.   A further 8 papers including editorials, letters, review articles, and commentaries and 5 papers from the thesis submission database were also excluded. Thus, 23 published research papers were selected and reviewed.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Study design

The reviewed papers are conducted with various source of population; therefore different sampling methods were applied in the design of research. Most of the studies used cross-sectional designs, 3 studies used Case-control/Comparison and 2 study applied a longitudinal design. The table below (Table 1) shows the methodological design of the included papers.

Table 3 Design of Studies in the review

Case-control/Comparison	Chan et al. (2009a)
	Zhan, Feng, & Luo, (2008)
	Chiu, & Yu, (2002)
Cross-sectional	Chen, & Short, (2008) Ross, & Zhang, (2008) and Zhang & Liu, (2008)
	Cheng, Fung, & Chan, (2008)
	Ku, Fox, & McKenna, (2007)
	Li, & Liang, (2007)
	Yeung, & Fung, (2007)
	Leung, Chen, Lue, & Hsu, (2007)
	Chou, Ho, & Chi, (2006) Chou, Chi, & Chow (2004), Chou, & Chi, (2002)
	Silverstein, Cong, & Li, (2006)
	Chan et al.(2006) Chan, Cheng, Phillips, Chi, & Ho, (2004)
	Cheng, & Chan, (2006)
	Wu, Tang, & Yan, (2004)
	Sun (2004)
	Wu, Tang, & Kwok, (2001)
Longitudinal	Chan et al. (2009b)
	Chou, & Chi, (2003)

2.4.2 Search results

The 23 reviewed papers are listed in table 2, according to the order of publication date. This table reports basic information about the reviewed papers, including their authors, publication dates, research question, size of sample, method and brief results.

Table 4: Summary of search results

Authors	Date	Research Question	Size of Sample	method	Brief results
Chan et al.	2009	To measure and compare the perceptions of HRQoL amongst Chinese older people with depression between Hong Kong and Shanghai	80 elders in Hong Kong and 71 elders (aged 65+) in Shanghai with a diagnosis of depression.	WHOQOL-BREF, Chinese MMSE, the Physical Health Problems Checklist, MBI,IADL, and SSQ-6	Shanghai group had a better perceived HRQoL than Hong Kong group. More females suffered from depression than male participants.
Chan et al.	2009	To examine the predictive value of biological and physiological status, symptom status, physical functional status, daily living interference, social function status and individual characteristics on changes of HRQoL over 12 months	31 elder(aged 65+) who were newly diagnosed with depression	Same as above	Participants had significant improvement in their scores for the majority of measures
Chen, & Short	2008	To investigate the importance of household context to subjective well-being among the oldest old (aged 80 years and older) in China	Data from CLHLS 1998(9,093 elders aged 77 to 122 in the mainland of China)	a four-item index of Psychological distress, including anxiety depression, well being and happiness	Living alone is associated with lower subjective well-being; co-residence with family member is associated with positive subjective well-being
Ross, & Zhang	2008	To examine whether more highly educated older Chinese have lower levels of distress than do their poorly educated counter-parts and whether engaging in cognitively stimulating activities such as reading and playing mahjong explains the association	Same as Chen et al. (08)	Same as above	A significant negative association between education and psychological distress in Chinese elders. Actives such as Reading, playing mahjong, and watching television all negatively correlate with the psychological distress.
Zhan et al.	2008	To examine elders' changing attitudes about filial piety	20 elderly residents (68-97), 14 family members, and 9 staff members in Nanjing	In-depth interview	The respondents interpreted the notion of filial piety in terms of their own social worlds and on the basis of their own social locations and contexts

Authors	Date	Research Question	Size of Sample	method	Brief results
Cheng et al.	2008	To examine whether elders who lived alone had lower psychological well-being than those elders who lived with someone, and whether downward social comparison would influence this.	208 elders (aged 60+) elders from social centers in Hong Kong	Scales of social comparison, life satisfaction, depression, living status, physical status	The participants living alone were more depressed than those living with someone; this difference was found larger among the participants with lower levels of social comparison than those with higher levels.
Ku et al.	2007	To devise a psychological test measuring the subjective well-being in Chinese elders	23 elders (aged 55-78) for qualitative stage, and 1,906 elders in Taiwan in quantitative stages	Qualitative interview and self-devised questionnaire	The elements of subjective well-being are common across western and eastern cultures but are interpreted and weighted differently
Li, & Liang	2007	What are the effects of social support and negative interactions on life satisfaction and depressed affect among older persons in China? Do these effects vary between young-old and old-old Chinese?	1991 Survey of Health and Living Status of Elders in Wuhan, China, 169 elders for interview 2,943 elders (aged 60–94) questionnaire	Interviews and questionnaire	The contribution of social support and negative inter-actions to depressed affect is not significantly different. Depressed affect of old-old Chinese reacts more strongly than the young-old to both social support and negative interactions
Zhang & Liu	2007	Does childlessness have an effect on the well-being of elders in China	Data from CLHLS, 2002	questionnaire	With control of social demographic variables of age, gender and education, childlessness is significantly associated with feelings of anxiety, loneliness and life satisfaction.
Yeung, & Fung	2007	Compare the family's and friend's contribution to elder's life satisfaction.	108 elders (93 female and 15 male) aged 61–93 years in Hong Kong	interview	family support contributes (via emotional and instrumental routes) to the life satisfaction of older adults more than does friend support (which contributes via emotional route only)
Leung et al.	2006	Does the support have buffering effects in the presence of health stressors?	507 elderly community people (65+)in Northern Taiwan	SCL-90-R, SSRS, FEICS, SPMSQ, KADL	Family involvement had buffering effects on psychological symptoms for people with cognitive impairment and diseases

Authors	Date	Research Question	Size of Sample	method	Brief results
Chou et al.	2006	To investigate whether the relationship between living alone and depression is independent of health status, social support and financial strain among Chinese elders, and whether the relationship persists after the above variables had been adjusted	2003 elders (aged 60+)	Scales of living arrangement, Demographic and social-economic variable Health indicator, Family support, Financial strain, depression	Living alone was not significantly associated with depression in male participants; female participants who live alone were likely to report depressive symptoms than those who were living with others. Education, self-rated health, financial strain were significantly associated to depression in old women.
Silverstein et al.	2006	To examine how household composition and intergenerational support had an impact on the psychological well-being of older parents in rural areas in mainland of China	1561 parents (aged 60+) from 72 villages in Anhui province, China	Scales of depression and other psychological factors, life satisfaction, living arrangement, and intergenerational support social demographic characteristics	Elders living with their offspring had better psychological well-being than those living only with people in their generations. Because they could receive greater remittances from their children or grandchildren. Stronger emotional cohesion with children also improve their well-being
Chan et al.	2006	To examine the relationships between self-rated health related quality of life and mental and physical health, functional status and social support of elders diagnosed with depression in Shanghai	71 elders(aged 65+) diagnosed with depression in Shanghai	HK-WHOQOL-BREF, Physical Health Problems Checklist, GDS, HDRS, MBI, IADL and SSQ-6	A higher level of depression was related to a poorer health related quality of life. The level of depression, activities of daily living and satisfaction with social support were predictors of health related quality of life ratings.
Cheng, & Chan	2006	To study to what extent, the elders felt their expectations for filial piety are met; which filial behaviours are predictive of subjective well-being; the difference between the close and not-so-close children.	206 elders (aged 60+) from social centers in Hong Kong	Scales for Filial behaviour, filial discrepancy, functional health, financial strain, and Psychological well-being	The children's paying respect and providing care when their parents were ill or distressed were the most important perceived filial behaviours; respect emerged as a consistent predictor of wellbeing; findings of close and not-so-close children were similar

Authors	Date	Research Question	Size of Sample	method	Brief results
Wu et al.	2004	To investigate Chinese elders' attitude towards OAH	185 older adults (aged 50+) from 15 community centre in Hong Kong	10-item scale of Chinese elders' attitude towards OAH	Salient correlates of willingness to enter OAHs were positive attitudes toward OAHs, poor perceived physical health, male gender, and a low need for independence.
Chan et al.	2004	To develop an instrument to address the need for a culturally relevant measure of quality of life for Chinese older elders in Hong Kong and similar communities	1616 elders(60+) from community in Hong Kong	Focus group and HKQOLOCP	The adoption of both an index and six domains for measuring Hong Kong older persons' QoL
Sun	2004	To examine the role of family support in reducing the elders' depression in the face of the perceived inadequate public medical care in urban China	943 elders (aged 60+)from Survey on Aging and Intergenerational Relations in Baoding City	CES-D Scale	Perceived inadequate public medical care, which results from dramatic changes in China's socioeconomic transformation, has a stressful impact on all measures of depression.
Chou et al.	2004	To investigate the association between major source of income and depression among Hong Kong elders, and how the mediating and moderating effects of family social support and financial strain related to the elders' major source of income and depression	1106 elders (aged 60+) from a list of households from the Census and Statistics Department Hong Kong	ADLs, CES-D, Scales of souse of income, socio-demographic, self-rated health, family social support, and financial strain	The major source of income had a differential impact on depression. Elders with pension and financially independent had a higher level of depressive symptoms than those who received adult-children's offer as the major source of income.
Chou, & Chi,	2002	To study successful ageing among Chinese elders in three different age cohorts: 60-69, 70-70, 80+	Same as above	ADLs, CES-D, SPMSQ, and scale of productive involvement	Age, gender, education, financial strain, number of close relatives, frequency of contact with friends, number of chronic illness, self-rated health, hearing impairment, and life satisfaction were associated with successful ageing.

Authors	Date	Research Question	Size of Sample	method	Brief results
Chou, & Chi,	2003	To examine the reciprocal relationship between social support and depression in elders in a period of 3 years.	554 elders (aged 70+) living in Chinese Community in Hong Kong	ADLs, CES-D, Scales of social support, socio-demographic, self-rated health,	Elders with depression more frequently were likely to receive higher levels of support from family members living with them, but lower level of support from friends three years later.
Wu et al.	2001	To examine the cognitive and emotional reactions of Chinese elders toward death	237 elders (62 men and 175 women, aged 60+) in Hong Kong	DAS, and The Chinese version of the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1978)	A high level of death anxiety was associated with younger age, and a high level of psychological distress, and the presence of recent stressors.
Chiu, & Yu,	2001	to study the applicability of the shared care approach in the Chinese community in Britain	60 Chinese elders(1991) and 55 Chinese elders(1998) aged 60+ resided in London	Semi-structured interview	There is a strong belief among Chinese families that older people should live with their sons

Key to abbreviations

HRQoL, health related quality of life
OAH, old age home

Key to method
WHOQOL-BREF, Hong Kong Chinese World Health Organization Quality of Life Scale-Brief Version
MMSE, Mini-Mental State Examination
IADL, Instrumental Activities of Daily Living
SSQ-6, the Chinese version of the Social Support Questionnaire
MBI, Modified Barthel Index
GDS, Chinese Geriatric Depression Scale
HDRS, Chinese Hamilton Depression Rating Scale
SCL-90-R, Symptom Check-List-90-R

FEICS, Family Emotional Involvement and Criticism Scale
SPMSQ, short portable mental status questionnaire
KADL, Katz Activities of Daily Living
HKQOLOCP, Hong Kong Quality of Life for Older Persons Scale
CES-D Scale, Center for Epidemiologic Studies–Depression Scale
DAS, Death Anxiety Scale

2.4.3 Evaluation

In order to evaluate the validity of the reviewed studies, a table (table 3) was designed

to rate the performance of these studies, and the ratings covered multiple criteria

including the null hypothesis, sampling, ethical issues, procedure, measures, analysis

and discussion. The researcher attempted to rate each paper using standard scores

ranged from 0 to 2, with 0 for worst and 2 for the best.

Table 5: Rating of quantitative studies in the review in relation to validity
Part I definition of scores in each criteria

	Ho	Sampling	selection	Ethical issues	Procedure	Confounds	Measures	Cultural grounding and translation issues of measures	Analysis: Power	Appropriate statistics	Reporting statistics	Awareness of limitations	Appropriate conclusion
	Relationship between social-psychological factors, QoL, Well-being, depression or life satisfaction	Sample clearly defined		Awareness of ethical issues and consent	Procedure clearly stated		Appropriate instruments of QoL, Well-being, depression or life satisfaction measure	Cultural grounding and translation issues of measures					
0	Didn't look at it or hypotheses nor reported	Not described	Not described	Not specified	Not specified	None identified or accounted for	Insufficient details given to judge or single item or unvalidated scale only	Not specified	<0.5	Not appropriate stats	Significance only	None identified	None
1	Incidental/exploratory hypothesis	Gender split plus some mention of age	Convenience	Mentioned	Mentioned	Symptom or demographic confounds identified	Some aspects of measures not reported or not adequate	Mentioned	0.5-0.8	Some appropriate	Some reported	Some identified	Some
2	A-priori, principal hypothesis	Social demographic information addressed in detail	Random	Mentioned in detail and addressed	Reported in detail	Both Symptom and demographic confounds identified	Measures correct construct and adequate in reliability and validity	Reported in detail	>0.8	Appropriate	All reported	Full and reflective discussion	All

Part II the rating of each paper

| | Ho | Sampling | | Ethical issues | Procedure | | Measures | | Analysis | | | Discussion | |
	Relationship between social-psychological factors, QoL, Well-being, depression or life satisfaction	Sample clearly defined	selection	Awareness of ethical issues and consent	Procedure clearly stated	Confounds	Appropriate instruments of QoL, Well-being, depression or life satisfaction measure	Cultural grounding and translation issues of measures	Power	Appropriate statistics	Reporting statistics	Awareness of limitations	Appropriate conclusion
Chan et al., 2009a	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Chan et al., 2009b	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Chen, & Short	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	1
Ross, & Zhang	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	1
Cheng et al.	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Ku et al.	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Li & Liang	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Zhang & Liu	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	1
Yeung, & Fung	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Leung et al.	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Chou et al., 2006	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Silverstein et al.	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1

	Ho	Sampling	Ethical issues	Procedure	Measures	Analysis	Discussion		Power	Appropriate statistics	Reporting statistics	Awareness of limitations	Appropriate conclusion
	Relationship between social-psychological factors, QoL, Well-being, depression or life satisfaction	Sample clearly defined	selection	Awareness of ethical issues and consent	Procedure clearly stated	Confounds	Appropriate instruments of QoL, Well-being, depression or life satisfaction measure	Cultural grounding and translation issues of measures		Appropriate statistics	Reporting statistics	Awareness of limitations	Appropriate conclusion
Chan et al., 2006	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Cheng, & Chan	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Wu et al., 2004	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Chan et al., 2004	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	1
Sun	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Chou 2004	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Chou, & Chi, 2003	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Chou, & Chi, 2002	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
Wu et al., 2001	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Chiu, & Yu,	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2

From table 3, it can be seen that the average score of most of categories is 1. Most of researchers reported their exploratory hypothesis and research questions clearly, and their sampling process is well described. Some researchers did not report the ethical issues and consent in detail. Perhaps this was due to the challenge of formality of research in Chinese setting since most of the Chinese elders are not familiar with the research culture, and it may have been hard for the researcher to ask for formal consent from the participants.

In terms of measures, some of the studies did not apply appropriate questionnaires or use up-to-date data, and not many studies reported on issues of cultural grounding when adapting existing questionnaires from the non-Chinese population; in analysis, most of the studies reported the appropriate statistics but not many of them reported all the results. In the discussion section, most of the reviewed papers scored 1 in both awareness of limitation and appropriate conclusions.

Overall, considering the ratings, it can been seen that some papers seem to have superior quality since there is no aspect of quality on which a score of 0 is allocated. These are the papers by Chan et al. (2004), and Chiu, & Yu, (2001). This indicates that the findings from these papers can be given greater weight than those that have some procedural threats to validity. Each paper and its findings will now be briefly summarized.

Chan et al. (2006) conducted a cross-sectional research study on the factors associated with elders' perceived HRQoL, with a sample of 71 community-dwelling participants diagnosed with depression in Shanghai. The research data showed that the participants were less satisfied with their physical condition than their level of social support. The researcher explained that those elders with functional difficulty had to depend on others for support which brought further psychological burden to them. Many elders still found it hard to adjust to the idea of accepting forms of care other than care provided by their family members. The discussion section highlighted dramatically the impact of socioeconomic change in China on elders' life in general, though without linking the participants' particular personal situations to the broader social backdrop.

Chan et al. (2009a) compared two groups of elders in Hong Kong (80 participants) and Shanghai (71 participants) with a diagnosis of depression. The data for the Hong Kong sample were those used in the study described above. The Hong Kong participants (37% were 71-75) were older than Shanghai participants (50% were 65-70) and the Shanghai participants were higher in education, so these differences between the two groups might influence the statistical validity of the comparisons which showed that Shanghai participants reported higher HRQoL. In their discussion section they explored the idea that the high level of perceived HRQoL was related to the degree of socio-economic change in Hong Kong and Shanghai, and they focused on the Confucian context of cultural values, especially the economic pressure and the

mismatch of expectations of filial responsibility. They reported an interesting finding that, unlike the findings in western studies that the majority of the depressed women were widowed, the majority of depressed Chinese women were married.

Chan et al. (2009b) designed a longitudinal study for a group of 31 elderly participants diagnosed with depression in Hong Kong, using a baseline study and a follow-up. Their work looked at the influence of a wide range of factors on the WHOQOL scores of the group at baseline and at 12 months, but the researchers did not aim to look specifically at change over the period of 12 months. In the method section the researcher took special efforts to provide simple and clear instructions and explanations, because the majority of participants were illiterate or had received very little education.

Studies by both Chen, & Short (2008) and Ross & Zhang (2008) used the data from the Chinese Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey (CLLRS). The first wave of CLLRS data was collected in 1998, with 9,093 respondents aged 77 to 122. The measurement covered psychological distress including depression and anxiety, as well as well-being and happiness. The validity of the questionnaires was not mentioned, and the details of the data collection procedure and the validity of the measures were lacking. Chen, & Short's findings supported that living alone is associated with lower subjective well-being; co-residence with family members is associated with positive subjective well-being; Ross& Zhang's findings indicated a significant negative

association between education and psychological distress.

Similar to Chen & Short (2008)'s study on living arrangement and psychological well-being, Cheng et al. (2008) aimed to examine whether elders who lived alone had lower psychological well-being than those elders who lived with someone, and whether downward social comparison would influence this. In order to avoid asking direct a question about comparison, the researchers let the participants rate themselves and others independently, which seemed to reduce the participants' bias in viewing themselves as different from others or everyday comparison with stereotypic responses of their age group (McFarland, Buchler, & Mackay, 2001). Their findings indicated that the participants living alone were more depressed than those living with someone; for those participants living alone, there was a strong negative relationship between the social comparison and depression; for those participants not living alone, the relationship between the social comparison and depression was also negative but weak.

Cheng, & Chan (2006) aimed to study filial piety and psychological well-being in Chinese elders with a survey of 164 participants recruited from social centres. They found that children paying respect and providing care when their parents were ill or distressed were the most important perceived filial behaviours. This finding suggested the prevalence of elders' need and expectations for support and care when ill. In the discussion section, the researchers addressed the limitation that the rating of

adult-children's filial behaviours might be biased according to the closeness of the relationship. The bias might be reduced if the researchers also gave ratings after listening to the participants' descriptions.

Zhan et al. (2008) conducted a qualitative study in a residential home to examine elders' changing attitudes about filial piety with 20 elderly residents, 14 family members, and 9 staff. The researchers used open-ended questions examining participants' understanding of the adult children's behaviour of "xiao" (fulfilling the filial responsibility) and "bu xiao" (not fulfilling the filial responsibility) and elders' status in the institution. The application of a qualitative approach to research in the Chinese setting is new, and researchers reported the difficulties they found in the data collection process: for example, some of the elderly participants did not like the conversation being tape-recorded. Their findings suggested that most of the participants reported that they felt satisfied with institutional life and many of them reported that they felt the choice of institutional care was worthwhile. However the researchers' analysis of their scripts could be seen as both one-dimensional and static. One dimensional in that it only involved elders' and adult children's views on filial behaviour alone, without considering the two-way nature of the relationship; and static in that it did not consider the dynamic process of how the family relationships developed and changed over time. In addition, the label of the theme, "placing elders in care homes is not children's abandonment of filial piety" seemed to go slightly further than participants' accounts. However, the strength and contribution of Zhan et

al.'s study is that it provided in-depth exploration of elder's inner world at the individual level.

Ku et al. (2007)'s study aimed to devise an instrument (Chinese Aging Well Profile) to measure the subjective well-being in Chinese older adults. Their study involved both qualitative and quantitative stages. In the qualitative stage, seven key dimensions (physical, psychological, independence, learning & growth, material, environmental, and social well-being) were identified, and these dimensions were used in the quantitative stage for instrument construction. Their findings indicated that some elements of subjective well-being in Chinese elders were similar to the western studies, but some elements are interpreted and weighted differently (for instance, the emphasis on autonomy and independence in western society against the emphasis on value of filial piety in eastern society).

Li & Liang (2007) applied structural equation modeling to examine the effects of social support and negative interactions on life satisfaction and depression among Chinese elders. Their results suggested that social support and negative interactions are equal in influencing depressed affect, social support has stronger effects than negative interactions on life satisfaction, and the effects of social support and negative interactions on depressed affect are stronger for elders aged 70+ than elders aged 60-70. The findings provided some empirical evidences that social exchange may play a more important role when people entered the later stage of life.

Zhang & Liu's study (2007) examined the influence of childlessness on the well-being of Chinese elders. Their findings supported gender, education and childlessness are significantly associated with feelings of anxiety, loneliness and life satisfaction. The data were taken from the 2002 wave of the Chinese Longitudinal Healthy Longevity Survey (CLHLS); and possibly because of this connection with the large scale survey, this paper did not report the detail of the data collection process or give information on the validity of the questionnaire designed.

Yeung & Fung's study (2007) compared two sources of contributions (from family member and from friends) to older people's perceived well-being. A group of 108 participants (93 female and 15 male, aged 61–93) in Hong Kong were recruited, and the majority of the participants came from a group of HK residents with low levels of income (74% of participants with monthly income below HK$5000), low educational level (only 9% received secondary or higher education), multiple children (mean of 3.51) and a moderate level of self-perceived health (31% considered their health to be good, 38% to be average). The statistical results indicated that family support was positively related to life satisfaction for participants with higher family-centred scores, and the interaction between family emotional support and family-centred on life satisfaction was not significantly reported. The participants' physical health condition and demographic background should be considered as possible confounds which might have had an influence on the results.

Silverstein et al. (2006) used the data derived from a 2001 survey of 1,561 elders from 72 randomly selected villages in Anhui Province, China. Elders living with their offspring had better psychological well-being than those living only with people of their own generations, because they could receive greater remittances from their children or grandchildren. Their findings supported Chen et al (2008)'s findings on the relationship between living arrangement and psychological well-being. This is one of the few social psychological studies based on the sample of elders in the rural area in China. The researchers mentioned their back-translation method for checking the accuracy of the Mandarin translation of the questionnaire.

Leung et al. (2006) surveyed 507 elderly people living in the community on the question of whether support has buffering effects in the presence of health stressors. The researchers used the Chinese version of a questionnaire, which raised the question of whether the translation process involved cultural grounding of question structure, content and wording. The statistical results showed a high emotional support score, strong family involvement score, and relatively low criticism score. The low criticism score might indicate that the elders genuinely perceived a lower level of criticism in their families or they tended to express the harmonious side of their family life.

Wu at al. (2004) recruited 185 elders in HK, examining their acceptance of long-term placement in an old age home (OAH). The results showed that the participants'

willingness to enter an OAH is associated with their attitudes toward OAH, physical status and their beliefs about independence. The researchers mentioned that the cost of OAH placement is expensive for a majority of Chinese elders in Hong Kong, so they might need to take this into account in any assessment of attitudes by looking at the participants' willingness to enter OAH if the cost were adjusted to an acceptable level.

Chan et al. (2004) developed an instrument to address the need for a culturally relevant measure of quality of life for Chinese older persons in Hong Kong. The researchers considered use of more colloquial dialect as the key issue; therefore in the first stage of development of their measure they conducted focus groups with elderly participants and observed perceived meanings of QoL in order to capture their own words. They complete the development of the measure via appropriate steps to ensure it was reliable as well as valid with a representative sample.

Sun (2004)'s study paid attention to the social context of the welfare system and related policies in China and the elders' reaction to the situation they faced. Based on a review of cultural, historical, and social policy background of elders' lives in urban China, the researcher proposed the hypothesis that worries about public medical care are correlated with higher levels of depressed symptoms amongst Chinese elders. He found that perceived inadequate public medical care had a stressful impact on all measures of depression. The data for this study were drawn from the Survey on Aging and Intergenerational Relations in Baoding City in 1994, but was published in 2004;

therefore the data he used seemed to be a little out of date.

Chou & Chi, (2002) and Chou et al. (2004) used the same sample of 1106 community-dwelling Chinese elders aged 60+ in Hong Kong,. Chou et al. (2002) examined the factors associated with successful ageing among Chinese elders, they found that the most predictive variable was life satisfaction. Chou et al. (2004) investigated the association between major source of income and depression among Hong Kong elders, they found that financially independent participants are more likely to report depressive symptoms than the others for they are less likely to receive tangible or emotional support from their family members. The researchers considered other confounds such as living arrangement and employment status, and they also indicated that financial strain modified the linkage of sources of income and depression.

Chou & Chi, (2003)'s study on reciprocal relationship between social support and depression among Chinese elders was based on a longitudinal study of a community sample in Hong Kong. Their findings showed that elders with depression were likely to receive higher levels of support from family members living with them at baseline and 3 years later, but lower levels of support from friends had faded by three years later. In the discussion, the researchers mentioned the possible explanation that perceived social support from close family members was highly dynamic and changed over time, whereas social support from distant family members and friends seemed

more stable.

Chou et al. (2006) designed a research project studying living alone and depression in Chinese elders. In their sample group of 2003 elders in Hong Kong communities, the number of participants living alone is rather small (181) compared to the number of participants (1822), and this might influence the statistical validity of their results on the comparison of living alone and not living alone. In the discussion, they reported an interesting finding different from previous studies in USA (Dean et al., 1992) that living alone is associated with depression particularly in older woman not older men in China.

Chiu & Yu (2001) examined the applicability of the 'shared care approach' (in which elders from different families live in a residential institution) among Chinese elders living in the Chinese community in Britain. The researchers set up two assumptions that the traditional values of society family were influential for the Chinese elder's life decisions, and that the Chinese in Britain still kept these traditional values and were willing to practice them. The first wave of data (1991) was collected with participants whom the researchers contacted initially through Chinese practitioners, community and the church, and then visited at home; the second wave (1998) of data collection started from interviews in a fast-food restaurant and then snowballed to a larger group. Due to the snowball sampling method, the source of participants was limited: for instance the second sample contained 25 (out of 45) participants who had

children working in a Chinese Restaurant. Unlike other quantitative studies, the researcher of this study did not look at the statistics alone, and the semi-structured questionnaire interviews helped the researchers look at the participants' explanations for their answers. Therefore their findings touched some subtle parts of family relationships, so that they concluded that the two generations were not necessarily enjoying living together, and it was likely that the sense of guilt or obligation was binding them together.

Wu et al.'s research (2001) looked at Chinese elders' attitudes towards death. The researchers reported a low level of death anxiety as compared with previous literature and the participants' death anxiety was predicted by younger age, a high level of psychological distress, and the presence of stressors. The researchers also mentioned that the Chinese rarely talked about death and one third of the participants felt uneasy when others referred to death. This might raise the issue of whether the participants' low scores of death anxiety indicated no presence of death anxiety or their denial of accessing death issues. Exploring questions around similar issues like planning or preparation for future, or their attitudes towards a close person's death might to help clarify this point.

2.5 Lessons from methodology

The studies of psychological aspects of ageing in older participants in the Chinese

setting using quantitative designs were judged to have both methodological strengths and weaknesses. The strength of the quantitative approaches included the application of standardised measurements across a wide range of participants in both urban and rural populations, which to some extent allowed the researchers to draw conclusions across samples. In addition, the clear statistical analyses provided an effective way of testing hypotheses and therefore assisted in constructing statistical models about the interplay between different factors. The weakness was mainly revealed in the process of data collection: since the use of questionnaires that were drawn up and validated with US or European samples raised the issue of validity of their application with the target sample groups of Chinese participants. Most researchers did not discuss whether the content would transfer across cultures nor did they report any steps taken to ensure validity. In addition, no reflective sections were reported on the steps taken to ensure whether the participants understood the questions.

Looking across the studies, it seems that the data collection process in particular posed many difficulties for work with samples of Chinese elders, for instance how to give adequate instructions, how to explain the research purpose to participants with lower levels of education or reading difficulties and how to get participants' permission for tape recording. Only Chan et al (2008) and (2006) mentioned that the researchers took special effort by reading the questions and explaining the research to the participants with reading problems. The challenge of formality of research in the Chinese setting seemed to be another issue. This involves informing the participants of their roles as research participants, explaining the research aim and asking

permission for taking notes or tape-recording.

Of particular note is that Chiu et al. (2001) also conducted follow-up interviews to hear the participants' explanations for their answers, which helped the researchers touch some subtle issues in participants' family lives. And in Wu et al. (2001)'s study on death anxiety, the researchers pointed out the importance of understanding the discursive style of Chinese elders, from the phenomenon that people in Chinese society rarely talk about death. From these studies, I learned the importance of listening to participants' accounts and paying attention to their discursive style.

2.6 Summary of findings

This review provides us with an outline of the main research interests in the area of social psychological aspects of Chinese elders. The papers covered a wide range of studies, and findings varied with very few being duplicated across studies. Most of the researchers found some factors were significantly associated with the participants' quality of life, subjective well-being and psychological distress. These factors include both internal factors such as age, gender, education, physical state, marital status and belief in family, as well as external factors such as living environment, financial situation, support from family and friends, social activities, and the public medical care system.

To summarise findings related to distress, studies have found that being female and

having less education may contribute to higher levels of depression; and being childless may lead to higher levels of anxiety in old age. Age seems to have modifying effects such that in young-old people higher levels of death anxiety are related to higher distress and in old-old people higher levels of social support and lower levels of negative interaction are associated with lower levels of depression. Research also shows that older people who are actively involved in leisure activities have lower levels of distress, whilst those who worry about inadequate funding of medical care are more prone to distress. For those who become ill, family involvement seems to protect them from distress in the face of their illness.

From the studies of quality of life, the findings suggested that health related quality of life is predicted by lower levels of depression, better performance in activities of daily living and higher satisfaction with social support. One study found that participants in different locations might report different results, with those living in Shanghai having higher perceived quality of life than those in Hong Kong, though the reasons for this were not apparent.

In the area of subjective-wellbeing, the findings suggested that living arrangements are an important contributor to the participants' psychological well-being: living alone is associated with lower levels of subjective well-being and co-residence with family is associated with more positive subjective well-being; older adults living with their offspring had better perceived psychological well-being than those living only with

people in their own generation. Adult-children's respect emerged as a consistent predictor of Chinese elder's well-being.

Although the researchers have reported many important factors which have a certain level of impact on Chinese elders' lives, the whole picture of 'being an older adult in China' remained unclear. From these studies, we still have an incomplete and partial knowledge of the elders' views of life, in terms of how these external and internal factors linked to elders' stress, satisfaction and resilience. The explanations of how these factors had an impact on the elders' lives and why the participants rated high on these factors were lacking.

Some papers attempted to discuss their findings in the context of socio-economic change in China. These papers paid attention to the concept of "filial piety", which was proposed to be a distinctive cultural value in Chinese society. The dramatic social changes were hypothesised to have an impact on the elders' trust in the continuation of traditional family-centred values, and it was proposed that it may lead to older people having worries about their adult-children's willingness to fulfill filial responsibilities. These papers tried to explain the participants' psychological status in the light of whether their expectations of filial piety had been met. Although the concept of "filial piety" is important in the Chinese context, other values acquired in the elders' earlier years of life in their employment organisation, social milieu and family remained unexplored.

Most of the studies related psychological aspects of Chinese elders to the difficult side of their life, in terms of health status, source of income, living conditions or lack of support. The findings seemed to reduce the elders' lives to a pattern of their reactions to various strains and stresses of life, and to the related negative outcomes of worries, depression or death anxiety. Few studies looked at the elders' positive reactions to challenges during the ageing process. The areas of how older people adapted to the various changes in their life remained under-researched.

The current state of the existing literature reviewed here has informed the researcher in thinking about her own research. In terms of methodological aspects, the qualitative approach may provide a complimentary approach which will be more suitable to gain a more holistic view of Chinese elders' lives, since it will allow the use of open and broad research questions exploring participants' personal experiences, attitudes and values in relation to the ageing process; for the cultural aspects, the researcher will bear in mind the influence of the social context on participants, and keep an open mind about the existing cultural values and participants' ways of understanding and relating to them. By beginning to try and understand the lived experiences of participants from their own subjective position it is hoped that the imposition of psychological constructs developed elsewhere will be avoided, allowing the voices of elders to emerge in the research process.

Chapter 3 How do I feel about my life and family as I grow older?—a qualitative study of older people in a Chinese community

3.1 Research aims

This study aims to explore psychological aspects of the ageing process of elders in a Chinese setting, and to take a cultural psychology approach to develop understanding of their lived experience of stress and satisfactions. The researcher also paid attention to issues of an identity, well-being and quality of life. Semi-structured interviews were used, inviting an account of these Chinese elders' life spans in order to gain their understanding of ageing across time and space.

3.2 Research method

In order to acquire first hand accounts of the lived experience of Chinese elders, the researcher chose a qualitative research design for this study, using semi-structured interviews for data collection, and qualitative analysis following the principles of the constructivist mode of Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The details of the data collection and analysis process will be addressed further below.

3.2.1 Participants

13 participants (aged 73 to 87, all female) were interviewed. The locality, Dongting, is an inner-city neighbourhood in an old industrial city Wuhan, in the Middle of China.

Most of the participants in the community have been living there for more than ten years before their retirement, and all the participants lived with their adult-children in apartments which were assigned by the participants' previous employing organization. Due to commercial reasons, the community was refurbished recently and many properties were resold. Thus the residents were only familiar with a few of their neighbours. The locality was selected by convenience as the researcher had prior knowledge of that community and had known some of the residents there, prior to coming to the UK. The sampling process was based on the principle of snow-balling, P1, P5 and P6 were initially contacted and they recommended some of their friends and neighbours to take part and helped to arrange a time for the researcher to pay the home visit.

Table 6: Characteristics of the Participants

Participants	Age(year)	Gender	Number of children	Living status	Marital statues
P1	87	F	2	Living with her eldest son's family	widowed
P2	87	F	3	Living with her son and daughter's family	widowed
P3	85	F	1	Living with her daughter's family	widowed
P4	73	F	3	Living alone	widowed
P5	75	F	4	Living with her spouse and second youngest son's family	married
P6	77	F	2	Living with her younger son's family	widowed
P7	79	F	4	Living with her daughter's family	widowed
P8	75	F	2	Living with her spouse	married
P9	78	M	2	Living with his spouse	married
P10	78	M	4	Living with his spouse and second youngest son's family	married
P11	81	F	2	Living alone	widowed
P12	Not Known	F	Not Known	Living with her spouse	married
P13	Not Known	M	Not Known	Living with his spouse	married

P5 and P10, P8 and P9, P12 and P13 are married couples.

3.2.2 Research Question

Open-ended questions were raised by the researcher covering the following areas:

How people view their day to day life

Relationships with family members (parents and adult-children)

Perception of own role in family

Influence of ageing and requiring care on their identities and relationships

Feelings about their expectations of their children

Sources of stress and satisfaction

The interview schedule as used for the first interview is given in Appendix2.

3.2.3 Procedure

Participants 5 and 6 were contacted first by the researcher and a 20 minute telephone interview was conducted with each as a pilot study. The analysis of the pilot data helped develop the outline of interview questions for study 1.

With the help of the first two participants, participants 1, 2, 3 and 7 were invited to the research project and contacted first with a telephone call confirming the time of the face-to face interview. Then the other participants were introduced by participant 1 and 7. Each participant was visited by the researcher in their own home. Sometimes family members were present at the interview, in those cases they were also introduced by the researcher to the aim of the interview, but they seldom joined in the conversation.

The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. At the beginning, the interviewer obtained the participants' consent for taking notes and recording. The recordings were then transcribed.

Facilitator

Two facilitators were invited to assist with the interviews. These were people who were of the same age as the research participants and were already known to them. They played roles as introducers, organisers and facilitators of the research conversations. The two facilitators were both informed about the aim and intended process of the research project, so that they could understand the research design and the meaning of the research questions.

The primary aim of inviting a facilitator to be present was to familiarise the participants with the interview setting for the research purpose and to introduce the researcher to the participants formally at the beginning of interviews. During the interview process, the facilitators were invited to help explain the enquiries of the researcher to participants from with their own understanding.

In most cases the facilitators did not interrupt the participants' narration; they joined in the conversation when they felt the participants had difficulty in developing their thoughts in order to help to draw them out or encourage them. Thus at times, the facilitator's agenda may have shaped the direction of the interview content, though

this was generally in tune with the line of exploration the researcher was pursuing. In effect, at times, the facilitators acted as a type of intermediary to convey the enquiries of the researcher to the participants and more so, convey the essence of the response of the participant to the researcher.

The reason for using the facilitators was to bridge the gap between a young researcher and elder participants, since elders would not normally expect to have personal conversations of this type with a young, unknown person. They helped the participants find a comfortable position in the conversation and therefore were able to encourage freer expression in response to research questions. With the facilitators present, the participants seemed to be less hesitant in expressing their personal ideas or answering questions related to their own life experience. In those interviews without the facilitators, the initial warming up period usually took longer. At the beginning of those interviews, the researcher needed to search for the possible clues which could intrigue participants' interests, whereas when a facilitator was present, they were able to do this more easily, from their prior knowledge of the person.

The role of the facilitators seemed to have some impact on the construction of participants' narrative. Some participants who had a good relationship with the facilitators, tended to recall their common experiences in their past, or to share the ideas that had been debated and agreed in their peer group. On the positive side, this encouraged disclosure, yet it may also at times have constrained the participants.

Some spoke of wanting to supply the answers the researcher wanted to hear, and when a facilitator was present, they may have felt even greater pressure to say the 'right thing'.

After each interview the researcher reflected with the facilitators on whether the facilitators' introduction and organisation worked and whether the researcher gained useful materials from the interview. The researcher tended to give positive feedback to the facilitators for their suggestions and organisations as they played a valuable part in setting participants at ease and encouraging disclosure.

3.2.4 Translation

Transcripts from interviews sessions were translated into English, using Newmark's (1983) communicative translation approach, which places conveying the interviewee's original meaning as the first concern. Then they were analysed following principles of grounded theory.

In the early stages, the researcher translated whole scripts and then sent them to the supervisor to read and suggest ways of making the script flow in idiomatic English. In the supervision meetings, the scripts were discussed for the meaning of certain sentences, the related background, and the discursive style. This sometimes involved considerable discussion in order to establish the underlying meaning and thus find a

way of expressing the material in English that conveyed the sense of the words that had been used in Chinese. Thus for some passages, the translated version might eventually not very closely ressemble a word for word translation of words themselves but the meaning itself might be well conveyed. Field notes from observations and memos of thoughts and interpretations arising during analysis of transcripts were made directly in English.

The challenge of translation was not only related to problems of explaining certain sentences and their related background but also to problems of revealing participants' emotional truth from their expressions. For instance, when participants commented on their relationship to adult-children, they tended to state that they were satisfied in a general sense; but sometimes they also disclosed some more subtle feelings that were not in the tone of their previous statements. When coming to these cases, attention was paid to both literary translation and interpretations.

In order to double-check the differences in mode of expression and meaning system of two languages, back translation strategy was applied to the first two transcripts, in order to check whether the translation achieved linguistic equivalence and accuracy (an example of back translation was shown in Appendix 6). This involved the researcher translating the script as well as possible in the manner described above, and then passing the English translation to a colleague versed in translation so that she could translate the script back into Chinese. The original and the back-translated transcripts were compared to make sure that the translation conveyed the correct sense

of participants' statements in both the literary meaning and narrative tone.

3.2.5 Data Analysis

The Data analysis process of grounded theory involved several stages. The first stage required the researcher's reading and re-reading of the transcripts and writing memos. Themes were identified through the coding process: the analysis started with line-by-line coding with the English version of each participant's transcript, and then focused coding was used to go back to the data with further consideration of the central or repeated categories; and finally theory building involved identifying the themes and the links between the themes after examining all the data the categories covered.

3.3 Results

During the qualitative analysis, categories and themes were identified and listed, and a theoretical model was built with the links between the themes (a piece of transcript and examples of analysis were listed in the appendix). Three main themes emerged from the transcripts: Family life, social life and discursive style, with 5 sub-themes within the theme of family life. I shall go on to describe the first two themes, following which there is a section exploring the interaction between themes. Last but not least the discussion section will summarise the contribution and limitations of this first study.

3.3. 1 Family life

Family issues were the major topic in participants' conversation. Participants cited

stories that happened around them in the recent period, with a focus on the ways in which they were participants or witness. Among different lines of their story-telling, participants introduced their experiences of family life, coexisting with adult children, providing and receiving care, dealing with income budget and adjusting to their role change. Themes in this section fall into five main categories: Attitude to life, attitude to future planning, experience of death, dynamic decision making and role in the family.

Table 7: sub-themes of "Family life"

Themes	Definition
Attitude to life	This categories mainly focus on the participants' perspectives on 3 main issues in their daily life: finance, housework and health.
Attitude to future planning	The participants' ideas about how to plan their future life.
The experiences of death	Some participants talked about their experience of a close person's death.
Dynamic decision making	This category comes from participants' views about the process of how a family makes decisions on issues related to the wellbeing of older family members.
Role in a family	This category is mainly concerned with how participants perceived their role in their families. Their ideas varied from a certain role to an uncertain one

3.3.1.1 Attitude to life

There were divergent views among participants of their daily life. Some seemed to be satisfied with their life status and thus hold an easy-going attitude; some seemed to feel insecure and were comparatively anxious about issues in finance or housework. From the transcripts, participants' topics around their daily life fell into two main domains, financial issues and housework, which illustrated this dimension of attitude

to life. And their attitudes towards their daily life issues varied along a dimension from easy going to concerned and worried.

For instance, participant 2 described her "not-worrying" personality as "Do not like to use the brain"

> *"I do not like worrying, or paying attention to important matters. How can worrying be any good, for someone elderly?"*

By contrast, participant 9's quote illustrated his wife P8's "easy to worry" characteristics:

> *"Every time she could not sleep well when she was disturbed by a thought, no matter how small it seems."*

Financial issues

From participants' conversation, financial issues seemed to be one of the most important factors that participants talked about as influencing their daily lives, as well as their family relationships. Those who had a limited budget, understandably seemed to put more effort into financial planning and management. These people also seemed to have a heightened awareness of their role in the family, either as a contributor or as a burden.

P2 illustrates her view that money is the root of all evil with her general and perhaps somewhat extreme statement that "*If families have any disturbance in their*

relationship, all problems can be attributed to money."

Easy-going

Some participants expressed an easy-going attitude to their finances, usually because they felt financially secure.

P4, for example, stated that her stable financial income assured stability in her current life. From her perspective, one of the advantages of this was that it means she does not have to rely heavily on her children. Thus financial independence ensures she is not a burden.

> *"...my financial condition is ok, and I don't have to worry about it at this moment. Generally speaking, our adult-children are good. And if your financial state is still ok, then you can rely less on your children."*

P2 also stated that she seldom worried about financial issues.

> *"When age comes, it (money) will become useless. So I am not taking money seriously...I don't think about anything any more, and do not care much about money. Anyway, I have my pension every month, so I have no worries about that, that's fine."*

Like P4, she felt that one of the advantages of this was that financial independence helped to maintain smooth family relationships as her family was free of conflicts

related to economic problems. Somewhat paradoxically she seems to say that their financial independence allows them to function autonomously rather than sharing with each other, yet this very independence helps to create better unity and harmony in the family.

"Everyone has his or her own family, he or she can use as much (money) as they like. So there is no conflict at home. Be more united and stay in harmony.

I leave them alone, they leave me alone too…I don't need money from them, when my final age comes [i.e. when I die] all my money becomes theirs, doesn't it?   It is unnecessary to quarrel over the money, meaningless; our family is just like that."

She described that her idea of independent financial management was formed earlier when her husband was still alive. She seemed to have a philosophy of living for today as you cannot take your money with you when you die and she felt no obligation to pass any onto her children:

"When my husband was still alive, he earned, and I earned as well, and our children received money from us. When my husband passed on, he left no savings for us; neither do I have any savings currently. I use up my pension every month; buy whatever I want to eat. Now they even don't know how much I have in my savings. They never ask questions like, 'how much do you earn per month, or how much have you saved?"

Concerned

In contrast to those who were relaxed about their finances, some participants expressed concern either directly or through the stories they told about other people. P6 told a story of her neighbor (Xian) who had some conflict over financial issues with her co-resident son.   Xian had a stable income from her pension while her son had financial difficulty in maintaining his family life and he more or less expected his mother to support him. Xian appeared to resent having to support her son financially as she needed her income to pay for medical treatment, for *"her wrist pains, as she needs injections and massage. Those things cost a lot."*

However, P6 explained that she held a different view from her neighbor Xian.   Her view was that an elder is likely to need his/her son or daughter in future and so it is necessary for an elder to keep a good relationship with his/her adult-children, even if this involves providing them with financial support.

> *"I said, 'Why you took all your money along with you, [spend the money as you wish] on injections and medications? Give him what he deserves, save the necessary amount of money, which will be sufficient'. And she feels satisfied then."*

Worried

It was less common for participants in this sample to express worry about finances, but some, especially those with less or no income did talk about anxieties in this

aspect of life.

P3 had been a full-time housewife for most of her adult life and thus she had no source of income or pension and could only financially depend on her daughters. She stated that she had no other option except to depend on others, and she described how her activities are highly restricted due to her dependent status.

"You do not have an income for yourself, you can not play outside. Tourism costs a lot, doesn't it? If I had a pension, I would have money for myself. Without a pension, I can only depend on others.   They all have income after retirement."

Housework (cooking)

This category is mainly focused on elders' perceptions of their daily housework especially making meals.   Some of the participants viewed housework as a necessary part of their life as it was important to them to support other family members as well as to fulfill a role in the family. On the other hand, some of participants regarded housework as beyond their responsibility.

Easy-going

Participants' accounts seemed to indicate that some were quite content with their situation with regard to their role in the household. In some cases they were content with doing very little and in other cases were content with continuing to perform roles.

P1, for example, stated that she did not have a lot of necessary housework since her retirement, as the other family members took over her part of the work: *"They did not let me do anything once I retired, I retired in my sixties. We, workers, have done nothing after retirement; we don't have to do anything. ."*

She talked about keeping a similar routine in her current life to that she had had before retirement, except that her share of housework, cooking and washing dishes was taken by her family. .

> *"Before retirement, after breakfast I went to work, and then came back to look after the children. I didn't have much to do. After I retired, things remained the same, and did not change much. I stay at home. They cook meals for me, and I even don't have to wash dishes. My age comes, they do not let me wash dishes and do it themselves."*

Sometimes she took up the job of decorating as a leisure activity: *"I worked as a decorator and painter before. So I can do some decorating work myself, like painting the wardrobe. Look at the wardrobe in my room; I mixed up the color for it."*

In contrast to P1, P2 spoke of enjoying keeping an active role in the house. She regarded housework as a way to exercise herself, *"to prepare for old age and future life"* and *"we should do exercises with our own bodies, people cannot live without*

working.”

She also stated that she did not like the idea of depending on others for help with daily life tasks.

"Indeed if you were rich in your family, you could ask someone else to do things for you, but I would not do that, I would do it myself. Why bother others, when up until now, my body still feels fine to work, and still has energy to do so.”

In the accounts of P1 and P2 it seems that there is agreement between their own view of how much they prefer to contribute to the household and their families' view and this helps them to feel relaxed about it. P6 described a situation where she and her daughter had different views of what was appropriate but she seems to have asserted her own view and they reached a way of operating that suited them. She rejected her daughter's suggestion of helping their family in preparing meals. She explained that this would be a "huge task" for her.

"My daughter is quite busy, every day she has to buy food, make meals, and go work. I will not help them with breakfast, it is not my job preparing meals for you, and you do it for yourselves. That would be a huge task for me.”

She stated that they had come to an accommodation where they each looked after themselves, though with some degree of sharing at times.

"Yes, we have decided that I cook for myself and they care for themselves. Another point is that, I sometimes go out visiting my friends. We agreed that

whoever comes back first, he or she will make the dinner. I said' I cannot make

every meal for you, I can not do that, and I will not do it'."

Concerned

Some participants seemed to be positioned between those who were "easy-going" and those who were "worried", in that they cared more about their duty of housework than the easy-going. Housework kept them busy and also brought a sense of engagement. Participant 8 mentioned her duty of preparing meals for older families after her retirement, which kept her busy: *"When I retired, there were still elders in my family, and I still have to cook for them…I felt quite busy".*

Participant 4 has been providing care for a long time, taking care of her spouse and his parents. Her mother-in-law had been lying in bed all the time in her last few years. She was the only one who was capable of housework.

> *"I was the only one to look after the family, preparing meals and doing cleaning*
>
> *for her. She often loses control of herself, incontinent, and I always had to help*
>
> *her wash and clean her sheets each time. Those sheets smelled very odoriferous."*

In this quotation we see that P4 comments, without complaint, on the difficult and unpleasant nature of the personal care she had to provide, whilst also perhaps taking some pride in the responsibility of her role as the carer of the whole family.

Worried

It was not common for this group of participants to report that they worried about domestic work. Only in participant 3's case, she was not comfortable with her current status that she does not need to do any housework, in that sense she felt that she was a dependent: *"I do nothing, nothing to do. From day to night just wait for my daughter making the meal, and then I eat. I do nothing."*

She also stated that she was not confident in preparing meals for her family, and she worried that she could not meet their taste. In this way, housework means a difficult task for her: *"They don't let me do anything; I do not buy food or make meals. I don't know how to choose food now, I don't know the children's taste, I don't know which food is tasty which is not."*

3.3.1.2 Attitude to future planning

In response to the interviewer's question: *"How do you prepare for your future life"* or *"Do you have any plan for your future life?",* participants provided their ideas about their plans for their future. Their attitudes varied from approaching and planning for the future to avoiding and justifying avoidance of thinking or planning. Whether participants were able to plan for the future seemed to depend in part on whether they felt the future was predictable and on who they envisaged themselves relying upon should they reach a stage of requiring a lot of assistance.

Planning for the future

It seemed that the dominant narrative was that older people should be able to rely on their daughters who would naturally take on the role of caregivers if required. However, participants varied in their views about whether they would turn to their daughters in the future. Participant 3 implied somewhat tentatively that she since she can rely on her daughter to some extent now, she may be able to continue to rely on her in the future, whereas P4 has a very different view. She challenged the commonly accepted idea of depending on a daughter for care and was explicit in her opinion that she did not wish to devote too much energy to maintaining her relationship with her children. In her case, this seemed to be based around the fact that she and her daughter did not have a very close relationship and she was aware that her daughter would be reluctant to provide care for her.

> *"The children have their own happiness; there is no need for me to be at their beck and call. They say that I have a daughter, and that she can provide some care to me. That's nonsense. I can never find my daughter when I need her. Compared with sons, daughters might be much more suitable for giving care, but she herself may not want to become a carer. When you are seriously ill, you cannot totally rely on your daughter. So for my personal opinion, I seldom think about it."*

Some participants stressed the importance of maintaining self-reliance in the future, either because they had no alternative or because they would prefer to maintain independence rather than rely on others. P2, for example, challenged the idea of being

looked after by others just because you are old and voiced a determination to remain independent.

"I am currently old, but I have made preparation myself for the time when I am even older, and I thought for myself that an older person still has to find ways of managing on his or her own. Some people act as if, even when you are not very ill, you still need someone supporting you, helping you, even when you need a cup of tea. I won't be like that."

Participant 7 provided a detailed plan for her later life which involved mutual support rather than reliance on family and she had already taken steps towards that plan.

"I discussed with some of my friends, we shared an idea that 7or 8 of us move to an old people's home together, so that we can spend our time together and take care of each other. ...that will save lots of trouble for our sons and daughters. And I have already visited several institutions, some of them look good."

Postponing the future

On the other hand, a number of participants' accounts seemed to reflect a wish to put off thinking about how they would manage should they need more help in future.

More than one participant expressed the view that the future is unpredictable and therefore impossible to plan for. P3, for example, expressed this view and implied that, since she felt content with her current situation, it was easy for her to suspend thinking about planning for the future.

"How can I plan for that? I can depend on my daughter now, my daughter is fairly good. And there are several old friends nearby, quite convenient generally. Right now I do not need to worry too much for my children and other family members; it is still good for me."

Participant 4 talked about how it would be impossible to sort out plans for every eventuality in advance: *"Things like institutions for elders, I will think of those when I am dying. Even if you move to an institution, this still wouldn't solve all your problems as you would still have to find someone to look after you."*

This participant said that she would prefer to suspend her worries for the future until the moment when she was forced to think about them, and even then she expressed the attitude that things would somehow work themselves out.

"Things like planning for the future ... old people's homes, I seldom think about that. Something will sort itself out, so there is no need to worry about it. My attitude is just to leave it alone. That is the way it is and this is how I think of it."

She goes on to talk about how older generations managed to live long lives despite living in poor conditions, and she seems to take this as implying that perhaps it would be a mistake to become too concerned about the material and practical aspects of how to manage.

"And our own parents, they lived in such awful living conditions, yet they still

lived to a good age. So I don't think I should invest a lot for the sake of the future.

I should only invest a little for that."

3.3.1.3 Experiences of death

This category is concerned with several participants' statement of their experience of a close person's death. In the transcripts of a few participants, their stories of experiencing a person's death, though not very common, are central accounts of their narrations. They witnessed the process of dying as a role of a spouse, a friend or a carer, and their perception of the process varied from easy to difficult.

One participant recalled her husband's death. She described that his last stage of life was as normal as healthy life, not particularly involved with pain or stress.

"Cancer, it was Lung cancer. It was only one year's time from the starting up of the disease till the end of his life; the therapy could not help him. Cancer is like that."

"He could still walk just before dying. His health condition is not that awful. Every time he just went to hospital for an injection and went back home directly, not staying there. His death is also very simple; he ate breakfast with us in the morning, spoke to us, played, and then took a nap in the afternoon. After that, he stood up for a walk, when the rest of us were still napping. In evening, he woke up from sleep, stood up again and walked, pissed, then went back to bed again, continued the sleep, this time ended. Without pain, all came so fast, without any

pain."

Differing from the above statement, one participant witnessed her friend's final stage of life. She viewed her life as ending up miserably, totally dependent, bringing burdens to the whole family.

> *"My friend Xu, your grandma knows her. She entered the home for elders in her seventies, moved out in her 86th year. Because after her eighties, she became a little out of her mind. And it is a heavy burden to employ a fulltime carer. So her families decided to send her to hospital, and hired a nurse taking care of her in day time and her children did the rest. After some time, she recovered a little; her children sent her to a cheaper institution for elders, but still hired a part-time carer for her. That's it, and she died in one year."*

One participant (P4) had taken the role of providing care for both of her father-in-law and mother-in-law for their last life stage: *"I kept looking after them until their death. My father-in-law was fine, he kept good health all the time, even in the last few years of his life, he could manage to take care of himself"*.

She referred particularly to her mother-in-law's life state as incapable and out of control, although she was still conscious and deeply in pain.

> *"My mother-in-law was not all right, in her last few years, she was bedridden all the time. I was the only one to look after the family, preparing meals and doing cleaning for her. She often lost control of herself, and was incontinent, and I*

always had to help her wash and clean her sheets each time. Those sheets

smelled very odoriferous. "

So this account shows that P4 had more than one experience of death and that they varied in quality, so that her account seems more balanced that that of the participants who had a singular experience of one death.

3.3.1.4 Dynamic decision making

This category is mainly concerned with participants' views about the process of how a family makes decisions about issues related to the wellbeing of older family members. Generally the examples given by participants seemed to show them being excluded from decision making even when it was directly connected with their own lives. Participants seemed to grudgingly accept this position but they give accounts that make it clear that they found this difficult.

Participant 7 talked about how her family reached agreement on how to provide care and a suitable room for her. She and her family had moved several times and lived in different sub-groups according to the availability of accommodation. At one point she lived with her six year old grandson. She "*felt afraid because there were only an old lady and a baby. What if someone broke in, a thief or a burglar?*". So her family arranged a meeting to discuss who would take on the responsibility of caring for her.

"Knowing my worries, all my children gathered together for a meeting and

discussed it. Finally they agreed that they would raise money together to buy a new apartment, and whoever is willing to look after me would get that apartment."

It seems here that without any change in this woman's level of capability and solely on account of her expressing her nervousness about living arrangements, that the family view of her shifted from someone who could be trusted to look after her grandson to someone who needed to be cared for her. Her words ('knowing my worries') imply that she saw this as motivated by benevolent intentions. However, the researcher and her supervisor were aware of reacting with discomfort as she described the bargain that whoever looks after her gets the apartment. It seems to convey the idea that she is being seen as a liability.

Her daughter finally agreed to take on the duty of taking care for her and thus the participant's other children raised money to buy an apartment for her and her daughter's family. The participant did not openly present comments on her feelings about this family meeting in which she is not involved, nor about the decision of who should provide care. When asked whether she knew about the meeting, she replied: "*Actually I knew. Anyway it is good of them to let me know their final decision.*" This comment seems to try and minimize her sense of exclusion by pointing out that she knew of the meeting. In expressing a sense of being grateful that she was *even* told the outcome, she seems to be trying to let the researcher know that she is not

objecting to the way the decision was made. It sounds as if she perhaps feels she should be thankful for any recognition at all.

Participant 5 compared past and present. It seems that in the past she played quite a major role in supporting family members but that now she feels less able to do this as she has lost touch with some of the complexities of the modern world. "*Basically, the eldest and the second son go home on ordinary days, but their affairs become more and more difficult for me to get involved in.*"

As with P7, she seems to feel actively excluded but also does not feel she should complain about this:

> "*We can not help even if we would like to. My eldest son sometimes comes to see us with a worried face, I just ask a little bit about what's going on, how is his situation. He is always very impatient with me, saying 'I don't need your management'.*"

Whilst this last phrase would suggest that she might be hurt, she does not express this openly. On the contrary she tries to see things from her sons' perspective in order to provide an excuse for their dismissal of her advice: "*In fact they all have a heavy burden on their shoulders; they have their own families and careers*". It perhaps feels easier to her to provide the researcher with a work related rationale for their rejection of her role rather than exploring other reasons why they might be excluding her.

This participant then referred to her youngest son who lived with her and gave a further example of being totally excluded from decisions. Recently her family decided to redecorate her flat, and her son voluntarily offered to take charge of decorating.

"I did not want to worry much about it, so I just let him be in charge. Actually his intention was good, to release our burdens. So he made decisions totally on his own. But as we viewed the apartment and offered some suggestions on the decoration of kitchen and bedrooms, he became impatient. He said it had been agreed that it was his responsibility to run the decoration, so it is unnecessary for us to offer any ideas."

"I saw a lot of places that were unsatisfactory, such as the floor. He took great pains to restore what is said to be made of original timber, but it is very slippery, and for us old people it was not convenient to walk on. I feel it is not as good as the previous ceramic tiles…He soon got angry with me and said that I had agreed to let him be fully responsible for the decoration ,so it is unnecessary for us to get involved, but I am now getting involved and disturbing him with different opinions."

The language at the beginning of this extract seems to say that she felt she had some power but was 'letting' him be in charge. However, towards the end it is apparent that,

when she tries to exercise some influence, her input is completely rejected. Although she does not voice any overt hurt or annoyance, the example itself is so demonstrative that the telling of the tale obviates the need for her to put her emotions into words.

Her husband P10 concluded that *"to rear children against old age is not the case now. We as parents should care for them not to ask for their offers."* He seemed to be less bothered by his son's decision on decoration.

3.3.1.5 Role in the family

This category is mainly concerned with how participants perceived their role in their families. In general most of participants view their roles as a certain part of a family, in relation to their contribution and responsibility in the family. Only one participant stated that she could not find a suitable place when she lived with her daughter.

Certain role

According to participants' different contributions and responsibilities, they tended to view their role as a carer (someone who is responsible to provide care), a supporter (someone who is helpful to other members), or a dependent (someone who makes no contribution and depends on others)

Participant 5 described her role as carer, for she has been looking after her spouse and her spouse's parent until they passed on. After that, she changed her focus to looking

after her grand children: "*Then my eldest son was assigned to a new room, so I moved back to the apartment of two rooms with my mother-in-law, also helping my eldest to take care of the grandson,*"

Participant 5 played a supportive role in her family. She shared her house with her youngest son, helped him with housework and took care of her grandson. Despite her efforts, she felt that her role as a "helpful mum" has declined "*Sometimes they (her sons) come home with a worried face. But when I asked them what they were worrying about they became inpatient with me.*"

Participant 3 described her identity as "*just an old lady depending on her daughter*" She explained that she had no source of income, which seemed to make her hesitant in whether to join her family. When she was asked "*Do you talk with your family around the dinner table?*" She replied that "*I do not contribute to the food expenses, how I can have any comments on that (food)?*", a remark that shows she feels disenfranchised.

Participant 4 made a few comments on those who depended heavily on their families. She viewed their life as quite undesirable.

> "*They completely rely on their children, that kind of life, they have pay a lot to maintain their life. Doing housework, bearing the hardship without complaining, and they also have to continually see their children's faces. They live with a son*

for few months, and then move to daughter's place, without their own place. If

they have a private place, they have to share it with their children."

Through this kind of comparison, she could view her current life as satisfactory. *"There are not many people like us who can eat well and go out for fun, not much entertainment indeed free enough, and no one try to control my life."*

Uncertain role

Different from previous cases, Participant 4 could not find a satisfactory role in her daughter's family. She had been a widow for two years, and during those days, her house was broken into, so she decided to move to her daughter's place. She described that her stay with her daughter's family was not so desirable.

> *"When I lived with them, I felt that things were different from what I had imagined. Because they are a family of three, and I still felt lonely with them. Why? They all went out, for work or for school. I have to do my things, and sometimes help them."*

She finally decided to move back to her previous place. *"My previous place is more convenient for me; there are a lot of shops and restaurants nearby. I can go out, eat or play whenever I want"*

She further explained that she felt that she had been slightly excluded from her

daughter's family.

"My ear now is not so good, sometimes I cannot hear clearly. When we speak, they will think, it is my personal feeling that, if I speak at the right time, that's all right, but if I speak my words in the inappropriate time or place, they might think I am not going well with them, that is very troublesome."

Participant 8's son divorced and left his daughter in the participant's home. She and her husband took their son's role of looking after their granddaughter for several years before her granddaughter graduated from university. "*In these years, I took care of her [her son's daughter]. I became both her grandmother and mother.*" She seemed to be unhappy to her son's irresponsible attitudes, but was proud of her role of supporting her granddaughter.

3.3.2 Social life

The second theme arising from the participants' accounts, about their experience of social communications and activities, was labeled "Social life". Some of the participants were pleased to talk about their engagement in social activities which rendered them different experiences from their family life. In their social circle, participants could meet friends, play games or join in group discussion. The social activity provided an opportunity for participants to escape from family responsibility, to express their views to people with similar life experience, or just to kill time.

Participant 12 was always an active organizer in her group of friends. She introduced her usual activities "*In the morning, I go to a park nearby, meet friends and join in exercises. Once in a week, I and some of my friends gather, in one member's place to play card games.*"

Participant 7 was a central person in her friendship group, for her responsible and easy-going personality was appreciated by her friends. She always raised some provocative issues in group discussion.

> "*My friends agreed with me that, we belong to a group that falls short of the best, but is better than the worst. And we should plan our future life carefully for our own needs, which could also save our children's trouble.*"

P7 was happy that her ideas could be echoed in a group, which brought her confidence in discussing ageing issues.

Sometimes social circles could also bring burdens to those participants. Participant 5 cited a story about one of her friends who was previously pleasantly engaged but latter refused to show up to the group.

> "*She is quite good looking and younger than us. She joined in group dancing in the park. But we heard that her situation was not so good, for her son and daughter's marriage was in trouble. We avoided talking about children's family life in front of her, but she was quite sensitive. Then she left our group activities and avoided showing up.*"

3.3.3 Interaction between themes

The relationship between themes as found in the transcripts is illustrated in the following picture.
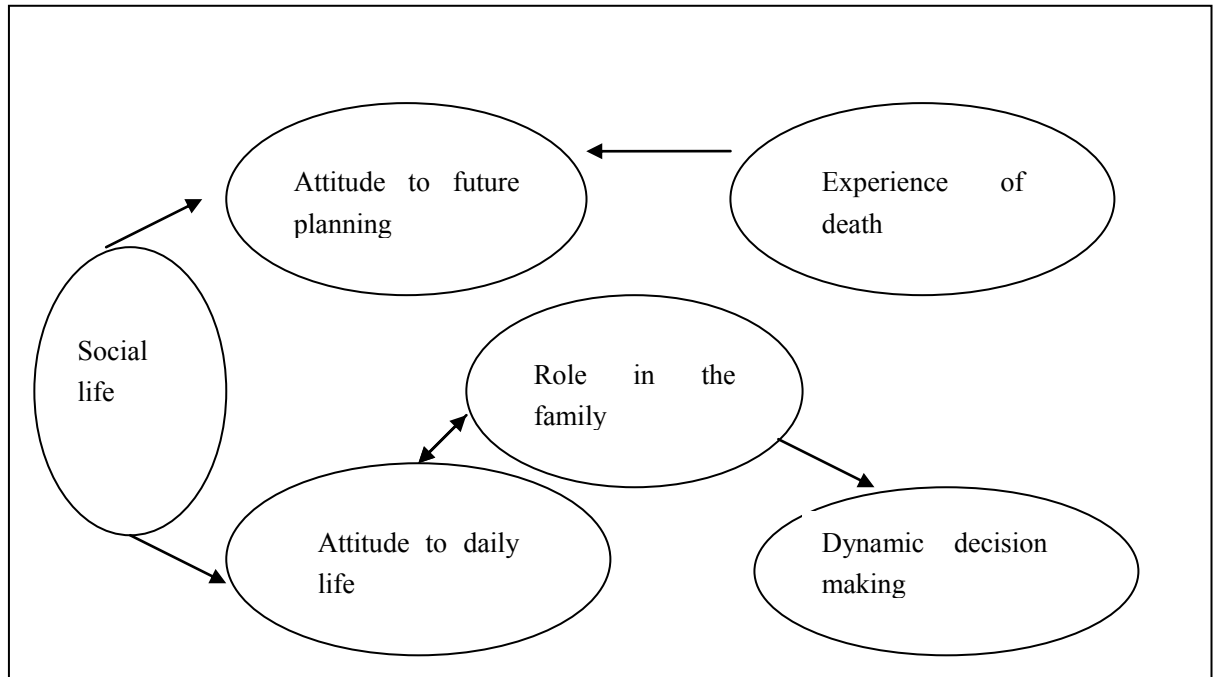
Figure 1: Study 1 links between the themes

3.3.3.1 'Experience of death' and 'Attitude to future planning'

In some participants' accounts of their life story, experiences of a close person's death seemed to be central, and shaped participants' views about their own death and predictions of their future. There was a contrast across participants' descriptions of death, varying from easy and short to long-lasting and painful.

In section 3.3.1.3, Participant 2 recalled her husband's death; she thought the day he died was usual and not related to a severe painful experience. And when participant 2

talked about herself, she said: *"Currently I am already in my 80s, still not dead. To be alive, just dawdling away the time that remains to me, is quite easy now."*

In relation to her casual attitude, she emphasized that she was not particularly worried by issues commonly found stressful, like financial management or maintenance of health. She also showed her confidence in planning her future life. *'I am currently old. But for that time, I have made preparation for myself.*

In contrast, participant 6's witnessing her friend's last stage was described as a painstaking and long-lasting experience. She described her friend's body and mind being out of her control, which brought excessive burden to her family members. Witnessing these uncontrollable life events, participant 6 rejected the idea that preparations and plans for future life could reduce certain risks as one ages and eventually dies.

3.3.3.2 'Role in the family' and 'dynamic decision making'

The probable relationship between two themes 'Role in a family' and 'dynamic decision making' is well supported by Participant 1's case. In her case, she remarked that her eldest and second sons, who did not live with her, seldom come to her for advice. She explained that this communication gap derived from their different understandings of current life events as well as the distance between their homes. She furthermore stated that her role as a planner and organizer has declined due to that gap.

"In fact they all had a heavy burden on their shoulders...I can not help even if we would like to."

In section 3.3.1.4, participant 5 told a story about the decoration of her apartment. In the beginning, her family had decided that her youngest son would take responsibility for decoration, and she also agreed and felt happy that her son could save her trouble. But when she tried to offer ideas for arranging the furniture, her suggestions were rejected by her son, and he seemed to react impatiently to her intervention. At that time she felt that *"they [her family members] don't think I should be unhappy about that."* and she soon adjusted her reaction to the event *"I should not be angry alone, no one cares, they are all minding their own business."*

Thus it seemed that when these older people no longer had a central role in the family they found themselves excluded from decision making or unable to play a part.

3.3.3.3'Role in the family' and 'Attitude to life'

The participants' tone concerning their attitude to life in the conversations, varied from positive to middling to negative, and suggested a possible relationship between their perception of their role in the family and their attitude to daily life issues. Some participants' viewed their role as a contributor, who was helpful in providing advice, care, housework, or income, and these people showed a sense of pride when talking

about their contribution. The pride in their independent identity derived from their previous experience as a pillar in their family, and it continued to support those participants' beliefs and seemed to help to maintain a positive and self-reliant image.

When participant 2 described her role in the family, she emphasized that she had a stable source of income and she could afford her daily outgoings and also support her family members in certain ways, like: "*I could buy some food for them, so they can enjoy better meals.*" So she seems not to worry about her financial management, as she stated: "*When age comes, it (money) will become useless. So I am not taking the money seriously…*" In addition, she was proud that her children do not rely much on her support: "*All the family members can be self-sufficient, so there is no conflict at home. We are more united and in harmony.*"

Those without an active family role in which they could take some pride seemed to have a more negative attitude to life. Participant 3 for example has been a lifetime housewife. She described herself: "*I do nothing, I cannot read, do not have any skills, just depend on my daughters for meals. My husband has gone; I could only rely on my daughters' offer.*" When asked about difficulties, she was particularly worried about her financial status and related the way her financial situation impacted upon conversation: "*I can not find a place in the conversation. How can I discuss money with them, I can only talk about the food.*"

3.3.3.4 'Social life' and 'Attitude to life and future planning'

Comparing common topics and general attitudes in participants' transcripts, the impact of one's social life experience on the expression of attitudes was apparent. Those participants who often joined in social activities outside, tended to express ideas which were appreciated by their social group, or which were generally highly valued by their community or society. Popular topics in groups, like concerns for personal health, worries about medical costs and the pension system were common in their conversation. For instance, participant 7 was an active member in her group of friends and liked to join in group discussion. When asked about future planning, she introduced the idea agreed in that group; "*I have a detailed plan for future life, that I can move to a suitable institution with some of my friends so that we can take care of each other, saving trouble for our families*" Participant 7 was happy that her idea could strike the right chord with other members of that group, which brought her confidence in discussing ageing issues.

In participant 3's case, compared with other participants, she was in a rather isolated situation, with little contact with her neighbours. She explained that "*I seldom talk to others; those [neighbours] are intellectual or educated. A person without knowledge like me, can only listen to them…they are all familiar with each other. They have quite a lot to talk about, I am not in the same circle as them*" The isolation limited her social activity, and increased her attachment to her daughter. In her case, her lack of social life seemed to affect her attitude and self-concept.

These links that show how these themes interacted with each other and is supported by some case studies of certain participants, as described above. Also from Figure 1, we can see that the participants' perspectives were developed and influenced by several different factors, such as by their personal experience, their peer groups, family relationships, and community. This point will be discussed further in chapter 7.

3.3.4 Discursive style

This third theme is concerned with features of participants' tone of voice and their tendency in expression. In general they tended to use indirect statements and story-telling style to express their views, and sometimes their views were hidden behind other words.

This theme contained 3 sub themes: story narrative style and indirect statement, words unspoken, and excusing.

3.3.4.1 Story narrative style and indirect statement

Story narrative style and indirect statement

It is very common that the participants tended to cite others' life stories during their interviews. It seems that participants sometimes did this in preference to talking about their own lives. These stories they provided sometimes illustrate their views and

values about certain topics, especially when they feel topics are sensitive, like financial management and relationships with adult-children.

It is very rare for participants to describe their emotions directly though one example comes from P4, *"And I feel more comfortable when I live alone."* In most cases, participants would cite others' stories to illustrate their understanding of later life. Participant 1 cited two stories about her neighbours' problems with their sons regarding financial management. She used these stories to support her view that an older person will need his or her adult-children in future anyway, so that it is necessary for him/her to keep a good relationship with his/her adult-children.

Participant 1 also cited a story of one of her friends to illustrate her view that the future is almost unpredictable, and early planning cannot save as many troubles as one imagined. In her friend's case, she was diagnosed with dementia, and sent to hospital and day care centre by her adult-children

She then went on further to say that troubles in later life could not be solved, and even if you worried a lot, this kind of worrying could not help to solve some of the dilemmas of later life, especially concerning future dependency on others.

> *"That's the story. So my friend Lu started to talk about old people's homes in her*
>
> *60s. She said you have a daughter, no need for worry. I said that it is nothing to*
>
> *do with a daughter, but it is useless to think about it at such an early stage. And*

recently she talks about it less, after she moved into her 70s, she talked less. It is not that she forgot about it, but she still worries, if she moves into an institution, that she will still be troublesome for her children, the problem is still not resolved.”

This illustration showed that she was thinking about her own future life, and illustrates her view that the worries of the future could not be resolved easily.

3.3.4.2 Words unspoken

Similar to participants' preference for indirect statements and a story-telling style, their comments were sometimes disguised in other words.

<u>Self-praise</u>

It was common that participants disliked praising themselves in public, for self-praise might be viewed as a sign of pretension. Avoiding tangible words related to self-affirmation, they tended to quote others' words or reactions to show that they were doing well.

For example, Participant 4 has been a caregiver for many years, looking after her spouse and his parents. Her mother-in-law had been bed bound in her last few years. P4 was the only one who was capable of housework, preparing meals and doing cleaning for her mother-in-law, who often lost control of herself and was sometimes incontinent. Regarding her effort in supporting her family members, she cited her

mother-in-law's grateful reaction: *"Not long before her going a way, she held my hands for long, before she was moved to the hospital. She was deeply in pain at that time. "*

P12 was happy when she received her friends praise for her active social life. *"Happiness consists in contentment. I believe so. I don't have much treasure, but I enjoying playing with my peers. And my friends agree me with that joining social activities is a good thing. "*

Participant 1 was proud that she could be helpful to her friends in some way. She is famous as a good advisor for family issues in the neighbourhood, especially for financial management. She cited two stories about how she helped solve financial conflicts in her friends' families. Although she seemed to be proud of what she has done, she did not say out aloud that her role as a conciliator was important. However, when she was asked, *"Do you think those younger person can do this reconciliation?"* she replied that *"They can not do that, old ladies tend to listen to old ladies"* In this way, she seemed to suggest that her role was valuable.

Excusing

For some participants, they reported that their relationship with other family members became more distant than before, and they soon found excuses for them. In participant 5's case, although she was not content with her youngest son's performance in decorating, and she was also not happy that her ideas had been rejected, she soon

stated that her son had reasons.

"What else can I do, my youngest son's life is not as good as he wished, his organization was not good, and he is not good at getting along with other people, he does not even own a separate apartment till now. What methods do we have, except looking after him a bit or offering a help sometimes?"

Similarly, participant 6 did not have much contact with her daughter's family although they lived together. She explained that "*We lived in separate rooms. It was very hot in summer, so it was necessary for us to stay in our own room for air-conditioning,*" as if the heat excused the lack of human contact.

3.4 Discussion

Due to the process of snowballing in this study, the participant sample is limited to a small group of female elders, from middle-class urban residences, most of whom previously worked in a government-owned organisation. They represented a group of female elders who faced the challenges of their life stage, coexisting with adult children, providing and receiving care, dealing with a restricted income and adjusting to role change. Among this group of participants with similar backgrounds, there were divergent views. Some praised personal conservation, or self-reliance; while some emphasized cooperation and communication with others (especially families and friends). Generally contribution and reciprocity were expected and valued. Most of them were more likely to perceive their role in the family as a continuation of the

previous part they played (wage earner, housewife, planner and organizer), without great changes in their life or responsibility.

The analysis of this first set of data revealed that the sense of security (affected by participants' income source, health status, and other life experience such as a close person's death) is influential for those participants' attitudes. In a consumerist society which values productivity and efficiency, a positive and self-reliant image is accepted and praised. In that way their wish to meet social expectations of self-reliance may counteract their need to express their sense of insecurity. Furthermore, as they were well aware of changes in family members' attitudes, as well as in the social environment, they can be judged as being flexible in adjusting their expectations and understandings.

Due to the unaccustomed situation of being invited to talk about private issues and about sources of stress, the participants tended to use generalised terms of response to the interviewer's enquiries. In order to encourage detailed rich and personal responses, a wide range of questions were attempted. From the transcripts of the first group of participants, it was found that participants were comfortable with topics such as health status, financial management, and family decision making. Sometimes when participants were narrating other people's life stories, in that account their views and tendencies were clearer than in their own story.

Cross-sectional design brought uncertainty in analysis, for participants might pay more attention to life events that happened at around the time they were interviewed, thus when they were distracted by recent salient events their views might change as well.

In addition to the issues above, the translation process of transcripts may also have caused ambiguity in interpretations. Transcripts were dictated in Chinese, and then translated into English. There were problems in conveying ideas in a different cultural context, and more subtle information conveyed through pause, interjection or incomplete sentences.

Among those themes which emerged from the transcripts, the themes labeled "Role in the family" and "dynamic decision making" were central to participants' accounts. The former theme connected two main themes related to participants' attitude, in ways which built bridges between different lines of story. The latter theme provided a special angle to look at family relationships in a real life context, in which multiple family members were involved, and this theme was well supported by case studies, regarding participants' differences in personality or environment. Due to the limited source of the first set of data, further study is required to explore the decision making process from a larger sample. This is the subject of the following study.

Chapter 4 'How do I feel about my life in an institution?': A qualitative study of older people from a Chinese residential institution

4.1 Research aim

The second study was conducted in a residential institution; it aimed to explore the participants' life experience in the institution, how they made the decision to move and how they coped with the relationship with their adult-children being at a distance.

4.2 Research Method

Based on previous research experience, the researcher applied the same research design as that of study 1(see Chapter 3), using Grounded theory for data collection and analysis. Some new research questions were added to the interview schedule to explore the participants' experiences related to their lives in the institution.

4.2.1 Participants

In this study, a group of 10 participants (aged 73-84 years, 8 female and 2 male) from an institutional residence were engaged. This caring institution was situated in Guangzhou, the major city of the south part of China, and provides accommodation in a single building for more than 300 residents with a range of different health needs and income levels. In the1980s, the city benefited from the nation's Opening and Reforming Policy, with a significant speed of development. The participants in the

institution were not originally local residents in the city but they had moved to Guangzhou with the trend of influx of trained personnel in the '80s. In that institution, all the participants lived on the same floor and came from similar backgrounds in terms of health status, income level and social circle. They had been living in the institution for more than two years (3 years for the longest). Prior to retirement they had worked in occupations ranging from professor in a university to bank clerk. The locality was selected after the researcher spoke to one of the residents by telephone about the possibilities of researching at the residence. This resident (P4) invited the researcher to the institution. Some outline details about the sample are shown in table 1 below.

Table 8: Characteristics of the Participants

Participants	Age(year)	Gender	Number of children	Length of residence in the institution	Marital statues
P1	80	F	4 sons	1 year	widowed
P2	78	F	2 sons	2 years	married
P3	74	M	2 sons	2 years	married
P4	78	F	2 daughters	1 year and half	widowed
P5	78	F	2 sons and 1 daughter	2 years	married
P6	76	M	2 sons and 1 daughter	2 years	married
P7	86	F	0	1 year	widowed
P8	72	F	2 daughters	3 months	widowed
P9	75	F	2 sons	6 months	widowed
P10	77	F	2 children	2 months	married

P2 and P3, P5 and P6 are married couples

4.2.2 Procedure

The study was conducted in collaboration with one participant (P4) and staff in the institution. P4 played the role of organiser, and attended all the interviews with other participants, alongside the researcher. She helped introduce the researcher to the other participants at the beginning of each conversation, and she was also interviewed   in her own right.

A follow-up interview was conducted 6 months after the first interview, when P3, P4, P5 and P7 were interviewed a second time. P8, P9, and P10 were new residents, and they were also invited to the interviews through the introduction of P4, and they shared their experiences as new comers.

4.2.3 Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants (P2&P3, P5&P6 were interviewed together in two groups). Open-ended questions (see Appendix I) were used to explore the following areas:

The overall experience and perception of each participant of his/her life in the institution

Changes over time in family relationships, particularly as influenced by the move into the institution and how to get along with their children who live in distant

Decision making about the move into the institution

The first interview sections lasted about 40 minutes to 1 hour. The follow-up

interview sections lasted 30 to 50 minutes. Each interview was recorded, transcribed and then translated into English.

4.3 Analysis

The qualitative analysis of data followed the process of Grounded theory, as described in Chapter3. Themes emerging from the transcripts were identified first, and then the presence of themes and topics from the previous study with community dwelling older people were also considered in order to compare the lived experiences of the two samples.

4.4 Results

The analysis resulted in 3 themes, each with 2 categories subsumed under it as shown in table 9 below.

Table 9: themes in Study 2

Themes		Brief description
Life in an institution	Anxiety and fear of future	Participants often faced 'geriatric' issues around them in the institution, which prompted fears of their own future risk
	Concerns with personal well-being	It is common in participants' accounts of their life in the institution, that they value their achievement in some aspects of life, such as health maintenance or group activities.
Decision making about the move	Reasons for moving	Participants described their experiences of how he or she decided to move; their reasons included physical health, social convenience and tranquillity
	Ideas from family members	Some participants mentioned their children's idea of moving
Family communication	Away from children	Participants described their relationship with adult children as emotionally distant.
	Care from a distance	Some participants seemed to accept the geographical distance from their children, and admired the way their children cared for them from this distance.

4.4.1 Life in an institution

4.4.1.1 Anxiety and fear of future

The institution combined the functions of sheltered housing, residential home and nursing home. Thus people with different backgrounds, health status and stage of life co-existed in one building. Although they were grouped and accommodated according to their health status, these participants, being in reasonably good health, inevitably encountered people who were worse off than themselves. Compared with the previous group of participants who lived in the community, they more frequently faced 'geriatric' issues like witnessing confusion due to dementia or physical disability, which raised in them consideration of the possibility of losing control of their own faculties or health in the future. Thus in their conversations, themes of worries about the future appeared early.

Participant 4 was the central person in this group; she has lived in the institution for more than 3 years. She was aware of what happened in her living environment. She described that sometimes she witnessed undesirable situations (e.g. residents there were mistreated or they behaved in ill-manner) that triggered her worries about her own future life.

> "There are various types of elders in the institution, some of them have to share a
>
> room with others; some of them may have mental problems, such as   suspecting
>
> someone stole their things, took their keys away or opened their drawers. (One of

my neighbours) once said that her shoes beside the door were taken away, a few days later she said that the shoes were returned, almost as if she had dementia."

The participant used the term "as if", which seemed to reflect her rejection of the idea of dementia.

P4 stated directly that she worried about becoming demented or disabled herself. She explained that she was afraid of losing self-awareness and dignity. "*Without knowing anything about myself, others may tease me like they were playing with a bird.*"

This metaphor reflected her strong worries or perhaps sense of loneliness, uncertainty and helplessness, and it echoed with her disagreement with the careless treatment offered to residents with disability or dementia.

She further explained that her anxiety seemed to be triggered by neighbours who had difficulty in maintaining their independence. For instance, she had witnessed a man who was not able to take care of himself, and some of his neighbours making fun of him.

"There is an old man aged 77. All the parts of his body function well, except for his brain. He walks fast, but cannot control his brain, always goes around. In order to prevent him, his family have found him a carer, like a personal guard, who follows him all the time. One following another, the old man walks in front; the carer follows him with his hands on the back. Once some people tried to play a trick on the carer, they hid the old man and left the carer to find him."

She cited another example of a person who loses self-control in public.

"There is another man who often cries a lot. When we play table tennis, if his carer lets this man watch us play, he will stop crying. We play for an hour, and he watches for an hour, but sometimes he can not help crying."

All these examples seemed to play into the fears the participant had for herself.

P1 is currently 80. She was energetic and approachable and she was quite popular with her institutional neighbours, as she was active in singing and dancing classes for elders. She is a friend of P4. They often stayed together and shared ideas. P1 also stated that she was afraid of having dementia.

"I am afraid that I will have dementia one day, although other people may say that I will not."

She also noticed some possible signs of memory decline, and she took positive measures, by using brain exercises to reduce the risk of dementia.

"So I keep reading and writing and I practice a lot. Because my memory declines, I am apt to forget things. I try every possible means, using my calendar for recording my schedule and carrying out my plans. That is to say, my daily life is regular and routine. I can arrange my life, that's not bad."

She worked hard on the exercises, and her work helped her reduce the risky factors for her fears, giving her some sense of control over her life.

P5 was also in accord with P1 with the idea that it was unsatisfactory that this institution contained so many miserable sights.

"The most unsatisfactory part of this institution is that there are so many disabled people, some have mental problems, and some are physically disabled. When the weather is fine, the garden will be full of wheelchairs; they are brought there by the carers, to bask in the sun. This kind of scene is not pleasant."

And some of the staff do not take their job seriously; they treat people here like an unknown child. We are very uncomfortable with that, for it reminds me of our own future, without much dignity.

It seems that quite a lot of the fears relate to witnessing bad, undignified treatment as well as to seeing people being unhappy and distressed. The wish to keep these issues out of sight then seems to cause the participants to attach stigma to the people who are disabled such that P1 even implies they should be hidden away. Presumably one could try and take some of the fear away if the participants witnessed good respectful care and could see that even when disabled or with dementia it is possible to be content and to have 'well-being'.

4.4.2 Concerns with personal well-being

It is common in participants' accounts of their life in the institution, to hear that they

value their personal achievement in some aspects of life, like health maintenance or group activities. They were pleased to talk about their efforts to enrich their lives, in contrast to those common views that life in an institution is considered to be restricted or depressing, a place for people who are waiting for death.

P1 showed the researcher her collection of newspaper clippings. She seemed to be very proud that she made 20 notebooks of newspaper clippings, beautifully arranged and categorized in good order.

"And I spend more than I did in the past, just like newspaper and magazine subscriptions costs several hundred Yuan a year, I cut and paste with these materials."

She was the leading singer in the institution chorus.

"I have quite a lot to do here. I have joined the singing class and chorus in the institution."

P4 exhibited her drawings and calligraphy; she kept on drawing and writing every week.

"Every morning, I do some exercises, walking along the corridor several times. And sometimes I play table tennis downstairs."

I recently learned to use a computer. My neighbor helped me with that, I can now receive emails from my daughter."

P5 and P6 valued the nice atmosphere of helping each other in the institution. And they were also happy to offer something in that group. Their effects were highly praised by other participants. P6 introduced one of their social activities, an early outing.

"We organized some activities every week. We went out by bus together early in the morning, for breakfast or film."

4.4.3 Decision making about moving

In the interviews, all the participants described their experiences of how they decided to move out of their previous home and the process of family decision making that was involved. In their accounts, most stated that they had alternative options, and it was their own decision to move to an institution. Most of participants claimed that the moving decision was made on their own even if their family members disagreed with them.

4.4.3.1 Reasons for moving

In many cases, the participants' reasons for moving are related to their own wellbeing, e.g. for physical health and security, social convenience and personal improvement.

Physical health

P1 stated that living in an institution in a suburban area is better for her health and daily life, and moving out of a household with family members also freed her of

housework duties.

"It is a reasonable choice for me, that I had anaphylactic rhinitis in the past, and it is gone this year. Anyway, one's life should be regular, with healthy hobbies. I don't think it is reasonable only to be engaged in housework."

P2 was more concerned with health issues, especially the possibility of an emergency.

"If we two old people stayed together on our own, both ill, we could not feel at ease most of time. And in this place, there is always someone to keep an eye on us. If we could reach the alarm, staff would come to us very quickly."

Similarly P10's idea of moving was triggered by the emergency of her husband's heart attack when both of them were at home, but she could not help her husband by herself, and fortunately when she called for help, someone came and took her husband to the hospital.

"Our reason for moving is realistic. Previously we did not want to move so early, but recently his health is not so good…two months ago, he suddenly became breathless, I could not even help him up. I cried for help aloud, luckily someone who lived downstairs came up and helped us call the ambulance… I felt very scared after that, if there was no one around."

Social convenience

Participant 2 felt that the institution is a place where she and her husband can meet

people more conveniently than in the community.

"But in this institution, things are different, we know the people who live nearby, we share common topics. Although my daughters preferred us to stay in the flat they bought for us, we still decided to move here."

The institution offered them the opportunity to have contact with peers, which seemed to be less accessible in life in the community.

P8 had been in the institution for only 3 months, she was happy that she is surrounded by friendly peers and the social contact enjoyable.

"Since I came here, I have found quite a lot of people get along well with me. We can chat and play together. They usually care about me, sometimes help me with shopping. I am much happier here than before."

She seemed to appreciate the help from the peers, which seemed to be a valuable source of happiness.

Tranquility

 P1 stated another reason for moving was that she would like a tranquil place to spend her later life.

"It was my own decision to move into this institution, although my sons disagree. As long as I stay at home, many people may come to visit   me. So I would like to avoid the crowds by moving to a more tranquil place."

Previously P1 was quite sociable and led a group of people for morning exercises.

That activity kept her busy for more than 1 year. She further explained that her initial aim for leading that group of exercises was to join up with her friends for a while in the mornings. But as the group got more and more popular, she found herself stressed and tired organising the classes on her own, as she had to get up early and communicate with a large group of people. When a former leisure activity became a burden, she realised the results were against her initial aim and felt entirely free to relinquish some of her responsibility.

"I want to make myself comfortable, so I gave up my activities in that circle, which took plenty of time in my life. It was necessary for me to get up early and arrive in good time, staying with my peers for hour at least. So I negotiated with them for less time or I quit. I cannot sleep very well, and I feel my responsibility for that group, which forced me to get up early. It was hard for me to delay even 1 minute, so I did not sleep much, I was tired."

Unlike other participants, participant 7 stated that the decision to move was made by her husband, and she herself was not prepared for it and, in the beginning, could not accept moving to the institution without her spouse, who sadly died before the move took place:

"My husband made the decision to move out for both of us; he checked this place, booked this room and paid the residence fee for three years. Just a few days after that, he suddenly passed on, leaving me alone. I did not feel like moving to this place at the beginning, for it may remind me of him. But all my friends tried to persuade me; they

said that I could not waste my husband's arrangements and consideration. So I finally moved here."

4.4.3.2 Reactions of family members

Many participants admitted that their children disagreed with their decision to move at the beginning. Only Participant 8 stated that her daughter made the decision of moving for her.

P2's idea of moving to an institution was not supported by her daughter at the beginning.

"My daughter disagreed with us, for we had bought an apartment in town, and she thought she was a doctor and could take care of us, and hired someone to do the daily housework. If we employ someone to do the housework, shopping, cooking and washing, when our daughters are not available for those things, that's still a problem for us anyway."

P5 pointed out that his son cared not only about his parents' situation, but also his own reputation as an adult-child.

"My son who strongly disagreed with our decision, is now living in Hong Kong,. He thought if we moved to an institution, he would probably be seen as an unsuccessful son who failed to fulfil his filial responsibility."

P8 stated that it was her eldest daughter who made the decision for her to move into the institution, because previously her health condition was not good, and she needed to stay in hospital for some time each year, requiring her two daughters to come and take care of her. Her eldest daughter wanted her mother to settle down in a place which could provide the necessary medical care and health management.

"She did not tell me that we were visiting an elder's home that day, and of course I did not know that she had paid for the fees and deposit of the first three months."

"My daughter paid the deposit before I knew about this place. She took me there for a visit, and then she required me to move in soon for she had paid for it. I was not happy with her decision at the beginning."

P9 talked about her son with a pleasant tone, saying that her son had persuaded her to leave the past for the past and move to an institution for a different life.

"Soon after my husband passed on, my son came to talk with me. He repeated several times that I should not hang onto the problems I cannot solve. I felt he might be right, so I suspended my thinking and worries, and just came here to enjoy the rest of my life."

Though she seemed to be discontent with her son's arrangement at the beginning, she soon found her life in the new place enjoyable.

4.4.4 Family communication

Compared with the previous participant group of community dwelling older people, these participants seemed to feel more comfortable when talking about their relationship with family members, who live at a distance. The distance could be attributed as one factor that enables them to consider their family relationships from other angles that differ from those who live with families. In the interviews, participants referred to these issues, when they when they were asked about their relationship with adult children.

4.4.4.1 Away from children

Most of the participants described their relationship with their adult children as geographically distant.

When talking about her family, participant 1 introduced her four sons, and said that with the exception of her third son who moved abroad, her other sons' situations was not very desirable. She described that she was quite self-centred previously when she lived with her sons, and she had rejected her sons' request to look after her grandsons, but her understanding of her role in the family had changed after she moved to the institution. *"It has been a great change since I moved here; I have become quiet, and understand more deeply."*

She explained that since she moved to the institution, her needs for communication,

especially communication in-depth, were not met and "inevitably" she felt lonely.

"I was not used to coming to others for conversation, and so it was hard for me to reach the core topic from short conversations. Inevitably I felt a bit lonely, I missed my family."

P2 & P3 have been living at a distance from their children for a long time; they referred to their role in the family firstly as consultants to their children, acting as potential detectives in spotting troubles and helping them to solve them.

"Normally our children do not tell us their troubles, but we can find out, we can tell from their facial expression. If we find something wrong, we may ask them what happened."

They then addressed that this 'consultant' role has declined, and their children now tend to keep their troubles to themselves.

"But our children don't listen to us nowadays; they make their own judgments before they tell us. Sometimes we find out that we were left out. Because of our limited room for entertaining, we do not have much contact with wider society, and we have become distant from current times. Our children's thinking is more fresh and creative; it is that the living condition decided our mode of thinking and way of life. So we should be aware of that, minding less their business. Our children only tell us the good news when they are in touch with us."

They further explained their feeling of being "left behind".

"Since I retired, my communication with peers has decreased. And the people around us are 10 or 20 years older than us. That's the way it goes, and when it happens to you, you understand that you are distant from the current times."

They seemed to like the idea of being an understanding father or mother, and showed their wishes for family harmony and the good future of their children.

"We are concerned about health, and family relationship, especially the safety of our children. We don't expect them to earn a lot, we just wish for the whole family to enjoy a happy life."

6 months after the first interview, the researcher came to them for a follow up interview. At that time P2 was diagnosed with a long-term disease. In that second interview, P3 (P2's husband) talked less about their children, and he stated that he cared about his wife more than about others.

"I do not worry about my children much, they are out of reach. I am only worrying about my wife."

P1 used to live with her younger daughter, May, who often visited her at weekends. It took 2 hours to travel from her daughter's home to her institution by bus. On one hand she was happy that her daughter came to see her, but on the other hand she felt sorry for bringing her the trouble of the long travel.

"May came to my place every two weeks, and every time she will spend more than two hours for a single trip, and transferred buses 3 times. Sometimes I don't want her to visit me from such a distance, but she insisted. So I sometimes visited her place instead."

From her statement in the first interview, P1 seemed to be concerned with her role as a mother, supporting her daughter when she was in need. And she seemed to lack confidence in expressing her concern for her daughter at that particular time.

"Sometimes May invited me to her place on Sunday, but I was afraid that I might bring troubles to her, thus I was not willing to go. And the traffic inconvenience was another reason. I was ill two years ago after I came back from May's home. Her husband just passed on. My son-in-law was a very good man; I felt close to him, he suddenly left us. We all had no preparation for that. Considering May's situation, I did not show my sadness in front of her. She wanted me to stay with her for a few days, and I also brought my belongings with me. But my granddaughter just married, she and her husband also stayed in May's place, thus that place became very crowded and inconvenient. I came back to the institution by bus, standing all the way for more than 1 hour, and after I came back, I was ill."

From this story, the participant seemed to keep her feeling to herself in her daughter's place, which may be due to her awareness of the distance in their relationship and uncertainty of her daughter's ideas of her. In the second interview, she talked less about her relationship with her two daughters.

Following living in the institution for 3 months, P8 had moved to her daughter's place to take care of it when her daughter went aboard and her place was empty. She felt she could live there and take care of her daughter's home. But she soon found it was not as good as she expected," those neighbours never talked to me, and my daughter was not happy with me occupying her place"

She moved back to the institution again, and this time she settled down. *"I do feel happier here, I can find friends here and the staff are nice, and my daughter is content that I can be taken care of without troubling her."*

4.4.4.2 Care from a distance

Some participants seemed to accept the distance from their children, and admired the way their children cared for them from a distance.

P9 seemed to be happy to hear her neighbour praising her son, who often came to see her. She repeated the theme several times that one morning her son came to see her with a huge bag of gifts. She described that *"he brought so many groceries I could not use them up for a whole month."*

P1 once held a pessimistic view about her role in the family after she rejected their suggestion that she should look after her grandchildren. She thought that she might not be welcomed by her families and so did not contact them for a few months. However, when she went back to her sons' place, contrary to her expectations, she felt

pleasant and comfortable joining in her family members.

"Then I went back. My relatives were having a meal and playing mah-jong. They looked happy to see me, so I stayed with them for a few days. After that I went to their place more frequently, and let them come to my place less. And my daughters-in-laws are very good too; they said that they would visit me separately. I was moved by them saying this."

She summarised that the process of being together- detachment- reunion makes her family more united.

P4 addressed in her first interview that her relationship with her adult-children had become distant, and pointed out possible reasons in that her daughter's understanding of family has been influenced by western opinions, leading to long-term detachment.

"My neighbor Sun said that, our relationship with children may become distant, when children leave. I have found that since my elder daughter went to the USA, maybe affected by those western opinions, her concern for mother and daughter weakened… It is western views, that when parents get older, communication between parents and adult- children decreases, thus their relationship becomes distant. We have been apart for more than 20 years, so our bonds weaken."

In the follow-up interview, participant 4 seemed to accept the idea that her daughters also care about her from a distance. She agreed with the idea of Participant 1 that *"I understand how to get along with them now that I am old. I have been independent so*

far, with little reliance upon them."

She explained that recently she had adapted her understanding of getting along with children in that she expected less from her daughters, and admired their communications in a general sense. She tended to talk less about the content of their telephone communication.

4.5 Links between themes
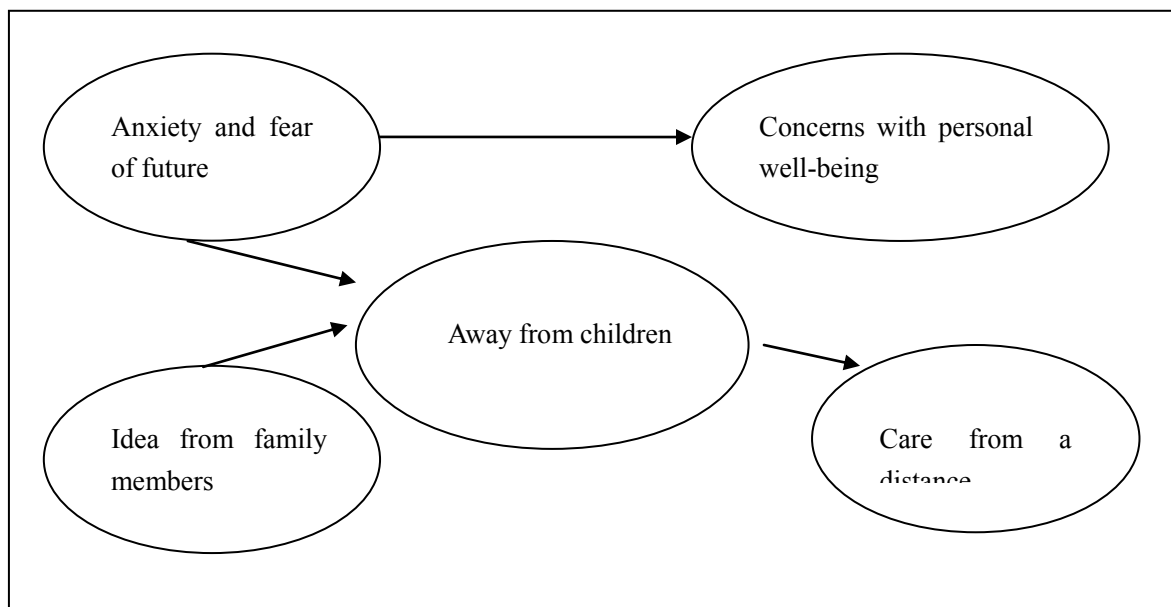
Chart 2: study2, the links between themes

4.5.1 'Anxiety and fear of future' and 'concern with personal well-being'

Many participants complained about the unsatisfactory atmosphere of the institution and this triggered unpleasant feelings in that environment. However from another angle, the institution was also seen as offering them for opportunity of personal

development, through the various classes and entertainment and exercises facility.

Participant 1, Participant 4 and Participant 5 all stated that they were often influenced by the miserable themes in the institution, witnessing bad, undignified treatment as well as seeing people being unhappy and distressed. Despite their witnessing and dissatisfaction, they then tried to explain that many people living in the institution also enjoy a happy life. They seemed to convince themselves that all the issues related to ageing and declining were not so fearful, and they also took actions against the unpleasant themes which triggered some undesirable imaginations, so for example P1and P4 talked about their exercises and health management, they also exhibited their collection and drawings to the researcher, and P5 introduced their social activities.

On one hand the participants were keen on the exercises of brain work, which seemed to help them gain a sense of self-control or counter the fear of losing self-consciousness- the most undesirable situation they could have imagined. On the other hand, they could share their work and achievement with their peers, which was also a valuable source of gaining social content.

4.5.2 'Idea from family members' and 'away from children'.

In some participants' narratives about how they made their decision to move, they talked about their children's ideas as well. It seemed that those ideas left them with a

sense that their children did not try and think from their parents' perspective, which made them feel emotionally detached from their children. Participant 6 quoted his son's saying against their moving decision, "*if we moved to an institution, he would probably be taken as an unsuccessful son who failed to fulfill his filial responsibility.*" He seemed to take that statement as a sign of detaching, for his son's idea was only on his behalf, putting his own reputation above his parents' well being. Participant 6 then commented that he and his wife have been parents who understood their children's point of view for many years. He seemed to imply in between the lines that his son's words disappointed them, in the sense of non-mutual care.

In participant 8's case, she seemed to be unhappy to move to the institution because her daughter made that decision for her. "*She forced me to accept her offer of moving.*" After 6 months, she admitted that she had grown to like her life in that institution. She listed a lot of reasons of why she liked it there. However, she tended to express this in a way that suggests that she discovered the goodness of this place on her own, not her daughter's merit.

4.5.3 'Anxiety and fear of future' and 'away from children'.

According to the participants' statement about their worries for their life in the future, most of the participants focused on the risk of emergent events like a sudden onset of a disease. Many participants explained that they chose to move to an institution because the staff around could reduce their worries of finding themselves in a helpless

situation. The guaranteed 24 hour emergency service seemed to decrease their reliance on the support from their adult-children.

Participant 8 stated that previously her health condition flared up regularly so that she needed to be hospitalised every year. During those periods, she required her two daughters to take care of her in the hospital. Then her elder daughter made a decision to send her mother to an institution. Though participant 8 was not happy with her daughter's decision at the beginning, after 6 months she found her life there was not only enjoyable but perhaps more importantly she seemed to feel relieved that she could save her daughter's trouble looking after her.." I do feel happier here, I can find friends here and the staff are nice, and my daughter is content that I can be taken care of without troubling her."

In participant 10's case, her husband's health condition forced her to move to the institution with daily nursing service. She stated that she did not feel like moving that early, and she would have liked her children to help her in caring for her husband. The emergency made her decide to move earlier but she not seem so content with the arrangement although she did not disclose any of her wishes to her children.

Participant 2 and Participant 3 valued the safety of their children as their most important concern and expressed their wish to maintain the parent-children relationship in harmony. In the follow-up interview, as participant2 was recently

diagnosed with a long-term disease, participant 3 mainly talked about his wife's disease in the conversation. He seemed to pay less attention to their children, and stated that he cared about his wife more than about others.

4.5.4 'Away from children' and 'Care from a distance'

Some of the participants, who felt they were far away from their adult-children, also reported that they could sense their children's care for them from a distance. It seemed that for some participants the rather negative sense of being away from their children could be transformed into a more positive feeling that children's care from a distance is valuable. The turning point of that relationship seemed to come when the participant tried to accept the distance and to interpret it positively. They feel safe with that level of contact and no longer long to go back to their former closeness.

In participant 9's case, she was persuaded by her son to move, but she felt pleased when her neighbours saw her son visit her and praised him for he brought groceries for his mother. She herself felt both happy for her son's behaviours and her neighbours' praise. In that sense she seemed to accept the idea that her son still cares about her even though he lives at a distance.

4.6 Discussion

4.6.1 Comparison with study 1

Compared with study 1, the participants of study two had education and a higher

average income level. They live in the inshore city Guangzhou, where the concept of the free market was introduced earlier than the inland areas. Many participants had children who studied or worked abroad and saw their children as being influenced by the so-called "western mode of family life", for it is commonly regarded that the "western mode of family life" is the opposite of the traditional Confucian ideal of family-centred life.   In comparison with the participants in study 1 they seemed to be more open-minded in taking part in the interview and talking about their private experiences and emotions.

From the above citations, there was a difference in participants' accounts between the institutional and community dwelling groups: the institutional residents tended to talk more about their own well-being, while those living at home tended to value the harmony and unity of the family. This difference may not be a real contrast; but may reflect the change in social desirability related to the change of one's position.

Also compared with the previous group of participants who live in the community, the institutional residents more frequently faced 'geriatric' issues like dementia or disability, which directed them to consider the possibility of losing self-control themselves in future. Thus in their conversations, themes of worries about future life appeared early.

4.6.2 Findings unique to this study

Most of the participants seemed keen to talk about their decision to move to the institution. In most cases they made the decision on their own and seemed to be happy that the decision was right.

In many elders' ideal of later life, children are supposed to live with the parents and support them both instrumentally and emotionally. Along with the social changes and the decline of the traditional family-centred mode of living, the participants in the study seemed to have learned to have low expectations of their adult-children and to accept that their children did not live with them. Faced with these changes, many elders became doubtful of their self-worth and pessimistic about their relationship with their children. However several of the participants in this group seemed to build up some confidence in the relationship with children at a distance for they sensed the care from them.

The themes labelled "Concerns with personal well-being", "Decision making about the move" and "away from the children" are central in participants' accounts. These three themes are linked to each other, as this group of participants to some extent rejected the traditional family-centred mode of living and gradually accepted the idea of being self-reliant, and getting along well with the children at a distance.

4.6.3 Limitations

The group of participants contacted in this study were drawn from the same social circle and they knew each other quite well, therefore their views were influenced by the others and their understanding of many topics are similar to each other. In order to ease the tension of the participants in the situation of an interview with an unknown researcher, participant 4 was invited to join in the conversation as the facilitator. This may reduce the formality of the research and raised the issue of confidentiality. It is likely that with the help of the facilitator the participants took the interview as a fairly casual occasion like exchanging ideas in their social life, rather than narrating their life story to a person from a generation of their grandchildren, as seemed to be the case in study 1. However, the presence of participant 4 also set the other participants at ease and may have led to greater self-disclosure than would have been the case if the researcher had been alone with each person.

Chapter 5 'How do I feel about my life and family when I am growing old?' —A further qualitative study of elders in a Chinese sheltered community

5.1 Research aim

Study 3 aimed to identify the psychological aspects of ageing issues in older people in a different sample from those used in the initial studies, by recruiting a group with a somewhat different socio-economic background from a sheltered retirement community. The aim was to compare findings with those from the study 1 group, in part to establish whether a point of saturation had been reached in understanding of the psychological issues of ageing for older people in urban China. In addition, in study 1 and 2 most of the participants were female, thus the researcher tried to find out more about the male perspectives.

5.2 Research method

This study was an extension of study 1. It applied the research questions from study 1 to a different sample group in a sheltered retirement community in Wuhan. The researcher used both the semi-structured interview as well as focus groups for obtaining qualitative data. The transcripts were analyzed qualitatively using grounded theory as described in chapter 3.

The researcher used the focus group as a further means of data collection in which participants have an opportunity to talk openly with each other. This approach is appropriate because it fits with participants' close community, and their communal society. The participants had known each other for some time and they got used to the atmosphere of group discussion.

5.2.1 Participants

The study was conducted with a sample of people (10 participants, 5 female, 5 male, aged 71- 85) in a retirement community rather than people living in ordinary housing. All the participants lived in a sheltered community, and their apartments were assigned by their previous employers, like the participants in study 1, but their living space was older and more crowded. All the residents belonged to the same previous organization and therefore they were well acquainted with each other. The locality was selected for similar reasons to the locality in study 1.

Table 10： Characteristics of the Participants in Study 3, Chapter 5

Participants	Age(year)	Gender	Marital statues
P1	71	M	married
P2	78	M	married
P3	74	F	married
P4	76	F	widowed
P5	75	M	married
P6	85	F	married
P7	76	M	married
P8	72	F	widowed
P9	78	F	widowed
P10	77	M	married

5.2.2 Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to that group of participants, following the open-ended interview structure of study 1. In addition, two focus groups were facilitated with 4 participants present for each. One focus group was facilitated in the community yard; another focus group was established in the park 15 minutes' walk from the community. Each focus group section lasted about 40 minutes; and started with the introduction given by a facilitator (a friend of Participant10 in study 1) who was familiar to some of the participants.

5.3 Results

Participants' accounts generally reflected their perceived difficulty in maintaining a way of life and sense of self-worth that was consistent with their previous life style, and their accounts echoed similar themes to those in group 1. The similarities seemed to support that a point of saturation had been reached in that not a lot of new material was uncovered; it might suggest the theory saturation of the Grounded-Theory approach. Here in the result section, I will turn first to some distinguishing features of the male participants' accounts and then will go on to consider two additional themes from the accounts that had not been prominent in the sample of study 1, possibility of improving and finding meanings.

5.3.1 Male participants' accounts

In study 1, most of participants were female. In order to widen the sample, several

male participants were involved in study 3. The accounts of the men who were interviewed seemed to show certain differences from the women in their narrative styles as well as their attitudes to life-coping.

P1's tone initially seemed to reflect a matter-of-fact attitude, and he listed material improvement as a proof of life satisfaction. *"I have nothing unsatisfied. We are living comfortable life, not worrying about food or clothes."* Here P1 implies that because his material needs are satisfied, he has nothing to complain about. Perhaps he is implying he does not have a right to complain in these comfortable circumstances.

P1 went on to talk about his daily activities. *"I did some walking and chatting everyday, they are the main activities. Health maintenance was important for people in my age."* The tone of this statement sounded contradictory to his previous satisfaction with creature comfort. This seems to demonstrate a modest way of life but one designed to keep him fit.

P1 summarized his view of his life as two crossing lines of time and himself, in a way which seemed to be quite pessimistic and fatalistic.
"The days are getting better now, but we are declining."

Similarly one participant (P10) in the focus group also stated his view of life using a metaphor related to cash: *"Life is a 100 Yuan Note, and we have used up to 99 of it."*

As with the pithy statement by P1, this seems to convey their pessimistic view of what remains in their life.

P2 felt his life had changed in certain ways since his retirement from his previous position as a manager.

My life is quite different since my retirement from the way it was before. I was in a position of management and was quite capable and had authority. Now I have retired and the organisation does not take care of us any more.

His descriptions are clear in telling us of the degree of responsibility and status he had during his working life. He draws attention to the contrast between this and his current life, though perhaps he minimises this by use of the word 'quite' which implies that he is trying not to complain about his current circumstances.

He then stated that his and his wife's income had guaranteed their standard of living to a secure level, and he seemed to be satisfied that this was enough for him to support himself and his wife. However, he seemed to have given up his role in financially supporting his children due to limitations, under certain circumstances, in his budget.

I do not worry at all; I eat more or less depending on the financial condition. My wife also has a thousand Yuan salary which we could live on. I offer my children some of our savings when we can manage it. If not, it is fine. I am ok with that.

He seemed to be satisfied at his level of income. It is likely that his satisfaction came from peer comparison.

Although he seemed not to be over-concerned about his financial situation, he rejected the opportunity of joining his friends in social activities, giving various reasons why he withdrew from his social circle.

My friend always wanted me to join them however I did not attend as I wanted to avoid bringing troubles to others due to my leg problem. I have a lot of friends who are living in Wuhan. They are old as well and invite me to travel around the Province but I do not have time.

He narrated flatly about his absence from his peers' meetings, starting off with a matter of fact account in which he says he has no complaints. But he then revealed in fairly muted ways that he does not actually have a lot of income and perhaps this is affecting his self esteem and ability to engage in outside activities.

Participant 7 had been to his daughter's place for several months, and just returned to his own home and joined with friends.

"*I went to my daughter's place for several months; she and her husband invited me there. But actually they wanted me to help them cooking meals. I had not much to do there, just to grow some vegetable and to feed the chicken. Then I felt bored there, and my family here wanted me back, so I came back.*"

He spoke little of his experiences in his daughter's place, only mentioned he was bored there with the housework. Although he did not speak much about how he liked the community he currently lived in, he seemed to feel more comfortable there by comparing his experience of several months away.

He talked about the most unsatisfactory part of his past.

"There is one thing I am concerned with, that I started my work in the year of 1953, but the proof of my working document was missing, so they wrote I started to work in the year 1956. Until now I could not claim the missing 3 years of working."

When he was talking about this misfortune, he did not seem to be disturbed by it very much, and he talked quite fluently without much emotional disclosure.

Generally speaking, male participants' narrative style seemed to be more abstract than female participants', and story-telling strategies were seldom used in the conversation. They tended to understate their feelings related to personal issues, and minimise their discontent and difficulties without much of the emotional disclosure.

5.3.2 Possibility of improving

In response to the researcher's question: "Are there things in your life that you would like to be improved? Most of the participants took this questions as "Is there anything that *others* can do for you to improve your life" and stated that the possibility of improvement was *"beyond their ability"*. This seemed to reflect a general view that they should not count on anything changing for the better.

Participant 3 described her main difficulty in life, which was a hearing problem that impaired her communicational ability. She rejected the idea of being able to get any improvement in that difficulty:

"I can eat and sleep. It's just my legs that are not working so well. Walking slowly is still OK for me. I don't need a crutch; I can go out, much better than your grandma…. The reality is beyond my control. My eyes and ears are not working and I cannot hear what you asked me. I do not hold on to any ideas of change. Eating and drinking daily is all I aspire to do. Something is not determined by my will. Notions of improving are beyond my ability. I do not feel like thinking too much about my situation. The government is doing well enough to us.

The participant stated her difficulties in her physical health, and she seemed to accept her current situation, rather than seeking to change.

P4's view of life improvement was similar to P3's; it is also based on the value that 'happiness consists of contentment'. Her idea echoed with most of study 3 participants' passive view of will and wish.

"There are not many things needing improvement. I can take care of myself now, as I usually did. I don't need any improvement, even if I want something to get improved, I could not make it. There is something that can not be changed as you wished"

It is likely that she would like things to be improved but it is hardly worth saying them out aloud as she does not have the capacity to actually change them. She seems to put herself across initially as not needing more from life, and being content enough with the fact that she can manage.

P8 was prepared to voice her difficulties in personal health, transport, and medical

insurance coverage.

"I have to ask my children to do me a favour taking me to the hospital. If they were not willing to, I have to go along. I can not stay long on the bus. And walking was difficult for me. I tended to shiver when I started walking, and I am afraid of falling"

"The medical insurance was too little for me, so that I could only afford some medicines, like painkillers or hypertensive drug. And I have to pay some extra for the rest."

So in this extract, P8 seems to convey the struggle she has to get appropriate care for her health, feeling that she has to beg her children to take her to hospital; facing a hard journey when they cannot take her and also not being insured for appropriate treatment. The account feels as if it has elements of resignation at the children's lack of help but also of pride in the way she rises to the challenge of getting there by herself.

P1 described his idea of improvement from a view of material flourishing, he found an evidence to support his idea by comparing the goods and price past and present.

"In the past, only for the spring festival there is little glutinous rice available. 250 g oil per person only for Chinese New Year. Every purchase requires tickets, food ticket, grain food ticket, cloth ticket. You had to use clothes tickets for clothes, 1.5 inch per person. Even buying cotton requires tickets. You cannot buy without tickets even with money."

He seemed to derive satisfaction from comparing the price from past with the present,

as if to convince himself that things are better now than they used to be in the years of material hardship.

Participant 9 also stated that she did not expect any chances of things getting better, instead she preferred the idea of supporting herself independently. She explained that she had already felt detached from her children after they left her for their own career and family life.

"My eldest daughter's husband is very kind to me. He helped me move to here. But he just became a grandfather recently, and he had to help take care, being quite busy, so we communicated less than before. And my other children, I just took the responsibility to bring them up, and let them leave after adulthood. Now they all had their career and family, sometimes they come to me in festivals with their families."

She seemed to withhold her emotion in the narration about her children. Although she talked in a casual way about allowing her children to go their own ways, she seems a little sad perhaps to have lost the close communication with her son-in-law. So, this seems to convey, like P4 and 5, a sense that she should not ask for too much, almost as if she does not deserve it. Her voice echoed the views of this group that they should accept what they could have and not attempt to demand more than that.

She once rejected her son-in-law's offer of inviting her to move in with him. She explained that she appreciated his kindness, but he had some troubles for himself so she did not want to bring him more.

"My eldest daughter's husband told me that I had any trouble, I could contact with him, and once he even asked me whether I would like to move his place. But I don't want to bring troubles to him, his younger son was just unemployed who was in need of his support. And he has been so nice to me, that I would not like to trouble him any more."

In a general sense her perception of self-worth was as modest as the others in this group, and she held a popular pessimistic view of life, although she also mentioned some of her achievements with self-massaging, a hobby which she undertook for self-care and relaxation.

In summary, most of participants took a harshly realistic view of life when they were talking about possibilities or wishes. They did not expect a great deal and they hinted at changes they would like to see, rather than demanding these. The pessimism about the possibilities of future life improvement seemed to imply that they held a very low expectation of the future and were reasonably content with their current modest way of life. This could be attributed to environmental factors (for instance, Participant9 rented a small room in a sheltered community, unlike most of her neighbours she lived alone without any relatives), such as the living quality in the neighbourhood, the limited life circle, and the limited resources of communication.

5.3.3 Finding meaning

Not many participants reported they could find the meaning of their current life. Many participants tended to describe their life in a negative tone, and they would wanted to express that their life states in a reserved tone that it was ok but there are not many good things to talk about.

In P3's case, she lived in the retirement community with her daughter . She seemed to be proud of her role in her home as well as in the community, for she could offer help to others and received help in return.

I like to find something to do, housework, like washing, cooking and making clothes.

She introduced her successful experience of enjoyable life, and she attributed that to her merit of her easy-going personality.   She also found the core value of life, which she felt was to offer and to give service for others, was meaningful.

After retirement my days were much better than before. After my 80s, my income increased a little each year, I am happy with that. I seldom get angry; just let it go, like wind blows. Being critical does no good for people over 80s.   A person should not pay much attention to personal gain and loss, and he or she should pay attention to the benefit of others. If someone asks me to help, I will help."

In participant 6's case, she could do some massage to relief pain. She was proud of being seen as an expert for both herself and in helping others.

"One of my neighbour's little daughter twisted her leg, and her mum took her to me. I did some massage on her painful leg. The next day her swelling was reduced."

In most cases, other participants in that neighbourhood tended to report that they could not find life meaningful in many aspects. Some male participants liked to join in a group playing chess or chatting every afternoon. They described their activities as "*just to kill time as a routine or a habit*" *(P5)*, and compared with their achievement in the past their current life was "*nothing to speak of*" *(P5)*.

5.4 Discussion

The study aimed to extend the research questions in study1 to a larger and more varied sample and to identify the psychological aspects of ageing issues in older people in a sheltered community and to compare these with the study 1 group. Interviews were carried out with participants who were resident in a sheltered housing community. 5 of the 10 participants were male. Overall, they represented a wider range of occupational and educational backgrounds compared with the sample in study 1.

5.4.1 Comparison with study 1

In relation to comparison with study 1: There appeared to be a high degree of convergence between the attitudes and feelings described by the older people in study 3, although there were also some in this study who gave more unusual accounts, which provide exceptions from the norm and which have the capacity to broaden

understanding of the ways that these older people in modern urban China think about their lives.

In a general sense, self-reliance and personal conservation were still emphasised by many participants just as they were in study 1. It is likely that the emphasis that many participants placed on the positive structure of life planning was expressed as a result of social desirability, as it seemed as if these participants felt that society expected them to continue to be actively in control of their own lives and their own health.

This wish to convey being active and in control seemed to contradict the rather resigned and more pessimistic attitudes to life shown through the lack of belief that anything could change for the better and the lack of meaning expressed by many of the participants in sample 3. It might suggest that the participants in study 3 who live in a community with neighbours of their friends and previous colleagues, tended to feel more comfortable to talk about their dissatisfactions with their peers than those participants in study 1 who live in a community without many familiar people nearby. The participants in study 1 seemed to be more hesitant to reveal their negative perspectives to their neighbours and families, because the negative comments might be viewed as complaints which leave the audience a negative image of old age. it may also reflect the difference in methodology in the focus groups may have enabled people to exchange pessimistic view without so much consciousness of protecting you as the researcher.

Contribution and reciprocity are still important themes in the accounts of study 3 participants but they are not necessarily present in the lives of all in study 3. Some of the study 3 participants felt it acceptable to admit their limitations to the interviewer and they spoke about giving what they could afford rather than necessarily what was demanded from them. There seems to be a far greater sense of discontinuity and indeed loss in the accounts of those in study 3. This might reflect the difference in discourse style in the two groups of participants, with the participants in study 3 tending to talk in terms of pessimistic expectations while the participants in study1 tended to talk in terms of optimism. This maybe due to the same contextual influences as described in the paragraph above.

The analysis of study 1 revealed that a sense of security was a major influence on optimism or pessimism about the future for those participants. The present sample spoke more directly than those in study 1 about their sense of insecurity, which seemed to be increased by the Sichuan Earthquake. Some participants related the earthquake to the unexpected factors in their life, which were hard to predict or to prevent leaving them more uncertainties for future life. Some participants worried that the cost of the earthquake might decrease the funds for supporting elders' lives.

5.4.2 Findings unique to this study

Male participants' accounts

The male participants seemed to be reluctant to relate the problems of their current

lives to their perceived image of life satisfaction. Some tended to think back to regretted or difficult events in the past (e.g. the limited source of supplies) and the broad social changes which have brought common individual difficulties, (in most cases financial strain and worries about the uncertainty and instability of the welfare system), and others spoke in a veiled way about how the present compared unfavourably with the past due to a range of losses of status, responsibility, health, finances, and social life. The male participants did not complain or grieve or protest openly about these but there seemed to be an undercurrent of disappointment in their accounts. A sense of being rooted to a narrow community area seemed to limit the participants' field of vision. The gender difference in discursive style is also noted in some previous studies (e.g. Tannen, 1990, Maltz and Borker, 1982).

Generally the participants still attempted to convey a positive image of life satisfaction. Based on the principle "Happiness consists in contentment", they took a realistic view of life when they talking about the possibilities or wishes. Their attitudes to life satisfaction seemed to echo Baltes and Baltes's (1990) theory of selective optimisation. By contrast the female participants perceived more stress or inconvenience in maintaining daily life.

5.4. 3 Further themes from sample 3's interviews

Among the themes from the transcripts of study 3, the theme labelled "Possibility of Improving" was central in the participants' accounts. This theme was related to their

pessimistic attitude, "life lacks meaning" or "hope of improving was unfounded", which reflected the participants' tendency for a realistic extreme. In this extreme they kept their expectations to the lowest level and do not count on the possibility of others improving their life.

5.4.4 A note on context

Compared with studies 1 and 2, the impact of the Sichuan earth quake was felt to be an influential factor in study 3, although how the influence took place and how much it impacted on the content of the interviews was hard to quantify.

On the one hand, the earthquake might have provoked an atmosphere of insecurity and anxiety, and on the other hand, it might have distracted the participants from their personal concerns as they, along with the whole nation, were oriented to the situation of those people who were in the disaster area. It seemed to the interviewer that, under the impact of the earthquake, the participants tended to express their understanding of the difficulty the nation faced, and felt they should give relatively less attention to their own troubles. This could possibly have added to the tendency of participants to to convey a view of themselves as undemanding and content with little.

The researcher was also aware of feeling hesitant at that time in putting questions related to their feelings about the earthquake, and was also less comfortable than in the two earlier studies in encouraging participants to focus on personal issues. The

researcher tended to push less than in previous interviews when the participants deviated from the researcher's area of interest or finished soon.

5.4.5 Limitations

The sample of study 3 participants was limited to one sheltered community and the participants shared similar backgrounds in income level and previous occupation. The researcher found it challenging and seemed to fail in encouraging male participants to talk about personal life events freely. When the researcher listened to the interview recordings again, she found that, in most cases, participants' response to the researcher's questions was short, just one or two sentences. It might be possible that the male participants took longer to warm up to talking about themselves than the female participants. In addition, some participants tended to recall and recount historic events or particular periods of time, and expected someone to echo their line of memory, something that is hard for a researcher from a younger generation to achieve. It would be interesting for future research with Chinese male elders to see their preferred narrative style and what might help them express their ideas. A male researcher or an older researcher might get a different response.

Chapter 6 Analysis of a written account

One participant provided 8 pages of written work, addressing the researcher's questions on her view of life after retirement and her understanding of her relationship with her family members. She gave a detailed narrative account of her life experience, and wrote about her ideas of family relationships as well as her understanding of coping with ageing, in a literary style. In the material that follows I have paid attention to those aspects of her account that are distinctive and build upon the material already drawn out of the earlier samples.

6.1 Analysis

At the beginning of her writing, she summarised her view of how people can choose to spend their days after retirement. She listed two kinds of life style: To relax and let the days float by or to find meaningful things do. The dichotomy seemed to reflect her appreciation of having a meaningful life.

"Frankly speaking, most of my friends in our generation have gone through their busy and bitter way of life to reach retirement. I retired in 1992, in my 55th year, but I still have some time ahead of me before I reach the end of my life. The time left to me could be long or short, but who knows. And on how to go on, there are two different ideas, one is to sit back and relax and enjoy creature comforts; the other is to find things to do and to think and to exercise, and to keep a positive state of mind. I would like to choose the latter style without hesitation."

This citation also reflects some of the different accounts in the earlier samples in all 3 studies; both these styles do seem to have been conveyed by some of the earlier participants, *"to sit back and relax and enjoy creature comforts"* echoed the idea of P1 in study 3, and *"to find things to do and to think and to exercise"* was agreed by P1, P2, P6 in study 1 and most participants in study 2.

Generally in Chinese society and in the interviews, the mother and daughter-in-law relationship was a sensitive topic that not many participants commented openly upon. However, this participant, using the medium of writing did comment upon her relationship with her mother-in-law:

"My mother-in-law was quite capable in her early days, and she brought up a group of sons and daughters. But nowadays she has a temper and demands a lot from her children. My husband was a dutiful son and respects her in all aspects. Thus I had to cope with his relationship with her carefully."

Here, the participant describes how she perceived the triangular relationship of her mother-in-law, her husband and herself. She felt her husband was so dutiful to his mother regarding his mother's effort of bringing up the big family in early years, that he might neglect her feelings as his spouse whilst his mother captured all his concerns.

The participant felt she should be equal to her mother-in-law in her husband' eyes,

and equal as well to her husband in her mother-in-law's eyes. There is one story in her text of how she contradicted her mother-in-law politely, when she felt excluded from the communication around the dinner table. She interrupted with a pregnant saying borrowed from the metaphor of "flesh on both sides of palm", which means one should treat his or her children and their spouse equally.

Once when we visited her place, she cooked a meal, welcoming us. But at the dining table, she only helped her son with dishes, leaving me isolated. So I spoke to her: "Mum, aren't you very comfortable? You've become thinner than before, leaving only the flesh on the palm, no flesh on the back of your hand." All the people around the table burst out into laughter. She then felt a little embarrassed and brought me a piece of chicken. I received her giving with the bowl and commented: "Mum loved not only the son, she loved her daughter-in-law better."

She then quoted another concise conversation between her mother-in-law and her. That conversation happened when her mother-in-law said sorry to her after a game of bagatelle. Her reply to that apology showed her respect for her mother-in-law with the slightly discordant implication that the respect is coming from the nature of family relationship not really from her heart.

"And once after bagatelle, she felt she had not been treating me fairly, so she said sorry to me. I replied to her: 'Mum, you look pretty and your words are precious. You are our mum; you are the eldest adult in our family. Your words are correct when they

are correct; they are also correct when they sound incorrect. You don't need to say

sorry to me.'"

The above two stories revealed some aspects of how she coped during her married life with the sensitive relationship with her husband's mother. Her statement provided a new angle of understanding on family relationships in later life, which came back to the research question of family communication and family decision making.

This participant also quoted two concise conversations with her neighbours and her answers to the same question "Why are you out walking alone?"

"I often took a walk alone. One of the neighbours asked me: 'Where is your husband?' I said: 'He stayed in like a dog.' 'Why?' 'He preferred to stay at home guarding the entrance.' On a different day other people asked me: 'Why are you out walking alone?' I replied: 'The good time for being out as a couple is over. Even if we walk in twos, that time will never come again.'

She and her husband were always viewed as a model couple, and in her neighbours' view a model couple should behave like the saying: "We held hands; we are to grow old together with them." To challenge her neighbours' fixed view that a couple should always go out together, in the first conversation she explained that her husband would rather stay at home, suggesting that an elderly couple could have a different pace of life, and be happy with that. She also showed here that she would like to go out alone

without worrying about the social expectation of always being with her husband. In the second conversation she referred to the change of time, suggesting that in a different life stage, the mode of life for a married couple could be different.

She then cited a memorable saying about her husband, which could be taken as an illustration of "role reversal" in developmental theory, in that her husband took on her former duty of housework after retirement, so that she could have free time to go out without worrying about household duties. She admired her husband's merits in different life stages: a talented literary worker in early days and a full-time house-husband in later days.

When I was at work, my husband could not cook, and he did not like housework either. So I took all the housework at that time. But now he has changed quite a lot, changed his style of life, and brought me wellbeing. I said to him: "I only considered your literary talent, depth of thinking and sensitivity of empathy before, lacking the chance of considering your love and capacity for housework. But now I find that I married a man with good literary sense and with good command of housework since ageing. "

6.2 Discussion

From this sample of written work, the author provided not only material from her life experience but also her image of ideal family life. In that image she valued the harmony of the family as well as the independence of each individual in the family. The writing process allowed disclosure of personal information in her preferred style,

which helped her recall and record those memorable events in her life. In her writing, she echoed some issues which appeared in the interview studies, such as role in the family decision making and family communication strategy.

The material she included which was quite new to the researcher is that she had roles both as a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law. Unlike many other participants who viewed their roles of daughter-in-law in a relationship of care-giver and receiver or in a sense of respecting or distancing, she viewed her role as being equal to her mother-in-law and to her husband; she took effort to reach the balance in that triangular relationship. She summarized her experience of dealing with her mother-in-law, and through this she seemed to develop her idea of how to cope and her confidence in maintaining a balanced relationship without compromising much of her benefit. She then adapted her successful experience to her relationship with her daughter-in-law, in that way she felt double success.

Another new idea from her writing is about how she challenged the fixed social expectation of an elder's life. She seemed to feel comfortable to state that her preferred life style was not so conventional, like walking out alone leaving her husband at home, and holding a family meeting to openly discuss financial matters.

Compared with the interview data, this personal written material seemed to be richer, more creative, and free of style. It seemed that the written work encouraged the

participant adding more illustration from her life experience. This participant could express more than would have been possible in a time-limited interview. It also allows the participant to take his or her time in organising materials and choosing a suitable narrative style in her own pace.

Another possible merit of written work for older participants in Chinese society is that it allows the participant to express what he or she feels comfortable to address, such as the social preferred values, and agreed opinion from peers, before personal ideas. In the interview process, the warming-up section seemed to take up much more time than the researcher expected. By contrast in the written work, there was no set word-limit or time-limit, and this permitted the participant a sufficient warming-up section to breed further ideas.

Chapter 7 Discussion on theoretical implications

7.1 Social context

In many participants' accounts, short phrases or epithets are often used when they tried to explain their values or to comment on their situation. Some of the widely quoted epithets like "To deposit and not to spend" and "Happiness consists in contentment" can be traced back to the years of material scarcity; some values like "To rear children against old age" were inherited from the era of agro-farming. All the "good old values", which were helpful in the period of post-war rebuild and the socialist movement, were maintained and even reinforced in the accounts of the participants, even if some were challenged to   some degree by some.

The Marxist and the socialist views of collectivism and egalitarianism were popularised in all levels of public education in the1950s to 1980s and they had a strong impact on most older adults who had been employed in urban areas. The strong impact of collectivist values was long lasting across the working life of those people. Therefore they seem to be less influenced by the new booming ideas of 'belief crises' than their later generations. Their belief that their efforts and contributions are important and remarkable was challenged by the growing emphasis on the nation's recent rapid development and the new values preferring new achievements rather than the old experiences. However, the reform of nationalised organizations and the social

welfare system disappointed many of the retired people, as the nation seemed to break its previous promise of taking care of them as much as it could equally.

The revival of Classical Chinese ethics was recently advocated in public propaganda, especially Confucian ideas of humanity and filial piety, as a complement to the loss of trustful belief against belief crisis. A number of times in history the restatement of Confucian ethics has played a role of regulating behaviours in Chinese society. As the nationalised social welfare system has undergone serious difficulties, the social expectation of filial piety may have helped to improve the willingness and the quality of family care giving for elders.

Individualism and scepticism have never been mainstream values of Chinese society. Although Confucius values "self-examination", he mainly looked at the examination of action itself rather than the reason of action. This may be why most of the participants preferred to state that they value benefit to other people than themselves, and as was highlighted in chapter 3, some participants were proud that that they hold a belief or principle and carry on with it. Whether this is the experience of the participants in these studies is addressed further below.

Many of the old values, such as those cited above, which were helpful in the past are now in question. "To deposit and not to spend" was contradicted by "the increasing cost of health maintenance"; "Happiness consists in contentment" seemed to reject the

possibility of taking control to try and improve a situation; "To rear children against old age" sounds good, but what if the children need support as well? This was often the case for participants in these studies. Similarly the equality principle was in doubt. Losing those trusted ideas' resources, some participants found the only self-consolation was to deny his or her historical devotion and to hang on to general ideas, such as "The nation is going well for us", or "It is merciful of the nation to raise the useless like me".

Under this complicated situation, the idea of adaptation is important for some participants who seek a satisfactory solution to both the realistic problems and maintaining the cohesion of personal values.

7.2 Adaptation model

Reading the notes and transcripts in all three studies, the participants could be grouped in the following four types of engaged, strong belief, worried and shattered. Two axes were applied to categorize their thinking (Axis 1) and behaviour (Axis 2) mode.

7.2.1 Awareness of changes/risks (Axis 1)

Several external factors seemed to impact on participants' confidence in life: the prediction of future costs of medication and care, worries about their adult-children's
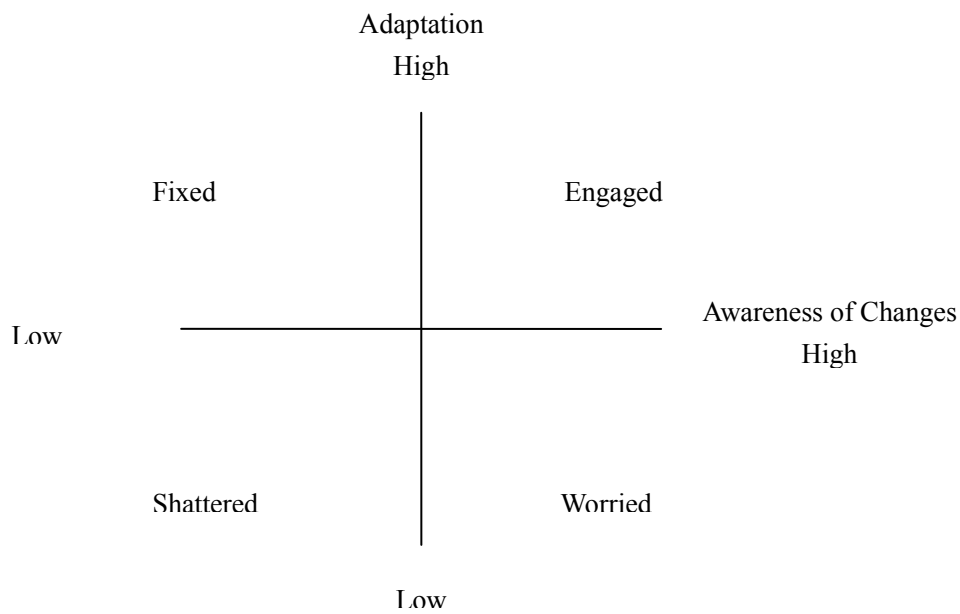
employment status, the local community's pessimistic atmosphere and the major recent events like the Sichuan earthquake. Those participants with a high level of awareness to changes/risks tended to talk more about the external and internal changes they perceived in the interview, while those participants with low level of awareness to changes/risks tended to talk less about present issues and to dwell on their experience in the past.

7.2.2 Adaptation (Axis 2)

In keeping with their previous life experiences, participants tended to adapt their perceptions and understanding to the reality, and this allowed them to develop their own coping strategies to maintain self-esteem and perceived control. Their coping strategies included admitting personal limitations, emphasising contribution, and quoting experiences of the past. Those participants with low a level of adaptation tended to talked more of their concerns or worries they perceived in their present or future life, while those participants with a higher level of adaptation tended to understate their worries or to show their acceptance and preparation for future risks.

Table 11: Adaptation and Awareness of change, chapter 7

Adaptation	Awareness of changes	
	High	low
High	Engaged	Fixed /strong belief
Low	Worried/concerned	Shattered

Adaptation
High

Fixed   Engaged

Low ─────────────┼───────────── Awareness of Changes
                                           High

Shattered   Worried

Low

Chart 3: Adaptation and Awareness of change, chapter 7

7.2.2.1 Engaged

Those participants, who fell into the area of high mark in Adaptation and high Awareness of Changes, were labelled as Engaged. Only a few participants in the 3 studies demonstrated their flexibility in both adaptation and clear awareness of changes. These participants had a sensitive mind about the changes taking place across multiple layers of social context, from social policy to market price and from fixed social expectation to the recent experience of a close person. Their adaptation seemed to be more thoughtful or voluntary that they tended to learn to deal with various layers of relationship from their own life experiences and gained a sense of confidence from their learning.

An adaptation of Cronen and Pearce's hierarchical model (Cronen & Pearce, 1982,

Pearce, & Cronen, 1980) is suggested introduced as a tool to focus on the layers of

context of participants' awareness of social networks from societal to individual level.
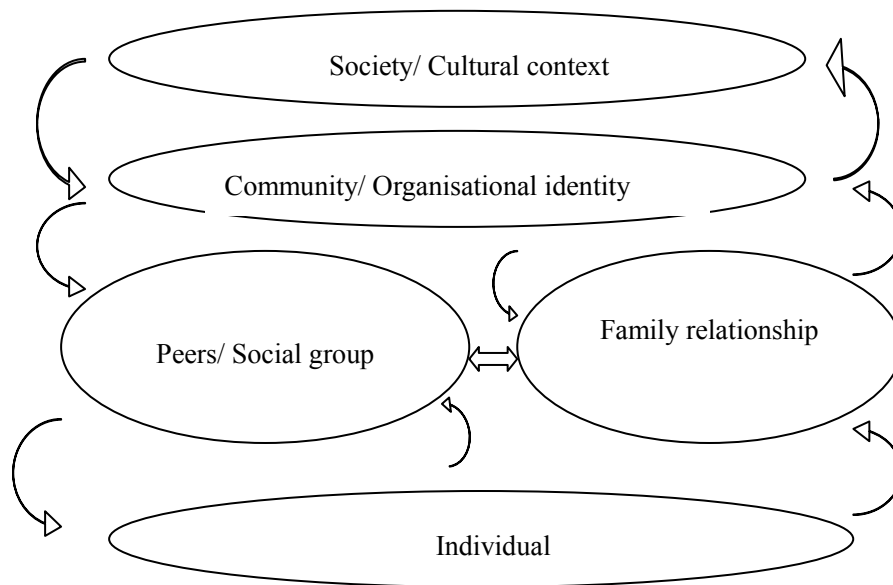
Chart 4: An adaptation of Cronen and Pearce's hierarchical model, chapter 7

The top level expresses that participants' views were developed in a cultural context,

which shaped participants' often cited epithets like "to deposit and not to spend" and

"Happiness consists in contentment". Under this layer of context, participants tended

to hold on to the socially preferred values as unchanged and long-lasting even in this

period of dramatic social changes, and in most cases they tended to agree with these

values. Only a few participants indicated that they perceived the challenges these

values now faced.

Under the layer of cultural context, a group of people who were previously employed

in the same organization or lived in the same community may identify their colleagues or neighbours as partners, sharing similar living conditions and life experience. This layer of context seemed to shape participants' general idea of preferred life style under the welfare policy of the organization or the environment of the community.

The next two layers are placed side by side in the hierarchical model. Peers/ social group indicates a smaller and more accessible group than the Community/ Organisation group. For most of participants, this kind of peer group was formed by neighbours, friends and colleagues who shared a similar age, interests or life circles. Family relationships express the bonds that unite family members who lived with a participant. The family and the peer group's influences on the participants are sometimes complementary, and the companionship formed a small network of people with close links to each other on this layer. This layer provided the first hand information and enabled the participants to interpret their experiences, and it may also limit their direct contact with the higher layers.

At the lowest level of the hierarchy is the layer of context centred on a participant, which is influenced by participant's ideas of his or her life history as well as his or her current physical and mental status. In most cases, this layer of context shapes a participant's awareness of changes indirectly, generally based on the framework of the other layers. The individual's personal experiences were their illustrative materials in

the research conversations, and generally examples of values reflected the context of higher layers. In most a flat narration of participants' life history was preferred in the conversations to his or her explicit experience of emotions.

7.2.2.2 Strong Belief/ Fixed

Those participants, who fell into the area of a high level of Adaptation and a low level of Awareness of changes, were labelled as Strong Belief/ Instructive. Most of the male participants fall into this group. These participants seemed to prefer to look back on their achievement or misfortune in the past rather than to pay attention to their current issues. In the hierarchical model, their ideas appeared to be influenced by the top two layers of context. In a general sense, this group of people seemed to state that they were satisfied with their current life conditions and capable of coping with life-maintenance issues. Their adaptations seemed to be more fixed or somewhat passive such as they reduce the level of expectation to meet the lower standard of life satisfaction.

7.2.2.3 Worried/ Concerned

Those participants who fall into the area of a low level of Adaptation and high level of Awareness of changes, were labelled as worried. Many female participants fall in this quadrant. These participants could identify the changes related to their day-to-day life and the difficulties brought. They emphasized their lack of experience or guidance for dealing with these modern problems, and their physical weaknesses were also mentioned. In the hierarchical model, they tended to relate their ideas to the three

bottom layers of context without explicit reference to the broader social influences. Despite the difficulty they faced, they tended to state that they would like to maintain their life independently.

7.2.2.4 Shattered

For those participants who fell into the area of both low level in Adaptation and Awareness of changes, were labelled as 'shattered'. A few participants who found it hard to maintain their lives without the support from others, and similar to the people from the Strong Belief/ Instructive group they tended to attribute their difficulties to some misfortunes in the past. For example, Participant 3 in study 1, who had been a lifelong house wife and now depended on her daughter for living, described herself as different from other elders in her community for she had no background of formal education or stable source of income, and she tended to suspend thinking about future planning or possibility of improvement due to her limitations in capacity and finance.

The shattered assumption framework (Janof-Bulman, 1989) illustrated that participants' attitude to coping may move from generally capable to anxious when core assumptions, such as "care and devotion for family members are mutual", have been challenged. Janof-Bulman (1992) focused primarily on three major assumptions that may be shattered in the face of traumatic events, 1) personal invulnerability; 2) the world as a meaningful and predicable place; 3) the self as a positive and worthy. In cases of some participants, they tended to shift their assumptions to another

extreme, such as from "life is meaningful" to "life is just killing time".

Their shattered attitudes reflected some challenges in their life stage, which resonated with Erikson's life-stage theory particularly, the crisis in the Adulthood stage (35 to 65 years, Generativity vs. Stagnation) and in the Maturity stage may reflect (65 years onwards, Integrity vs. Despair). The dichotomy of Generativity vs. Stagnation may reflect the two poles of the Adaptation Capacity axes.

Despite some participants' cases representing either extreme flexibility or stagnation in their adaptation capacity, there are also many participants' cases which fall into the middle areas of the axis.
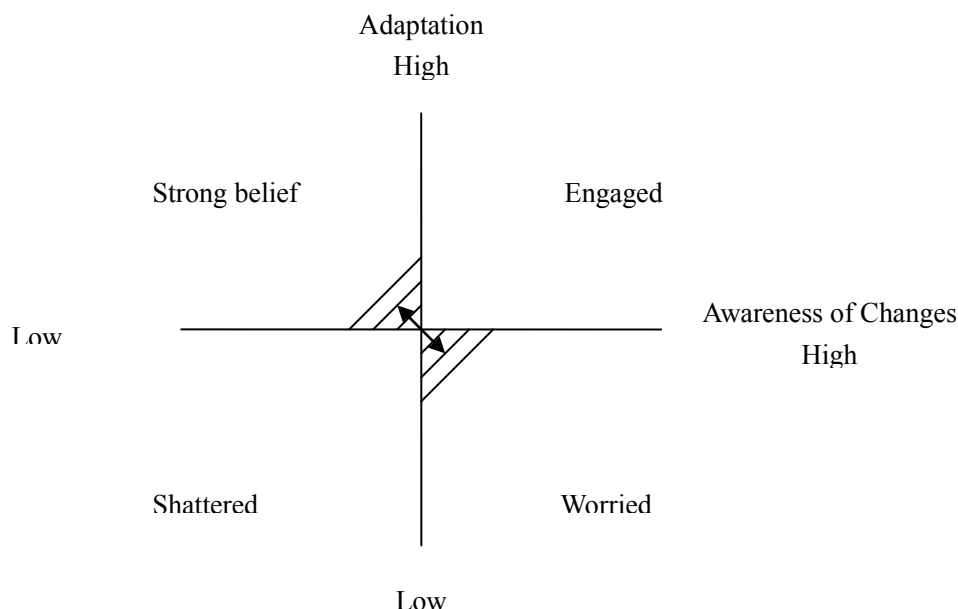
Chart 5: Adaptation and Awareness of change version 2, chapter 7

It is likely that some people who fall into the group labelled Worried could transfer to

the group of Strong belief and vice versa. In some cases, a participant in the group of

Worried who had recently solved one of his or her concerns may come to view the

changes in life as less threatening. This in turn may facilitate recall of similar

experience in the past, and help the participant gain a sense of adaptation in relation to

the successful experiences in their life-time. For example, P4 in study1 was once

moved to her daughter's home. She was content at the beginning but then found her

life was not convenient or comfortable there. So she made up her mind to move back

to her former place voluntarily. After she went back, she found her life alone was

more enjoyable than before, so she adjusted her previous idea that the daughter was

an important source of reliance for her and worried less about being excluded from

the connection and communication with her daughter's family.

Similarly a participant in the group of Strong belief, who recently had recently

experienced something unexpected which challenged his or her idea of life-coping,

may lead the participant to question his or her fixed values or beliefs. Then that

participant tended to worry more about the unexpected issue and its consequences,

and to become more aware of what happening around.

7.3 Connection to peer group in one's life

In contrast to the theory of disengagement (Cumming and Henry, 1961), some of the

participants stated that they enjoyed meeting peers in social activities. Many

participants in study 2 regarded social convenience as one of the important merits of

the residential institution, while many participants in study 1and 3 reported they spent more time or had more conversations with their peers than their family members. It is common that the participants tended to turn to their peers for advice when they were making decisions.

The trend of increased need to connect with one's peer group in later life was similar to the earlier life stage of adolescent. During one's adolescent life stage, he or she tends to leave his or her family to join in a larger circle of life with peers. As the person grows older, he or she tends to change their life focus from peers to his or her own family. After a period of family centred life mode, one would possibly feel the increased needs to return to the peer group again. In earlier studies of adolescent peer group (Brown and Lohr, 1987, Brown, B. et al., 2008, and Sussman et al., 2007), the adolescents were influenced by group's lifestyle characteristics (clothes, music, and shared belief), and they may develop a sense of identity and a positive self-concept with groups. Some participants in this study also reported the influence of peer group's lifestyle characteristics, like morning exercises, movies, and food. Some participants in study 2 stated that the peer group functioned as a union of health-maintenance against the misery of ageing issues, which seemed similar to the adolescent peer group's function of developing a positive self-concept. And it is likely that the elders used the peer group as a substitution of family.

7.4 Continuity

Atchley (1989)'s idea that adults tend to use continuity as the primary strategy of coping with changes related to normal ageing, could be supported in many participants' account of study 1. These participants were more likely to perceive their role in the family as a continuation of the previous one they had played (wage earner, housewife, planner and organizer), without great changes in their life or responsibility. In the study 2 sample, when some participants settled down in an institution, they could view part of their roles as different from before. It is likely that when facing great changes in their life, the participants adopted more strategies for adaptation other than continuity as the primary strategy.

7.5 Death Anxiety and Personal Regret

In all 3 studies, not many of the participants talked about death openly which echoed with Wu et al. (2002)'s finding that Chinese elders generally reported a low level of anxiety toward death. Very few of them admitted to being extremely fearful of dying. However, there are still signs of death anxiety, although the participants did not speak these aloud openly. In study 2, participants' fears of possible crisis and anxieties, seemed to be triggered by witnessing other residents with mental illness or physical disability. Their fear of decline in physical and mental ability, loss of self-control and awareness seemed to be related to death anxiety.

The researcher identified a strong sense of regret in many participants' accounts.

According to the mode of Death Anxiety by Tomer (2000), there are three direct determinants of death anxiety: past-related regret, future-related regret, and the meaningfulness of death.

In the Confucian ideal of social structures, the young pay respect to the old for the elders own richer life experiences, which are precious and helpful. However, as a result of dramatic social change, experiences from the past seemed to be not as helpful as before. From the elder's perspectives, their expected value of offering advice to their children has been seriously decreased. Therefore, the links between the younger and the elder in exchanging ideas has been weakened. The sense of loss of value could be related to both past-related regret and future-related regret, and may leave older people with stronger bonds and their peer group than with their family group.

7.6 Summary

Most previous studies of older people in the Chinese community applied the quantitative research approach. Studying the participants' quality of life, subjective well-being, life satisfaction and depression，they aimed to look at the relationship between these internal factors and some external factors (such as physical states, education, social support and financial strain). Their findings showed that statistical results supported the links between certain factors. Few studies looked at the issues from individual perspectives, studying the participant's personal experience, attitudes

and values, or to how these may have developed over time.

The current study provided new materials, consisting of Chinese elders' living accounts, to this area. These new materials were analysed using a Grounded Theory approach to draw out themes that illuminated participants' perceived understanding of external and internal factors that were related to their psychological functioning and well-being. From qualitative analysis, the results suggested that participants' physical health, source of income, and social activities were related to their attitudes to daily life and future planning; participants' experiences of decision making, relationship to their family members were associated with their perceived role in the family. An easy-going attitude to life and a perceived a position in family relationship seemed to contribute to more positive psychological well-being.

The results of this qualitative analysis, suggested that participants' physical health, source of income and social activities were related to their attitudes to daily life and future planning; participants' experiences of decision making and their relationship with their family members were associated with their perceived role in the family. An easy-going attitude to life and a more certain position in the family seemed to contribute to more positive psychological well-being. Whilst a direct comparison cannot be made to the results of previous quantitative studies, it is of interest to note that activity emerges as quite a key theme, echoing some of the findings of earlier studies that activity is related to lower distress and higher quality of life. In the current findings, family role and relationships, and indeed, role and relationships generally,

also emerge as central to older people's views of their lives, something which has not received a great deal of attention in previous studies except in relation to social support.

The analysis of these accounts also provided novel understandings of the possible influence of social context on elders' perceptions, from societal to individual level, in the past and present. To some extent, the influence of social context was demonstrated in the interviews themselves, for example, some were suspicious of officialdom and therefore preferred their research interviews to be held in a less formal and more personal atmosphere; Others preferred not to disclose a lot of personal information, or preferred to place an emphasis on harmony, this being in keeping with dominant cultural scripts. These are important lessons for future researchers to take into account when working with Chinese elders.

However, in addition, the research has shown that older people in China today are not only connected with their families. The accounts show how extended families do still connect closely across generations. However, they also show how hard this is when accommodation cannot be found for all together and when adult-children have to be mobile for work. For many, elders, especially those who had moved to sheltered accommodation, their peer group played a very important role, sometimes equally as much as their family. Sometimes this shift from affiliation with family to affiliation with peer group was not easy and took time and a mental shift. It demonstrates a type

of continued personal development in response to changing circumstances, something that has not been shown in this context in either Chinese or Western research.

Through consideration of the participants' narration of the changes that they had experienced and of how their ideas of family and life were gradually formed, the picture of personal development became more and more clear. From this picture, the participants' life experience of growing older could be reviewed using the life-span developmental approach (Baltes, 1997). Through participants' personal development, themes and variations were integrated into a number of suggested pathways of ageing; no fixed patterns or mode of ageing process was dominant in regulating the elders' life

Some previous studies indicated that the cultural value of "filial piety" was distinctive in the Chinese context and essential to the morale of older Chinese people. The current study found that although the participants often talked about "filial piety", they seemed to accept the idea that the traditional family-centred way of life did not work effectively in current times, and therefore they had made some adjustment to their expectation of filial behaviours. It is likely that in urban China today, traditional cultural values have become less distinctive in older people's lives, and some elders found that the old values, based on notions such as filial piety, were no longer fit to resolve the problems of modern living. This finding is in contrast to earlier research and suggests an evolving picture of ageing as elders respond to the rapid changes in

society.

The materials also added information about how elders made adaptations during the ageing process: Devoting effort to maintaining personal health and self-esteem, finding meaning in life, and supporting family and friends within the limits imposed by their age. This supports and expands on the findings of Ross et al. (2008) who showed that active involvement in leisure activities was associated with lower levels of depression. It also supports the theory of selective optimization with compensation (Baltes & Baltes, 1990) in showing how the elders found imaginative ways to continue to gain life satisfaction in the face of the limitations of ageing. This highlights a different angle from that found in most earlier quantitative studies that have focused primarily on stressors or negative aspects of ageing, in that it conveys that those elders interviewed for this thesis, were very active players in their own lives, taking charge of their destiny in many ways and contributing to the lives of others.

Chapter 8 Discussion on Research in a Chinese Setting

8.1 Choice of Research Methods

This chapter is aiming to look at the methodological issues in the research process, which involves the researcher's experience of both using qualitative approaches and with older research participants in a Chinese setting. It also covers the working experience of the researcher expressing her ideas in another language for analysis or for conveying findings to another audience in consideration of the cultural context. The challenges the researcher faced at the beginning were to select suitable research methods, with attention to the adaptation of guidelines of qualitative research.

8.1.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory offered the researcher a flexible set of inductive strategies for collecting and analysing qualitative data, which was plausible for an exploratory study in a previously un-studied territory. Also considering the cultural setting of these studies, the exploratory and inductive orientation of Grounded Theory helped the researcher carry out the data collection with flexible questions exploring various areas. It was also thought that this method of data collection would be more valid and acceptable than, for example, administering questionnaires to participants not familiar with a 'research culture'.

In study 1, the researcher's interest started with participants' perspectives on their perceived stress and satisfaction and their views on family relationships. With the open-ended questions exploring those areas, the conversations revealed many more aspects of participants' life experience from their social activities to family decision making. Based on the data collection in study 1, study 2 applied a similar interview guide with questions exploring participants' experience of their daily life, plus some questions aimed at understanding for their life experience in institutional settings. In study 3, the interview guide was confined to some core questions focusing on the participants' perceived difficulties and their perceptions of the possibilities for life improvement.

8.1.2 Life review and Narrative approach

In these three studies, a few participants preferred to reminisce about their life stories instead of talking directly about their understanding of their current lives. Their stories could be viewed as a source of supportive material focusing on a particular participants' life trajectory and their personal experience in detail.

Rather than a type of personal disclosure of lived experience and perceived meaning, their narrations seemed to reflect well rehearsed narratives that were conveyed almost as a monologue rather than being constructed between the interviewer and the participant as the interview progressed. Their statements flowed very well in their preferred story-telling style. These participants seemed to feel comfortable with their identity as the narrator, ruminating on the proud and regretful events in their personal

histories of which they were proud and those which they regretted.

In some cases participants' ideas varied from the majorities' in content or narrative style; such cases could be viewed as exceptional ones. Although not so representative, their views were valuable for they offered a different understanding of reality, whether positive or negative. The narrative approach reflected the participants' preference of topics and tones, which helped to discover their normally preferred topics and sometimes they could develop the ideas sounded unconventional to the researcher.

8.1.3 Discourse Analysis

Considering the multiple layers of social context within participants' accounts, the analysis of the interview data benefitted from further investigation of the background of participants' choice of language. During the exploration of transcripts, the influence of cultural context was thoroughly considered; the researcher discussed the issues in translation and comprehension with care. In study 1, the theme labelled "words unspoken" also dealt specifically with the non-linguistic aspects of the interview conversations, and thus this element can be seen as discourse analysis rather than application of Grounded Theories.

Gender differences also seemed to be reflected in participants' discourse style, that the male participants tended to talk in the form of general societal ideas rather than personal details, while many female participants seemed to prefer to talk in the form

of story-telling. The gender differences in discursive style seemed to reflect the different coping strategies in men and women, that men tended to be more problem-focused and women tended to be more emotion-focused.

8.2 Data collection

8.2.1 Interview

The semi-structured interview was the main approach to data collection. The researcher outlined the areas to address and raised these with each participant. In studies 1 and 3 the participants were selected through initial personal contact and then further participants offered to be involved through 'snow balling', while in study 2, one participant played the role of organiser, eliciting interest from potential participants, and she attended all the interviews with other participants, alongside the researcher. This might help ease the tension of the participants in the situation of interview and reduce the influence of the age gap between the participants and the researcher, but it might also reduce the formality of the research and raised the issue of confidentiality.

In many cases, the participants felt new to the label and role of "participant". At the beginning of the interview, they tended to express that they were comfortable in the interview situation, and always started with "Just ask everything you would like to know". Encouraging free expression was the central challenge in almost every interview. In most interviews in all 3 studies, the researcher required an initial

warming-up phase in order to introduce the participants to the notion of freely contributing their views and perceptions. She had to work to get a shift from a position in which she was deferred to as the person in charge of the interview to one in which she cooperated with participants in constructing the conversation.

Some abstract research questions like: "How do you plan your future life?" or "Do you think any part of your life could be improved?" worked well with certain groups of people. For instance, most of the participants talked about their future plans or their attitudes to life plans in response to the first question, but many participants in study 2 seemed not so interested in that question and only talked about how they planned to deal with their own dead body. It is likely that the participants in the institution felt more certain of how their life would be in future before death, and tended to talk more openly about their death.

In study 1, some of the research questions worked well while several other questions received only flat and general answers. From the transcripts of the study, the participants' statements were rich in addressing questions about their satisfaction with family and social life. However the questions aiming to explore the participants' experience of stressful events received only short answers in most cases.   This might reflect the limitations of posing straight questions about negative aspects of life. And it might also suggest that elders from the Chinese Community were not familiar or comfortable with the idea of talking about stress.

Because of the age gap between the participant and the researcher, it seemed to the researcher that some participants felt as if they were talking to their grandchild. Thus they tended to impose a positive image to reassure the researcher or they seemed to wish to convey that their own lives were not as miserable as the negative elders' images of elders in the media. The negative image, which is dominant in many kinds of media sources worldwide, conceives elders as dependent, fragile and unhappy individuals. It is likely that the participants' awareness of keeping and conveying a positive image was related to the age gap, for some of them tended to start with the phrase "I am telling you" as if they were passing on their life experience. In their narration of their life story, they tended to relax and smile from time to time as if sending the message that "I am alright", "don't worry about that", which might help protect the younger from knowing the undesirable life status when getting older, or to prevent themselves internalizing the negative concept of being older.

8.2.2 Written work

Instead of attending the interview, one participant provided a piece of written work, addressing the researcher's questions on her view of life after retirement and her understanding of her relationship with her family members. Her writing was in a literary style, describing her life-long experience illustrated with stories and witty dialogues. Compared with the interview data, this material was richer in content, more creative in ideas, and free in style. This written work is different from diaries or letters, although it is also dealing with private ideas and events, it aims to answer the research

questions for a wider audience, the younger generation.

8.3 Analysis

The analysis started from discussing the translated scripts. During the translation, the researcher paid more attention to conveying the explicit meaning than to keeping literal translation of words. Some culturally specific terms which have a formal translation convey more subtle meaning under certain circumstances. For instance, the Chinese word "Xiao", has a literal translation of "filial piety". However, the researcher understood from discussions with her supervisor that this term is not widely used or understood in the English language and that, indeed, the concept cannot be readily conveyed in English in one word, in a way that carries the connotations of 'Xiao' for those who understand Chinese culture. In the transcripts the term referred to a complex cognition, a widely appreciated "virtue" shown by an adult-child who fulfilled his or her duty of obeying and taking care of his or her parents and parents-in-law. Similarly many participants liked to talk about food and eating. Some of them used the term "I can eat well" to indicate that their health condition is ok, and to say that their financial condition was desirable for they can afford the cost of good food. Similarly the expression "to find an iron/gold rice bowl" means to get a steady job. And this needed to be explained to the supervisor in order for the meaning of the transcripts to be understood.

The model building in the analysis followed the steps from Description to Conceptual

ordering to Theorising. Through reading the transcripts and notes, the representative descriptive statements were identified and grouped to establish emerging themes, and then the themes were sorted according to logical and systematic order, and then finally put into a map of theorized structure.

In study 1, 3 main themes were identified in the analysis, and the central themes of "family life" and "social life" were generated mainly from participants' answers to the questions on participants' daily life, family relationships and future planning. The information came from scattered comments and stories, which permeated the accounts. Unlike "family life" and "social life", the theme labelled "discursive style" looked at the participants' narrative style and their unspoken meanings hidden in the speech lines. The themes were identified by both the participants' pregnant statements and the researcher's interpretation.

The cross-cultural approach in reading and discussing the interview scripts, offered the researcher the opportunities to compare not only the difference in understanding the Chinese and the British elders' views and the realities they faced, but also to identify the similarities in their emotional expression and perceived situations. For instance, some differences could be identified in language style; such as the Chinese emphasised "harmony" while the British talked about "fairness". But the feeling of "loss of power" or being "left behind", seemed to be common across the cultural differences.

8.4 Reflexivity

The background of the participants also seemed to influence their understanding of being interviewed and their openness to the researcher. Meanwhile, the researcher found herself more relaxed with the participants in Study1 and 2 than those participants in study 3. In some cases of study 3, the researcher felt she could not find a comfortable place in the conversation, as if the participants were not communicating with the interviewee. It is likely that the researcher's identity seemed strange or suspicious to them, since they were not familiar with the "research culture" or the interviews questions of their private lives.

The experience of doing research in the Chinese setting and analysing in English language was itself a challenge for the researcher and supervisor. In first year supervision meetings, both the researcher and the supervisor wrote a note of their ideas on what was going in the meeting. The writings helped the researcher to check her understanding of what was going on in the supervision meeting and whether both the researcher and the supervisor addressed the points the other tried to raise. This practice lasted through the process of the analysis of the first set of data. As the study moved on to the second wave of data, they became more familiar with other's ideas and expressions, and the supervision meetings became more focused on the meaning of transcripts.

Chapter 9 Summary

The majority of previous studies on psychological aspects of ageing in Chinese elders, which focus on quality of life, subjective well-being, life satisfaction and depression, are based on quantitative designs. Few studies have paid attention to participants' personal experience, attitudes and values, or to how these may be developed over time. Extending the previous studies, the present study investigated elders' ideas of their past, current and future life, family relationships and their social life via the use of qualitative approaches employing interviews conducted with people in their own homes.

The findings echo those of previous studies and contribute to the developing evidence that elders' life satisfaction and subjective well-being are associated with both internal factors (such as their attitudes, personal values, awareness, and capacity for adaptation) and external factors (such as their income and medical insurance, living environment, relationship with families and friends). Their personal experiences as well as their interactions with those people who are close to them (families, friends, neighbours and previous colleagues) help form their attitudes to daily life and future planning.

It is hard to summarise which factors have most influence on the participants' psychological status. In the first and third samples of elders living in community, the participants seemed to talk more about their family issues and especially financial

issues; in the second group who lived in an institutional setting, the participants seemed to focus more on talking about their personal achievements. Also in each sample there were a minority of participants whose accounts were quite different from the others, and these participants seemed to feel less obligated with their family duties, less concerned with their adult children and talked more about private and subtle issues (like asking for financial or instrumental support or rejecting taking care of a grandchildren) more openly.

The novelty of these studies is that they focused not only on the participants' ideas about their recent life but also their experience from the past and anticipation of the future, which help the researcher to develop a dynamic model of the process of changes in their family and social life; the researcher analysed the social context using Cronen and Pearce's hierarchical model, which breaks down the context of participants' awareness of social networks into multiple levels from society through family and to the individual and therefore avoided the potential problem of over-generalisation.

Given the conduct of this research in a particular cultural setting, participants' statements should be interpreted in the social context. Some studies with Chinese samples have considered social context as one of factors which helps to explain elders' life status (Chan et al., 2008 & 2006, Sun et al., 2004). However, the social backdrop involved many aspects of ongoing dramatic social changes in Chinese society. The

changes involved urbanisation (a large amount of population move from rural areas to cities), introduction of free markets, and the decline of government-owned organisations resulting in instability in job security as well as the pensions and accommodation location system. Only a part of these changes seemed to be influential in the elders' lives, for instance those elders retired from government-owned organisation experienced the changes in welfare system and some of the early promises which were given in their working days were not fulfilled.

Turning to limitations of the research, in terms of the participants' discursive style, most of the participants talked about what was happening in society, borrowing the jargon or concepts of the media rather than giving an independent opinion. To a certain degree their selection of language was similar to each other. This was hypothesised to be due to their understanding of a uniform and harmonious society, maybe something about social pressure to conform and cultural emphasis placed on harmony rather than criticism and dissent. Many participants used very general terms of language when referring to the differences between their past and present. It is likely that the media information they received about social changes and their complicated consequences led to their awareness of the changes in their environment and more often a sense of uncertainty, and therefore they tend to use ambiguous or general terms of language when referring to the current situation. It was also common that some participants, especially the men, seldom talked about their feelings and emotions. This finding of gender differences in discursive style has been noted in

some previous studies (e.g. Tannen 1990), and may be related to widespread gender differences.

The data collection process was based on snow-balling; therefore the source of participants was limited and fairly homogenous. Most of the participants in the first and second study were female and only a minority of the participants in the first and second groups was contacted for a follow-up interview, for the researcher had not enough time to pay the visits and some of the participants were out of touch. The age gap between the researcher and the participants may also be an obstacle in the interview section; it is likely that the participants thought the researcher was too young to understand their emotions and difficulties. Therefore the researcher invited an older adult as a facilitator to be present in some of the conversations. The facilitator's presence seemed to reduce the participants' worry of talking to an unfamiliar young person, and therefore help get the participants engaged more freely in the conversation.

The findings suggested a number of practical implications for future research with elders in a Chinese community. This study supported that a qualitative approach in a real life setting helped to encourage the participants' expressions by its openness and flexibility. The researcher tended to let the participants' conversation flow as much as they like without interruption. However, many participants in these cross-sectional interviews tended to talk about the influential events that had happened recently with

these overshadowing other less immediate influences. Some topics like "family decision making", "future planning" and "family relationships" required an in-depth investigation of participants' experiences from past and present and possible estimation of future, and in some ways, this was hard to gain in one-off single interviews. It could be that there is a lack of theory saturation concerning these topics, and that further interviews with those experiencing changes might have the potential to elucidate this further. A longitudinal approach may also help study the process of changes a participant is experiencing.

In terms of method, for those elders who are not comfortable talking about emotions or personal issue in public, participant observation and diary writing might enable the researcher's access to the target with indirect communications. This was supported by the written account provided by one particular participant who was found to reveal a range of personal and emotional content. This study, inspired by the psychological theories and concerns of ageing society in China, has fulfilled its primary task of describing the psychological aspects of Chinese elders with researcher's interpretations. The attempted qualitative method has proved its merits of obtaining participants' personal experiences and perspectives in a real life setting and constructing theoretical implications from multiple levels of contexts.

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Appendix 1 Self-assess ethic form

1.   Title of Research Project: Stress, satisfaction, and resilience, the psychological aspects of elders in a Chinese setting

2.   Contact person (normally the Principal Investigator, in the case of staff-led research projects, or the student in the case of supervised-postgraduate researcher projects):

      Title: Miss   First Name/Initials: Y   Last Name: Wu
      Post: PhD student   Department: psychology
      Email:███████████████   Telephone:███████████

3.   Is this a postgraduate researcher project?
Yes
    If yes, please provide the Supervisor's contact details: Dr. Jan Oyebode, Department of Psychology, University of Birmingham

4.   Proposed Project Duration:

      Start date: End date:
      09/2006   09/2009

5.   Briefly summarise the project's aims, objectives and methodology.
Aim: to explore psychological aspects of the aging process of elders in a Chinese setting, and to take a cultural psychology approach to develop understanding of their lived experience of stress and satisfaction

Objective: the Chinese elders' identity, well-being, stress and satisfaction, their understanding of their role in a family and relationship to their adult-children.

Methodology: a qualitative approach (Grounded Theory, constructivist mode) were used, with semi-structured interview, focus group and written work for data collection.

6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?
There was potential for psychological harm/ distress to the participants, when they talking about their personal experiences of loss, worries or stress.
If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.
A local clinical supervisor was supervising the research process in communities and residential settings. Any noticed sign of psychological harm/ distress will be reported

to the local clinical supervisor for clinical suggestions.

7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (Especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)
No.

If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.

8. How will the potential participants in the project be:

Identified?
The participants were identified with the help of two facilitators who were familiar with the locality and some of the participants living within it.

Approached?
The researcher contacted with each participant via telephone first to see when he or she would be available for an interview section, and then the researcher paid a visit to each participant's place.

Recruited?
The participants were recruited through snowballing. In study 1 and 2, the researcher or facilitators knew some of the participants and asked their willing of taking apart in the research project, and those participants agreed to be interviewed also introduced their friends or neighbours to the researcher. In study 3, the focus groups were used in a park and a community activity area, with the participants from community nearby joining in the groups voluntarily at the places.

9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?
Yes

9.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to obtain informed consent:
How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):
At the beginning of interview, the researcher introduced to the aim of the research and the process. At the end of the introduction, the researcher asked the participants for their permission of taking notes and recording.

10. What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?
The data were only used for research purpose, it would not be disclosed to any external party, and the data would be anonymous for coding and quoting.

11. Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)
No.

12.   Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?
Yes.

12.1. This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded media:
How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?
The researcher asked the participants' permission before using the recording equipment, and explained to the participants that the data would be quoted anonymously for research purpose only.

Appendix 2 Interview guides

Opening

Researcher: My name is Yikun Wu, and I am currently doing my PhD in School of psychology, University of Birmingham, UK. My research interest is the psychological aspects of Chinese elders, their daily life and social activities. I have a research plan to do some interviews in your community, and your friend thought it would be a good idea to interview you.

I would like to ask you some questions about your daily life, hobbies and interest, activities, your family and your understanding of growing older, and your experiences of getting along with your family.

What you have to say will be very helpful for me. I hope to use the information for my research and thesis.

The interview will take 30 minutes to 1 hour. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time?

And I would like to take some notes during the conversation. Is that Ok? And do you mind I record the interview?

I.   Body
1. Background information
How long have you been retired? Can you tell me a little bit about your former occupation and what it felt like to retire?
How long have you lived in this community?

2. Daily life
Can you describe your daily life? How do you view your day to day life?
Which part in your life, that you are particular concerned with?

3. Future planning
How do you plan for your future life?
Are there things in your life that you would like to be improved?

4. Family relationship
 Can you describe the family members you live with?
 Can you say something about your relationship with your children living with you?

For those children not living with you, how often do they have contact with you? How about your grandchildren?

5. Social activities

Do you have friends nearby?   How did you contact with them?

6. Life in an institution (study 2 only)

Can you describe your life in the institution?

Can you recall how you made the decision to move into the institution? How did your children react to your decision?

Can your say something about your relationship with your children since you settled down here?

Appendix 3 An example of transcript with notes made during analysis

Participant 7 in study 1

Transcripts	Notes
G This is your Yu grandmother, and an old friend of mine, We have been friends since my teenage years, for we were both early workers in the same factory. She now lives nearby, not far from our apartment. Your grandpa and I have looked for her recently, and luckily found her. She just came over to see me today. And since you are here too, let her tell you something, OK? She has experienced a lot, and she just moved to her daughter's new home nearby.	Greeting and introduction, a lady lives nearby, old friend of G
V What do you want me to say? I was not prepared for that.	Unexpected request
G Let her tell you the story of her family moving. She has moved several times for her children, how many times exactly?	Instruction and indication, a story of moving
V 5 times	
G Let her talk carefully to you, the house which is assigned to her first is quite good, but she did not stay long with that, changed several times, now she lives with her daughter.	Try to start the story and V's recent state
V I will tell a story casually, what do you want to hear first?	
	Accept the request
Y Tell the thing about your moving.	
	Following G's suggestion
V All right, I will talk about moving first. The first time my husband and I were assigned to a new apartment, the factory cared for us and assigned us an apartment with two bedrooms and a dining room, on Qianjin Road. Your grandma also lived there in that year. That house was very good at that time, all very large, my husband, my three sons lived in one room, my husband's parents and my daughter lived in the other one, it is fairly good.	Whole family, 8 people, lived together in early years. No private room Good apartment or family arrangement
Y When did that happen?	
	Interrupted, asking for

V When was it? I cannot tell. It seems to be a year in the past, I could not remember that clearly now, the factory assigned an apartment to us that year, our whole family moved in, everything was still pretty good at that time. Later on my eldest son was going to marry, so he needed a separate room, so this apartment is not suitable for that. I have to go to my factory to ask people for help with my spouse, we want to get one more room.

information
Continued, first move, son's marriage, problem for room share
Constraints in finance and social condition

G Her first apartment was pretty good, but soon she move far away.

G mentioned V moved away from her first apartment

V The ones we moved to are quite far. After asking the factory many times, they finally agreed, changed our apartment into a much smaller apartment of one bedroom and one dining room plus an additional place of one room only, which was built on a conjunction of the corridor in the middle of a building. My husband and I sleep in the bedroom with my two sons, my husband's parents and my girl sleep in the dining room, the elder son and his wife live in the additional room outside. Later my second eldest son gets married and in need of a separate room again. We have to go to ask for a change again to our factory. The factory agreed, so we changed our apartment with two rooms into a smaller one plus a separate base room. In this way, my second son has moved out too.

difficulties in family as well as the organization
most members of family's living condition worsen

Second move, another son's marriage
living condition continue to worsen
unstable life

Later on my eldest son's wife gave birth to a grandson, my youngest son is going to marry, the apartment is not suitable for us again. Fortunately my second son was assigned to a new apartment, and moved out at that time. After discussing, we exchanged rooms again, my husband his parents and I had moved to the place where the eldest lived in the past, my eldest son, his wife and baby moved into our previous apartment with my daughter, then the youngest son moved into the base room where my second son lived in the past.

special plan, a new apartment from second son
third move, living condition continue to worsen
looking after elders

After some days, my husband's father passed on. Then my eldest son was assigned to a new room, so I moved back to the apartment of two rooms with my mother-in-law, also helping my eldest to take care of the grandson. My youngest son moved to the separate room where we lived before, my daughter moved to the base room. And a few years later, my husband and my mother-in-law departed, then my youngest son's wife gave birth to a grandson. So I moved to the separate room on the

new apartment
Fourth move, living condition improved a little, end of days of taking care of the elders, new duty of taking care for grandson.

conjunction of corridor with my grandson. My youngest son and his wife and child moved back to my previous apartment.

During my stay in that room with my grandson, I felt afraid because there were only an old lady and a baby. What if someone broke in, a thief or a burglar? Every evening being anxious and fearful I could not sleep well. Knowing my worries, all my children gathered together for a meeting and discussed about it. Finally they agreed that they would raise money together to buy a new apartment, and whoever is willing to look after me can get that apartment. It is my daughter that offered to look after me for my later life. So they bought a house nearby, two bedrooms and one dining room. Her husband and she live in the main bedroom, I live in the smaller one, but my granddaughter has no separate room. She enters a university outside Wuhan, but this holiday she will come back, has to live in the dining room. Maybe they will make a compartment for her in future.

New worries,
Family meeting on decision of her future life

Providing care for a visible profit?

Finally a private room
Concerns of granddaughter

G Did you know that they had a meeting.

V Actually I knew, *anyway it is good for them to let me know their final decision.* My daughter just finished the decoration recently, moved me to the new place. This place is quite good.

Acceptance of meeting result

G Do they leave any evidence of their result of their discussion, any written file or just oral agreement?

Suggestion, worries of things after death

V It is an oral agreement.

G You should write down a record of their discussion , in case that if you go in the future, they want to break their promise, concerning this new apartment, your daughter will suffer a loss.

Consideration of the worst

V Oh, what you said is reasonable, I have to think further about that.

agreed

Y Did you take care of your husband's parents in their later life?

new direction

V Yes, I kept looking after them until their death. My father-in-law was fine, he kept good health all the time, even in the last few years of his life, he could manage to take care of himself. My mother-in-law is not all right. In her last few years,

she was lying in bed all the time. I was the only one to look after the family, preparing meals and doing cleaning for her. She often lost control of herself, was incontinent, and I always had to help her wash and clean her sheets each time. Those sheets smelled very odoriferous. One day my sister-in-law came over to see us, she wanted to offer some help, so she tried to wash the sheet, but she could not stand the smell, almost vomited. She told me, my sister, it is so difficult for you.

Y Did your mother-in-law lose her consciousness during that time?

V She was still in clear consciousness. Not long before her going away, she took my hands for a long time, before she was moved to the hospital. In fact she was deeply in pain all the time.

Y What plans do your have for your future life?

Y How can I plan for that? I can depend on my daughter now, my daughter is fairly good. And there are several old friends nearby, quite convenient generally. Right now I do not need to worry too much for my children and other family members; it is still good for me.

Ignores the issue of future planning
Few worries equals satisfaction

Appendix 4: Illustrations of quotations related to each sub-theme in study 3

Sub-theme	Quotes	Notes
Financial issues	P2 "If families have any disturbance in their relationship, all problems can be attributed to money."	General statement that financial issues mattered
	P4 "My financial condition is ok, and I don't have to worry about it at this moment"	Seemed an easy-going attitude
	P6 "Give him what he deserves, save the necessary amount of money, which will be sufficient."	Seemed concerned with the issue, but not so worried
	P3 "When you do not have an income for yourself, you can not play outside"	Seemed worried about the issue
Housework	P1 "They did not let me do anything once I retired"	Not involved in housework
	P2 "We should do exercises with your own body, people cannot live without working"	Housework as exercise
	P6 "I will not help them with breakfast, it is not my job preparing meals"	Not taking the duty of housework
	P4 "I was the only one to look after the family, preparing meals and doing cleaning"	Responsible attitude toward housework
Attitude to future planning	P4 "When you are seriously ill, you cannot totally rely on your daughter. So for my personal opinion, I seldom think about it."	Seemed to postpone the future planning at that moment
	P2 "I am currently old, but I have made preparation myself for the time when I am even older, and I thought for myself that an older person still has to find ways of managing on his or her own."	Seemed capable of facing the issue of future planning Taking self-management seriously
	P7 "We shared an idea that 7or 8 of us move to an old people's home together, so that we can spend our time together and take care of each other"	Idea of staying with friends to face the future issue together
	P3 "How can I plan for that? I can depend on my daughter now…"	Seemed to feel less control over the future
Experiences of death	P2 "Without pain, all came so fast, without any pain."	Described her husband's death as an easy one
	P8 "And it is a heavy burden to employ a fulltime carer. So her family decided to send her to hospital, and hired a nurse to take care of her in the day time and her children did the rest...That's it, and she died in one year."	Witnessing her friend's last stage of life as undesirable
	P7 "My mother-in-law is not all right, in her last few years, lying in bed all the time. I was the only one to look after the family, preparing meal and doing cleaning	Her experience of looking after her mother-in-law, whose life state was incapable and out of control, but still conscious and deeply in pain

	for her. She often lost control of herself, was incontinent, and I always had to help her wash and clean her sheets each time. Those sheets smelled very odoriferous."	
Dynamic decision making	P7 "Knowing my worries, all my children gathered together for a meeting and discussed it. Finally they agreed that they would raise money together to buy a new apartment, and whoever is willing to look after me would get that apartment."	How her family reached agreement on how to provide care and a suitable room for her Her words ('knowing my worries') imply that she saw this as motivated by benevolent intentions.
	P5"He soon got angry with me and said that I had agreed to let him be fully responsible for the decoration, so it was unnecessary for us to get involved, but I am now getting involved and disturbing him with different opinions."	Her family decided to redecorate her flat, and her son voluntarily offered to take charge of decorating. But when she tries to exercise some influence, her input is completely rejected.
	P10"To rear children against old age is not the case now. We as parents should care for them not ask for their offers."	
Role in the family	P5 "Sometimes they (her sons) come home with a worried face. But when I asked them what they were worrying about they became inpatient with me."	She seemed to like to play a supportive role in her family but seemed to this role was rejected.
	P3 "I do not contribute for the food expenses, how I can have any comments on that (food)?"	Seemed hesitant in whether to join her family at the dinner table
	P4 "They completely rely on their children, that kind of life, they have pay a lot to maintain their life. Doing housework, bearing the hardship without complaining, and they should also look at children's faces."	Comments on those who depended heavily on their families. She seemed to view their life as quite undesirable.
	P4 "If I speak at the right time, that's all right, but if I speak my words in the inappropriate time or place, they might think I am not going well with them, that is very troublesome."	She described her experience her daughter's place, seemed to have been slightly excluded from her daughter's family
Social life	P12 "In the morning, I go to a park nearby, meeting friends and joining in exercises. Once in a week, I and some of my friends gather, in one member's place to play card game."	Introducing her usual activities
	P7 "My friends agreed with me that we belong to a group that falls short of the best, but is better than the worst. And we should plan our future life carefully for our own needs, which could also save our children's trouble"	She seemed happy that her ideas could be echoed in a group, which brought her confidence in discussing ageing issues.
	P5 "We avoided talking about our children's family life in front of her, but she was quite sensitive. Then she left our group activities and avoided showing up."	An example of how sometimes social circles could also bring burdens to those participants

Appendix 5: An example of supervision notes

1. Researcher's part

What we do

During this week's meeting, we mainly discussed the issues for 9 months review and proposal for future data collecting. Recently I have telephoned my grandmother to discuss my research. It is a little frustrating that she rejected a few of my ideas and left me a impression that she helped me with my research only because I am her dear grandchild and she herself are not interested in such research. Jan discussed with me mainly on the topic of the methods of collecting data.

In the discussion, I stated a certain conclusion that "daughters are not actually taking on a caregiving role", indeed that conclusion is too arbitrary, I should define it as in the middle and upper class family in urban area, daughters are not taking a major role of caregiving. In a large number of family, especially those family that the elder parents and adult children lived together, the daughters and daughter-in-laws are inevitably offering help for their parents, and only a small number of them whose overall helping behaviours reach the level of defined caregiver.

What I thought at that moment
I felt anxious and worried every time I talked with my grandma about my data collecting plan. Because she always left me a sense that you were too young to understand our story, and do not remind us of our wounds and let us ache again. And when I come to Jan and discussed with her, I found myself more assured of my interview plan. During the discussion I realized that what I am really afraid of is not that I will end up collecting superficial data, but that if I agitate their negative emotions how can I handle with them. From my experience of counseling, I come to know that there is so few sources I can turn to help.

What I thought after the meeting

I do not expect that I can go smoothly in the interview and get desired data in the initial attempts, and I am quite sure that I will make undesired mistakes and come across unexpected difficulties just like my counseling practice. I feel happy that Jan assure me that my quests are worthwhile, which leave me an optimistic perspective ahead.

2. Supervisor's part

What we discussed

9m review

We talked about the 9m review and how Y should prepare. We agreed that the focus should be on planning ahead. Y rose the issue of needing to be clear what she is actually focusing on and we discussed this later. She agreed to draft and send to me so I can give some feedback.

Lit review chapters

WE had previously agreed that this term should allow Y to write some of her background chapters. We talked about her having a dual focus in these – on methodology and on content. The methodology chapters will focus on background research: how it is mainly based on questionnaire surveys, how this is partly due to the social science perspective taken by the researchers, will consider the challenges of applying this methodology across cultures and the limitations of this method for this context; will then go on to highlight some of the qualitative methodologies that could be used to explore this area and give some initial thoughts about their usefulness in the Chinese cultural context. The content chapters will set the scene re older people and relevant psychological theories, research and perspectives.

Topic

Last time we met Y had proposed broadening her sample to include some additional perspectives and modes of data collection. Since then she had discussed with her grandmother and possibly her 'local supervisor' in China and had come up against further barriers. My understanding is that from these conversations, Y had come to two conclusions:

1) daughters are not actually taking on a caregiving role. Care is being undertaken either by spouses or if there is not spouse, then the families arrange either for someone to come in and do provide the care or the person has care provided in an institution – due to the need for daughters to work so they are not available to provide day time care. So if Y is still interested in focusing on the mother –daughter relationship it may not be in a context of care receiving/caregiving and if she is still interested in caregiving then she would need to gather data from some sources other than daughters.

2) Y is increasingly convinced that older women will not speak with her about their inner world in the context of research. This due to people's view of coinfidentiality and officialdom. So she needs another way of accessing this inner world.

So we spend the rest of the time talking about ways around these issues. We came to some tentative conclusions about ways forward:

So focusing older people's self identity during the process of ageing in China today:

She might gather info from the telephone and face to face interviews she is currently

conducting.

She could also enrol her grandmother as an interviewer and will see if people talk differently to someone of their own age group.

Then she could join an older people's group as a participant observer and use an ethnographic approach to observe older people's talk in a naturalistic setting.

Finally, Y suggested she could see some older clients for brief counselling through her former service. She could gain permission to tape the interviews for her research but would actually provide about 4 sessions of counselling. In this way the clients would come prepared to talk about their inner world. Y would offer them something appropriate as the same time as being able to collect useful data for analysis.

My thoughts/feeling at the time

I was pleased to have a meeting with some nitty gritty discussion, and by the end of the meeting I felt quite optimistic.

During the meeting I was concerned that Y still did not feel comfortable with the ways we had thought of gathering data and I was beginning to feel despondent about ever managing to find a suitable methodology. Also a bit of frustration because until Y is in China trying these things out we still do not know if they will be feasible. It seems sometimes we can be in a pattern where I try hard to suggest things and Y sees the pitfalls and barriers. This time I was pleased that Y had ideas about how to take things forward and was making some positive suggestions herself.

My thoughts/feelings now

I am unsure whether to still feel optimistic or whether Y will have had second thoughts and will come tomorrow having thought of difficulties with this plan.

I am more aware than ever of the complexities of working across cultures and glad we are giving time to think about methodologies and how they will be received in the particular cultural setting. It feels very important to give proper consideration to finding a method or methods that give a valid view. Squashing the research into a conventional approach and gathering meaningless data would be a waste of time.

So overall a mix of anxiety and optimism.

Appendix 6: An example of back translation

跟我自己比，虽然我看起来身体健康，但现在年纪老了，一年不如一年，我自己才知道。

Compared with myself, although I look healthy, I know that as time goes by, my body worsens year after year.

和我自己相比，虽然我看起来健康，我知道随着时间流逝，我的身体一年比一年恶化

我很怕得老年痴呆，别人说不会，所以我经常看书，写字，经常活动。由于记忆衰退，容易忘事，我就想办法，每天利用台历，将要做的活动记下来，我每天按这些记录去做，所以我的生活是很有规律的。自己安排自己，每天都过得去吧

I am afraid that I will be dementia one day, although other people may say that I will not. So I keep reading and writing, practice a lot. Because my memory declines, I apt to forget things. I try every possible means, using my calendar for schedule recording, and follow my plans. That is to say, my daily life is regular and routine. I can arrange my life, that's not bad.

我害怕我将来会得痴呆，虽然别人说我不会。所以我保持阅读和写作，练习很多。因为我的记忆力下降，我老是忘记事情。我会尽一切努力，用台历来记录日程，执行我的计划。这说明，我的日常生活是规律的。我可以管理我的生活，这样不坏。

以后我想自己保养，退出那样圈子，不用那么多时间，要跟大家在一起，起码是一个钟头。我一早要赶过去带操。以后我感觉自己老了，我与大家讲，要少带一些，要退出这个圈子，不要这么长时间，跟大家在一起起码花几个钟头。还有睡觉睡不好，要领操，有责任，要起早，所以我每天都要上闹钟，每天要起来，想多睡一会都不行，不敢多睡，所以很累。

I want to make myself comfortable, so I quit my activities in that circle, which cost plenty of time in my life. It is necessary of me to get up early and arrive in time, staying with my peers for hour at least. So I negotiated with them for less time or I quit. I cannot sleep very well, and I feel my responsibility in that group, which forces me to get up early. It was hard for me to delay even 1 minute, so I did not sleep much, tired.

我想保持生活舒适，于是我退出了那个活动圈子，这些活动占用了我生活的大量时间。它需要我每天早起准点到达，和我的同龄人一起好几个钟头。 我没法睡好觉，我感觉到我在那个团体里的责任，这些责任迫使我早起。 对我来说，即使迟到一分钟都不行，所以我睡的不多，很累。

进养老院是我自己要求进来，儿子不同意。但只要我还在家，好多人来找我，我为了避开，要清静一点的环境。我来到养老院选对了，我过去有过敏性鼻炎，去年就没有了。…反正一个人生活要有规律，也要有爱好，不要光忙家务。

It is my own decision to move in this institution, although my sons disagree. As long

as I stay at home, many people may come for me. Thus I would like to avoid the crowds, move to a more tranquil place. It is a reasonable choice for me, that I had anaphylactic rhinitis in the past, and it is gone this year. Anyway, one's life should be regular, with healthy hobbies. I don't think it is reasonable only engaged in housework.

住进养老院是我自己的决定，虽然我的儿子不同意。只要我呆在家，很多人会来找我。我情愿避开人群，搬到一个更安静的地方去。这对我来说是个合理的决定。过去我有过敏性鼻炎，去年就病就好了。总的来说，一个人的生活需要规律，有健康的爱好。我不认为只做家务是合理的。

我儿子的孙子我都没带。我这个人现在检查起来有点自私。我有四个儿子，没有女儿，我的命真苦，要有女儿，女儿帮手要好得多，儿子难得管你。我这个人爱舒服，年轻时候带了孩子。就是孙子我不带，一带我就没有自己的时间了，所以第一个儿子结婚我就说了，你们有办法结婚，就有办法找保姆带孩子，反正我不给带，第一个是这样，其他的也是这样。最小的孩子要我带，我说不行，你几个哥哥都没带，现在给你带，我现在年龄大了，身体不好，三个哥哥有意见了，所以不能带。

I have not taken care of my grandchildren, maybe from my current view that I am a little selfish. I have four sons, no daughter; a daughter might help me in some ways. It is rare for a son to take good care of you. I would like to enjoy comfortable life, and only took care of my sons, but avoid grandchildren's affairs, otherwise I may not have much personal time. So the I told my eldest son when he got married, that as long as you can find yourself a wife, you can also find someone to take care of your children, anyway I will not take that responsibility. The eldest son is an example, and the others follow him. My youngest child wanted me to look after his child, and I say no, your brothers did not succeed, let alone you. And I am getting old, not very healthy now, if I help you with your child, your brothers may have thoughts on that.

我并没有照顾我的孙儿们，也许从我现在的观点来看我是有些自私的。我有四个儿子，没有女儿，一个女儿可能会在某些方面帮我。很少有儿子能照顾好你。我想要享受舒适的生活，只照顾我的儿子们，却避开了孙儿们的事情，不然我就没法有自己的时间。所以我在我大儿子结婚的时候告诉他：既然你能找到一个妻子，你就可以找到帮你照顾孩子的人，总之我不会去承担那份责任。有了大儿子的事例，其他几个孩子也都一样。我最小的孩子希望我去帮他照顾孩子，我拒绝了，说你哥哥都没能劝服我，更不用说你。当我变老时，现在身体也不太好，我现在帮你照看孩子，你哥哥也会有些想法。

我要带晨运，晨运完后还要去喝茶，没有时间带孩子。孩子对我有意见，说我一头扑在工作上，又没有钱拿，还这么累。我现在回过头想，没体谅年轻人，与儿媳妇关系不够和睦。我后来改了，能体谅孩子，这是到养老院的变化，到养老院不感到孤独寂寞。但有时想家庭亲情，还对过去的一些做法感到自责，对亲情有些回忆留念.

I had a job of leading morning exercises, and I had tea after that, therefore I had no time of taking care of my grandchildren. My sons had some thoughts with me, they said I always spent a long time on a job without paying, and made myself tired. Now I

think back of those days, I did not consider their situations then, and did not get on well with my daughter-in-laws. I made some changes then; I can think more with my children. These changed happened after I moved to an institution, I do not feel lonely here, but sometimes I feel guilty when thinking of my family, and reminisce about the kindness of my family members.

我早上有带操的工作，之后还要去喝茶，因此我没有时间内来照顾孙儿们。我的儿子们对我有些意见，他们说我总是花太多时间在没有报酬的工作上，让自己太累。我现在回想那时候，我没有考虑到儿子们的处境，也和媳妇们相处的不太好。在搬到养老院后我发生了一些变化，我会为儿子们想的更多。这些变化都发生在我搬来之后，我并不感到孤单， 但有时想起家里来时觉得内疚，回忆那些家人们的亲情。

我现在更珍惜家庭亲情。儿子过年过节给我一点，但他们现在下岗了，经济不宽裕，工资奖金不多，所以我有时买礼物给他们，他们很高兴，谢谢我这个妈妈。我老了以后才懂怎样做人了。过去就是自己管自己，谁说也不算。

I now value familiar affection more. My sons visited me every spring festival with some gifts, but they are unemployed now with less income, and their economic situation are not so well. So I buy presents for them sometimes, and they are very glad for that, thank me as a good mother. I understand how to get along with them when I am old. I have been self-managed so far, with little concern with them.

我现在更看重家庭亲情。 我定的儿子们每年春节都带着礼物来看我，但是今年他们有人失业了收入减少，经济条件便差。于是我会时不时帮他们买礼物，他们对此也很高兴，感谢我是个好母亲。我到老了后才知道怎么和他们想吃醋，这么长时间以来我都自己管自己，不太注意他们。

这个大转变还是到这里来了以后，我静下来，我体会更深了。我不是孤独，我与3 个人沟通好一些，其他人不想多说，到这里以后我与别人没有更深地说，为什么？会花我的时间。陈回台湾去了以后，我感到说得少了。平时不与别人交谈，一时找人家没办法谈得深入。难免有些孤独，我就想到了我的家人。因为我回去以后，家人吃饭打麻将，看到妈妈很开心，我也多住一下。我也出去多一些，不要他们老是来看我。几个儿媳也很好，说分头来看我，她们这样说，我很感动。我自己没感觉，养老院有的老人，孩子不来便哭闹。我感觉很好，我的孩子一个季度要来看我一次。或者隔一个月四个儿子一起来，讲好了那个地方都不去，来看我，如果不来看我，怕妈妈有意见。我是不爱热闹的人，我对他们说，如果我以后走不动了，你们再多来看我。我知道亲情是很重要的，所以这个转变是真正在心灵上体会的。现在我的家庭是比较圆满，比较好的，大家互相关心。我四个儿子，一个儿子在外国，三个儿子全靠我这个老妈连在一起，我有时间把他们拉在一起，有意识要他们兄弟之间不要因为忙而放弃亲情。

It has been a great change since I moved here, I become quieter, understand deeper. I am not lonely here, I communicate with 3 people better than others, and I don't like speak much to others, I have not spoken many deep things with others here. Why? Because it will cost me a lot of time. After Chen went to Taiwan, I feel like talking less than before. I seldom came to others for talk normally, thus it was hard for me to

reach the core topic from short conversation. Inevitable I felt a bit lonely, I missed my family. Then I went back, my families were having meal and playing mahjong, they looked happy seeing me, so I stay with them for a few days. After that I went out more frequently, let them come to my place less. And my daughters-in-laws are very good too; they said that they would visit me separately. I was moved by their sayings. I feel fine, my sons scheduled to visit me at least once in three month, if they did not come, they may feel guilty, for their mum might be unhappy of them, and every two month my sons come together. Although I do not like crowded, I told them that if I could not move any more in future, please come to see me more. I know the kindred is very important to me. So this change really takes place when I realize that from my heart. My family is satisfactory now, it becomes better, and everybody cares for each other. One of my four sons lives in foreign country; the other three sons are all connected by my role as a mum. If I had time I may bring them together, and I want them to remember the importance of kindred no matter how busy they are.

自从搬来这里后我发生了很大的变化，我变得更安静，理解得更深入。在这儿我并不感到孤独，我和这里的三个人交流得比其他人要多，我不太喜欢和其他人说太多，也没和他们谈太多深入的问题。为什么？因为这会占用我的大量时间。自从陈搬到台湾后，我感觉交谈比以前更少了。我很少和其他人有正式的聊天，这让我在这些短的对话中有什么深入的中心。不可避免地我感到有些孤独，想念我的家人。后来我回到家，我的家人们在吃饭和打麻将，他们似乎很开心见到我，于是我和他们一起呆了好几天。在那之后，我更频繁地回家，让他们少些来看我。我的媳妇们也很好，她们说会分别来看我。我被他们的话打动了。我感觉很好，我的儿子们至少3个月来看我一次，或者每两个月一起来看我一次。如果他们不来，会感到内疚，觉得妈妈会为此不开心。虽然我不喜欢人多，我告诉他们如果将来我没法动了，请到时多来看我。我知道亲情对我很重要。这些变化发生在我从心底里认识到这些时。我的家庭现在是令人满意的，它变得更好，每个人都关心他人。一个孩子生活在国外，剩下的孩子被我这个妈妈联系在一起。如果我有时间，我会把他们聚在一起，我希望他们不论多忙都要记住亲情的重要性。

我还老说她（指陈奶奶）老想孩子，我教坏她了。您一定要有自己的时间，您一定要健健康康，您健康就是对孩子的最大支持。我的儿子对我现在很放心，说我这样挺好，我听到也很高兴。有的老人婆婆妈妈，自己舍不得吃，省吃俭用，把钱给孩子，这是很笨的办法。我自己吃好，把身体搞好，这是对孩子的最大支持。我自己好，有时也抽出一些钱看孩子，不影响我自己的生活。他们知道妈妈很好，我何乐不为呢。我是不像他们那样省吃省穿，我现在这么老了，还有几个80岁呢？

I sometimes talked to my friend who always wanted her child nearby, I set a bad example for her. I told her that you should have your own time; you should remain healthy, and your health is the biggest support to your children. My sons now feel relaxed about me, they say that my way of life is good, I am happy to hear that. Some elders always worried a lot, saving the money for the children. That's silly. I eat well myself, keep my body well, and that is the biggest support for the children. I keep myself well, and sometimes provide my children some money, which is not influential to my life. Let my sons know there mother is alright, why not do it? I am not as thrift

as my neighbours. I am now so old, how many 80 years can I have?

我有个朋友总想着她的孩子能在身边，我有时会劝他，给她有不良影响。我告诉她，你需要有你自己的时间，你需要保持健康，你的健康是对子女们最大的贡献。我的儿子们现在对我放心了，他们说我的生活方式很好，我很高兴听到这些。有些老年人总是担心很多，省下钱来支持子女。我管理号自己，也有时支援儿子们一些钱，并不影响我的生活。让我的儿子知道他的母亲很好，何乐而不为呢？我并不像我的邻居们那么节俭，我现在老了，还能有多少个 80 岁呢？

进养老院以后我就采取措施，进来以后，主要是老三付钱。因老三在国外，为了保证有足够多的经费，以应付一些事情，我召集四个儿子来，说妈妈现在进来有一定消费，妈妈工资不多，每月才 1000 多一点，这两年加上才 1300 元。我花费较多，订报纸一年要订好几份，要几百元，我剪贴，没有报纸没法剪贴，必要的营养要有，靠你们过年过节给的钱不够，要给定一定的钱，你们自己讲，每人每年给多少钱，随便你们自己报，少了不怪你们，多了不 要，因为会影响你们的生活，他们说我们讲出来少了，我说你们讲，不要有想法，我要一定的钱主要是好对一年的生活有相应的安排，最后有个儿子说每年给 600 元，我也很高兴，反正有个数字给我，一人 600 元，四人 2400 元。其实老三给我不少钱，这样老三也不例外，也给 600 元。我每年有 2400 元好安排生活。儿子过年过节一样给我钱。我也知道他们过年会给我钱，但每年 600 元不能少。

I took measures for financial management after I enter this institution, although my third son pays the major cost of residence fee, because he lives abroad and is capable of guaranteeing my residence fee…In order to prepare for some accidental cost, I gathered my four sons for family meeting about financial responsibility. I told them that mother's income was limited, just 1000 more per month, that salary just increased to 1300 Yuan in recent days. And I spend more than I did in the past, just like newspaper and magazine subscriptions costs several hundred Yuan a year, I clip and paste with these materials, and I need to buy food with essential nutrition, which will cost more than you give me in spring festival every year. In sum, I need certain amount of money from you, just tell me how much you can afford each year, more or less I do not care. If you give me more than you could afford, which might affect your family life. And they all hesitated to respond, so I say don't burden yourself with that, I just want a certain amount of money to manage my future life. One son finally said that he can offer 600 Yuan every year. I was very glad for that, a certain source of income anyway, 600 Yuan from a son, 2400 Yuan from four sons. In fact my third son gave me much more than that, but I need no exception, 600 Yuan is alright. I can make a good arrangement of life every year with this 2400 Yuan. And maybe I can receive some additional amount in spring festival every year.

搬来养老院后，我采取了措施来管理财务。虽然我的三儿子付了大部分的住宿费，因为他生活在海外能够负担我的费用。为一些事故做准备，我叫来儿子们开关于财务问题的家庭会议。我告诉他们，妈妈的收入有限，每月只有 1000 元左右，最近才涨到 1300 元。我现在比过去花的更多，订报纸和剪贴每年要花费数百元，我需要这些报纸材料来做剪贴。我也需要购买食物补充营养，这些花费比你们过年过节给的钱要多。总的来说，我需要你们提供一部分钱。请你们告诉我，你们每人每年能负担多少，多少我都不在意。如果给的多了，影响到你们的生活。他

们都犹豫不说，于是我说，不要有负担，我要一定的钱主要是为了一年的生活有相应的安排，最后有个儿子说每人给 600 元，我也很高兴，反正有个数字给我，一人 600 元，四人 2400 元。其实老三给我不少钱，这样老三也不例外，也给 600 元。我每年有 2400 元好安排生活。每年过年的时候我可能还会得到些额外的。