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The Dragon and the Lamb

Christianity and Political Engagement in China

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Abstract

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This thesis examines political engagement amongst young urban Chinese Protestants. Based on 100 interviews in Beijing and Shenzhen, 50 with Protestants, and 50 with non-Protestants, it focuses on three areas: national narratives (what individuals think about China, its current situation and its future direction), political opinions, and social and political activity.

I firstly argue that Protestants generally adhere to a relatively 'critical' national narrative, one that is more divergent from the Party-state's nationalist discourse than that of their demographic peers. I then argue that in causal terms, it is primarily individuals who hold these critical values who are most drawn to Christianity, rather than developing the values as a result of their faith.

Secondly, Protestants do not just hold more negative opinions of China's political regime, but that the criteria by which they judge it are different. In contrast to their demographic peers, Protestants do not base their judgements of the regime on its performance at delivering on everyday political issues.

Thirdly, Protestantism catalyses the development of a sense of agency in its adherents: a sense of moral responsibility towards China and a desire to bring change through transformative activism. However, factors in China's cultural, historical, social and political context serve to steer Protestants' activism away from engagement with secular society and inward towards the church community.

I conclude by arguing that Protestantism poses two challenges to China's Party-state: Firstly, it is symptomatic of an underlying sense of social and political malaise, of scepticism towards the primacy of economic enrichment and towards the Party-state's attempt to legitimise its rule based upon this. Secondly, Protestantism catalyses the emergence of a critical, morally agentic individualism that anchors its worldview in a discourse outside the control of the Party-state. Adapting to these social shifts presents a major future challenge for the CCP.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. The Puzzle

In this thesis, I investigate how Protestant Christians engage with politics in urban China.¹

The re-emergence of religion in reform-era China has attracted much attention amongst academics and journalists in Europe and North America.² In particular, Protestants are now estimated to number 40 million or more.³ Although small in percentage terms, China's Christian minority is significant because of the non-traditional and transnational nature of Protestantism, most notably its perceived links to a 'West' that China's ruling party-state seeks to define its vision of 'China' against.⁴

A common assumption about the growth of Protestantism in China is that it will be a westernising, liberalising and potentially even democratising force in society. Journalist David Aikman has written of the Chinese dragon being tamed by the Christian lamb, arguing that Christianity will cause China to act more responsibly on

¹ As this thesis focuses on Protestants, I use 'Christian' and 'Protestant' interchangeably; in doing this I am in no way inferring that, for example Catholic or Orthodox believers are not 'Christians'.

² Popular accounts include: Tony Lambert, *China's Christian Millions* (Oxford: Monarch, 2006); David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Oxford: Monarch, 2005); Evan Osnos, *Age of Ambition: Chasing Fortune, Truth and Faith in the New China* (London: Random House, 2014).

³ Daniel H Bays, "Chinese Protestant Christianity Today," *The China Quarterly* 174, no. 2 (2003): pp.488–504; Wu Jiao, "Religious Believers Thrice the Estimate," *China Daily*, February 07, 2007, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-02/07/content_802994.htm.

⁴ Richard Madsen, "The Upsurge of Religion in China," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 4 (2010): pp.58–71; Edward Vickers, "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimisation of China's Developmental Strategy," *International Journal of Educational Development* 29, no. 5 (September 2009): pp.523–531, doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2009.04.012.

the international stage.⁵ A more negative angle is taken in a recently-leaked Communist Party Central Committee document, which claims that, 'Foreign hostile forces have put even greater emphasis [on] using religion to infiltrate China to carry out their political plot to westernize and divide China,' and singles out Christianity as worthy of particular concern.⁶

Yet these assumptions have yet to be fully tested. A comprehensive study of this question is beyond the scope of this project. Instead, I am concentrating my investigation upon three relationships: firstly, the relationship between an individual's belief in Protestant Christianity and her⁷ national narrative (a concept I will outline shortly); secondly, that between an individual's belief in Protestant Christianity and her opinions about China's government and politics; and thirdly, that between an individual's belief in Protestant Christianity and her social and political activity.

In my first section, Chapters 2 and 3, I will argue that Protestants generally adhere to a relatively 'critical' national narrative. That is to say, their national narrative is more divergent from the Party-state's nationalist discourse than that of their demographic peers. Despite having similar concepts of China and what it means to be Chinese and seeing no contradiction between their national and religious identities,

⁵ Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power*. pp.286-287. This thesis takes its name from Aikman's imagery.

⁶ Document of the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Zhong Ban Fa No. 18, "Notice on 'Suggestions for Doing a Good Job of Resisting Foreign Use of Religion to Infiltrate Institutes of Higher Education and Preventing Campus Evangelism,'" 2011, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2012/12/secret-central-committee-document.html>.

⁷ Rather than use the grammatically dubious 'they' or the cumbersome 'he or she' to refer to third persons, I will use a mixture of gender-specific pronouns and leave it to the reader's intelligence to decide whether I am referring to a specific person or people in general.

Protestants are more critical of China's current political arrangements; less concerned with economic growth; and less hawkish on international and territorial issues. Whilst Christians share the Party-state's concern for the moral state of Chinese society, they differ in the language in which they articulate these concerns, and in their assessments of its causes and its cure.⁸ Protestants are also more concerned with the spread of Christianity in China. I then argue that in causal terms, it is primarily individuals who hold these critical values who are most drawn to Christianity rather than developing the values as a result of their faith. The growth of Christianity amongst young urbanites is therefore primarily a symptom, rather than a cause of a moderate sense of disaffection. These causal directions are not mutually exclusive, but the latter is the prevailing one.

In my second section, Chapters 4 and 5, I focus on one of the areas discussed in my chapter on national narrative, namely, Protestants' political opinions. Having already noted in that chapter that Protestants are more critical of China's current political configurations and more positive about democracy, I now investigate further by breaking down their political opinions into their constituent parts – namely, low politics orientations, specific support, high politics orientations, and diffuse support – and analysing how these aspects interact, and whether Christianity has anything to do with this interaction. I discover that Christians hold similar opinions on low politics issues to their demographic peers in Beijing, and more negative opinions than their demographic peers in Shenzhen. Opinions of local

⁸ I have also carried out an analysis of these key tenets of national narrative by income, age and gender sub-groups. Due to space constraints I have omitted from this thesis, but it is available to examiners on request. Overall, this analysis supports the findings displayed here, but highlights some interesting nuances of opinion within the Christian group, especially in this area of moral concern.

government were more positive in Shenzhen, with no difference between religious affiliations, but Christians showed lower levels of support for the central government.

In terms of high politics orientations and political tolerance, despite holding similar overall levels of liberalism and tolerance to their demographic peers, when these findings are disaggregated I discover that Christians were more supportive of freedom of association, more tolerant of Tibetan separatists, and less tolerant of those promoting gay marriage. Christians displayed lower diffuse support in the political system and the Communist Party. They also mentioned democracy more often than their demographic peers, but used similar procedural terms when they did so.

Examining the interaction between these elements of political opinion, I discover that unlike their demographic peers, Protestants did not base their assessments of China's political regime upon their perceptions of everyday low politics issues. Additionally, fewer Protestants held personal economic goals, and even those who did were less likely to allow these priorities to influence their political judgements. I end the section by arguing that this raises interesting questions of legitimacy for a regime that has to a large extent based its legitimacy claims on its concrete policy performance, such as its ability to deliver rising living standards and economic growth.

In my third section, Chapters 6 and 7, I examine my respondents' social and political activity. I find that Christians generally had higher levels of social engagement than

their non-Christian demographic peers, and high levels of particularistic social trust, but this extra engagement and trust was largely confined to within the Christian community. Christians were more politically active as individuals but, with the rare exception of Shouwang Church, they did not mobilise along Christian lines. Christians primarily defined their mission in spiritual, rather than political terms, articulating a responsibility for bringing about the spiritual and moral renewal of Chinese society, something I label spiritual efficacy.

I argue that Protestantism acts as a catalyst for a sense of agency⁹ in the lives of its adherents; this sense of agency develops pre-conversion as an individual questions society's values and decides to convert, is enhanced post-conversion by Christian teaching and community, and outworks itself in transformative activism. However, this transformative activism is constrained by factors in China's cultural, historical, social, and political contexts; as a result, it tends to be relatively inward-facing and aimed at building and growing the church rather than engaging with secular society or mobilising politically.

I conclude by examining the challenges Protestantism poses to the Party-state. I argue that there is little evidence that churches will form a social movement to confront the state directly. However, the fact that Protestantism is a symptom of a the existence of a moderate sense of disaffection amongst China's young urban professionals, and a catalyst for the creation of a sense of agency amongst these

⁹ Defined as *a sense that one has the responsibility for, and ability to make one's own conscious value judgements via a process of critical reflection on predominant social norms and, based on these judgements, to intentionally adjust one's own behaviour and take actions to shape the wider social environment*. I explain this definition further in Chapter 7.

disaffectees raises questions of Party-state legitimacy. A key question for future research, then, is the extent to which the Party-state will be able to adapt to, and satisfy, this group's demands.

2. Literature Review

In order to develop hypotheses about what I might expect to find, I will examine key scholarship in four areas. Firstly, what do existing findings tell us about how Protestants in China are engaging with politics in general and the Party-state in particular? Secondly, what does the literature tell us about the way in which different actors construct national identity? More specifically, upon what tenets has the CCP-led Party-state constructed its own official nationalism? And how have Chinese Protestants engaged with this and other Chinese nationalisms throughout history? As part of this section, I also draw on prior studies to outline a definition of 'national narrative.' The third section of my review investigates what Chinese in general think about politics. Here I examine the literature on public opinion in China. Finally, I examine the literature on social capital in order to determine what we might expect to observe in terms of the interaction of group membership, especially religious group membership, and social and political activity.

a) Protestantism in China

An examination of the literature on Protestantism in China offers some clues about political engagement amongst Chinese Christians. Writing shortly after the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations, Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan observed that despite their seeming 'apolitical quietism', Chinese Christians' decision to convert

'may be a symbolic rejection of official ideology.'¹⁰ Fenggang Yang analyses the growth of Christianity among young urban professionals, arguing that in becoming Christians they are aligning themselves with something they see as 'progressive, liberating, modern and universal' which offers them security and peace against a background of 'bewildering market forces and a stifling political atmosphere.'¹¹ Similarly, Gao Shining and He Guanghu put Protestant growth among urban migrants down to a feeling of 'confusion and dissatisfaction [迷惑和不满]' following their severing of social ties with their home town and their encounter with discrimination in their host city. Against this atmosphere, it is the house churches who pay them attention, argue Hu and Gao.¹² Gerda Wielander argues that people have embraced Christianity as a response to the perceived hedonism and nihilism present in Chinese society since the 1980s.¹³

In other work, Wielander¹⁴ claims that the internet is enabling Christians to develop a sense of collective identity and political awareness, as does Emily Dunn.¹⁵ Similarly, Carsten Vala argues that house churches act as free spaces in which Christians can develop counter-hegemonic discourses, learn organisational skills, and build 'local,

¹⁰ Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, Cambridge Studies in Ideology and Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). p.273, 278.

¹¹ Fenggang Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44, no. 4 (December 2005): pp.423–441, doi:10.1111/j.1468-5906.2005.00295.x. p.425

¹² Shining Gao [高师宁] and Guanghu He [何光沪], "Christianity in Contemporary China: Key Issues and Proposed Solutions [当今中国基督教的主要问题与解决设想]," *21ccom.net* [共识网], 2011, http://www.21ccom.net/articles/zgyj/ggzhc/article_2011041333463.html.

¹³ Gerda Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China* (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁴ Gerda Wielander, "Protestant and Online: The Case of Aiyan," *The China Quarterly* 197 (2009): pp.165–182, doi:10.1017/S0305741009000095.

¹⁵ Emily C. Dunn, "Netizens of Heaven: Contesting Orthodoxies on the Chinese Protestant Web," *Asian Studies Review* 31, no. 4 (December 2007): pp.447–458, doi:10.1080/10357820701710740.

national and transnational networks.’¹⁶ He contends that ‘Chinese Protestantism may be considered a form of emerging social movement.’¹⁷ Richard Madsen argues that it is this ability to cross-cut social boundaries in the name of universal values that makes Christianity particularly threatening to the party-state in a way that traditional Chinese folk religion is not.¹⁸ However, elsewhere Madsen cautions against over-emphasising Chinese Christian unity: Protestantism in China is still highly diverse, decentralised and divided, mirroring wider Chinese society.¹⁹

Gao and Hu,²⁰ as well as Jason Kindopp,²¹ examine the differences between so-called official ‘Three Self churches,’ (三自教会) that are officially registered with the government, and ‘house churches’ (家庭教会), that are unregistered and operate in a legally ambiguous zone. Gao and Hu argue that political restrictions on the theology and activities of Three Self churches, and upon the construction of new buildings, has limited their ability to satisfy the demands of young urbanites, with the result that those interested in Christianity have joined house churches instead.²²

¹⁶ Carsten Vala, “The Free Spaces of Unregistered Protestantism in Contemporary China: Alternative Values, Skills, and Networks,” in *Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the APSA 2008* (Boston, MA, 2008).p.16.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.30.

¹⁸ Madsen, “The Upsurge of Religion in China.”

¹⁹ Richard Madsen, “Chinese Christianity: Indigenization and Conflict,” in *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*, ed. Elizabeth J Perry and Mark Selden, 3rd ed., Asia’s Transformations (London: Taylor & Francis, 2010).

²⁰ “Christianity in Contemporary China: Key Issues and Proposed Solutions [当今中国基督教的主要问题与解决设想].”

²¹ “Fragmented yet Defiant: Protestant Resilience under Chinese Communist Party Rule,” in *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*, ed. Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004).

²² An examination of the differences in political engagement within the Protestant Christian community, between those attending house churches and members of Three Self churches, would make for an interesting study. However, space constraints dictate that in thesis I focus on the differences between Protestants and non-Protestants. In addition, only 12 out of my 50 Protestant respondents attended Three Self churches; it would be difficult to draw any firm conclusions from such a small number of respondents.

Vivienne Shue examines how, by providing its own alternative to the 'Truth, Benevolence and Glory'²³ of the state, Falun Gong threatened state legitimacy and provoked a repressive response. Whilst Chinese Protestants have never publicly challenged the state on the scale that Falun Gong did in 1999, in articulating their own universal truth independently of the party-state, unofficial Protestantism also offers an alternative worldview for those disaffected by official CCP historical materialism.

b) Nationalism and National Narrative

Modernist theorists of nationalism, such as Ernest Gellner, argue that nations are essentially modern inventions; nationalists selectively use historical and cultural elements as raw material for the 'crystallization of new units'.²⁴ Eric Hobsbawm also contends that nations are top-down, modern constructions.²⁵ Benedict Anderson argues that individuals 'imagine' this community through consumption of shared mass media.²⁶

Anthony Smith maintains that this 'modernist' approach, which views nations as inventions, goes too far, saying that nationalists, in their use of history to serve present needs, are constrained by previous interpretations, and by what will resonate with their ethnic community.²⁷ Similarly, Prasenjit Duara contends that nationalist intellectuals define the boundaries of the national community from 'pre-

²³ "Legitimacy Crisis in China?," in *Chinese Politics: State, Society and the Market*, ed. Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen, Asia's Transformations (London: Taylor & Francis, 2010). p.48.

²⁴ *Nations And Nationalism* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Limited, 2006). pp.46-47.

²⁵ *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁶ *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). pp.6-7.

²⁷ *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998). p.43.

existent loci of identification': some cultural practices are deemed as 'soft' boundaries and no barrier to inclusion within the nation, whereas others are 'hard' and serve to differentiate those in the community from those outside it.²⁸

Various literature has described how this process of self-definition has occurred in China. Arguably starting in the late Qing²⁹, nationalist thinkers have variously used race³⁰, Confucian culture³¹, territory, anti-imperialism (Western and Japanese) and a strong state³² as key themes around which to unite the nation of China.

In recent decades, argues Suisheng Zhao, the perceived rise of Chinese nationalism has been due to the Party-state's instrumental promotion of 'Patriotic Education' as a way of shoring up its legitimacy in the wake of Tiananmen.³³ Anne-Marie Brady takes a similar line, stating that the aim of official nationalist propaganda in the years following 1989 has been to form a link in Chinese citizens' minds,

whereby the CCP-controlled PRC is China and all it represents;
hence to criticize or attack the state in anyway [sic] is to be a traitor
to China (*hanjian*) and a collaborator (*maiguozei*).³⁴

²⁸ Prasenjit Duara, "De-Constructing the Chinese Nation," in *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. Jonathan Unger (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).p.44, 49.

²⁹ James Townsend, *Chinese Nationalism*, ed. Jonathan Unger, *Chinese Nationalism* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

³⁰ Frank Dikötter, "Racial Discourses in China: Continuities and Permutations," in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Frank Dikötter (London: Hurst, 1997).

³¹ Yingjie Guo, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2004).

³² Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). p.100.

Edward Vickers investigates the content of Patriotic Education classes by analysing the content of upper-middle school textbooks.³⁵ Similarly to Zhao and Brady, he concludes that the Party-state promotes nationalism through the education system as a way of uniting China's population behind a strong state and legitimating unjust socio-economic arrangements by subordinating all other considerations to the goal of enhanced state power; this state power is necessary in the face of what the textbooks describe as a hostile international environment dominated by a hegemonic and aggressive USA that seeks to interfere with China's internal politics.

Susan Shirk's perspective is more bottom-up: she argues that, conversely, it is popular nationalism which forces the Party-state into adopting certain hawkish foreign policy positions in order to stay legitimate.³⁶ Similarly, Peter Hays Gries argues that in the face of popular nationalist protests over the alteration of Japanese history textbooks in 2005, 'the party's hands were tied.'³⁷ He concludes:

The party and the protesters are engaged in a very subtle dance, both seeking to use each other to achieve their goals, but also fearful of the threat each represents to their own survival.³⁸

Elsewhere, Gries discusses the role of the 'victimization narrative' in Chinese nationalism (both popular and official), which emphasises the atrocities carried out

³⁵ "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimation of China's Developmental Strategy."

³⁶ *China: Fragile Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³⁷ "Chinese Nationalism: Challenging the State?," *Current History: A Journal of Contemporary World Affairs* 104, no. 683 (2005): pp.251–256. p.255.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p.256.

against China in history, and through which Chinese nationalists view events such as the 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing.³⁹

Alastair Ian Johnston uses survey data to argue that middle-class residents of Beijing have less 'nationalistic'⁴⁰ views on foreign policy relative to lower-income groups in terms of attitudes towards free trade, support for interdependence, support for military expenditure, and degree of 'amity' for the USA.⁴¹

Numerous studies have examined the way in which Party-state propaganda has linked individual conduct and national strength with concepts such as *suzhi* (素质)⁴² and civilisation (*wenming* 文明),⁴³ as well as a recent re-emphasis on traditional Chinese cultural values.⁴⁴ Implicit in this is the Party-state's awareness of the serious threats that perceived moral decay and corruption pose to the wellbeing of China's citizens and their trust in the ruling Communist Party.

³⁹ "Tears of Rage: Chinese Nationalist Reactions to the Belgrade Embassy Bombing," *The China Journal* 46, no. 46 (2001): pp.25–43. p.32.

⁴⁰ I find Johnston's use of this term problematic – see Chapter 2.

⁴¹ "Chinese Middle Class Attitudes Towards International Affairs: Nascent Liberalization?," *The China Quarterly* 179 (September 2004): pp.603–628, doi:10.1017/S0305741004000505.

⁴² *Suzhi* is often translated into English as 'quality' but that fails to capture the complexity of a term that carries a wide and contested range of associations, such as education, politeness, refinement, sophistication, public ethics, and even chastity. See Vanessa L. Fong, "Morality, Cosmopolitanism or Academic Attainment? Discourses on 'Quality' and Urban Chinese-Only-Children's Claims to Ideal Personhood," *City & Society* 19, no. 1 (2007): pp.86–113, doi:10.1525/city.2007.19.1.86.a; Andrew Kipnis, "Suzhi: A Keyword Approach," *The China Quarterly* 186 (2006): pp.295–313, doi:10.1017/S0305741006000166.

⁴³ Geremie R Barmé, "Introduction: Engineering Chinese Civilisation," in *China Story Yearbook 2013: Civilising China*, ed. Geremie R Barmé and Jeremy Goldkorn (Canberra: ANU, 2013), i–xxix.

⁴⁴ Kipnis, "Suzhi: A Keyword Approach"; Fong, "Morality, Cosmopolitanism or Academic Attainment? Discourses on 'Quality' and Urban Chinese-Only-Children's Claims to Ideal Personhood"; Heike Holbig and Bruce Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China," *Politics & Policy* 38, no. 3 (June 08, 2010): 395–422, doi:10.1111/j.1747-1346.2010.00241.x.

From the above literature, then, it is possible to discern several key emphases of official nationalism: a strong, CCP-led state;⁴⁵ territorial sovereignty, including over Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and the Diaoyu Islands;⁴⁶ economic growth and social stability, leading to economic and military strength;⁴⁷ a rhetoric of victimisation by, and hostility towards, Japan and the USA;⁴⁸ and a concern with the moral state of society and the *suzhi* of its citizens.⁴⁹

Historically speaking, Protestantism has often been perceived as being at odds with Chinese nationalism, a reflection of the sometimes tense relationship between Christianity and Chinese society as a whole. When Protestantism arrived in China in the nineteenth century, it suffered, with some justification, from guilt by association with Western imperialism.⁵⁰ Qing dynasty intellectuals argued that Christianity was heretical (邪) and antithetical to Chinese culture.⁵¹ In the mid-nineteenth century, the Taiping rebellion under the Protestant-influenced Hong Xiuquan challenged the Qing, resulting in a protracted war and millions of deaths.⁵² The May Fourth

⁴⁵ Vickers, "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimisation of China's Developmental Strategy"; Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*; Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism*.

⁴⁶ Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*.

⁴⁷ Vickers, "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimisation of China's Developmental Strategy"; Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*.

⁴⁸ Vickers, "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimisation of China's Developmental Strategy"; Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*. The party-state's hawkish narrative has not always been followed up by hawkish foreign policy actions; indeed, this was one of the complaints raised by some of my respondents: IVN14a, SIVN03, IVN04b1b.

⁴⁹ Kipnis, "Suzhi: A Keyword Approach"; Fong, "Morality, Cosmopolitanism or Academic Attainment? Discourses on 'Quality' and Urban Chinese-Only-Children's Claims to Ideal Personhood".

⁵⁰ Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism 1860-70* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Subsequent Chinese evaluation of the Taiping has been subject to changing historiographical winds; early nationalists and the CCP viewed Hong's project positively, as an anti-Manchu nationalist and revolutionary movement respectively. In the early 1990s these discourses were challenged by pan-Chinese cultural nationalists who praised Zeng Guofan, the general who defeated the Taiping, as a guardian of Confucian Chinese culture

Movement and later the Communist Party dismissed religion as superstitious and detrimental to China's modernisation.⁵³ Early nationalist leaders such as Sun Yat-sen, Song Meiling and Chiang Kai-shek embraced Christianity;⁵⁴ but following Mao's victory over the Kuomintang, Christians came under political suspicion for their perceived links to the West and their ability to organise independently of the state, resulting in periods of persecution that reached their peak in the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁵ Since 1978, religious freedom has grown in China. However, this history of antagonistic relations still lingers, and is evident, for example, in Document 18 quoted above.⁵⁶

Few studies on the intersection of nationalism and Christianity in contemporary China exist. This thesis therefore aims to investigate how Chinese Christians think about issues of national identity and nationalism: how do they imagine 'China', and is this different from other Chinese? How do they think about China, its place in the world, and its future priorities? And how does this thinking compare with the tenets of the party-state's official nationalism? Do Christians embrace official nationalism, or are they, as members of a transnationalised religion, more critical?

against the rebels. Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Guo, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China*.

⁵³ Lewis Hodous, "The Anti-Christian Movement in China," *The Journal of Religion* 10, no. 4 (1930): pp.487–94.

⁵⁴ Chiang Kai-shek, "My Religious Faith," in *China Readings 2: Republican China*, ed. Franz Schurmann and Orville Schell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

⁵⁵ Brian J Grim and Roger Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Chapter 5.

⁵⁶ Kindopp, "Fragmented yet Defiant: Protestant Resilience under Chinese Communist Party Rule"; Document of the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Zhong Ban Fa No. 18, "Notice on 'Suggestions for Doing a Good Job of Resisting Foreign Use of Religion to Infiltrate Institutes of Higher Education and Preventing Campus Evangelism'"; Grim and Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century*.

A useful working concept that I will use to encapsulate these questions is that of 'national narrative.'

The Concept of 'National Narrative'

Many researchers have discussed 'national narratives', but few have attempted to clearly and explicitly delineate the concept.⁵⁷ One useful and concise definition is that of Vasu, Chin and Law, who define national narratives as, 'the stories that nations convey to connect their past, present and future.'⁵⁸ The authors argue that

national narratives serve as platforms of social mediation for this ongoing dialogue and negotiation between myriad segments of society seeking to articulate their aspirations of what their country, as an extension of themselves, stands for.⁵⁹

I build upon this concept to define 'national narrative' loosely as, 'the way that people think about a nation - its form and history, its current condition and place in the world, and its future.' It is both descriptive ('the nation is....') and normative ('the nation should....'). A national narrative could roughly be divided into two aspects:

⁵⁷ e.g. James V. Wertsch, "National Narratives and the Conservative Nature of Collective Memory," *Neohelicon* 34, no. 2 (October 27, 2007): pp.23–33, doi:10.1007/s11059-007-2003-9; Lei Zhang, "The Google-China Dispute: The Chinese National Narrative and Rhetorical Legitimation of the Chinese Communist Party," *Rhetoric Review* 32, no. 4 (October 2013): pp.455–472, doi:10.1080/07350198.2013.828549; Homi K Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," in *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990); Geoffrey M White, "Introduction: Public History and National Narrative," *Museum Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (1997): pp.3–7, doi:10.1525/mua.1997.21.1.3. To use Wertsch's terms, my concept of national narrative is less abstract than a 'schematic narrative template', but broader in scope than 'specific narratives' (p.29). Bhabha writes of 'narratives and discourses that signify a sense of nationness' (p.2), and White focuses on 'narrative representations of the shared past' (p.1); both of these are helpful, but capture only part (i) of my definition.

⁵⁸ Norman Vasu, Yolanda Chin, and Kam-ye Law, "Introduction: Un/settled Narrations - Nationalism in the Asia-Pacific," in *Nations, National Narratives and Communities in the Asia-Pacific*, ed. Norman Vasu, Yolanda Chin, and Kam-ye Law (London: Routledge, 2013). p.1

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.3. Their definition has parallels with Geremie Barmé's concept of the 'China Story': Geremie R Barmé, "Telling Chinese Stories," *The China Story*, 2012, <http://www.thechinastory.org/2012/08/telling-chinese-stories/>.

1. National identity – What ‘loci of identification’⁶⁰ does the individual use to define the nation? What are the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ boundaries⁶¹ of membership of this ‘imagined community’⁶²? And how does the individual define his or her relationship to that community?

2. The state of the nation – What are the key issues the nation is currently facing? How should the nation be governed and handle its international relations? Do the nation’s current political configurations best benefit the nation? What is the ideal future vision for the nation?

National narratives are narrated by numerous actors: state rulers, sub-state or trans-state nationalists agitating for their own nation-statehood, individuals, and even outside observers.⁶³

It is important to distinguish the concepts of ‘national narrative’ and ‘nationalism’. Nationalism is a political project that firstly privileges national identity over other identities such as religion, race, class, gender or political belief.⁶⁴ However, nationalists do use and combine these secondary identities to delineate the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ boundaries of their nation, defining who is included and who is excluded.⁶⁵ Secondly, nationalism seeks to achieve or maintain self-determination for the nation

⁶⁰ Duara, “De-Constructing the Chinese Nation.” p.44.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.49.

⁶² Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

⁶³ Barmé, “Telling Chinese Stories.”

⁶⁴ Clifford Geertz, “The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civic Politics in the New States,” in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.29–34.

⁶⁵ Duara, “De-Constructing the Chinese Nation”; Anthony W. Marx, “The Nation-State and Its Exclusions,” *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 1 (2002): pp.103–26.

in question over a territory it views as rightfully its own, preferably in the guise of a nation-state.⁶⁶

A national narrative can be *nationalistic*, but it is not necessarily so. An individual may tell the story of a nation before stating that she feels little attachment to it, or does not consider membership of the national community to be as important as other communities to which she belongs. Similarly, she may not place that much importance upon seeking national self-determination, nor support those who do.

c) Political opinion in China

Wenfang Tang's study, carried out between 1987 and 1999, demonstrated the relatively politically conservative nature of Chinese public opinion: only 24% of respondents said they wanted systemic change.⁶⁷ The more politically conservative demographic included older people, females, the unemployed, manual workers, and residents of Shenyang; less conservative groups included males, high earners, those working in the private sector, and non-manual workers⁶⁸. Younger people and the better-educated were also less supportive than others of Marxist-Leninist and Maoist ideologies and more favourable to 'Western culture.'⁶⁹

Tianjian Shi argues that the public in China are both generally very favourable to the idea of democracy and supportive of the current CCP-led regime. This is because

⁶⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Nations And Nationalism* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Limited, 2006); Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Limited, 1993); Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

⁶⁷ Wenfang Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). p.70.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p.71.

⁶⁹ Ibid. pp.74-75.

Chinese tend to define democracy in populist terms – emphasising the idea of the authorities listening to the people - rather, than liberal terms – emphasising ‘political rights, institutions, and processes.’⁷⁰ By this standard,

the current Chinese regime is already democratic in many ways

that matter to them.⁷¹

Similarly, Wang Zhengxu claims that whilst Chinese public opinion is generally favourably inclined towards democracy, at the moment, most people generally prioritise economic growth and stability, and in this regard they are satisfied with the government’s record.⁷² Drawing on the earlier work of Ronald Inglehart,⁷³ he contends that the Chinese public is largely driven by ‘materialist’ rather than ‘post-materialist’ values; the exception is those born after 1977, who view democracy as a higher priority. As this generation grows as a proportion of the Chinese population, Wang argues, the prospects for democratisation will be better.

Jie Chen argues that demographic factors and a respondent’s high politics orientation⁷⁴ have a strong association with a respondent’s level of ‘diffuse support’ for China’s CCP-led political system. Conversely, high politics orientations and demographic factors have little bearing on a respondent’s ‘specific support’ for the

⁷⁰ “Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System,” in *How East Asians View Democracy*, ed. Yun-han Chu et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 209–37. p.215.

⁷¹ Ibid.p.209.

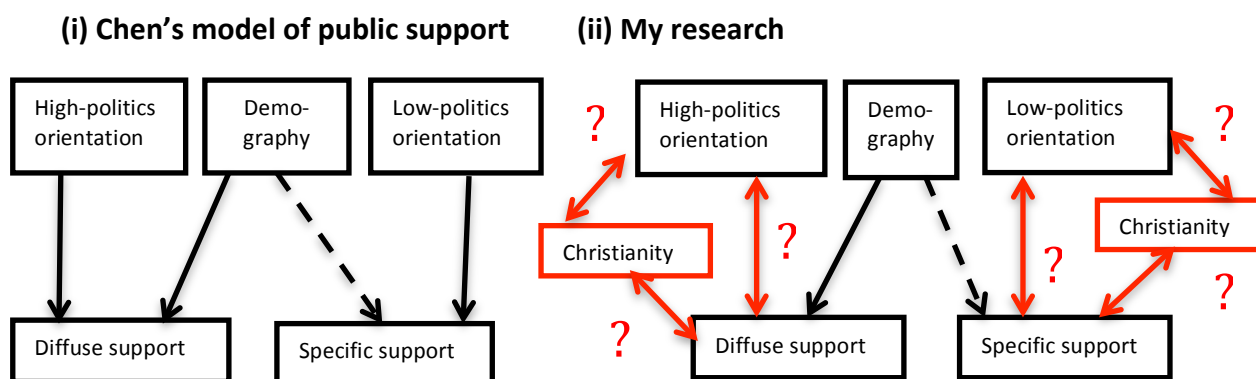
⁷² “Public Support for Democracy in China,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 16, no. 53 (November 2007): pp.561–579, doi:10.1080/10670560701562283.

⁷³ Ronald F. Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

⁷⁴ ‘High-politics orientation’ is defined as attitudes to issues such as democracy, the state of the nation, and international affairs. See Jie Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004). pp.8-9. My questions on high politics orientations exclude questions on the state of the nation and international affairs because I ask respondents their opinions on these issues in other questions (see Appendix 4).

current rulers and their policies; instead the key factor here is the respondent's low politics orientation.⁷⁵

Figure 1: Extending Chen's model of Political Support



My research aims to examine how an individual's Christian faith fits into Chen's model (see Figure 1). As stated above, much of the literature has argued that Christianity at least has the potential to be a contrarian force in Chinese politics. Adherence to it has been linked to the rejection of official ideology, an alignment with a progressive modernity, and a growing emphasis on rights in the face of state repression.⁷⁶ However, in South Korea and Latin America, studies have linked Protestantism to political acquiescence.⁷⁷ I will test whether or not being a Christian is indeed associated with liberal high politics orientations and negative views of the political system. I will also investigate whether Christian faith is associated with a more negative attitude towards low politics and more negative views of China's

⁷⁵ 'Low-politics orientation' is defined as attitudes towards daily life political issues. See *ibid*, pp.9-10. In an early study, Chen had found an association between low politics orientations and diffuse support. However, in his later study, with more data, and after controlling for high politics orientations, this association disappeared. The earlier study can be found in Jie Chen, Yang Zhong, and Jan William Hillard, "The Level and Sources of Popular Support for China's Current Political Regime," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30, no. 1 (March 1997): pp.45-64, doi:10.1016/S0967-067X(96)00022-0.

⁷⁶ Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*; Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China"; Wielander, "Protestant and Online: The Case of Aiyan."

⁷⁷ Yong-Shin Park, "Protestant Christianity and Its Place in a Changing Korea," *Social Compass* 47, no. 4 (December 01, 2000): pp.507-524, doi:10.1177/003776800047004004; Timothy J Steigenga, *The Politics of the Spirit: The Political Implications of Pentecostalized Religion in Costa Rica and Guatemala* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001).

current government's performance and policies. I suspect that if these last two relationships exist, they will be weaker than the relationship between Christianity, high politics, and diffuse support, and more dependent on local circumstances. There is little in the literature to suggest an association between Protestantism, low politics and specific support.⁷⁸ It should be noted here that I am not investigating the role of demographics in these relationships; in focussing upon young, urban professionals, I aim to control demographic variation within certain parameters.

d) Christianity and social and political activity

I aim to locate the part of my research that investigates Christians' social and political activity within the literature on social capital that has emerged over the past three decades.

Much scholarship has gone into categorising definitions of social capital.⁷⁹ Rather than going through each theorist's definition, the following review will focus primarily on the ideas of Robert Putnam (et al.) and Francis Fukuyama, as these are most relevant to the topics in hand. Putnam deals explicitly with the relationship between religion and social capital; and Fukuyama examines trust and in/out group distinctions. As we will see below, scholarship has argued that such sharp distinctions between insiders and outsiders are a distinguishing feature of Chinese society.

⁷⁸ Paul Freston, "Introduction: The Many Faces of Evangelical Politics in Latin America," in *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Paul Freston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Joshua Young-gi Hong, "Evangelicals and the Democratization of South Korea Since 1987," in *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia*, ed. David Halloran Lumsdaine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷⁹ Viva Ona Bartkus and James H Davis, "Introduction: The Yet Undiscovered Value of Social Capital," in *Social Capital: Reaching Out, Reaching In*, ed. Viva Ona Bartkus and James H Davis (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2010).. Table I.1, p.3: 'Definitions of Social Capital'.

Robert Putnam, Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Nanetti, define social capital as:

features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks,
that can improve the efficiency of a society by facilitating
coordinated actions.⁸⁰

In contrast, Fukuyama's definition of social capital is narrower, and focuses on norms:

[S]ocial capital is an instantiated informal norm that promotes
cooperation between two or more individuals.⁸¹

Paul Haynes argues that social capital is best seen as an umbrella term for a constellation of explanatory variables;⁸² indeed, which variables are included differs between social capital theorists, as we see above. Whilst I maintain that this does not completely undermine its usefulness as a concept, it will nevertheless be important to be specific about the particular relationships we wish to analyse.

Almond and Verba claimed a positive association exists between an individual's level of social activity and social trust – i.e. what later scholars would define as part of social capital - and active support for the system.⁸³ Wenfang Tang argues that this relationship holds true for China.⁸⁴ Ren Liying examines why social trust is ostensibly so high in China, arguing that this trust is restricted to a narrow group of

⁸⁰ *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). p.167.

⁸¹ Francis Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society*, 1999. p.3.

⁸² "Before Going Any Further With Social Capital : Eight Key Criticisms to Address," *Ingenio Working Papers*, no. 2 (2009).

⁸³ Gabriel A Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Little, Brown Series in Comparative Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

⁸⁴ Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. Table 5.1, p.103

acquaintances.⁸⁵ Fukuyama discusses the idea of a 'radius of trust', defined as 'the circle of people among whom cooperative norms are operative.' If the 'radius of trust' extends beyond the boundaries of the group, then the group will produce positive externalities for society.⁸⁶ To put Ren's findings in Fukuyama's terms, then, in China, individuals' radii of trust do not extend far. Yan Yunxiang blames China's perceived moral crisis partly upon this low level of 'generalized trust', as opposed to 'personal trust', lamenting that:

Many of the behavioural norms and moral values do not apply to people who are outside one's network of social relationships.⁸⁷

Gerda Wielander argues that Chinese Protestantism can create new in/out group trust categories.⁸⁸ Li Xiangping examines trust within Christian enterprises (基督徒企业); whilst also arguing that this trust is also particularistic in nature, he contends that it has the potential to expand and become generalised.⁸⁹

Offering us further clues about the effect of church membership on social capital, Putnam and Campbell contend that in the USA, the more religious people, including Christians, are more civically active in terms of participation in community

⁸⁵ Liying Ren, "Surveying Public Opinion in Transitional China: An Examination of Survey Response" (University of Pittsburgh, 2009). pp.140-146.

⁸⁶ Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society*. p.4.

⁸⁷ "The Changing Moral Landscape," in *Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person, What Anthropology and Psychiatry Tell Us about China Today*, ed. Arthur Kleinman et al. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011). pp.59-60.

⁸⁸ *Christian Values in Communist China*.

⁸⁹ Xiangping Li 李向平, "The Protestant Ethic and the Establishment of Social Trust in China: Putting Contemporary China's 'Christian Enterprises' at the Centre [新教伦理与社会信任的中国建构: 以当代中国的'基督徒企业'为中心]," in *Believing Without Identifying: The Sociological Interpretation of Spiritual Beliefs in Contemporary China* [信仰但不认同: 当代中国信仰的社会学诠释], ed. Xiangping Li 李向平 (Beijing [北京]: Social Sciences Academic Press [社会科学文献出版社], 2010).

organisations, elections, and political reform than less religious people.⁹⁰ More religious people were more likely to volunteer or give to charities (both secular and religious) than less religious people.⁹¹ Elsewhere, Putnam has argued that religious people are more active in secular social activities, too.⁹² Religious people were found to be more trusting of others: 'shop clerks, neighbors, co-workers, people of their own ethnicity, people of other ethnicities, and even strangers.'⁹³ Religious people were also more trusted by all except the least religious two deciles of the population.⁹⁴ In other words, Putnam and Campbell contend, in terms developed in earlier work, that in the USA religious observance is associated with 'bridging' social capital, the benefits of which accrue to wider society as well as to believers and their churches, as opposed to only 'bonding' social capital, which primarily benefits the members of the organisation themselves.⁹⁵ Putnam and Campbell's findings that religious people are more politically active also chimes with Hong's study of Protestantism in South Korea, which argues that churches, via their social and religious activities, have created a space for spillover activities of a more politicised form to occur.⁹⁶ Although these studies examine societies that are very different from China's, it will nevertheless be interesting to see which forms of Protestant social and political activities have emerged in China and how these differ from, or share similarities with, those elsewhere.

⁹⁰ *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2010). pp.456-457.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp.446-448.

⁹² Robert D Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, A Touchstone Book (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000). pp.66-69.

⁹³ Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. p.461.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Fig 13.4, p.460.

⁹⁵ These terms were developed by Putnam in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.p.23.

⁹⁶ Hong, "Evangelicals and the Democratization of South Korea Since 1987."

I therefore aim to investigate the extent to which these findings hold for China's urban Christian churches: do its members have higher levels of social trust – and is this trust generalised or particularistic? And does this norm extend beyond the group boundaries, forming 'bridging' social capital? Does it cause Christians to be more politically acquiescent and/or inactive? Or, conversely, do churches provide a potential organisational base for contrarian political action?

At this point, however, it is worth noting two sets of factors that may act as constraints on these actions. Firstly, unlike in the USA and South Korea, in China Christians are perceived as a newly emergent and still small minority. This is despite the fact that Christianity has been present in China in various forms since the Tang dynasty, from the year 635 onwards, and in its Protestant form since the nineteenth century.⁹⁷ Putnam and Campbell discuss the 'My Friend Al Principle' - that if someone has a friend or relative who belongs to a certain religious group, then they are likely to regard that religious group more positively.⁹⁸ They use this principle to argue that the least popular religious groups in America are Muslims, Buddhists and Mormons because they are 'those with which most Americans have little or no personal experience.'⁹⁹ It will therefore be an interesting point of comparison to analyse in which ways this minority status affects or constrains Protestants' interactions with wider Chinese society, and wider society's perceptions of Protestantism.

⁹⁷ Daniel H Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, Wiley Blackwell Guides to Global Christianity (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Limited, 2011).

⁹⁸ *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. p.526, p.531.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p.534.

Secondly, in China, the Party-state actively hinders the creation of independent social groups who form horizontal social linkages, lest disparate social groups unite to form an independent body that could even be perceived as a challenge to its rule; whether the vector of this ‘bridging’ capital is religion, art, microblogging, or environmental grievance, if it has the potential to form linkages which cross-cut social boundaries, it merits close scrutiny and even suppression.¹⁰⁰ This may also serve to somewhat constrain Christian’s social and political activity.¹⁰¹ Additionally, in terms of potential political co-operation between Protestants and the Party-state, Liu Peng has argued that,

The excessively strong political utilitarian goals and bureaucratic administrative model of the government department¹⁰² has damaged the basis of mutual trust that is required for there to be mutual respect and cooperation between the state and religion.¹⁰³

3. Generation of hypotheses

At present, therefore, there is no shortage of scholarship on Christianity in China, Chinese nationalism, political opinion in China, and Christianity and social and political activity. What I aim to do in this study is link these areas to get a rounded

¹⁰⁰ Madsen, “The Upsurge of Religion in China” ; Jessica C Teets, “Let Many Civil Societies Bloom: The Rise of Consultative Authoritarianism in China,” *The China Quarterly* 213 (2013): pp.19 – 38, doi:10.1017/S0305741012001269; Gao [高师宁] and He [何光沪], “Christianity in Contemporary China: Key Issues and Proposed Solutions [当今中国基督教的主要问题与解决设想].”

¹⁰¹ It should be noted that the Party-state is not monolithically antagonistic towards Christianity – for example, Liu Peng, former Deputy Chief of the Religion Section of the United Front Work Department and now Professor of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has been a consistent advocate of religious liberalisation in China, as the following quotation demonstrates. But judging from recent policies, it seems questionable as to what extent his voice, and the voices of others like him, are prevailing.

¹⁰² Presumably the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA).

¹⁰³ “Church-State Relations in China Today: Problems and Trends,” *Pu Shi Institute for Social Sciences*, 2013, <http://www.pacilution.com/english/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=3174>.

picture of how ordinary¹⁰⁴ Chinese Christians think and act with regards to politics in China.

From our review of the above literature it is possible to generate the following hypotheses:

In terms of national narratives:

1. Christian conceptions of 'China' differ from those of their demographic peers.
2. Christians are less likely than their demographic peers to embrace the tenets of the official national narrative:
 - a) a strong, CCP-led state (and its necessity for social stability);¹⁰⁵
 - b) economic growth;
 - c) international and territorial assertiveness;
 - d) concern for the morality and *suzhi* of China's citizens.

In terms of political opinions and support:

3. Christians are more liberal and pro-democratic than their non-Christian demographic peers.
4. Christians are less supportive of China's political system than are their demographic peers.
5. Christians have more negative attitudes towards low politics.

¹⁰⁴ By 'ordinary' I mean those who are not in positions of intellectual, political, or religious leadership; in Chinese terms, the 老百姓.

¹⁰⁵ In discussing national narratives, then, it will be impossible to avoid discussion of Christians' opinions of the party-state and political system, which raises the question of endogeneity. In order to avoid this confusion, hypotheses 3, 4, 5 and 6 are best seen as component parts of hypothesis 2.(a). I sketch out Christians' basic opinions on the Party-state and democracy in Chapter 2, before disaggregating them according to Jie Chen's schema in Chapter 4 and investigating their interaction with each other and with respondents' faith in Chapter 5.

6. Christians hold more negative views of China's current government and its policies.

In terms of social and political activity:

7. Christians' level of social engagement (including church and secular activities) is greater than that of their demographic peers.
8. Christians' level of social trust is higher than that of their demographic peers.
9. Christian activity and belief has positive externalities for society.
10. Christians are more politically active than their demographic peers.

4. Methodology

a. Sampling

(i) Choice of sample

In my study, I examine adherence to Christianity as a potential explanatory factor in individuals' political engagement. Due to time and resource limitations, I realised I would only be able to interview a relatively small number of respondents. Therefore, in order ensure comparability between the opinions of Christians and a comparison group consisting of those of other affiliations,¹⁰⁶ I aimed to minimise demographic differences by drawing respondents from the same rough demographic group. In future studies, given more resources, it will be worthwhile attempting to capture a more diverse sample.

¹⁰⁶ In this study 'other affiliations' refers to those believing in a non-Christian religion, or no religion at all.

I therefore restricted my sample to young professionals in Beijing and Shenzhen. Specifically, in order to meet the interview criteria, respondents had to be between 20 and 40 years old, be currently living in Beijing or Shenzhen,¹⁰⁷ be educated to at least undergraduate degree level, and be working professionals. I defined this last criterion fairly loosely as those holding a non-manual white-collar job, such as office work, teaching, law, medicine, journalism, business, academia, or bureaucracy. Descriptive statistics for my respondents can be found in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Interview Respondents – Basic Descriptive Statistics

Total number of respondents	100
Median birth year	1983
Gender	50 males, 50 females
Location	49 in Beijing, 51 in Shenzhen
Median age at time of interview	29 years old
Median salary	7500 RMB/month
Occupational areas (most popular)	Law, management, IT, media, banking, engineering, accounting, education
Province of origin (most popular)	Shandong, Guangdong, Hubei, Hunan

It made sense to concentrate my research upon this demographic group. Firstly, they are easily accessible to, and used to dealing with foreigners. I had several personal contacts in this group who acted as ‘seeds’ (see below). Secondly, they are more

¹⁰⁷ However, they did not need to be Beijing or Shenzhen residence permit (户口) holders.

politically engaged. People with a higher education know more about politics, are more politically active, and have usually thought in more depth about the issues relating to my topic.¹⁰⁸

I chose to spread my research over two cities for reasons of replicability – as I argue below, if a difference in opinion between Christians and their demographic peers is replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen, then this is more firmly suggestive of an underlying difference. Beijing seemed an obvious starting point for my fieldwork as I was already familiar with Beijing and had numerous contacts there, which made finding initial seeds easier than it otherwise would have been. As a city, it also has a large, diverse, affluent, well-educated population, a relatively high proportion of whom fit my target demographic.

Like Beijing, Shenzhen is also a large, wealthy city with a diverse population, many of whom are in my target demographic. However, it also has some interesting contrasts: it is a new city, built virtually from scratch in the past 30 years; it is in Guangdong in the South of China, a province whose culture is very different from that of Beijing; and its proximity to Hong Kong and influence from its missionaries also makes for a promising second fieldwork site.

(ii) Sampling process

In China, Protestants form a hidden population for whom no sampling frame is available from which to randomly select names, as in simple random sampling (SRS).

¹⁰⁸ Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. p.137, 181.

I therefore recruited respondents via respondent-driven sampling, or RDS. This method was developed for generating samples from hidden populations, and has most often been used to sample from stigmatised groups such as intravenous drug users.¹⁰⁹ The basic idea is to use interview respondents to recruit new respondents from the target population. My research aims to compare two sub-groups (Christians and non-Christians) within the same population (young middle-class professionals); I therefore took a sample from each sub-group.

As a first step, on arriving in Beijing (and later, Shenzhen), I identified and contacted 'seeds' who met Heckathorn and Magnani's criteria:¹¹⁰ namely, diverse in terms of geography (though within Beijing and Shenzhen) and demography (though within the parameters specified above). The purpose of these criteria is to mitigate the effect of 'homophily', the tendency for respondents to recruit people similar to themselves.¹¹¹ Protestantism in China is heavily factionalised, so I attempted to recruit Christian seeds from a range of churches and networks in order to give a fairer reflection of Christian opinion.¹¹²

After interviewing the initial seed, I would ask him to ask around his friends to see if any would be willing to be interviewed, and to then pass on the contact details of

¹⁰⁹ Douglas D Heckathorn, "Respondent-Driven Sampling: A New Approach to the Study of Hidden Populations," *Social Problems* 44, no. 2 (1997): pp.174–199; Matthew J Salganik and Douglas D Heckathorn, "Sampling and Estimation in Hidden Populations Using Respondent-Driven Sampling," *Sociological Methodology* 34 (2004): pp.193–239; Douglas D. Heckathorn and Robert Magnani, "Snowball and Respondent-Driven Sampling," in *Behavioral Surveillance Surveys: Guidelines for Repeated Behavioral Surveys in Populations at Risk of HIV*, n.d.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p.7.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.9. Of course, the population parameters specified do ensure to a certain extent that respondents will be similar to each other; however, even within the target population, there are differences, such as gender and type of employment, making it necessary to interview as diverse a range of respondents as possible.

¹¹² See Madsen, "Chinese Christianity: Indigenization and Conflict." p.256.

any willing potential respondents to me. I would then contact them myself to arrange an initial meeting.

After interviewing each of these new respondents, I asked each to introduce me to another three friends. The intention was to build up a set of Christian and non-Christian sample trees, within the same demographic group, until at least 25 people in each sub-group had been interviewed. In practice, this was trickier than it seemed. Whilst some seeds produced sample trees that flourished into several branches (one Beijing tree yielded 14 interviews), other seeds produced saplings that died after one or two interviews, and others failed to introduce me to any contacts at all (to stretch the metaphor – they failed to germinate) (Appendix 1, Charts 1 and 2). It was interesting that it was the Christian respondents who were normally the most successful at introducing me to their friends – I will analyse what this says about relative levels of social trust in Chapter 6.

In order to ensure diversity, I sometimes imposed conditions on the contacts I asked respondents to recruit. For example, early on in my Beijing Christian sample, I had not yet interviewed many men; I specifically asked one of my respondents to introduce me to male friends, which she did – three of them – which restored the gender balance of my sample. I would also sometimes ask Christian respondents to introduce me to at least one person from a different church to their own.

I continued recruiting in this way until I had interviewed 100 respondents in total, or roughly 25 respondents from each group – Beijing Christians, Beijing comparisons,

Shenzhen Christians, and Shenzhen comparisons. This process took a total of about 12 months' fieldwork, from Summer 2011 to Autumn 2012 (more if I include my initial two months in Beijing spent building contacts and checking on feasibility and security issues).

In sum, RDS enabled me to draw a sample of Christians and non-Christians from the target population of young, middle-class residents of Beijing, without a sample frame. Additionally, recruiting through friendship networks rather than by approaching random people did have its benefits; Chinese culture emphasises trusted relationships (关系), so I suspect that respondents were more frank in their interviews with me than they would have been if I had recruited through SRS (see my comments on potential problems below).

It should be noted here that I took a number of steps to deal with the ethical issues arising from interviewing human subjects in a politically sensitive context.¹¹³ Firstly, I anonymised all interview data, storing respondents' personal contact details in a separate file. I made it clear to respondents that they could refuse to answer any question, or end the interview at any point if they felt uncomfortable (see Appendix 3). I avoided attending house church meetings in person, so as not to draw unwarranted attention from the authorities. Similarly, I avoided contact with prominent pastors or political activist leaders. My relatively small sample size also served to reduce the political risks to my respondents and myself.

¹¹³ I am grateful to He Jianyu for suggesting these measures.

(iii) The cohesiveness of Protestant Christians as a group

At this point it is worth posing the question: Do Protestant Christians form a cohesive group at all? I will argue here that the Protestant Christian respondents in my study enjoy an intensity of contact with each other that does indeed merit studying them as such.

Protestant respondents self-identified by ticking a box on my fieldwork handout indicating in which religion they believed.¹¹⁴ I then asked my Protestant respondents to introduce me to other Protestant respondents. Whilst, as I explain below, RDS may have excluded or under-sampled certain individuals, it did ensure that the individuals who are sampled enjoy relationships with each other that are close or trusting enough to persuade the other person to talk to a foreign researcher about sensitive political issues.

In terms of the nature of the relationships between respondents, of the 37 respondents who had been recruited by other Christian respondents,¹¹⁵ 26 respondents (70%) were recruited to the study by someone who they knew from church (either their current church or a previous church), while others were recruited by former school or university classmates, work colleagues, those whom they had met at non-church-based Christian activities, or family members (Table 1).

¹¹⁴ See Appendix 3.

¹¹⁵ i.e. Those who were not RDS seeds (see methodology chapter) or whom had not been recruited by non-Christian demographic peers.

Does Protestant group identity transcend individual churches? To answer this question, I examined my interview data – chiefly, answers to the question about a respondent’s history of church attendance and their links with Christians from other churches - for evidence of inter-church connections. I deemed churches to be connected if any respondent had attended both of them; or, if a respondent from one church said they knew people from a different church. These latter relationships could be with friends, former classmates, work colleagues, family members, or people encountered at inter-church or para-church events. The results are displayed in visual form in Appendix 1, Charts 3 and 4.¹¹⁶

All of the churches attended or mentioned by respondents in Beijing are connected to each other, either directly or indirectly (via other churches). The same is true for churches in Shenzhen, with one exception: only one church in Shenzhen has no connections to any churches in the wider network, and this is due more to a lack of data. The respondent attending this particular church said that he knew Christians from other churches, but did not mention any of these churches by name, and this made it difficult to analyse any connections he may have had; I nevertheless included these unspecified churches as an additional dot in Appendix 1, Chart 4.

In addition to personal contacts, many of my respondents from different churches were consumers of shared Christian media: most obviously the Bible, of which regular study is a common practice (as I later demonstrate), but also online videos of

¹¹⁶ I used the social network analysis software package Gephi to produce these diagrams, with each church represented by a dot (I chose to display churches as dots rather than give their names, so as to ensure anonymity).

sermons by Yuan Zhiming,¹¹⁷ Tang Chongrong,¹¹⁸ and David Pawson,¹¹⁹ and books such as Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* (标杆人生).¹²⁰ This shared media enables the creation of solidarity between Christians who have never met via the development of a shared vocabulary.

In summary, then, my Protestant respondents do form a cohesive group:¹²¹ they self-identified as Protestant Christians, and were recruited as such primarily by their fellow Protestants. Most respondents recruited further respondents from their own or other churches. In both Beijing and Shenzhen, there are links between churches via personal relationships between members of different congregations, as well as through respondents themselves who had previously attended different churches. Shared consumption of Christian media further facilitates the development of a shared identity and shared vocabulary. In short, therefore, there is an intensity of contact and shared identity such that it makes sense to study them as a cohesive group.

b. Data Collection

(i) Why qualitative interviews?

An important starting point for the discussion of data collection is that I collected mostly qualitative data. There are four reasons for this.

¹¹⁷ SIVC06b, IVC04b3, IVC05, SIVC01b113

¹¹⁸ IVC04b3, IVC05, IVC01121, SIVC01b1121, SIVC07b1. Tang Chongrong, or Stephen Tong, is an ethnically Chinese Indonesian pastor.

¹¹⁹ SIVC01c1, SIVC01c2, SIVC06c. Pawson is a conservative British pastor.

¹²⁰ SIVC01b1, SIVC01b11, SIVC01c2

¹²¹ Again, care must be taken when discussing the extent to which these findings can be extrapolated from my Protestant respondents to Protestants as a whole; but the fact that the churches in my networks are some of the most well-known churches in Beijing and Shenzhen, covering several thousand, or even tens of thousands, of believers, suggests that at least a significant proportion of Protestant Christians and churches in Beijing and Shenzhen enjoy such intensity of contact.

Firstly, quantitative data collection normally requires a large sample size (n), which would require a team of researchers, in order to obtain statistically significant results from the ensuing analysis. For example, Shi's survey of political participation in Beijing had $n = 941$,¹²² Chen's opinion surveys had $n = 700$ and 720 ;¹²³ Tang's Six-City Survey had $n = 1820$.¹²⁴ Secondly, quantitative analysis usually requires that this example be randomly selected.

A third reason to concentrate on qualitative analysis was that many of the questions under investigation were not easily quantifiable. For example, the question of how an individual became a Christian is better captured by a narrative rather than a set of quantitative variables.

Finally, in recent years several successful social scientific studies of Christianity in China have used qualitative methods. Examples include Yang's explanation of conversion to Christianity by young urbanites,¹²⁵ Vala and O'Brien's investigation of Protestant recruitment tactics,¹²⁶ and Wielander's study of believers' intellectual activities.¹²⁷ In pursuing a qualitative methodology, I was following a tried and tested research strategy.

¹²² Tianjian Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). p.26.

¹²³ Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*. p.16.

¹²⁴ Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. p.34.

¹²⁵ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China."

¹²⁶ Carsten Vala and Kevin J O'Brien, "Recruitment to Protestant House Churches," in *Popular Protest in China*, ed. Kevin J O'Brien (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹²⁷ "Bridging the Gap? An Investigation of Beijing Intellectual House Church Activities and Their Implications for China's Democratization," *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 62 (2009): pp.849–864, doi:10.1080/10670560903174689.

(ii) The interview process

I therefore decided to collect the bulk of my data through semi-structured interviews. In terms of practicalities, having contacted my respondent via RDS, I would arrange our first meeting. At this prior meeting I would explain the purpose of the interview and hand my respondent a fieldwork handout consisting of a participant information form, a participant consent form, and an initial questionnaire (See Appendix 3). The participant information form gave details of the project, assured the respondent of anonymity, and provided him with the chance to refuse permission for me to record the interview in audio or written form, or for me to allow other researchers access to his data. The participant consent form was to ensure the respondent knew exactly what he was agreeing to when consenting to be interviewed. At that stage, the respondent would have the chance to ask me any questions about my research or the interview. He would then be able to go away, read through the forms, decide whether or not he wanted to go ahead with the interview, and fill in the questionnaire. Alternatively, a lot of respondents were happy to proceed with the interview there and then, which made the process a lot faster and more convenient for me.

For those respondents who did not do the interview at the first meeting, I would contact them a few days after our initial meeting to ask whether they wished to proceed with the interview. If so, we would then do the interview at a time convenient for the respondent wherever he felt comfortable. Venues were as varied as cafés, university canteens, restaurants, company offices, gardens, and classrooms.

Interviews generally lasted as long as was necessary to obtain the information required, which tended to be between 1½ and 3 hours. They were conducted in whichever language the respondent felt comfortable in using (Mandarin, English, or a mixture of both). If the respondent permitted, I recorded the interview using my iPod's Voice Memos app. I also took handwritten notes. Only on one occasion did the respondent not give me permission either to record or to write notes¹²⁸ – in that case, I scribbled down as much as I could remember of what he had said as soon as I got home. For the Shenzhen leg of my fieldwork, I produced a respondent sheet, a form on Word that respondents could fill in on my laptop in answer to some of the more 'closed' questions (Appendix 5). The overall aim was to make things as easy and comfortable for the respondent as possible, in order to encourage more frank responses.

(iii) Interview questions

I have attached the final manifestation of my interview questions as Appendix 4. Throughout my fieldwork I added some questions and took away others, but the vast bulk of the questions was unchanged. The interview questions fell into the following categories:¹²⁹

– Personal information

This basic demographic background knowledge was intended to ensure comparability and to weed out those respondents who did not meet the

¹²⁸ IVC01122

¹²⁹ In the interviews, the questions were ordered by political sensitivity rather than category, starting with the least sensitive questions. In some cases, I skipped some questions, sometimes completely, sometimes by returning to them later. This was normally the case if I thought someone nearby was listening in to the conversation.

relevant criteria to be respondents; but it also proved useful in my ensuing analysis as, for example, the discussion on 'formative affluence' in Chapter 3 demonstrates.

– **Foreign interaction**

I collected this information in order to test the alternative hypothesis that Christians hold different values not because of their faith per se, but because they have been influenced more by foreigners, such as missionaries.

– **Personal situation and aspirations**

These questions, such as, 'Do you have an ideal or goal for 20 years' time?', helped me to gauge my respondents' broader outlooks on life by encouraging them to raise the issues which they felt were the most salient to them, without yet imposing my priorities or categories upon the conversation. They were also a useful way of getting respondents talking and making them feel relaxed.

– **Christianity and religious activity (Christian group only)**

These questions gauged a respondent's process of and motivation for becoming a Christian as well as their spiritual and church life after conversion.

– **Christianity and religion (comparison group only)**

This aimed to capture what those in the comparison group knew about, and thought about issues of Christianity and religion, in order to chart the influence (if any) on their opinions, and get a feeling for how Christians and Christianity are perceived in wider Chinese society.

- **Political opinions and political support**

These questions covered issues such as low politics orientations, high politics orientations, specific support for the present local and central governments and diffuse support for the Communist Party and political system.

- **National identity and nationalism**

These questions tested respondents' concepts of China and what it meant to be Chinese, as well as their opinions on issues of territory (Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang) and international relations (USA and Japan) that feature strongly in the official nationalist narrative (see above).

- **Social trust and social and political activity**

These questions were aimed at getting a picture of respondents' social activity, both religious and secular, their social trust and their political activity.

Here I should note that, due to space constraints, there are some questions listed in Appendix 4 for which I have not systemically analysed responses in this thesis. These include questions on levels of happiness, corruption, and the government's handling of religion – issues that were not directly linked to the hypotheses above. However, I do use quotations from them where relevant, in order to further enrich the picture of respondents' political engagement.

c. Data analysis

The first stage of data analysis was to transcribe all my recordings and handwritten notes into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, a process that took many months.

For my initial analyses, I performed a basic content analysis, coding answers to each question according to the issues raised, and then calculating the proportion of respondents in each group – Christian and comparison - who raised an issue. I then also broke them down by city – Beijing Christian, Beijing comparison, Shenzhen Christian, Shenzhen comparison – to see if the same variations between Christian and comparison groups were replicated over both cities. I carried out repeated iterations of coding for the key variables, using inter-coder reliability checks to improve the fit of the coding schemes to my raw interview data.¹³⁰ I produced tables of the results, which can be found in Appendix 2.

My sample size is small, and not randomly selected. I have therefore had to be cautious in handling the statistical findings. Many standard techniques for making statistical inferences (such as p-values, chi-squared distributions, and linear regression) therefore do not work, because the underlying statistical assumptions are not met.

I therefore restricted myself to the use of basic percentages, averages, and bar charts to give clues about the discrepancies between the views of Christians and their demographic peers. Individual tables are best seen as Xs on a treasure map – indicating the possibility of an interesting finding, but with further digging necessary. If the difference between the answers given by the different groups of respondents

¹³⁰ Detailed coding schemes are available upon request.

is large¹³¹ and replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen over a number of similar questions, then the more suggestive it is of an underlying difference in opinion.

Having gained an idea of the themes and issues that respondents had raised, and their relative salience, I then investigated further, examining the answers that individual respondents had given in order to gain a deeper understanding of their opinions and the reasoning behind them. If there was a concept I wanted to examine across several questions –such as *suzhi* or ‘Patriotic Education’ (see Chapter 2) - I performed a keyword search, before copying the answers mentioning the concept into a Word document for further analysis.

d. Problems

(i) Sampling Bias

As my sampling method was not random, there was potential for bias. I have already discussed the problem of homophily, of respondents recruiting people similar to themselves to participate. As already mentioned, I tried to minimise this by choosing diverse seeds, and imposing restrictions on the profiles of people my respondents could recruit if I felt my sample was getting too much of one particular church, or gender.

A second source of bias may have arisen from my recruitment through trusted friendships. My respondents were likely to recruit people with higher degrees of

¹³¹ In this study I take a difference of 10% or above as potentially interesting; I then look to see if it has been replicated in both cities, and in answers to similar questions. This is, admittedly an arbitrary difference, but in practice it seemed to work in alerting me to key themes without picking up too much ‘noise’.

social trust, larger friendship networks, and probably higher levels of social activity than is average for the demographic group. Loners, introverts, the socially awkward, the unpopular and the untrustworthy are probably underrepresented. However, as both groups are subject to the same sampling method, it is probable that the effect of this bias is similar for both groups, with the result that the relative difference in levels of social trust and activity remains unchanged.

Thirdly, the study excluded those too busy to participate, particularly those with children or demanding jobs. One potential respondent expressed her interest in the study, but between working and looking after her son had no time to participate.

Fourthly, when Christian respondents recruit other respondents for interview, it is probable that the people most likely to be contacted would be those most active in their church community, and therefore with more prominence and more contacts within that community. When we come to discuss levels of religious and social activity, it may be likely that the effects we find are somewhat exaggerated, by excluding the less active Christians.

Fifthly, several of my non-Christian respondents were introduced to me by Christian friends, which may have influenced their answers when it came to asking them about their opinions of Christianity. However, I do later try to take this into account by comparing the answers of comparison group respondents who did know Christians with those who did not.

Finally, in the absence of a financial incentive, my respondents are probably those who are more interested in politics or hold stronger political views than the average member of the demographic group. They are also likely to be more confident about expressing these views. Those disinterested in politics – the apathetic or alienated – are probably underrepresented, as are those timid about discussing politics in the current climate. The latter includes those with politically sensitive jobs – there were few government officials in my sample, for example. This means that I need to be very careful about making inferences about the absolute proportions of Christians and non-Christians holding certain views.

(ii) Eliciting frank responses

In general, respondents seemed quite happy to answer the questions raised; those who did not behaved either very nervously¹³², or took on a somewhat hostile attitude towards my motives for carrying out the research.¹³³ These were a small minority of respondents, however.

My positionality as a Protestant Westerner may also have affected respondents' answers, as they may have been reluctant to say something that would offend their interviewer. The presence of a foreign interviewer may also have made respondents' national identity more salient. There is a limit to the extent to which these problems could be mitigated, other than to be modest about the representativeness of my findings. In future, it would be worth carrying out similar studies, running the interviews with Chinese researchers to test for any distortions. In practice, however,

¹³² IVN13a

¹³³ SIVC06c, IVN13b

respondents often made negative comments about the West,¹³⁴ and some commented negatively on Protestantism, too (see Chapter 6).

Indeed, demography was on my side here. Ren Liying has observed that those least likely to give a 'don't know' answer to political survey questions in China (and, for my purposes, therefore probably most likely to give a frank answer in an interview) are men, those aged under 35, those with a higher level of education, those interested in politics, and those interested in the survey itself.¹³⁵ The age and education level of likely non-'don't know' respondents happily coincide with those of my target demographic.

Having said that, I did take appropriate measures to improve the chances of a frank response. Firstly, as already mentioned, recruiting through trusted friendship networks meant the bond of trust between my respondents and myself was stronger than it would have been if I had randomly approached them. Secondly, I tried to build trust in the course of the interview by asking the relatively uncontroversial questions first and leaving the most politically sensitive questions until last, making it clear to respondents that they did not have to answer any question if they didn't want to (see Appendix 3). Thirdly, I gave respondents assurances of anonymity – though I use and quote their words in my research, I never reveal their names in doing so, and am careful about the personal details I reveal (see Appendix 3).

¹³⁴ Although, as I will discuss in Chapter 2, many of these negative comments were directed explicitly towards America and not the UK.

¹³⁵ "Surveying Public Opinion in Transitional China: An Examination of Survey Response." Table 4, p.89. Ren uses 2000 WVS data.

5. Thesis Structure

To recap, Chapter 2 examines differences between the national narratives of Christians and their demographic peers, and Chapter 3 examines potential reasons for these differences. Chapter 4 examines political opinion in more detail, disaggregating it into its various aspects, and comparing the political orientations and support of Christians and their demographic peers. Chapter 5 analyses how the different aspects of political opinion interact, and whether this differs by religious affiliation. Chapter 6 looks at differences in the social and political activities of Christians and their demographic peers. Chapter 7 examines reasons for the variations in social and political activity between Christians and their demographic peers, and also why these variations differ from the initial hypotheses and the studies upon which these were based. Chapter 8 concludes by summarising the thesis' findings, discussing the implications for Party-state legitimacy, and suggesting possible avenues of future research.

Appendix 1 contains charts to illustrate my arguments; Appendix 2 contains the data tables; Appendix 3 contains my fieldwork handout, consisting of a participant information and consent sheet, and an initial questionnaire. Appendix 4 contains my interview questions and Appendix 5 my respondent sheet.

Chapter 2

Christianity and National Narrative (I): Results

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will outline how Christians' national narratives – the ways in which they think about China and its place in the world – differ from those of their demographic peers and from that of China's official national narrative as propagated through the media and the educational system.

I argue that both Christians and their demographic peers of other or no religious affiliation demonstrate a 'selective national narrative', choosing the elements of official nationalism that they like, and rejecting those they do not. Christians, however, reject more of this narrative than do their demographic peers. When Christians and those of other affiliations talk about 'China' as a nation, they are generally talking about the same concept, and Christians see no conflict between their religious and national identities. However, of the two groups, Christians demonstrate firstly, more negative attitudes towards the Party-state and more positive attitudes towards political reform and democracy, secondly, less concern with economic issues, thirdly, more forbearing attitudes on international and territorial issues, and fourthly, a more widespread moral critique of society.

On the first three issues of difference, Protestants' political views are more divergent from the priorities embedded in the Party-state's national narrative – a strong, CCP-led state, economic growth, territorial sovereignty, and international assertiveness -

than are those of their demographic peers. Christians share the Party-state's concerns about Chinese society's perceived moral problems. However, the way they talk about these problems differs in important ways from Party-state discourse: several Christian respondents see China's Party-state as part of the problem and avoid using its vocabulary of *suzhi* to articulate their concerns; and the solution to the problem is to promote spiritual revival via the spread of Christianity, the final key tenet of Christians' national narrative.

Overall, then, Christians could be described as holding a more 'critical' national narrative relative to their demographic peers.

At this point it is necessary to note that in the following analysis I will pick out the most prominent areas of contrast between Christian respondents and their demographic peers. At no point do I claim that the points I highlight are shared unanimously by my respondents. Likewise, I do not argue that there is one single national narrative amongst Christians, or their peers in wider society. Neither do I contend that the Party-state and its actors are 100 per cent consistent in the 'official national narrative' they recount. What I am saying is that by picking out points of common concern – points which interview respondents themselves repeatedly and consistently raised – a coherent narrative emerges from amongst Christian respondents; I do not claim that all respondents agree to every tenet of that narrative.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ See Joseph Schull, "What Is Ideology? Theoretical Problems and Lessons from Soviet-Type Societies," *Political Studies* 40, no. 4 (1992): pp.728–41. Whether or not a particular 'national narrative' can be categorised as an 'ideology' is a discussion that would require more space than is available here.

2. Findings

a. Similar definitions of 'China'

The first point to note is that, despite many features of Christians' national narrative diverging from that of official nationalism and that of their demographic peers, there was very little apparent disagreement over the definition of what counted as 'China' and of what it meant to be Chinese. In other words, they are talking about the same thing in different ways, not about different things.

When asked 'What does China mean to you?' and 'What is the meaning or significance of being Chinese?', there were common points raised by high proportions of both groups in answer to this question – for example, the ideas that China was the motherland¹³⁷, the place where the respondent was born and grew up (生我养我的地方 or a similar formulation),¹³⁸ and that had distinctive culture and traditions¹³⁹ were raised by similar proportions of respondents from both groups, or showed no discernible pattern of variation over the two groups and the two questions (Table 2).

A clear pattern of difference between Christians and their demographic peers did emerge in two areas: on the sense of responsibility towards China¹⁴⁰ and the calling to preach the gospel to China¹⁴¹ (Table 3). I will discuss these below.

¹³⁷ 30% of both groups.

¹³⁸ 38% of Christians and 28% of the comparison group gave this answer to the question, 'What does China mean to you?'

¹³⁹ 8% of Christians and 22% of the comparison group gave this answer to the question, 'What does China mean to you?'; 24% of Christians and 21% of the comparison group gave this answer to the question: 'What does it mean to be Chinese?'

¹⁴⁰ 30% of Christians and 0% of the comparison group gave this answer to the question: 'What does it mean to be Chinese?'

Overall, though, to use Anderson's terms, when Christians and those of other affiliations talk about China, both groups are 'imagining' the same community.¹⁴² This is in contrast to the situation in some other parts of the world,¹⁴³ where Protestant Christians' definition of who is 'in' and 'out' of the nation contrast markedly with those of other groups in society.

Finally, I put to Christian respondents the proposition, 'One more Christian, one fewer Chinese,' a phrase commonly believed to have been used to criticise Chinese Christians, and one that stresses the incompatibility of Christianity and being Chinese.¹⁴⁴ Whilst the origins of the phrase are murky, and possibly apocryphal, I asked respondents their opinions of it in order to gauge how they view the relationship between national and religious identities.

The first, and most common reaction was that the statement was illogical and there was no contradiction between being Chinese and being Christian.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, for many respondents, this statement was rooted in a misunderstanding of Christianity as a Western religion:

[O]ften when I talk to people they will say, "Christianity is a Western thing, it's nothing to do with my China [基督教是西方的东西，跟我中国没有什么关系], so if we must believe there is a

¹⁴¹ 21% of Christians and 0% of the comparison group gave this answer to the question: 'What does it mean to be Chinese?'

¹⁴² *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁴³ The example of Northern Ireland comes to mind, although in this case, the rival Protestant and Catholic groups are both Christians.

¹⁴⁴ See, for example, Fenggang Yang, "ABC and XYZ: Religious, Ethnic and Racial Identities of the New Second Generation Chinese in Christian Churches," *Amerasia Journal* 25, no. 1 (1999): 89–114. p.90.

¹⁴⁵ IVC011, IVC031, IVC04b2, IVC04b3, IVC06, IVC11211, IVC011212, SIVC01a, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b111, SIVC01b1111, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01c, SIVC06a, SIVC06b, SIVC06b1

God, we will also believe in Guanyin, Buddha, these Buddhas, but this [Christianity] is [from] the West, it's nothing to do with me." But I reject this sentence, this sentence seems to be saying that Christians and Chinese people cannot be the same,¹⁴⁶ I think this is very laughable [好笑], because after you believe in the Lord, you will say more often: how should you yourself as a Chinese person, live for Christ, how to better be a Christian in China, because China really needs Christians, there are not many Chinese Christians, but now there are more and more, so how will you spread God's gospel in this place? [...] You need to go and think more about: What kind of Chinese person do I want to be? [我要做一个怎么样的中国人?]¹⁴⁷

Some respondents talked about the sentiment behind the phrase arising due to Protestantism arriving in China with invading Western powers:

I think that in this attitude, there is actually a really narrow nationalism [很狭隘的民族主义]. It will... I don't know, actually maybe it is that China has always since the Qing dynasty suffered a lot of humiliation [羞辱], it has suffered a lot of oppression [欺压] from abroad. Our history books have always emphasised our China in the Qing dynasty was always bullied by other people [一直被人家欺负], always bullied by foreign Great Powers, so this kind of

¹⁴⁶ This last phrase is unclear on the recording.

¹⁴⁷ SIVC01b11

feeling in Chinese people's hearts is actually very deep, there will be a kind of, "We were previously bullied, we can't be bullied again," this kind [of feeling]. Actually, here there is a very deeply-wounded inferiority complex [深深地被伤害的自卑心理在里面], so this attitude reflects this. That is, they will instinctively feel that in spreading the gospel [they are] also invading us [福音传到中国也是在侵略我们], and bullying us. On this you can't blame them because we've always been brainwashed [洗脑] in this way, our education has always told us this. So when we encounter this [= Christianity], we instinctively have this kind of reaction. [...] So in China this is actually very normal. But for me, I certainly don't approve, because I know that we have really been lied to [我们确实被欺骗], our education has lied to us a lot. According to what I know, I think a lot of Westerners who come to China to preach the gospel, have come with a lot of compassion [是带来非常大的爱心过来的].¹⁴⁸

Several respondents argued that faith transcended national boundaries, and that God loves all humanity, whether Chinese or not.¹⁴⁹ This means on the one hand it cannot be dismissed as a Western religion, but on the other, that it does not completely erase pre-existing identities.

¹⁴⁸ SIVC01b12; see also IVC01121, SIVC09d1.

¹⁴⁹ IVC011, IVC04, IVC05, SIVC01b, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01b21, SIVC06c1, SIVC07b

I refute this opinion. [...] I don't think Chinese, Americans, Europeans have any concrete differences. In Christ, all are the same people, all are God's children, all are God's people.¹⁵⁰

In a later quotation in this chapter we will see the same respondent describing himself as a patriot [爱国者] who cares deeply about his country. In this he demonstrates a non-exclusive idea of patriotism that, whilst caring about one's own country, does not view national boundaries as ultimate. This contrasts with the Party-state's national narrative, which is continually seeking to emphasise Chinese exceptionalism, and that Chinese are fundamentally different from foreigners.¹⁵¹

Some respondents claimed that being a Christian actually made people better Chinese,¹⁵² rejecting the sinful parts of culture,¹⁵³ loving people, working hard, and contributing to making society better.¹⁵⁴ Lastly, respondents also discussed the process of Christianity's indigenisation into Chinese culture, and the fact that it was no longer foreign¹⁵⁵ – a similar process that had earlier occurred with Buddhism, which was not originally from China either.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ IVC05

¹⁵¹ Anne-Marie Brady, "'Treat Insiders and Outsiders Differently': The Use and Control of Foreigners in the PRC," *The China Quarterly* 164 (2000): pp.943–964.

¹⁵² IVC01111, IVC0112133, IVC011212, IVC0112111

¹⁵³ IVC0112131, SIVC01c21

¹⁵⁴ , IVC04b, IVC06,

¹⁵⁵ IVC011, IVC03, IVC04, SIVC07c1

¹⁵⁶ IVC02

To summarise this section, then, Christians have similar ideas about what China is and what it means to be Chinese; and they do not see their religious and national identities conflicting in this regard.

b. Criticism of the party-state and approval of democracy

The second area to note is that Christians are less satisfied with China's government and politics and more positive about democracy.

I presented respondents with a hypothetical dialogue asking whether they thought the Chinese political system was:

- a) good and should not be changed;
- b) not ideal and should be changed, but not yet;
- c) not good, and should be changed (see Table 4).

A 63% majority of the Christians who were asked said that the system was not good and should be changed, whereas a plurality of 50% of those of other affiliations said that the system was not ideal and should be changed, but not yet (Table 4). This difference was replicated across both cities. It should be noted that several respondents who advocated change supplemented their answer by saying that the type of change they hoped for was gradual and reformist rather than immediate and revolutionary:¹⁵⁷

I think that [China's] politics has lots of places that need to be improved. But I certainly cannot suddenly bring a big revolution to

¹⁵⁷ IVC04b2, IVC05, IVC011211, IVC0112131, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b1111, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c, SIVC01c2, SIVC07b, SIVC07b1, SIVC09d1

thoroughly turn [things] over [反转], I think this is an impossible and unrealistic [不现实] method. I hope that we can have more democracy and more freedom step by step, then we will be able to draw lessons from some of the West's experiences, and then improve our politics.¹⁵⁸

When asked, 'What aspects of China make you feel ashamed?', more Christians mentioned China's government and politics (Table 6). This was replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen. Similarly, in answer to the question: 'Who do you trust least?', more Christians answered 'Government' or 'officials' [官员], a finding that was replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen (Table 60). In Shenzhen I added a new question to the interview, asking respondents to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how much they trusted certain groups, such as friends, family, and strangers. 'Government' received a low mean rating from both the Christian respondents and their demographic peers, but there was only a small difference between the two groups (Table 61).

Christian respondents were also more likely to disassociate loving the country from loving the Party. When asked if they agreed with the statement 'To love the country is to love the Party',¹⁵⁹ more Christians (91%) than non-Christians (76%) chose the 'No' option, and this was replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen (Table 7). Again, there was a city difference here: more Beijingers than Shenzheners said 'No.' When asked what 'China' meant to him, one respondent answered:

¹⁵⁸ SIVC01b11

¹⁵⁹ This question took the form of a hypothetical dialogue. See Table 7 for details.

I'm very proud to be Chinese, because [China has] a very long history, a glorious cultural history. This land has also birthed and nourished me. So I'm a patriot [爱国者], but when I love my country it doesn't necessarily mean I love my government or the ruling Party, I only love the country. I could also say that I want to do lots of things for my country [...]; that is to say, the benefit of the country [...] ranks very highly in my heart. My level of trust in the ruling Party and government is lower and lower.¹⁶⁰

Contrast this with the more moderated view given by a member of the comparison group:

Firstly, loving the country is not equivalent to loving the Party [爱国不等于爱党]. Secondly, it is a reality that the Party leads the country. If the Party was overthrown, the country would inevitably be unstable [动荡]. There might be separatism. Now, if you don't love the Party, then there will be no country. Socialism would inevitably turn into capitalism.¹⁶¹

When asked, 'What do you hope China will be like in 20 years' time?', a higher proportion of Christians said that they hoped China would be 'more democratic' or have 'more public participation' in politics (Table 9). This finding was replicated amongst Beijing and Shenzhen respondents. On the same question, a higher

¹⁶⁰ IVC05

¹⁶¹ IVN1021

proportion of Christian respondents mentioned political freedom, a finding replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen, using both detailed and condensed categories (Tables 9 and 10).

[I hope that] the government will become open-minded [开明], that they will communicate in a more democratic, rational, way; they will judge themselves, and not try to control every group in society; they will use dialogue rather than top-down suppressive methods; they will use dialogue to find a solution satisfying to both parties, and not take a confrontational stance. But I don't think this will happen, because the Chinese government is going in the opposite direction.¹⁶²

Christians also mentioned democracy more often in general in the course of interviews (Table 43). I will discuss this in more depth in Chapter 4, as well as investigating what respondents mean when they refer to 'democracy'. I will also break Christians' political opinions down further - into low politics orientations, high politics orientations, specific support and diffuse support - in order to see how these aspects interrelate with each other and with respondents' faith.

c. Less concern with economic issues

It was amongst respondents of other affiliations that economic issues were more frequently raised. On the question, 'What do you hope China will be like in 20 years' time?', only one out of the 50 Christians interviewed (i.e. 2%) said 'more economic

¹⁶² IVC04

growth', compared to 38% of their demographic peers, a difference replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen (Table 9). Likewise, in answering the question 'Do you have an ideal or goal for 20 years' time?', fewer Christians (10% compared to 36% of their demographic peers) mentioned some kind of material or financial goal such as earning more money or buying a house, and the difference was replicated across cities (Table 8).

When asked, 'What is it about China that makes you proud?', fewer Christians (23%) than those of other affiliations (36%) mentioned economic growth, a finding replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen, although in Shenzhen the difference was admittedly small (27% of Christians and 36% of the comparison group) (Table 5).

One banker in the comparison group expressed it in this way:

I think currently China's economy is developing very fast, including [the fact that] after the financial crisis, you can see that a lot of countries, like the USA, Europe, the influence of their [financial crises] was especially large, but actually its influence on China's economy was, relatively speaking, not that big. At the moment China's economy is developing very fast, and today everyone's material conditions are better.¹⁶³

By way of contrast, and as I will discuss with reference to Christians' moral concerns, many respondents, particularly Christian ones, expressed concern that economic and material goals had become too important in China:

¹⁶³ IVN102

In China at the moment, people's thinking is restricted to certain things. For example, everyone wants to buy a flat, or everyone thinks, "I want to earn a bit more money", or everyone thinks, "I want to study more, to gain a higher degree." [...] But, in the future, after I've got the flat, will things be better? Or after I've earned more salary, will things go better? Or after I've got a bit more education, will I be happier? Actually, nobody has future ideals; everyone just wants to first get their hands on these things.¹⁶⁴

d. **Forbearance**¹⁶⁵ on international and territorial issues

I asked respondents their opinions on areas highlighted by the literature on Chinese nationalism¹⁶⁶ as areas of typical nationalist concern, namely: relations with the USA and Japan, and the issues of Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang.¹⁶⁷ In addition, issues of China's international standing also appeared in some of the more general questions I asked about China.

¹⁶⁴ IVC06

¹⁶⁵ 'Forbearance' is here defined as feeling less strongly about the need for strong national defence and an assertive foreign policy; having fewer negative feelings about other countries; and feeling less strongly about the need for Chinese sovereignty over places such as Tibet, Taiwan and Xinjiang. I will use 'assertive' to indicate the opposite orientation. These two terms are not ideal, but alternatives leave a lot to be desired. Johnston's use of 'liberal' and 'nationalist' (in Johnston, "Chinese Middle Class Attitudes Towards International Affairs: Nascent Liberalization?") is highly problematic, as I will explain later; Leonard's use of 'internationalist' and 'nationalist' equates 'nationalism' with a hawkish stance, which historically has not always been the case (the non-violent Indian nationalism of Mohandas Gandhi comes to mind). See Mark Leonard, "What Does the New China Think?," in *China 3.0*, ed. Mark Leonard (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2012). p.12.

¹⁶⁶ Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower*; Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*; Vickers, "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimation of China's Developmental Strategy."

¹⁶⁷ In the middle of my research trip the issue of China's maritime disputes came into prominence. Although I did not include a question on these issues, respondents would frequently mention them and comment on them, as demonstrated in the quotation from IVN14a.

Firstly, a smaller proportion of Christians expressed a hope that China's international standing and influence will improve, compared to those of other affiliations. In answering the question, 'What do you hope China will be like in 20 years' time?', more non-Christians than Christians (16% to 0%) said they hoped that China's international standing would improve, although the difference was smaller in Beijing¹⁶⁸ than in Shenzhen.¹⁶⁹ A worker at a Beijing internet firm with no personal religious belief gave the following answer:

I hope firstly that it [= China] is a bit tougher in the world [强硬一些] [...].

[Interviewer: Can you describe that?]

That is, at the moment, maybe including the Diaoyu Islands, including the South China Sea, and so on, these problems, with Japan, with Vietnam, maybe they will have some disputes and quarrels with China. [...] Then it may have some disputes, but in China the common idea is to develop together,¹⁷⁰ but when it comes to talking about issues of territory, actually, in international relations there's no room to negotiate, is there? But in reality now, China is always pursuing development, but is being comparatively weak [软], this is the kind of feeling I have. Certainly, I hope that 20 years in the future, there will be some increase in terms of its

¹⁶⁸ 0% of Christians to 8% of the comparison group.

¹⁶⁹ 0% of Christians to 24% of the comparison group.

¹⁷⁰ This phrase is unclear.

power, not just from an economic standpoint. Certainly, [in] this kind of traditional Chinese culture [...] China cannot, for example, colonise or terrorise¹⁷¹ other countries, but I hope it can have some of its own scope to be a superpower [自己的大国风范], and not blindly shrink back and exercise forbearance [退缩忍让], it's this. I hope it will have its own principles [...]. Regarding today, a lot of Chinese people, not just me, a lot of people think that currently, on issues of sovereignty, the government already has no baseline [已经没有了底线了].'¹⁷²

In contrast, Christians viewed this as less of a priority:

Actually I think that economically, I think that China's economy is already very good, I hope that the government will be able to care more about the people and not only care about getting to the moon, not care about China building the world's tallest building; I hope that people's salaries and their purchasing power [购买力] will all be very good, I hope that I won't see [...] the government only seeming to care about how many gold medals [China wins] in the Olympics. But actually our own public welfare benefits [福利], recently I feel have been reduced.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ This word is unclear. Pinyin = 'jingkong' / 'jinkong'

¹⁷² IVN14a

¹⁷³ SIVC06b

The respondent then went on to discuss Shenzhen's hosting of the 2011 Universiade and how it used up a lot of public money that could have been put towards pensions.

Both groups have similar levels of criticism of the USA's international behaviour, notably its perceived interference with other countries, including China;¹⁷⁴ A significant proportion of both Christians and non-Christians (26% and 38%)¹⁷⁵ commented negatively on this aspect when asked their opinion of America (Table 11). One Beijing lawyer made an interesting comment:

I think, because I'm a Christian, I can understand a lot of America's thinking. I think that America, sometimes the viewpoint it sets out is good. For example, it can talk about China's human rights [...] then there are also some questions about Chinese democracy and these kinds of problems and situations. It's good that they pay attention to these problems, but I don't think its methods are good.

[Interviewer: For example, what methods?]

I'm thinking, for example, like a person who you think is backward, you think he doesn't like being clean, and his educational level is average, and he doesn't really respect other people [...] in his family. Now, every day you say to him: "You must respect the people in your family, you need to respect the people in your

¹⁷⁴ IVC0112, IVN09, IVN112, IVN14a

¹⁷⁵ This difference only appeared in Shenzhen, where 40% of the comparison group and 23% of Christians commented negatively on US international behaviour.

family, you really don't respect the people in your family!" Is that useful? It's not useful, is it? That is, if you talk, talk, talk with him every day, bit by bit you'll make him resist you, it'll only bring a rebellious mentality, right? [...] That is, the more you talk in this way, the less he acts. It's like an adolescent child, that is, like a teenager, a sixteen year-old. [...] The more you make him walk forward, the more he'll walk backwards; go east, and he'll go west, it's like that. So I think they should change their method.¹⁷⁶

However, fewer Christians (6% compared to 22% of the comparison group), said that America was the 'hegemon' [霸权 / 霸道], the 'world police' [世界警察] or the 'boss' [老大] (Table 11). One Shenzhen engineer with no religious belief explained his opinion:

Hegemony, certainly, actually the root of this is its [= America's] economic development; it is impossible to separate it from this kind of interest. Why is it hegemonic? It is certainly because of its own economic development needs. Because, regarding its own territory [本土], its consumption, its demands are like this: for it to sustain positive economic growth, for it to sustain its country's rise, it needs to go to other places to open markets and obtain resources, in this situation it cannot but [不得不] use its military power as a support, as a kind of threat. [America] goes and

¹⁷⁶ IVC01111

threatens¹⁷⁷ other countries or influences other countries' politics and economics, to harass them. It's like it previously fought Iraq, Afghanistan, and a while ago it fought Libya. I think this is... from my personal perspective, my personal view, certainly is inseparable from oil resources, it is the looting of resources [资源掠夺].¹⁷⁸

When asked if they viewed the USA as an ally or an enemy, a majority of both groups in both cities viewed it as an ally; in Beijing, for the Christian group this majority was somewhat larger (75% compared to 64% of the Beijing comparison group), but in Shenzhen the proportions of both groups were similar (58% of Christians and 60% of their demographic peers) (Table 12).

When asked their opinion of Japan, more of the comparison group (64% compared to 46% of Christians) raised the issue of Japan's invasion of China, or its antagonistic history with China, although this difference was not replicated across cities (Table 13). On the question of whether China should forgive Japan for the atrocities it carried out against China, or whether it should pay a price, more Christians (64% compared to 32% of the comparison group) said that China should forgive Japan, and this was replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen (Table 14):

Because the people who did these things in the past have already died, present-day Japanese people are the new generation, I'm not clear as to how they could be one and the same, so it's not right to make them bear the responsibility. Also, I think that with war, you

¹⁷⁷ This word is unclear. Pinyin = 'xiehao'.

¹⁷⁸ SIVN03

can't make the common people bear the responsibility for this, it's certainly the government, its decisions which are [responsible], the common people are innocent. These Japanese troops who came to China and died in China, how can it be that they haven't already paid the price?¹⁷⁹

On the question of Taiwan, almost twice the proportion of non-Christians as Christians (60% to 33%) stated explicitly that Taiwan is part of China. A considerable proportion of both groups said that they hoped for, or predicted unification (42% of the comparison group, 48% of Christians) (Table 15). However, when this category was disaggregated into the kinds of unification respondents desired, 17% of Christian respondents and 4% of the comparison group¹⁸⁰ expressed a wish for the Kuomintang to either rule the mainland, compete in democratic elections, or share power with the CCP – not exactly the ‘one country, two systems’ unification envisaged by China’s Party-state.¹⁸¹ For several respondents, this desire was based upon positive evaluations of Taiwan’s politics, society and culture;¹⁸² indeed, many respondents from both groups made positive remarks in this regard:¹⁸³

In terms of politics, they [Taiwan’s political leaders] let Chinese people [中国的华人] implement democracy. [...] I think Taiwan has preserved a lot of traditions really well, including marriage

¹⁷⁹ IVC06

¹⁸⁰ This difference was smaller in Shenzhen (8% of Christians and 0% of the comparison group) than in Beijing (27% of Christians and 8% of the comparison group).

¹⁸¹ Scott L. Kastner and Chad Rector, “National Unification and Mistrust: Bargaining Power and the Prospects for a PRC/Taiwan Agreement,” *Security Studies* 17, no. 1 (March 12, 2008): pp.39–71, doi:10.1080/09636410801894159. The proportion of Shenzhen Christians with this view was smaller, at 8%.

¹⁸² IVC04, IVC05, IVC01121, IVC011213, IVN112.

¹⁸³ IVC04, IVC04b, IVC05, IVC01121, IVC011213, IVC0112131, IVN04b1b1, IVN09, IVN112, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b1111, SIVC01c2, SIVC01c21, SIVN09d, SIVN09d12.

[customs?]; a lot of ceremonies and celebrations, they are all a mixture of Chinese and Western culture. Then there are also a lot of Christians in Taiwan; it always makes me think that China's traditional things are not in conflict either with Christ or with Western civilisation.¹⁸⁴

On the issues of Tibet and Xinjiang, similarly large proportions of both Christians (34%) and their demographic peers (33%) said these regions are parts of China (Table 16). However, more Christians than non-Christians made negative comments about the role of the government in Tibet and Xinjiang (27% to 10%):

That is they [= the people in Xinjiang] will think you've heartlessly suppressed them, looted their resources. In Xinjiang, I think that too much interference in the ethnic group's internal religious affairs [民族内部的宗教] and belief has constantly been intensifying this inter-ethnic conflict. Actually, people can do better than this. If you really want to give them more self-government and freedom in the current environment, I believe that they really won't want to become independent.¹⁸⁵

By way of contrast, more of the comparison group (15% to 5% of Christians) said that more political control would be a good thing (Table 16)¹⁸⁶:

¹⁸⁴ SIVC01c21

¹⁸⁵ IVC0112133

¹⁸⁶ However, the difference between groups was smaller in Shenzhen, where 13% and 4% of the comparison and Christian groups viewed political control as positive.

I think they shouldn't be independent. Also, from ancient times, very long ago, they have been our territory. I think forcefully attacking the Tibetan independence and East Turkestan [movements], [...] East Turkestan... Xinjiang's terrorists, I think the state's suppression of them is rational [国家对他们的镇压是合理的].¹⁸⁷

e. Moral critique

Many respondents in both groups raised issues of morality in China (Tables 6 and 10). However, this concern was particularly pronounced amongst the Christian respondents.

When asked, 'What is the biggest issue facing China today?', more Christians raised issues of morality, value systems, or ideology (27% compared to 4% of the comparison group) (Table 17).¹⁸⁸ Likewise, to the question 'What aspects of China make you feel ashamed?', more Christians mentioned Chinese people's perceived negative characteristics and behaviour¹⁸⁹ (72% to 46% respectively) (Table 6). For both groups, however, this was the most common concern raised.

¹⁸⁷ IVN14b

¹⁸⁸ Category M2, described below.

¹⁸⁹ Category M3, described below.

Respondents from both groups shared a concern with materialism, utilitarianism, and selfishness in society.¹⁹⁰ A Beijing Christian, working for a study abroad agency, said:

Chinese people, I think [...] there are a lot of people, although they are extremely successful, although they earn so much money, or their living conditions are better than before, they feel that they themselves are empty [感觉自己空虚]. [...] Also, they, that is, a lot of Chinese people, they only pursue money, then they pursue houses [房子], then they only pursue the material side of things, and they don't really care about the spiritual side [他们只追求物质方面的; 精神方面的他们不太在意]. I think that this is the biggest issue [facing China].¹⁹¹

Another moral issue about which there was a common concern was normlessness, or a lack of ideals:¹⁹²

Chinese society is at what seems to be the end of an era; lots of past Chinese culture, and things everyone used to approve of, are no more, they've been smashed. New things have not yet been established, there's no new consensus; [the only new consensus is] "Ah, we want GDP, we want to earn money." [...] China is totally restless [浮躁] [...], it doesn't know what it wants to do, it's very similar to everybody's own situations – that is to say, very busy, but

¹⁹⁰ IVC041, IVC04b2, IVC011212, IVC0112131, IVN04, IVN09, IVN09211, SIVC01b111, SIVC06b, SIVC07c1, SIVN02a, SIVN09b.

¹⁹¹ IVC0112111

¹⁹² IVC011, IVC04b1, IVC05, IVC06, IVC01111

without knowing what the future goal is. China appears to be becoming a superpower, but what are the responsibilities [that come with] becoming a superpower? No-one knows. [...] America, when it was establishing itself as a country [建国的时候], wanted to illuminate the world spiritually and morally; but China doesn't have these kinds of ideals. [...] Most individuals don't have these kinds of ideals, either.¹⁹³

Respondents discussed ways in which they perceive this normlessness, or lack of moral baseline (道德底线) to be manifesting itself in society:¹⁹⁴ lying,¹⁹⁵ corruption,¹⁹⁶ food safety scandals,¹⁹⁷ a lack of compassion between people,¹⁹⁸ and passers-by who refuse to help people on the street for fear of being cheated out of money.¹⁹⁹ One respondent linked these themes as follows:

In Chinese people's culture, there is a kind of... "As long as I'm doing OK, then that's fine [只有自己好就好]." If oneself is OK, that's OK. A lot of people have this kind of idea. [...] Also, in today's China, everyone is relatively utilitarian. [...] That is, people just grab money, they only see money, money, then they only pursue a kind of so-called... [they] want to have a car, have a flat, have money,

¹⁹³ IVC011

¹⁹⁴ Many of the following concerns are mentioned and analysed by Yan, "The Changing Moral Landscape."

¹⁹⁵ IVC01121, IVC01122, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b3, SIVC06a, SIVN06aa11, SIVN081

¹⁹⁶ IVC031, IVC04, IVC04b, IVC11221, IVC112133, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b112, SIVC01c2, SIVN03, SIVN09a, SIVN09b, SIVN09c

¹⁹⁷ IVC04b, IVC06, SIVC01b113, SIVC01c1, SIVC01c21, SIVC06a, SIVN02a2, SIVN04, SIVN09b

¹⁹⁸ IVC01121, IVC011213, IVC0112111, IVC0112133, SIVC01c

¹⁹⁹ IVC011213, IVC0112133

these things, then they lose a lot of the good things that they used to have.

[Interviewer: What things do you think have been lost?]

A kind of purity [单纯] in people's hearts. Maybe Chinese people previously had a baseline [底线], that is, they would always say what one could do, and what one could not do. Previously, we had these things. People in this country also all had a kind of reverence towards the world, towards nature, but now they don't, now if [one] only wants money, that's fine [只要钱就可以]. It's only for success and GDP that one can sacrifice everything.²⁰⁰

It should, however be noted, that in the midst of all the negativity, respondents showed a high level of pride in Chinese people's good characteristics. When asked, 'What is it about China that makes you feel proud?', 60% of the Shenzhen comparison group, 73% of Shenzhen Christians, 52% of the Beijing comparison group, and 33% of Beijing Christians mentioned the positive characteristics of Chinese people, such as hard work,²⁰¹ filial piety,²⁰² cleverness,²⁰³ endurance,²⁰⁴ and kindness²⁰⁵ (Table 5):

There are a few distinctive histories and experiences that [make] me think that Chinese people, have a very good character in their

²⁰⁰ IVC0112131

²⁰¹ IVC04b3, IVC01111, IVC01122, IVN0921, IVN101, IVN102, SIVC01b, SIVC01b1, SIVC01c, SIVC01c1, SIVC2, SIVC07c1, SIVN02a, SIVN06a1, SIVN06a11, SIVN082, SIVN09a1

²⁰² IVN09, IVN11, SIVC01c21, SIVC06b, SIVC07c1, SIVC07b1, SIVN02a1, SIVN06a

²⁰³ IVC05, IVN102, IVN112, SIVC01b111, SIVC07b, SIVN09b,

²⁰⁴ IVC011, IVC01111, IVC011211, SIVC01b, SIVC01b2, SIVC01c, SIVN06a11, SIVN09c, SIVN09d, SIVN09a1

²⁰⁵ IVN14a, SIVC01b113, SIVC01c1

bones [骨子里]. [...] When they meet difficulties, you can see this character. This is a bit like what Mencius said, he often said that people are basically good, and Confucians say that people are basically good; it's not quite the same as what the West and Christianity say about people having original sin. But this type of goodness, I believe it is also... people have a very good form [形象]]

[...] A while ago I translated a book, it discussed an ethnic minority in Yunnan in the past. They believed in Christianity but took a lot of oppression. [...] They were very persevering, and never abandoned their belief. This was very moving [感人]. China has lots of stories like this, including when, during the Cultural Revolution perhaps most people were doing very bad things, but at the same time [...] there were still many of this type of very good people.²⁰⁶

Therefore, despite all the talk of moral turmoil, for many respondents, Christians and others, there is still a lot of goodness and good people in China.²⁰⁷ Indeed, it is often out of the contrast with the good characteristics of Chinese people that moral worries about China arise. Rapid economic and social change, and before that, the

²⁰⁶ IVC011

²⁰⁷ As with many points highlighted in this analysis, this point was not shared unanimously. For some, it was all or part of traditional morality itself - with its perceived passivity, hierarchy, utilitarianism, and conservatism - that was part of the problem, rather than part of the solution (e.g. IVN092, IVN1021, SIVC01b1, SIVN09d12, SIVC07c1, SIVC07b1):

I will think this so-called Confucianism [儒家的东西] actually has a lot of bad things [about it]. For example, [...] the responsibility of the ruler and his ministers [负责君臣] [...] these things, that is to say, if he is a monarch, he is the biggest, if you are at home, the father is the biggest. [...] I actually, I don't really like hierarchical systems [等级制度], this is a kind of grade [which] separates people into levels. [...] I really [...] emphasise equality and fairness [this last phrase is unclear on the recording]. Emphasising a kind of justice, this kind of thing. I really like this. [SIVC01b1]

Cultural Revolution are seen as having caused damage to what many perceive to be China's good traditional values.²⁰⁸ After extolling the virtues in Chinese culture, one respondent, whose family had been given a 'landlord' class label and persecuted in the Cultural Revolution, went on to say:

Now, I think the parts that make me very ashamed are that China originally had a very good culture, but we have been continuously ruining these cultures [我们有一直摧残这些文化]. Then, originally there were very beautiful, very good [善] things, these have also continuously been ruined, [and] been suppressed. I think this is a very shameful thing, it's that wickedness has triumphed over righteousness [邪恶胜了正义].²⁰⁹

From this analysis, therefore, a nuanced picture emerges: The traditional values and characteristics of the Chinese people are generally good. However, these values have been damaged first of all by the Cultural Revolution, and then by rapid economic and social change. In Chinese society, there is now a pervasive sense of normlessness, and a lack of moral framework or common value system. This has led people into the blind pursuit of money and interests at the expense of others, and has manifested itself in all sorts of undesirable social phenomena. Whilst these concerns were shared by respondents from both groups, it was amongst the Christian sample that these issues were more frequently raised.

²⁰⁸ IVC01121, IVC0112133, IVN14c, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01c1, SIVC06b, SIVN02a2, SIVN03, SIVC06c, See also Ibid.

²⁰⁹ SIVC01b12

In this respect, a greater number of Christian respondents echoed the concerns of the Party-state's national narrative regarding the moral state of Chinese society. For example, an outline of Xi Jinping's August 2013 speech reads:

Among our Party members and cadre teams, lack of belief is a problem that needs to attract high attention. Among a few people [...] some are slaves of material things, believe in the supremacy of money, the supremacy of fame and the supremacy of enjoyment, they don't have any reverence in their hearts, and their acts don't have any baseline at all.²¹⁰

As I will discuss below, respondents who were Party members were also more likely to raise issues of moral concern relative to their non-Party member demographic peers (Tables 29 and 30). It may be that both groups – Christians and the Party-state – feel that they are in some way responsible for the fate of China, so are likely to be more sensitised towards the moral state of Chinese society.²¹¹ Indeed, as I will discuss below, it was common for Christian respondents to articulate a feeling of responsibility towards China. When asked 'What does it mean to be Chinese?', 30% of Christians said they felt a burden of responsibility, compared to 0% of the comparison group (Table 3).

²¹⁰ China Copyright and Media, "Xi Jinping's 19 August Speech Revealed? (Translation)," 2013, <http://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/2013/11/12/xi-jinpings-19-august-speech-revealed-translation/>. The original Chinese can be found on the China Digital Times website: <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/chinese/2013/11/网传习近平8•19讲话全文：言论方面要敢抓敢管敢/> Accessed 2nd May, 2014.

²¹¹ I am grateful to Anna Boermel for giving me this suggestion (personal communication).

However, while Christians share several moral concerns in common with the Party-state, there are a number of important differences in their assessments of the reasons for the perceived problem, and ideas of how to resolve it.

Firstly, it is interesting to note the language that Christians use to talk about morality and related issues. I coded respondents' answers on these issues in terms of three codes:

M1: *Suzhi* – covering *suzhi* (素质), civilisation (文明), cultivation (修养), culture (文化) on an individual level, for example, 'People's level of culture is not that high.'

M2: *Morality* – covering morality (道德), baselines (底线), character (品质), value systems (价值观), ideological problems (思想), lack of clear belief, inner emptiness (内心空虚), public ethics (公共道德), and sin (罪).

M3: *Behaviour* – covering negative behavioural traits that the respondent did not explicitly link to lack of *suzhi* or morality: greed, money worship, throwing litter, and not helping other people. It did not include corruption, which was coded separately.

M: *Combined* code covering all of the above.

Figure 3 combines data from Tables 6, 9, and 17 to show which group mentioned which concept more in answer to which question.

Figure 3: Respondents Mentioning *Suzhi*, Morality and Behaviour

Relative proportion of respondents mentioning....				
Question	M1 - <i>Suzhi</i>	M2 - Morality	M3 - Behaviour	M - Combined
What do you hope China will be like in 20 years' time? (Condensed categories)	Comparison group more (Beijing only)	Christians more (Beijing only)	Both groups same	Christians more
What aspects of China make you feel ashamed?	Comparison group more	Christians more (Shenzhen only)	Christians more	Christians more
What is the biggest issue facing China today?	Both groups same	Christians more	Christians more (Shenzhen only)	Christians more

From this table we can see that relative to their demographic peers, in general higher proportions of Christians tended to talk about morality and behaviour; and higher proportions of the comparison group tended to talk about *suzhi* and related concepts. In discussing morality and related issues, then, Christians tended to employ vocabulary that referred to morality in general terms, or gave specific examples of negative behaviour; they tended to steer clear of employing vocabulary explicitly associated with the Party-state's national narrative.

In addition, on the question of morality, for some Christians, the Party-state itself is part of the problem: it has not taken responsibility for China's moral state;²¹² it tacitly consents to people making money the most important thing in their lives,²¹³ and its official corruption sets a bad example to the Chinese public:

²¹² IVC0112133

²¹³ SIVC06b

The corruption problem is the root of all other problems. [...] If your government is that corrupt, [and] you have no way of attracting public trust [没有公信力], then how will you demand that your people be kind [善良], or that they care for other people?²¹⁴

In terms of solutions, whereas the Party-state are moving towards more ideological education and culturalism, combined with greater control over the internet,²¹⁵ several Christian respondents see the answer as a better-established, fairer, legal system that gives freedom of religion.²¹⁶ Most importantly, for a lot of Christians the solution is to encourage people to embrace Christianity and turn away from sin. This leads on to the next point.

f. Concern with the spread and growth of Christian faith

For several Christian respondents²¹⁷ (and even a small number of those of other affiliations²¹⁸), the root of China's ethical problems is a lack of faith; as outlined above, the perception is that China has destroyed its old cultural system, but neither has it fully embraced Christianity.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ SIVC01c21

²¹⁵ Holbig and Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China"; China Copyright and Media, "Xi Jinping's 19 August Speech Revealed? (Translation)."

²¹⁶ SIVC01b21, SIVC09d1, SIVC07c1

²¹⁷ IVC04b, IVC04b1, IVC05, IVC01121, IVC011211, IVC011221, SIVC01b, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b12, SIVC07b1, SIVC01c2, SIVC01c21

²¹⁸ IVN14a, IVN101, SIVN06c

²¹⁹ IVC011, IVC04b, IVC01121, IVC011221, SIVC01c2, SIVC01c21

In answering the question, 'What is the biggest issue facing China?', 33% of Christians and 2% of the comparison group discussed issues of religion and Christianity, namely concerns over China's lack of faith (Table 17). When asked their hopes for China, 34% of Christians and 0% of the comparison group expressed a hope that there would be more Christians in 20 years' time; and more Christians (20%) than those of other affiliations (0%) said they wanted Christianity to influence Chinese society (Table 9). All of these findings were replicated in Shenzhen and Beijing. Below is a common response:

I certainly hope that in 20 years' time, China [...] will get better and better, and more people will have faith. Because China is a country without faith, they all think Chinese people worship their things, worship this, worship that, believe in this, believe in that, lots of people [...] just believe in money, [...]. You need a faith to support you; if you have no support, the problems facing China will get worse. [...] I also hope that more people will be able to believe in God, and we can then address social contradictions really well, via the instruction of the Bible. If they have no active faith as a basis, I will really worry about China's future.²²⁰

Likewise, Christians are more likely to apply similar moral and theological judgements to other societies. When asked 'What is your opinion of America?', more Christians (26% compared to 2% of the comparison group) commented positively on Christianity in America (Table 11). However, more Christians also said

²²⁰ IVC05

that faith was declining in America (16% compared to 0% of the comparison group). The most commonly cited example amongst Christians of American spiritual decline was homosexuality in US society, about which 18% of Christians commented negatively (compared to 0% of the comparison group). All of these differences were replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen. I will discuss levels of tolerance towards homosexuality further in Chapter 4.

It was common for Christian respondents to articulate a feeling of responsibility towards China, a sense of divine destiny, which they would often articulate in terms of preaching the gospel and influencing society for the better. When asked 'What does it mean to be Chinese?', 30% of Christians said they felt a burden of responsibility, compared to 0% of the comparison group; 21% raised the idea of spreading the gospel in China, compared to 0% of the comparison group (Table 3). More Christians than non-Christians (21% to 4%) said that God had put them in China or had a plan for China. All of these differences were replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen. One young entrepreneur gave the following answer:

I think it [= the meaning of being Chinese] is to discover one's own mission [使命], then go and carry out this mission. Because I think that, although Chinese people have experienced a lot, and this faith environment is not open, there are now more and more Christians. People are increasingly breaching the limits of this environment in order to find faith; I think this is a very good start. Previously, missionaries from every country all came to China to spread the gospel, to bring faith, but as the environment improves, Chinese

people have the responsibility to carry out their own mission; they should not just receive information. So I think, in this land there will always be more opportunities to improve oneself, and to face this environment.²²¹

I will examine this further in my discussion of spiritual efficacy in Chapter 6.

g. Patriotic education

Finally, I also asked some respondents if they had received Patriotic Education lessons at school or university, and what they thought of these. These questions were unscripted and I did not systematically ask every respondent, so it is difficult to make an accurate comparison. However, neither Christians nor those of other groups were particularly enthusiastic about the courses.

This course was too boring! [...] The words they said were all very official, [...] so they would make it very hard for people to be convinced. Some of the teaching materials were really badly written.²²²

Christian respondents looked back on the lessons with a particularly critical view:

After I went to university I had the opportunity to understand more about the true history. That is, I know originally in the war against Japan, the CCP was certainly not the leader, actually it was mostly the Kuomintang at that time, so afterwards I thought that loving

²²¹ IVC0112133

²²² IVN04

the country and loving the Party should not be put together. [...] I think now my patriotism is more rational, that is, I don't think that everything about China is good, I know these compatriots have their own problems, and their own difficulties and their own disadvantages, but I still love them.²²³

The only positive voices came from the comparison group; for example:

[Patriotic education is] very good. We need more, especially for the post-1990s and post-2000s generations; they're further and further away from history.²²⁴

Overall, this suggests that amongst these highly-educated respondents, the success of Patriotic education was limited at best. 'I haven't held onto these kinds of empty words [空话],' said one respondent.²²⁵ 'After [we've] grown up, nobody believes it,' said another.²²⁶

3. Summary

In aggregate then, a common, although by no means unanimous, thread in the way Chinese Christians think about China goes something like this:

Although China is currently enjoying a measure of material success, there are serious problems with China's politics and society. In politics, China is not democratic or

²²³ IVC04b1

²²⁴ IVN01

²²⁵ IVN103

²²⁶ SIVC07c1

free enough, and the political system should be reformed. Society has serious moral problems, such as the excessive pursuit of materialism. These moral problems are caused by a lack of faith, which has led to people having no moral baseline. Therefore, Christians have a responsibility to change society by spreading the gospel.

The USA is a democratic country with Christian foundations, but it behaves badly internationally and is in moral decline domestically. Japan invaded China but should be forgiven. Taiwan is part of China, but its politics and society have positive aspects; we hope it can be unified with the mainland, maybe into a democratic China. Tibet and Xinjiang also belong to China, but the government's policies there have room for improvement.

4. Initial thoughts: an observation and a question

In my next chapter I will carry out a detailed analysis of these variations. However, I will end this chapter with one initial observation and a question.

a. One initial observation: the selective consumption of official nationalism

In the introduction, from a review of the relevant literature, I identified the following features of official nationalism: a strong, CCP-led state; territorial sovereignty, including over Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang; economic growth and social stability, leading to economic and military strength; a rhetoric of victimisation by, and hostility towards, Japan and the USA; and moral concern over the state of society and the *suzhi* of its citizens. The data above demonstrates that Christian respondents tend to accept these tenets of official nationalism less than do their demographic peers,

preferring a national narrative of relative political contrarianism, economic disinterest, forbearance on international and territorial issues, and the need for the spread of the Christian gospel. Whilst they share the Party-state's moral concerns, they avoid employing its *suzhi* discourse to articulate them, and some see the Party-state as part of the problem.

Despite the usefulness of categorising respondents' national narratives in this way, it is important to note that generally speaking, respondents neither wholeheartedly rejected or accepted the tenets of official nationalism, but employed what could be termed a 'selective national narrative', exercising critical judgement in what they took and what they discarded.

For example, my sample contained several respondents who could be classified as 'liberal nationalists', firm in their support for Chinese strength and territorial sovereignty but critical of China's current political system and of the CCP. One respondent, who was critical of what he perceived as the government's overly doveish approach to the Diaoyu island dispute with Japan, had also sent money in support of Ai Weiwei following the artist's arrest.²²⁷ Another gave the following response when asked about the USA:

[A]s a Chinese, no matter what problems exist domestically, none of us want other people to come and interfere and control our path, rather, we all hope that we will walk it ourselves. It's like saying: If one day our country was to become a multiparty system, not a one

²²⁷ IVN04b1b

party system, we wouldn't want another party to emerge with backstage support from America. That is, we don't want to become other people's puppy or other people's slave.²²⁸

Similarly, many respondents praised the USA's commitment to democracy and personal freedom whilst criticising the way it behaved towards China.²²⁹ These respondents follow a similar pattern to the 1990s 'liberal nationalist' intellectuals described by Zhao:

They were critical of the Chinese communist regime for violating their individual rights and, at the same time, critical of the Western powers, most of which were democratic, for violating China's national rights. In other words, liberal nationalists were liberals in the domestic arena and nationalists in the international arena.²³⁰

For this reason, as already stated, I find Alastair Ian Johnston's use of 'liberal' or even 'proto-liberal' to indicate a forbearing approach to international issues as highly problematic.²³¹ Rather, domestic liberalism versus illiberalism and international forbearance versus assertiveness should be seen as two distinct ideological dimensions.²³²

²²⁸ IVN09

²²⁹ IVC0112, IVC02, IVC01111, IVC011211, IVN09, IVN091, IVN09211, IVN1221, IVN14a, SIVC01b113, SIVC06a, SIVN09d2

²³⁰ *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism*. p.25.

²³¹ "Chinese Middle Class Attitudes Towards International Affairs: Nascent Liberalization?"

²³² See Leonard's schema in "What Does the New China Think?"

In summary, the findings outlined in this chapter call into question Ann-Marie Brady's assertion that:

The growth of popular nationalism in China since the 1990s and the widespread embracing of the Chinese bourgeois dream are clear indications that the key thought work messages of the post-1989 era have been seen, understood, learned, remembered and acted upon by Chinese citizens.²³³

Amongst China's young urban professionals, it would be better to view official nationalism as taking the form of a Chinese banquet, from which diners can pick from the dishes they like, rather than a European meal, where they are expected to eat everything on their plates. Of the two respondent groups, it was the Christians who took this 'selective national narrative' the furthest, accepting less and rejecting more of the official nationalism propagated by the Party-state. The following chapter investigates the reasons for this variation.

b. One initial question: Are Chinese Protestants 'nationalists'?

From the above discussion we have seen that Christians are not nationalists in the sense of adhering to the Party-state's official nationalism. But does the Christians' national narrative as outlined above constitute a different, alternative variety of nationalism? Protestantism-infused nationalism would not be a novelty in China, as demonstrated by the aforementioned examples of Sun, Chiang and the Soongs.

²³³ Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*. p.193.

Here we must return to the simple definition of nationalism I proposed in the introduction: firstly, nationalism is a political project that privileges national identity (however defined) over other identities such as religion, race, class, gender or political belief; and secondly, nationalism seeks to achieve or maintain self-determination for the nation in question over a territory it views as rightfully its own.

On the first point, in my interviews I did not ask respondents to rank different identities in order of priority; and, as mentioned in my introduction, the presence of a foreign interviewer may have made their national identity more salient. However, from the above discussion on the question of ‘One more Christian, one fewer Chinese,’ we observed that Christian respondents certainly did not disavow national identity,²³⁴ and indeed claimed that Christians could make better citizens.²³⁵ They did, however, see it with a sense of perspective – all are human beings, all are God’s children, and God transcends nationality.²³⁶

Maybe previously, [I thought national identity was important]. But I don't think it's that important.

[Interviewer: Why not?]

Before I believed in the Lord I had more of this kind of national sentiment [民族的情结]. For example, I thought that other people

²³⁴ IVC011, IVC031, IVC04, IVC04b2, IVC04b3, IVC06, IVC11211, IVC011212, SIVC01a, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b113, SIVC01b111, SIVC01b1111, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01c, SIVC01c1, SIVC01c2, SIVC06a, SIVC06b, SIVC06b1

²³⁵ IVC01111, IVC0112133, IVC011212, IVC0112111

²³⁶ IVC011, IVC04, IVC05, SIVC01b, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01b21, SIVC06c1, SIVC07b

bullied us, or whatever. After believing in the Lord, I increasingly discovered that some of this was lies. [...] Some were certainly... For example, the USA attacked our Embassy, at that time, I felt there could be this kind of motherland consciousness, because we thought that you [sic] had violated our country. Certainly, after believing in the Lord, there was more feeling towards the world [更多的是一种感觉世界], because in the Lord we are all one family. [...] I don't have a particularly strong separate²³⁷ national consciousness.²³⁸

[T]here is no need to over-emphasise whether or not one is Chinese; this is related to the so-called patriotism we've just talked about. I think there's no need to separate them, for example, you are British, I am Chinese. Aren't we all people? Only we may have different birthplaces and cultures, but this does not affect other things. I don't have that many national boundaries [国界].²³⁹

It therefore might be said that Christians wear their national identity somewhat lightly, albeit – as we have seen from our discussion on Christian views of the moral state of Chinese society, and their responsibility towards China - with a mixture of pride and concern.

²³⁷ This word is unclear on the recording. Pinyin: 'helikai.'

²³⁸ IVC011211

²³⁹ IVC011

In terms of the second, in their answers as outlined above, Christians tended to prioritise the right of the Chinese people *as citizens* to governance over their own country via democratic participation rather than the right of the Chinese people *as a nation* to sovereignty over a particular territory. In other words, Christians mentioned issues like democracy and political freedom - as well as concerns over morality and desire for Christian revival - more often than they mentioned issues like national power and esteem (e.g. Table 9). Even when I as an interviewer forced the issue directly by asking questions about Taiwan and Tibet, they did not often insist upon China's sovereignty; in absolute terms, a only a minority of Christian respondents in each case explicitly asserted that these places were parts of China (Tables 15 and 16).

Overall, then, it would be difficult to make the case that my Protestant respondents as a group were 'nationalists.' Whilst clearly demonstrating affection and concern for their country, Christians also indicated a sense that faith transcended nationality, and showed lower levels of concern about national power and sovereignty relative to other issues.

Chapter 3

Christianity and National Narrative (II): Discussion

1. Introduction

In this chapter I will analyse the variation outlined in the previous chapter. Why do Christians, whilst having a similar view of the discursive boundaries of 'China' as their demographic peers, hold values that are more critical of the party-state, more positive about democracy, less concerned with economic growth, more forbearing on international and territorial issues, more concerned with moral issues, and more concerned with the growth of Christianity in China and their part in it?

I will examine the following explanatory hypotheses: firstly, following Inglehart, that Christians hold this constellation of values because they enjoyed greater 'formative affluence' – in other words, because they were more economically secure when they were growing up, concerns about economic growth and the need for a strong state to guarantee social stability and national security figure less prominently on their ideological radar.¹ Secondly, I examine the argument that Christians hold the values they do because they have more foreign influence in their lives, perhaps through missionary activity. Thirdly, I will look at the reverse causal argument – that Christians do not embrace these values post-conversion, but that people who embrace these values are more likely to become Christians.

¹ Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. pp.78-80.

I find that formative affluence does not explain the differing values of Christian respondents and those of other affiliations, as the data shows that Christians and their demographic peers have similar levels of formative affluence but different values. Regarding foreign influence, I argue that foreign interaction does not necessarily lead to the development of a national narrative that diverges from official nationalism; for some respondents, it has had the opposite effect. Furthermore, for my Christian respondents, interaction with foreigners was primarily a result, rather than a cause of their Christian belief. With regards to causality, drawing on respondents' conversion narratives, I argue that it tends to be those with pre-existing doubts about the values that characterise official nationalism who are drawn to Christian faith, rather than Christians later developing these questioning values as a result of their faith; in an interesting parallel, it is those who are more accepting of the values of official nationalist discourse who are drawn to join the Communist Party.

I conclude the chapter by arguing that the growth of Christianity amongst China's young urban professionals is a symptom of the emergence of generation whose priorities differ markedly from those of Party-state as manifested in its self-justificatory national narrative and its policies. Disaffected with what they see in China's politics and society, it is those of a politically contrarian, morally concerned, and internationally forbearing persuasion who are most drawn to Christianity. Drawing on the work of Wang Zhengxu,² I then argue that if this demographic group

² Wang, "Public Support for Democracy in China"; See also Wang's "Before the Emergence of Critical Citizens: Economic Development and Political Trust in China," *International Review of Sociology* 15, no. 1 (March 2005): pp.155–171, doi:10.1080/03906700500038876.

continues to grow, the Party-state will need to adjust its policies and narrative in order to maintain legitimacy.

2. Explanations for the variation

a. Christians have grown up with greater economic security

Inglehart has argued that growing up in an environment of economic insecurity can cause a person to prioritise the political values of economic growth, social stability and national security upon reaching adulthood. He categorises these values as ‘materialist’ values as opposed to ‘post-materialist’ values, which emphasise democracy, freedom, ideas, and care for the environment.³

Figure 4: Post-Materialist Values and Protestant Priorities

Inglehart’s ‘post-materialist’ values ⁴	My Christian respondents
Higher priorities: More say over decision-making at work and in communities More say over government decisions Freedom of speech Less impersonal society Ideas more important than money More beautiful cities and countryside	Higher priorities: Political system reform Democracy Freedom Morality Spread of Christianity
Lower priorities: High economic growth Stable economy Fighting inflation Strong defence forces Social stability Fighting crime	Lower priorities: Economic growth Personal material gain China’s international standing International hawkishness (Japan should pay a price etc.) Territorial hawkishness (Taiwan part of China etc.)

³ Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Fig.2-2, p.46

⁴ Paraphrased from Ibid. pp.40-42.

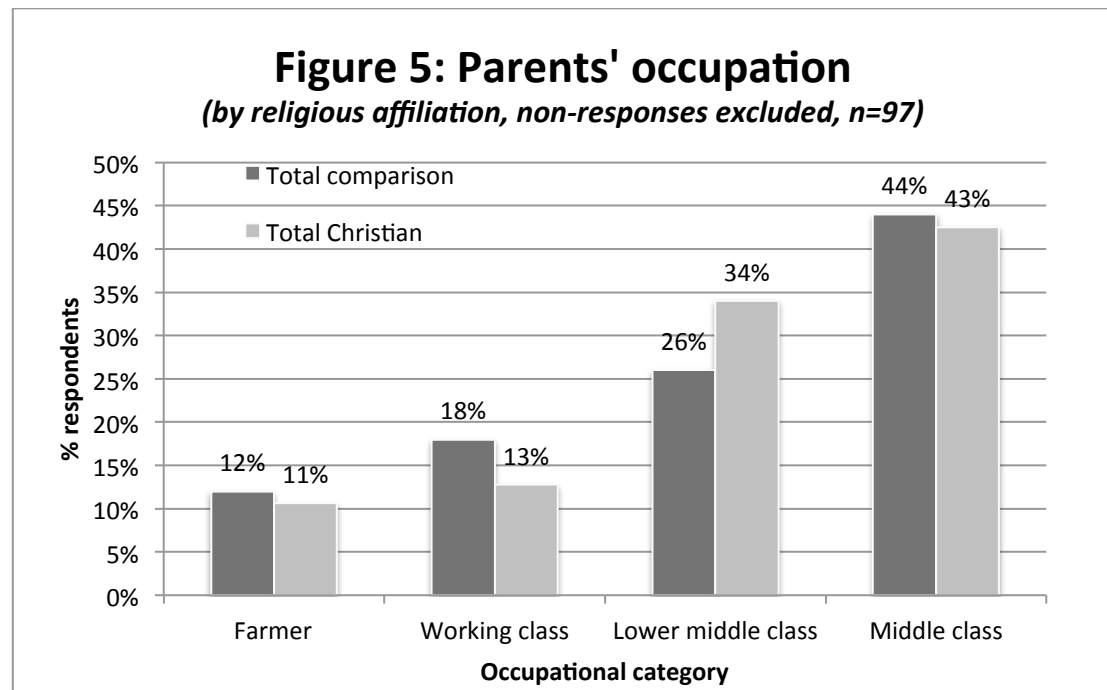
Care must be taken here, as the constellation of values that Christian respondents tend to embrace do not all map easily onto Inglehart's definition of 'post-materialist' (see Figure 4). Inglehart also associates religious belief (which in his study of Europe and the USA, is mostly Christian) with those who hold 'materialist' values.⁵ Nevertheless, several of the values exhibited by the comparison group – relatively greater concern with economics, support for the current political system, and an assertive attitude on issues relating to national sovereignty and national strength – could fit the definition of 'materialist'. Likewise, certain values held by Christian respondents – the relative low priority accorded to economic issues, a more contrarian political stance, more preference for freedom and democracy, a gentler approach to issues of sovereignty and national strength – could be classed as 'post-materialist'. Bearing these significant caveats in mind, does Inglehart's hypothesis hold for my respondents?

Inglehart finds that a good way of measuring economic insecurity in respondents' formative years is to look at their fathers' socio-economic status, a composite of father's educational background and occupation type.⁶ I did not collect data on respondents' parents' education, but I did ask about what job their parents did (or had done, if they were retired). I categorised these into four types: farmer; working-class, covering manual professions such as driver [司机] or worker [工人]; lower-middle-class, covering non-manual jobs such as administration or self-employed

⁵ Ibid. p.222.

⁶ Ibid. pp.78-82.

entrepreneurship which do not require a high level of education;⁷ and middle-class, covering managerial or professional occupations such as teachers, engineers, doctors, and civil servants. If a respondent's parents were in different occupational categories, I recorded the highest one. This provides a rough proxy of formative affluence or insecurity.⁸



Overall, there was remarkably little variation in the proportions of each parental occupation type between Christian respondents and those of their demographic peers (Table 18, Figure 5). When I broke the results down by city as well as religious affiliation, greater variation emerged. The Shenzhen Christian and Beijing comparison groups are similar in terms of parental occupation, with large proportions of middle and lower-middle-class parents, and small proportions of working-class and farming parents. Conversely, the Beijing Christian and Shenzhen

⁷ I realise that these definitions can be contested. Under 'lower middle class', I also included occupations such as generic staff member [职工/职员] and accountant [会计].

⁸ In the Chinese context it may have helped here to collect data on my respondents' parents class labels, as these may have influenced their family's economic security in the 1970s or early 1980s. I did not ask for this information, however.

comparison groups both had lower proportions of middle-class parents and higher proportions of farming and working-class parents relative to Shenzhen Christians and the Beijing comparison group.

Overall, then, Inglehart's findings do not hold true for my demographic group. Whilst Christians generally have similar levels of 'formative affluence', as defined by parental occupation, to their demographic peers, they generally have different values in terms of the priority accorded to economic growth, a strong state, and national defence. Neither does breaking the results down by city reveal a relationship between formative affluence and post-material values: in terms of parental occupation, Shenzhen Christians are closer to non-Christians in Beijing than they are to their fellow believers in Beijing, with whom they share a more similar national narrative.

b. Christians have more foreign influence

I now examine the argument that Christians think about China in a way that diverges from the official national narrative because they have had more interaction with foreigners. This line of causality is implicit in the party-state's concerns about foreigners trying to interfere in China's politics by converting Chinese people to Christianity.⁹ Similarly, Edward Vickers states:

⁹ Document of the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Zhong Ban Fa No. 18, "Notice on "Suggestions for Doing a Good Job of Resisting Foreign Use of Religion to Infiltrate Institutes of Higher Education and Preventing Campus Evangelism.""

Perceptions of the world outside China [...] remain powerfully mediated by official discourse (and by official controls over the internet), and influenced by a populist nationalism that the regime has alternately sought to stoke and rein in. While opportunities for contact with foreigners, and for direct experience of the world outside China's borders, are far greater for young urban Chinese today than even five or ten years ago, such opportunities remain limited to a relatively privileged few, and often do not involve the kind of prolonged or sustained interaction with actual foreign "natives" that might fundamentally challenge preconceptions and stereotypes.¹⁰

The first thing to note is that there is no great difference between the proportions of Christians and those of other affiliations who have been abroad (Table 23). Similarly, there are no great differences across the board in the proportions of respondents who claim to know foreigners in China (94% of Christians, 88% of those of other affiliations) (Table 24).

However, as implied by Vickers above, it may be the quality of contact with foreigners rather than its mere fact that drives political beliefs. I therefore coded each respondent 'Yes' or 'No' according to whether they had had sustained or deep

¹⁰ Vickers, "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimisation of China's Developmental Strategy." p.524.

interaction with foreigners.¹¹ According to this coding, a higher proportion of Christians had deep or sustained interaction with foreigners (52% compared to 26% of the control group, replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen) (Table 25).

This indicates some association between being a Christian, interacting with foreigners, and the expression of the views outlined above – less political satisfaction, more praise for democracy, more concern with morality, less concern for economics, the view that Christianity is the answer to China's problems, and greater forbearance on international and territorial issues.

However, a detailed look at some of the statements made by respondents who have had sustained interaction with foreigners cautions us against believing there is a direct, consistent relationship between interaction with foreigners and, for example, pro-democratic and internationally forbearing political views. For some respondents, it was the case that their experience abroad gave them a sense of freedom, and a positive appreciation of other societies, often in contrast to the state propaganda they had previously received. I asked one Christian respondent, who herself had spent several months in the USA on business, what her opinion was of America. She replied:

I think that actually Americans live very simply [活得很简单], [...]

The [Chinese] media will say, "America is very bad [很坏],

¹¹ Defined as: A period of study or work abroad (during which there was considerable interaction between the respondent and non-Chinese); an exchange programme (during which the respondent stayed with a local host family); marriage; long-term friendships with foreigners based in China (via church, university, work or other). Meeting a foreigner once, having a foreign teacher at high school, having casual acquaintance with foreigners at church or work, or going on a foreign holiday as part of a tour group do not count. As one respondent described going with a tour group to Thailand: 'This trip was like visiting the zoo.' (SIVN082).

Americans are like such and such." Actually I think that [...] most of them are very simple, they really don't know where China is, some people don't know what China is like, they even don't care about any other country in the world, they will think, "I care about whether my children are happy or not, I only pay attention about what we're going to eat tomorrow." They actually do not live as complicatedly as we thought [没有我们想过活得那么复杂].¹² I think that their lives are relatively simple. What they pay attention to are things that really have an effect on their lives. [...] A lot of Americans are even... they don't know about the Great Wall of China, they don't know anything. Because this thing doesn't have too much to do with their lives.¹³

Another respondent answered:

[Americans are] friendly. They are very friendly and [...] they are very willing to help whenever I had problems, and when I was in America I was very interested to know how society functioned. Actually, from a lot of details I could feel the difference between America and China. In the course of this experience I thought that I had a big change in my feelings towards life [那我在去这个经历过程当中我觉得我对于生活的感受有很大变化]. I thought that in America it was very convenient, you can be very comfortable and

¹² NB: In Mandarin, 'complicated' (复杂) often has negative associations, connoting craftiness or trouble.

¹³ SIVC01c21

at ease [舒服自在]. [...] Oh, there was one emotion that influenced me, that is, I felt that when I was in America every aspect of my personality [个性] was liberated [解放]. [...] Liberated, really not restrained or ashamed. A lot of my friends also had the same emotion, that is, after we went to the USA, [we] felt a lot of our individuality was really released, then when we returned to China it slowly started to be restrained again [开始满满地收回来了].¹⁴

Two women of similar ages, both living in Shenzhen, married to Westerners (one still married, the other divorced), had very different views on many issues (e.g. China's political system, the USA, Japan, Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang);¹⁵ perhaps counter-intuitively, it was the divorcee who had more favourable views of the West. For example:

I remember, I think it was in Utah or South Dakota, somewhere in the Midwest, we stopped in a very small fast food restaurant and we were lining up for lunch [...] I saw three police, two men and one woman walking into the restaurant, lining up, with their guns, their electronic sticks [=batons]. [...] And they were lining up. And they paid! Do you understand what I'm saying, right?

[Interviewer: And this was unusual for you?]

¹⁴ IVC04

¹⁵ SIVN09b, SIVN09d.

It's, yeah, it was very impressive. I knew that [...] the foundation of America, the spirit, the fundamental spirit of America is about equality, freedom, and respect and independence, but this, the police, waiting up in a tiny local restaurant really impressed me.¹⁶

One respondent had spent several years living in Russia, which he perceived as weakly governed, chaotic, corrupt, and racist, with very unequal distribution of wealth and no protection of citizens' rights.¹⁷ His experience led him to see Russia as a negative example of what happens when a communist regime falls, and he was therefore a supporter of continued CCP rule in China.¹⁸

The current system as a whole relatively suits China's national situation [国情], but I'm saying there are some sectors that need to be improved [改善]. Because regarding your [sic] American-style democracy, it suits America's system, but it doesn't certainly suit all countries. You have a look at Russia, it's the same. America spent a lot of effort to turn them into a presidential parliamentary system [总统议会制], but now they are going back to the previous one; it's not suitable.¹⁹

¹⁶ SIVN09d

¹⁷ SIVN02a1

¹⁸ Brady discusses the role of the fall of the USSR as a negative example in China's party-state propaganda. See *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*. p.175

¹⁹ SIVN02a1.

Two respondents with experience of studying abroad shared the view that national greatness equates to personal respect; China needs to be strong, otherwise Chinese people themselves will get looked down upon when they go abroad:

In the UK when we were studying a unit on the economy, [we would] certainly talk about China, then almost all of the Europeans would curse [骂] China, saying the present economic crisis is because of Chinese or China, that is, I think this was unfair, right? Because I myself do trade, I'm very clear on a lot of things. Now, I think that 20 years' time China should obtain more respect [尊重], and understanding [理解]. Then it will certainly need to be stronger. Because [...] another point which I've also firmly believed [坚信] is that individual respect comes from the strength of the country [个人的尊重来自于国家的强大], that is, individual development comes from whether or not one's own country is strong. That is, if the country is strong your personal development will be better, [...] but if the country isn't [strong] then your personal development will be very limited.²⁰

You need to have a respected position in the world. Otherwise when you immigrate you'll be looked down upon by the locals. You'll not be respected or treated equally.²¹

²⁰ SIVN02a

²¹ SIVN09c

Another respondent, a fierce critic of the CCP and of China's political system, was in San Francisco during the 2008 Olympic torch relay:

That is, 2008 was the year in which Tibetan independence was most fiercely agitated [闹得最凶]. [...] I remember especially clearly that previously, at the very start, a lot of people asked me, "Hey! When the Olympic torch comes to San Francisco, do you want to watch?" I said, "No, no, no," it wasn't interesting. But then later, you know, that torch went to France and the UK, at that time, when there were a lot of Tibetan people going to attack those people, I was very angry, very angry, I thought that at that time it was just like my family members had been bullied [就像我的家人受到欺负]. Then we all went to San Francisco. [...] I remember at that time there were a lot of foreigners [洋人], that is, local American people, they maybe completely didn't understand this matter, they all took that Tibetan independence flag there. Then, I took a Chinese flag, and toppled over their flag. That is to say, although I have so many areas about which I am dissatisfied, if someone wants to take [them] away, although I will be dissatisfied with my child, but you cannot [take?] my child for yourself, it belongs to me.²²

It is therefore difficult to generalise a direct relationship between respondents' experiences abroad and their own national identity narrative. The effect that a

²² SIVN09d2

sustained period of interaction with foreigners has on respondents' views seems bound up with the context of that foreign interaction, the other cultures and nationalities with whom they interacted, and, probably, their own ideational predispositions. Indeed, the causality is not unambiguously mono-directional: whilst in some of the above examples, respondents' views clearly were influenced by their experiences with other cultures, it may also be the case that for some, the decision to go abroad or interact with foreigners was driven by a certain mind-set - perhaps more open, perhaps more instrumental - regarding the outside world.

The data does, however, suggest a link between Christianity and foreign interaction. As previously mentioned, a higher proportion of Christians than those of other affiliations have had deep or sustained interaction with foreigners. (52% to 26%, respectively, replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen) (Table 25). It is now necessary to investigate the causality here: Have respondents become Christians as a result of interacting with foreigners? Or do Christian respondents tend to interact with foreigners more because they are Christians?

To test this I looked over Christian respondents' interview transcripts, in particular their accounts of conversion and of their interaction with foreigners since, and coded interactions with foreigners along two different metrics. The first metric was the extent to which a respondent's interactions with foreigners caused them to become a Christian: None (indicating no relationship at all), Weak (indicating some foreign influence over the respondents' decision to convert, such as attendance at a talk with a foreign evangelist), or Strong (indicating significant foreign influence over

the respondent's decision to convert, such as sustained attendance at a church abroad, or sustained interaction with foreign Christians). The second metric was the extent to which a respondent interacted with foreigners as a result of her being a Christian: None (indicating no extra interaction), Weak (indicating some extra interaction with foreigners as a result of a respondent's Christian belief, such as knowing foreigners from church), and Strong (indicating significant extra interaction as a result of being a Christian, such as going abroad specifically for a Christian conference or mission trip, sustained attendance at a church abroad or an international service in China, or working for a Christian organisation). The results can be found in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Foreign Interaction as a Result or Cause of Christian belief

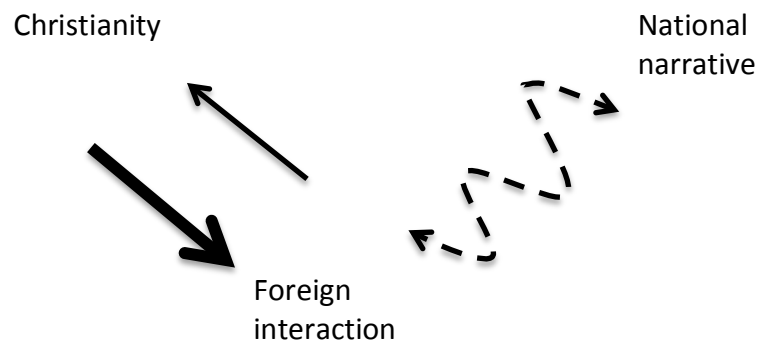
<i>(n=50)</i>		% of respondents experiencing foreign interaction stemming from Christian belief			
% of respondents experiencing foreign interaction leading to Christian belief		None	Weak	Strong	Total
	None	0%	46%	18%	64%
	Weak	2%	0%	6%	8%
	Strong	2%	12%	14%	28%
	Total	4%	58%	38%	100%

This table shows us that for 64% of respondents, their decision to become a Christian was not influenced by any interaction with foreigners. For 8% of respondents, foreign interaction had a weak influence over their conversion. For 28% of

respondents, their decision to become Christian was strongly influenced by some kind of interaction with foreigners.

Likewise, 4% of Christians had no extra interaction with foreigners as a result of their decision to become Christians; 58% had some extra weak interaction with foreigners, such as meeting foreigners at church. 38% had some extra significant interaction deriving from their Christian belief. The findings of this table therefore point to Christian respondents' extra interactions with foreigners as *primarily a result of them being Christians* rather than a cause of them being Christians.

In summary, the data does not support the view that Christians hold the views they do – relative political disaffection, a positive attitude towards democracy, more concern with morality and Christianity and less with economics, and a more forbearing standpoint on international and territorial issues– because they have had more interaction with foreigners. Interaction with foreigners can cause one's ideas about China to go in any number of different directions, and even this line of causality is not certain in all cases. Foreign interaction has been a causal factor in a significant proportion of respondents' decisions to become Christians. However, more commonly, it has been respondents' Christian belief that has brought them into contact with foreigners. These relationships are summarised in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Foreign Interaction, Christianity, and National Narratives

(Size and weight of arrow indicates strength of relationship.)

c. Christians are a group of self-selecting contrarians

I now examine the argument that rather than respondents' Christian faith causing them to hold certain views about Chinese society and politics, it is people who hold certain views on Chinese society and politics who are drawn to Christianity in the first place.

An examination of Christians' conversion narratives shows that two respondents did convert out of an explicit rejection of societal norms.²³ One of these became a Christian after a moral crisis, which began when she witnessed three executions by lethal injection whilst on an internship at a prosecutor's office:

When I started, I thought that studying Law could help me to know what was good and what was bad, what was right and what was wrong. If I only knew the law, I would know what to do. But then after I had studied Law I discovered it wasn't like that. I held a lot of my values because they had been taught to me by teachers at

²³ IVC11, SIVC06b

university. After a few situations²⁴ these were shattered. My worldview totally collapsed. Then I continued to search for a value system [价值观], but I couldn't find one. I started to doubt everything, and I didn't believe [anything].²⁵

But for others, their decision to convert may have been a more implicit indication of disaffection.²⁶ A decision to become a Christian because of the love, peace, meaning and community Christianity offers may imply that the respondent did not find it elsewhere (see Table 21). For example, 18% of respondents chose to become Christians because they observed that Christians and their values were different from those of the rest of society (Table 21); this implies that the respondents were not completely satisfied with society's values. This fits the findings of Yang who argues that,

For Chinese converts, Christianity is a faith that provides peace, certainty, and liberation amid bewildering market forces and a stifling political atmosphere.²⁷

An interesting point of contrast of my data with Yang's findings is that none of my respondents explicitly said they converted to Christianity because they saw it as something associated with 'modernity' (现代). Respondents did, however, associate 'modernity' with rule of law,²⁸ universal values,²⁹ freedom of speech³⁰ and the

²⁴ This word is unclear on the recording.

²⁵ IVC011.

²⁶ Hunter and Chan, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*. p.278.

²⁷ "Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China." p.425.

²⁸ IVC01121, IVC0112111

West,³¹ the latter not always in a positive sense. Only two respondents linked Christianity with modernity: one, a Christian, argued that Christianity is a necessary precondition for the establishment of modern rule of law,³² and the other, not a religious believer, said that Christianity teaches kindness, which is important in order for people in modern society to get along with each other.³³ I suspect that this discrepancy may be because since the time of Yang's study (2000 to 2003), 'modernity' has dropped in terms of its salience in official and public discourse.³⁴ Further study will be needed to ascertain whether this is the case.

It is interesting that most respondents began to believe at university (63% of those from Beijing and 54% of those from Shenzhen) (Table 19). For many respondents, going to university involved a move away from home and parental pressure and influence. Students at university have more free time than they did in upper-middle school when they were preparing for the infamous college entrance exam (高考). In addition, they have growing cognitive capacity combined with more access to information.³⁵ The latter includes more contact with foreigners (as described above), new ideas, and rapidly-developing forms of media such as online forums or BBS,

²⁹ IVC011213

³⁰ IVC0112132, IVN092

³¹ SIVC07b, SIVC07c1, IVN092, IVN14b, SIVN081, SIVN09c

³² IVC01121

³³ SIVN082

³⁴ See also Susan D Blum, *Portraits of "Primitives": Ordering Human Kinds in the Chinese Nation* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001). Blum (whose research took place in the 1990s) notes the dominant status of the discourse of 'modernity.' However, only 30 of my interview answers contained references to 'modernity' or 'modern'; in contrast, respondents mentioned 'democracy' or derivative terms in 155 interview answers (see Chapter 4).

³⁵ See Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. pp.66, 75, 83.

Weibo,³⁶ and WeChat. One respondent described the transition in her thinking that occurred at university, using a mixture of Mandarin and English:

When I was studying, before college in high school, because in high school I really, really believed the things they talked about in the books, you know, in the textbooks, something good about the Chinese government or something like that, I really, really believed in it. When I went to college I touched [= came into contact with] something outside the textbooks, I know they are all lies, really lies. I feel very lucky to find it out. [...] That is, when I was at high school, I really believed these things, but when I was at university, I didn't believe any of it any more. [...] You know, where you're in high school, you just study, study, study for college, for going to the college. But when you go to the college your world is bigger, bigger than before when you're in high school, so you know something you don't know, or you don't expect. [...] When I got to high school and college, the internet had developed very well. [...] We know some more things and my friends told me [...] that a lot of the war against Japan was fought by the Kuomintang [...] They did it, they fought, it wasn't the CCP who fought. [...] I think it was the internet that really plays this role. Another point was maybe my age.

³⁶ 'Weibo' (微博) is the Chinese word for micro-blog.

Because when you go to college it means you are mature, right?

You're more mature, you might have your own opinions.³⁷

In addition, church groups in China are, within tightly controlled limits, legally permitted to proselytise to over-18s,³⁸ meaning that for several respondents, university was the first chance they had to come into contact with Christianity.³⁹

In other words, as elsewhere in the world, university is often a time of questioning previously-held beliefs and experimenting with new things. One Beijing respondent described her process of becoming a Christian:

I hadn't been at university very long. At middle school, life had been simple. There were a lot of opinions that I hadn't had the time to understand; I read books and studied relatively simply. But after I arrived at university, it was like all of sudden there was no big homework stress, so opinions which I had previously suppressed [now] sprang up [冒出来], that is, "What is the significance of life?", this kind of [question]. Then I saw that a lot of classmates around me, they were working hard towards things that they themselves considered important. For example, a lot of classmates participated in all kinds of groups, or some classmates wanted to go abroad, some classmates wanted to study, and so on.

³⁷ IVN092. This respondent is was not a Christian. This illustrates the probabilistic of the argument I make below: that although those with contrarian attitudes are more likely to convert to Christianity, it is not absolutely certain that they will.

³⁸ Yang, "Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China." p.430. Yang notes that Christians do evangelise outside of these legal constraints (as my next quotation also demonstrates).

³⁹ IVC011, IVC0112, IVC04, IVC04b, IVC04b3, IVC01111, IVC01121, IVC011212, IVC0112132, SIVC01a, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b12, SVC01121, SIVC01c21, SIVC06a, SIVC06b, SIVC06c1, SIVC07b, SIVC07b1

Also, some started dating, but I thought that I myself didn't know what do to do [不知道怎么样], I saw that each person had things that they thought were significant but I myself [...], did I also want this sort of [thing], or what did I want? Anyway, at that time, about a month after I had started university, that is, I saw people around me hurrying around [忙来忙去]. Then one afternoon, around noon, I was doing my homework in my dormitory, then some older girls [师姐] came [in]. They were using a questionnaire survey to preach the gospel. [...] When I heard they were Christians I was particularly happy, because I hadn't encountered Christians before. I always really wanted to know what this belief actually was [about]. Then I welcomed them in, then I filled in the form they gave me, then they started to talk with me [...], then afterwards they brought out [a Christian tract]. [...] Then I said "I'm willing", it was like this, then I went church and [did] other activities then I started to read the Bible for myself, and pray, it was like this.⁴⁰

The above discussion would seem to suggest that for many respondents, it is primarily the development of questioning, critical values that led to them embracing Christian belief, rather than their Christian belief leading them to develop such values.⁴¹

⁴⁰ IVC04b

⁴¹ This support's Inglehart's argument that in post-communist societies (in which he includes China), it is the unhappy and disaffected who embrace religion. See "Faith and Freedom: Traditional and Modern Ways to Happiness," in *International Differences in Well-Being*, ed. Ed Diener, John F. Helliwell, and Daniel Kahneman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

What is the attraction of Christianity for those disillusioned with the state of China's society and politics? Firstly, Christianity gives them a coherent narrative framework with which to make sense of the world, and of China, particularly their frustrations with the status quo;⁴² it provides a normative framework to guide them in making moral choices in life, and to develop a sense of moral agency;⁴³ it enables them to be part of a community of shared trust and norms at a time when generalized social trust in China is perceived to be low;⁴⁴ it provides them with opportunities to serve, to organize, and to lead.⁴⁵ Finally, it enables them to participate in the task of changing China and making it a better place – by preaching the gospel they intend to change people's hearts, which will then lead to positive social changes such as improved morality and decreased corruption.⁴⁶ I will discuss the relationship between Christians' belief, their activism and their sense of agency further in Chapter 7.

The exception here seems to be for those who became Christians when they were children – 7 respondents, or 14% of my Christian sample (Table 19). For these respondents it makes more sense to draw the causal arrow in the opposite direction. Even for this group, however, deciding to become a Christian entailed critically evaluating what they were being taught at home and church against the claims of China's atheistic education system:

⁴² SIVC07c1, IVC011, SIVC06b.

⁴³ IVC0112131, SIVC01b21. See also Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China*. I discuss this further in Chapter 7.

⁴⁴ SIVC01c2, IVC05.

⁴⁵ IVC011, SIVC01b2, IVC05.

⁴⁶ IVC05, IVC0112131, IVC04b2.

When I was very young I simply believed [单纯地相信], I followed my Mum in believing that there was a Lord. But when I had grown a bit older, I started to study. When I was studying, Chinese education tells you that there is no God. So at that time, when I was at elementary school I was very resistant [很反抗] to Mum telling me there was a God. [...] But later I went to a young people's Sunday school [青少年的主日学]. [...] I slowly felt the Lord's love [慢慢地感受到主的爱], I felt the love from the people around me [身边的人的爱]. At that time I wanted to understand the Lord more, then later I believed in the Lord.⁴⁷

It should be pointed out here that the two causal directions are not mutually exclusive; an individual with a questioning attitude to the values promoted by the party-state's national narrative on a spiritual search becomes a Christian and joins a church full of other social and political disaffecteds, who then reinforce her existing values, perhaps aided by Christian moral teaching.⁴⁸ In the case of Shouwang Church's members, it is highly likely that the conflict they experienced with the Beijing authorities in Spring 2011 served to amplify any pre-existing negative views they may have felt towards the Party-state and political system. I will discuss this case in my examination of Protestants' social and political activity in Chapter 6.

⁴⁷ SIVC01b21

⁴⁸ Although few respondents explicitly mentioned discussing these issues with church friends. IVC04 was one exception.

There is an interesting parallel here between respondents who have converted to Christianity and those who have joined the Communist Party. In both cases, the majority of decisions to become an adherent happen at university (Table 27). However, there is a stark contrast between Party member respondents' reasons for joining the Party and Christian respondents' reasons for converting to Christianity. 20 of my respondents were current Party members, and a further 5 had been members in the past but had since left the Party (Table 26). Of the 20 current Party members, 50% of them said that they had joined the Party to help them with their future career advancement, whereas only 20% said they had joined for ideological reasons (Table 28):

If you're excellent enough, the teachers will let you enter the Party, then you may also think that entering the party represents the fact that you are excellent. But not many people will tell you that to join the party is to choose a kind of political belief.⁴⁹

In terms of their views on four of the key areas discussed in the previous chapter – levels of concern with democracy and political disaffection, levels of concern with economics, the spread of Christianity in China, and levels of international and territorial assertiveness – the views of Party members diverge markedly from those of their non-Party member demographic peers, and in the opposite direction to the way in which the views of Christians diverge from those of their non-Christian demographic peers (Table 29). Relative to non-Party members, higher proportions of Party members: articulated personal material goals for the next 20 years, such as

⁴⁹ IVN09

buying a house or earning more money; stated a hope that China's economy would grow in the next 20 years; said that they were proud of China's economic growth; commented negatively on the USA's international behaviour; said the USA was a hegemon or the world police; and said that Taiwan was part of China. Likewise, fewer Party members: said they wanted China to become more democratic in the next 20 years; said that China's political system should be changed; said that the USA was China's ally; or stated that China should forgive Japan for its wartime atrocities.⁵⁰ In other words, somewhat unsurprisingly, Party members were closer in their views to the official national narrative than were non-Party members.

This also holds true for the one area in which the values of Party members diverged from their non-Party demographic peers in the same direction to that in which the values of Christians diverged from their non-Christian demographic peers, namely their views on morality. When asked what they would like China to be like in 20 years' time, a higher proportion of Party members (35%) than non-Party members mentioned morality (20%). Likewise, a higher percentage of Party members in both the Christian and comparison groups said that they were ashamed of morality in China.⁵¹ Interestingly, the proportions of Party members raising these issues were similar to the proportions of Christians. 28% of Christians and 35% of Party members mentioned morality when articulating their hopes for China; 30% of Christians and

⁵⁰ To ensure that the differences were not just because the 'non-party' sample contained a higher proportion of Christians, I then compared opinions of Party members and non-members within the Christian and comparison groups (see Table 30). Within the comparison group all of the differences described hold true, with the exception that similar proportions of Party members and non-members articulated a hope for economic growth, and said that Taiwan was part of China. Within the Christian group there was more variation, but as there were only four Party members here, it was difficult to draw any firm conclusions from this comparison.

⁵¹ This difference disappears when Party members are compared to non-Party members in the aggregate because of the higher proportions of Christians (Party members and non-Party members) who raised the issue.

25% of Party members said that morality was something about China of which they were ashamed (Table 29 cf. Tables 6 and 10).

Party members, then, tend to hold views that are closer to those of official nationalism in terms of support for the present political system, concern with economic growth, international and territorial assertiveness, and morality, and less concern with democracy and Christianity. Are these values a result, or a cause, of their Party membership?

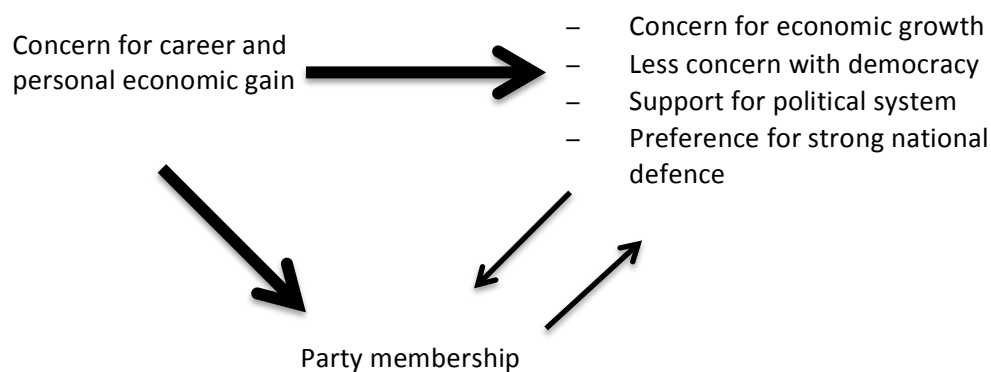
As already noted, 50% of Party member respondents joined in the first place for reasons of career advancement (Table 28). This fits the finding that 55% of Party members voiced some kind of personal material or economic goal for the next 20 years, compared to just 16% of non-Party members. The implication of this data is that it is those who are relatively more concerned with material gain who are attracted to join the Party.

Returning to Inglehart, he demonstrates that those respondents who chose the answer 'a good salary' when asked about what they looked for in a job also tended to prioritise concern with economic growth, social stability, and strong national defence forces over values such as more say in one's job, a less impersonal society, more say in government, and freedom of speech.⁵² In other words, individuals who

⁵² Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Fig 2-2, p.46; Fig 2-4, p.56; See also Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): pp.19–51.pp. 19-51, Table 3., p.27 in which preference for a good salary over job fulfilment is linked to, amongst other things, emphasis on material possessions, political acquiescence, an unfavourable view of democracy. It should, however, be noted that this is national-level, not individual-level data.

tend to be concerned for personal economic gain and security tend also to be concerned with national economic gain and security. If Inglehart's arguments are valid (and they are not without their critics),⁵³ this would imply that it is this constellation of values – concern for personal economic gain, national economic growth, and strong national defence,⁵⁴ less concern with freedom of speech and democracy that are present before an individual joins the Party. As, however, only 20% of Party member respondents said that they had joined the Party for ideological reasons, it can be tentatively concluded that personal considerations were more of a causal factor than the values relating to the wider national narrative in an individual's decision to join the Party. As with Christianity, the causality is not necessarily mono-directional: joining an organisation comprised largely of people who share one's values may have a reinforcement effect on those pre-existing values. This causality is illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Personal Values, National Narrative, and Party Membership



(Size and weight of arrow indicates strength of relationship.)

⁵³ Clive Bean and Elim Papadakis, "Polarized Priorities or Flexible Alternatives? Dimensionality in Inglehart's Materialism-Postmaterialism Scale," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 6, no. 3 (September 01, 1994): pp.264–288, doi:10.1093/ijpor/6.3.264; Guy Moors and Jeroen Vermunt, "Heterogeneity in Post-Materialist Value Priorities. Evidence from a Latent Class Discrete Choice Approach," *European Sociological Review* 23, no. 5 (June 28, 2007): pp.631–648, doi:10.1093/esr/jcm027.

⁵⁴ Which presumably carries with it a concomitant emphasis on territorial sovereignty and a hawkish attitude towards those, such as the USA and Japan, who might be perceived as seeking to violate it.

In contrast to Christian respondents, no Party members claimed to have joined the CCP out of a sense of concern with society's morality. This might tentatively point towards a process of sensitisation to moral concerns occurring *after* a respondent's entry into the Party. In this regard, one respondent mentioned the fact that as a Party member, he needs to be more disciplined and self-controlled⁵⁵; another told me about a recent CCP document that he had studied at his company's Party organisation, which emphasised that:

as a Party member you need to exhibit a kind of vanguard model
[先锋模仿] role. So in daily work you need to walk in front, do
things more actively, be [...] a role model [榜样的作用].⁵⁶

Both of these examples point to some form of moral instruction occurring after joining the Party. This may have had the effect of sensitising members to perceived moral deficiencies elsewhere in society, as may the act of belonging to an organisation with strong guiding principles that, as stated above, views itself as responsible for the moral state of China.

Whilst discussing Party members, it is finally worth mentioning respondents who were both Christians and Party members. The first thing to note, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, is that far fewer of the Christian sample were Party members than their demographic peers (Table 26). This is to be expected, given the diverging values of Christians and Party members outlined above. Furthermore, also as outlined in

⁵⁵ SIVN14a

⁵⁶ SIVN03

Chapter 6, several Christian respondents said that they did not want to join the Party because they felt that joining a party based on atheistic principles would conflict with their Christian belief.⁵⁷ Only one respondent became a Party member after she had become a Christian.⁵⁸

Secondly, of the 7 Christians who originally were Party members, 3 have since left.⁵⁹ In 2 out of 3 cases it was because their Party identity did not transfer when they changed jobs, and they did not bother to chase it up;⁶⁰ in the remaining case, the respondent stopped communicating with the Party and paying the fee.⁶¹ None of them explicitly cited their faith as a reason for leaving, but it is likely that this contributed to their reticence in sorting out the necessary paperwork.

Because the numbers are so small, it is difficult to make meaningful statistical comparisons between the views of Christian Party members, other Christians, and other Party members. A larger study of these 'Christian communists' would be a very interesting and valuable endeavour.

3. Summary of explanations

In summary, then, formative affluence does not explain variation between Christians and their demographic peers, as both have similar breakdowns of parental occupational background, but different values informing their national narratives.

⁵⁷ IVC04b, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b111, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b1111, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c1, SIVC06b1

⁵⁸ IVC01111

⁵⁹ SIVN04, SIVC01b11, SIVC01c2

⁶⁰ SIVN04, SIVC01b11

⁶¹ SIVC01c2

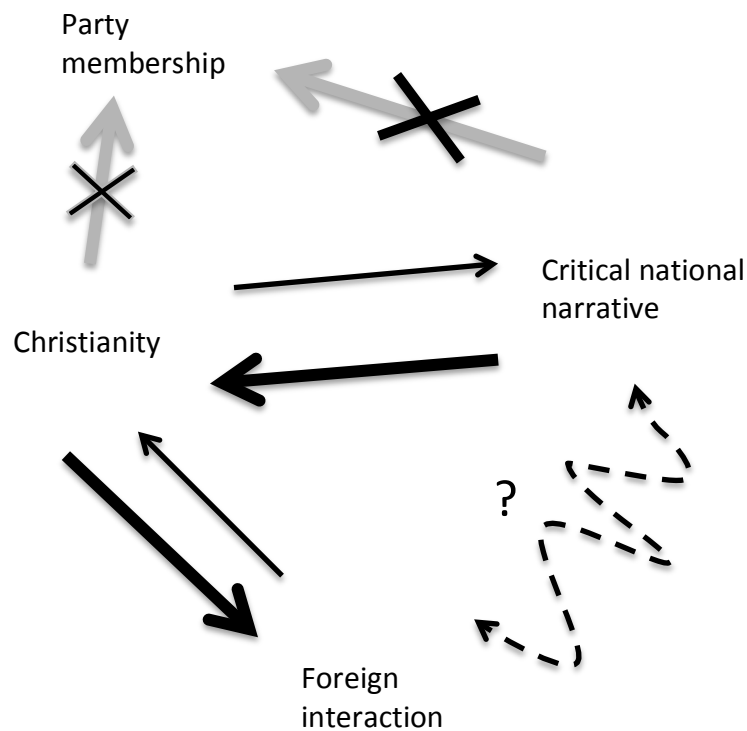
The fact Christians have more deep interaction with foreigners does not explain the variation, either. Interaction with foreigners can have a variety of effects on one's national narrative, and causality can run both ways. For Christians, increased foreign interaction is more often a result of their faith than a cause of it.

The argument that Christians are self-selecting contrarians carries weight. A minority of respondents had family members who were Christians and brought them up going to church; these respondents came to faith at a young age, and most probably developed a critical national narrative later in life. However, the majority of respondents converted later in life; for some, this was out of an explicit rejection of the value that they perceived to be informing China's society and politics, whilst for others, this sense of dissatisfaction was more subtle and tacit. It was often at university that these issues surfaced, and that respondents decided to become Christians.⁶² It was also at university where the majority of respondents who were Party members joined the Party. These were generally people who held the values contrary to those of the individuals who were drawn to Christianity: a desire for personal material gain, a concern with economic growth, a supportive view of the political system, and assertiveness on international and territorial issues. Joining the Party did serve to inculcate a strong moral sense, one that both Party members and Christians share, although, as outlined above, there are important differences in the way the different groups think about moral issues.

⁶² I am not saying *all* individuals with critical values became Christians, but merely that it was those who held such values who were *more likely* to become Christians. My comparison group contained a number of respondents who held such values but had not become Christians: IVN04, IVN04b1b, IVN04b1b1, IVN092, IVN103, SIVN06aa1, SIVN09d, SIVN09d1.

These relationships may be represented graphically as follows:

Figure 9: Christianity and National Narratives



(Size and weight of arrow indicates strength of relationship.)

Key



Positive relationship



Negative relationship

4. Conclusion: Implications for state-society relations in China

The growth of Christianity amongst China's young urban professionals is one symptom of the emergence of a constituency with very different priorities to those of the party-state. Whilst an official nationalist narrative that emphasises a strong, CCP-led state, economic growth, and international and territorial assertiveness may

indeed currently resonate with a majority of China's overall population,⁶³ a significant proportion of my respondents are not buying it any more.

As Yan Yunxiang notes, in the reform era Chinese society has undergone a process of individualisation.⁶⁴ 'The rise of the individual'⁶⁵ is not a threat to the party-state-led political status quo insofar as it is the materialistic individual who rises⁶⁶ – one who strives for economic benefits for herself and her family, prioritises a stable and prosperous living environment, and supports, or at least does not oppose, the Chinese Party-state both domestically and internationally, whilst displaying high personal *suzhi*.⁶⁷

However, the results presented in this chapter attest to the rise of the critical individual,⁶⁸ who has different priorities – the ability to shape her life through participation in political decisions, the freedom to debate intellectual ideas in an unrestricted way, the opportunity to belong to a morally cohesive community, the

⁶³ Vickers, "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimisation of China's Developmental Strategy"; Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*; Wang, "Public Support for Democracy in China."

⁶⁴ Yan, "The Changing Moral Landscape." pp.40, 69.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.69.

⁶⁶ Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, "Foreword: Varieties of Individualization," in *iChina: The Rise of the Individual in Modern Chinese Society*, ed. Mette Halskov Hansen and Rune Svarverud (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2010). pp.xviii-xix.

⁶⁷ This paradox is captured by Mette Halskov Hansen, "Learning Individualism: Hesse, Confucius, and Pep-Rallies in a Chinese Rural High School," *The China Quarterly* 213 (2013): pp.60–77.:

The self-promoting, self-reliant, and at the same time obedient, disciplined individual is promoted through various organized activities at school. [...] The one-party leadership requires loyalty from its citizens, while simultaneously it heads a modernized state in which the promotion of liberal economics depends on innovation and, to an ever-increasing extent, on the self-reliance of individuals. In this political landscape, the state school and the teachers and administrators running it struggle to find suitable means to define the moral person and to convey the message in a meaningful way to students. (p.63)

⁶⁸ I use 'critical individuals' as distinct from Norris's concept of 'critical citizens', which primarily refers to those disaffected with representative institutions in established or newly-established democracies. Pippa Norris, "Introduction: The Growth of Critical Citizens?," in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*, ed. Pippa Norris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). pp.1-2.

scope to find more satisfying answers to life's questions than those provided by official ideology – and raises demands that the party-state is currently not meeting, and indeed may not be able to meet without significant political reform.⁶⁹

The rise of the critical individual, and the consequent pluralisation of national narratives – ways of talking about China and its place in the world – reflect the changes in Chinese society: higher levels of economic security, education, and information, in an atmosphere of modest improvements in free speech, both in private and online, in which the party-state prefers to guide and selectively respond to public opinion through more subtle and skilful means than it had previously employed.⁷⁰

Ironically, however, this greater access to information has given citizens a greater awareness of continued restrictions on information, free speech, and political participation, as well as of government corruption. The 2011 Wenzhou train crash, cited by many respondents⁷¹ is an example of this: it was through new forms of social media that many respondents found out about the crash and also became aware of alleged government cover-up attempts.

⁶⁹ Yan, "The Changing Moral Landscape." p.70.

⁷⁰ Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*; J Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy*, Contemporary Asia in the World (Columbia University Press, 2013).

⁷¹ IVC0112, IVC04, IVC04B3, IVC05, IVC06, IVC0112111, IVN09211, IVN112, IVN14e, SIVC06c1, SIVN06aa11

It is in this uncomfortable in-between world – where respondents have a measure of freedom, which has made them cognisant of the lack of freedom, in which new demands have been created but not fulfilled – that Christianity is growing.

This raises the question of whether Protestantism provides a source of stability or contention in Chinese society. On the one hand, it may act as a channel for the organisational and intellectual energies of those disaffected people who might otherwise put their abilities towards more direct political action. On the other hand, it provides both a powerful counter-narrative to make sense of individuals' hitherto amorphous feelings of disaffection and to guide normative response, and an organisational framework linking together like-minded people; factors which, when combined, may feed contrarian action. I investigate this question in Chapters 6 and 7.

However, I first want to investigate Christians' opinions about politics in more detail. In the previous chapter, we established that, relative to their demographic peers, Christians hold attitudes that are more contrarian towards the Party-state and more positive about democracy and freedom. In the next chapter, I will disaggregate respondents' political opinions into their component parts according to Jie Chen's schema – namely, low politics orientations, specific support, high politics orientations and diffuse support. I will attempt to see how these parts interrelate and whether respondents' Christian faith has anything to do with this interrelation.

Chapter 4

Christianity and Political Support (I): Results

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that one of the ways in which Protestants diverge from the national narrative promoted by the Party-state is in their relatively contrarian opinions towards China's current political arrangements and their positive inclinations towards democracy. In this chapter I will unpack these attitudes further, disaggregating Christians' political opinions into their constituent parts, and analysing their interaction with each other, and with respondents' faith.

I will concentrate on four main areas, according to Jie Chen's schema:¹ low politics orientations (what respondents think about everyday political issues), specific support (opinions about the current local and central governments), high politics orientations (opinions on issues such as elections, free speech, and the free market), and diffuse support (views of China's political system and ruling Communist Party). I will also examine Christians' levels of political tolerance, and their views of democracy, in terms of the salience and content of the concept.

I will argue that regarding low politics, relatively high proportions of respondents perceived improvements in their living conditions and social statuses, and low proportions of respondents perceived improvements in levels of inequality and corruption. These findings were consistent across cities and religious affiliations. On

¹ Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*. Chen's schema draws on concepts earlier developed by David Easton.

aggregate, across all areas, lower proportions of Shenzhen Christians perceived improvements in low politics issues relative to all other groups. Regarding specific support, Christians generally demonstrated lower levels of support for the central government, but not for their local governments, opinions of which largely depend on city location.

In terms of high politics orientations, Christians demonstrated similar levels of liberalism to their demographic peers, with the exception of the area of freedom of organisation, for which Christians were noticeably more liberal. They also demonstrated similar overall levels of political tolerance to their demographic peers: Christians were more tolerant of Tibetan separatists whereas non-Christians were more tolerant of those promoting gay marriage.

Christians showed lower levels of diffuse support, in terms of their opinions of the political system. They were also less supportive of the Communist Party; their most common criticism was that its core beliefs were weak, a criticism that fits in with Christians' concern with the moral state of Chinese society discussed in Chapter 2.

Finally, Christians talked more about democracy but did not differ greatly from their demographic peers in the terms in which they discussed it. In terms of conceptions of democracy, both Christians and comparison group members who discussed democracy tended towards liberal, rather than populist conceptions and procedural, rather than substantive conceptions. I argue that this conceptual commonality supports the causal view presented in the last chapter that primarily it is

Protestantism that attracts those from wider society who are democratically inclined, rather than causing Christians to embrace democratic ideals after conversion. These findings are shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Political Orientation, Political Support, and Religious Affiliation

Area	Difference
Low politics	Christians less positive (Shenzhen only)
Specific support: Local government	Shenzheners show higher support No religious difference
Specific support: Central government	Christians show lower support
High Politics	Similar levels of liberalism Except for freedom of organisation, on which Christians are more liberal
Tolerance	Similar overall levels of tolerance Christians more tolerant of Tibetan separatists, less tolerant of gay marriage advocates
Diffuse support: Political system	Christians show lower support
Diffuse support: Party	Christians show lower support
Democracy salience	Democracy more salient for Christians; Similar concepts of democracy for both groups

I end this chapter by observing that overall, respondents generally held more favourable views of local government, slightly less favourable views of central government, and even less favourable views of the political system and Communist Party; when this finding is disaggregated by religious affiliation, it is amongst the Christians that this tendency is most pronounced. This is in contrast to previous studies, which have found that in China, people tend to trust central government and the CCP more than their local government. I posit that this may be due to Beijing and Shenzhen having wealthier, more efficient local governments than other places in China, and also to the spread of technology such as Weibo, which makes it

easier to see local abuses as systemic and more difficult for the central government to claim a lack of awareness or responsibility.

In the following chapter, I then examine the links between these political opinions to see how, and indeed whether, they fit into the model proposed by Jie Chen outlined in my literature review.

2. Findings

a. Low politics orientations

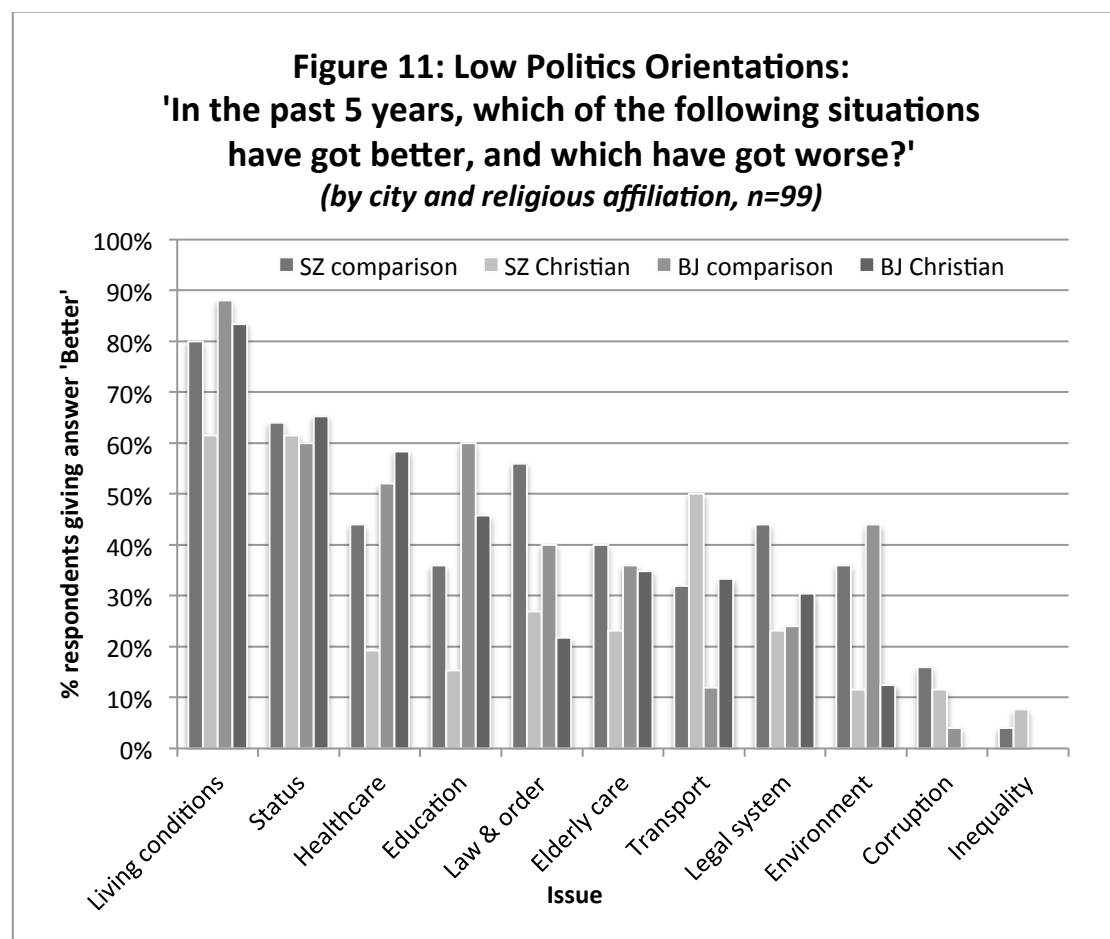
During the interviews, I presented respondents with 11 everyday political issues:

- The respondent's own living conditions (income, housing etc.)
- The respondent's own social status (work position, etc.)
- Law and order
- Healthcare
- Education
- Environmental protection
- The condition of the elderly
- Transport
- Inequality
- Corruption
- The legal system²

² This list is roughly based on that in Ibid. pp.37-49.

For each issue, I asked them to choose whether they thought the situation had improved, deteriorated or stayed the same in the past five years. My results are displayed in Table 31.

A lower percentage of Christians said that an above-average number of situations (4 or more) had improved, compared to their demographic peers. However, when disaggregated by cities, this difference was only present in Shenzhen, and not in Beijing.



When broken down issue-by-issue across the four groups - Beijing Christian, Beijing Comparison, Shenzhen Christian and Shenzhen Comparison - an interesting pattern emerges (see Figure 11). In terms of the proportions of respondents saying that an

issue had improved over the past five years, respondents' personal living conditions and social statuses came top across both religious affiliations and cities.³ Conversely, inequality and corruption came bottom. For the former, however, more Shenzhen respondents perceived an improvement, a difference replicated in both Christian and comparison groups.

In between these two extremes were a cluster of issues for which the proportions of respondents saying they had improved varied between cities and religious affiliations: More of the comparison group said that law and order and the environment had improved, a finding replicated in both Shenzhen and Beijing. More of the comparison group and more Beijing respondents said that education had improved. In contrast, more Christian respondents and Shenzhen respondents said that transport had improved. Both of the previous findings were replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen, and across Christian and comparison groups. On the issues of healthcare and the condition of the elderly, similar proportions of all groups said that they had improved, except for the Shenzhen Christian group, whose proportion was lower.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from differences in opinion on these interim issues; given that there seems to be no across-the-board consensus, such discrepancies are most probably down to a combination of differences in localised policies and provision (even between different districts or neighbourhoods of the same city), and varying personal experiences.

³ It should be noted here that a lower proportion of Shenzhen Christian respondents perceived improvements in their living conditions (62%; the proportions of the other three groups were all higher than 80%).

However, corruption (腐败) and inequality (贫富差距) were sources of discontent that respondents often raised, even in response to questions in which I did not ask about these issues explicitly; and respondents often linked them together.⁴ The following two responses are answers to the question: What is the biggest issue facing China?

I think the biggest issue facing China is corruption and inequality. [...]. Corruption, this problem you should be able to understand; [regarding] inequality, I think the people at the bottom of society [底层的人], their lives are extremely, extremely hard, but they have not been able to get any care from the government [得不了政府的照顾]. Now, for a very small minority of people, no matter what their lifestyle, they after they have got rich, these people maybe only think of squandering the money [挥霍], they haven't thought about also doing charity. [...] Anyway, I think rich people maybe after they have got rich their behaviour is not very appropriate. Now, these very poor people maybe can't see any hope [看不到希望], they have never been able to get any attention, or [...] any resolution of their problem from the government. I think this is a [unclear word] big problem, also, what is the most important is rich people are very few, but poor people are very many, also these poor people, most of them are people who have received low levels of education [受教育很低的人].⁵

⁴ IVC04b1, IVC04b2, IVC011221, IVC0112132, IVN04, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b111, SIVC07b1, SIVN06aa2, SIVN09a

⁵ IVN04

[I]n China we have a saying: “In love, you cannot compete with the Second Generation Rich kids [富二代].” These people, beginning in the 1980s were the original capitalist accumulators; they are the children of people who have private companies, that is, you can't compete with them in love. [...] Secondly in your career you cannot compete with the Second Generation Official kids [官二代], that is, their family are government families. [...] China is already a class society [一个有阶级的社会].⁶

As for living conditions and social status, several of my respondents were recent university graduates and had therefore seen their incomes and social statuses increase after they had left university and found jobs.⁷ On the other hand, respondents also noted that inflation and rising house prices had reduced or even counteracted any increase in income:⁸

An improvement is an improvement [改善就是改善], but not much. It hasn't equalled the pace of economic growth. Inflation is bad.⁹

Maybe our income seems to have increased, but in reality it is getting increasingly difficult to rent a flat [租房越来越困难]. [...] Now, although there is now more income, things have become

⁶ IVC0112132

⁷ IVC04b2, IVC04b3, IVC06, IVC011211, IVN1221, SIVC01b21

⁸ IVC31, IVC01122, SIVC01b113, SIVC01b21. Were I to carry out a similar study in future, it would be a good idea to include accommodation or housing as a low politics issue, as this was clearly a concern for some respondents.

⁹ IVC01122

more expensive. It seems there has been a little bit of deterioration.

I feel a bit pressured [感觉到有点压力].¹⁰

b. Specific support: local government

Christians' opinions of local government in general were not dissimilar to those of their demographic peers. However, there were noticeable differences between Beijing and Shenzhen respondents here.

In terms of detailed categories, higher proportions of Shenzhen respondents said that the local city government was better than other governments in China; was good in general; was reformist or open; had better rule of law; was more democratic; had good structures for handling matters; and that Shenzhen was a new, immigrant city (Table 33).

Higher proportions of Beijing respondents mentioned their city's transport problems and complained about the way their city government handles the *hukou* (户口)¹¹ issue (Table 33):

Comparatively speaking, every aspect of Beijing – the people, the life - is relatively perfected [比较很完善] compared to other cities, because there is a saying that holding the 2008 Olympics brought Beijing forward by ten to fifteen years in terms of modernisation. For example, in terms of the subway, transport, public health, and

¹⁰ SIVC01b21

¹¹ or residence permit.

so on. [Regarding] income distribution, inequality is very wide. For example, the housing problem - rich people can have many flats, people without money live on the streets or rent a flat of a few square metres; this is a problem faced by lots of cities but the population of Beijing is more than ten million, [...] lots of people want to come to Beijing. The impact of this contradiction is that the Beijing city government certainly wants to help local people more [than migrants]. For example, a while ago there were some migrant worker children's schools that were demolished. Students from outside Beijing had nowhere to go to study. They [= the local government] do very bad things towards these people, these weak groups; they do more to protect those with money; or if you've got a position, you've got a Beijing *hukou*, these people, you will have more power. [...] Regarding these people from outside Beijing, they don't have any money or standing, [...] you will be looked down upon. Other people will be this high, and you will be that high [*respondent demonstrates different levels with his hands*]; your standing will be very different.¹²

All of the above patterns are replicated within both the Christian and comparison groups.

¹² IVC05. This respondent did not himself have a Beijing *hukou*.

Overall, a higher percentage of Shenzhen respondents mentioned good points (80%) than bad points (45%) about their local city government, whereas a higher overall percentage of Beijing residents raised bad points (63%) than good points (51%) (Table 34). There was a noticeable polarisation here within the comparison group: whereas for Christians, 73% of Shenzhen respondents and 63% of Beijing respondents raised positive points about the local government, for the comparison group, 88% of Shenzhen respondents but only 40% of Beijing respondents made positive comments.

According to the aggregated subjective understandings of respondents, then, Shenzhen's city government comes off rather well compared to Beijing's city government; and this was generally regardless of the religious affiliation of the respondent:

After all, Shenzhen is a newly developed city, so it has done some of its city planning extremely well; and it is an extremely young and lively city. Our Shenzhen city government has also taken positive actions to safeguard some of these young people growing up in its midst, and has also studied some of Hong Kong's experiences, I think this is a really good point. Then, the Shenzhen government is very rich, very rich, but I think they do some unnecessary things. For example, they build some unnecessary bridges, they do some unnecessary building, and then they will be very wasteful. Then I think that the Shenzhen government is still relatively corrupt; there will be relatively many corrupt officials, because it is creating GDP

non-stop. [...] But speaking overall, I think Shenzhen's government is much better than some inland [内地] governments.¹³

Salient concerns other than the ones just outlined, and shared across both religious affiliations and cities included government incompetence or inefficiency (mentioned by 16% of respondents) and corruption (12%); good points include efficiency (24%), and public transport (10%).

After asking a respondent's opinion of the local government, I would then ask her how well she thought their local city government was able to handle everyday issues. On this question, more Shenzheners mentioned their city government's good points irrespective of religion. More Christians mentioned their city government's bad points irrespective of city (Table 35).

There are lots of things that they haven't done. For example, the repairs [that are going on] in my neighbourhood are very noisy. I don't know whether the government has any restrictions on when you can make noise – maybe, or maybe not - but I don't know because there are no clear guidelines. If there are, does the government have a supervisor? I don't know who to speak to or who takes care of this. So firstly, I don't know if there is a standard; secondly, there's certainly no supervision; thirdly, I can't find who to complain to. But the good aspect is that law and order is

¹³ SIVC01c2

relatively satisfying in Beijing. This problem has been solved better.¹⁴

However, there was also a widespread feeling that many problems were out of the local government's hands:¹⁵

I think that regarding today's city's everyday [unclear word = problems?], I think they [= local government] are handling them pretty well [不错]. Then on the wider scale [大面], maybe inequality, I think they are powerless [无能为力], I think it's not something that can be resolved in the short-term, this kind of problem has existed for a long time, for systemic, historical reasons [体质历史], this aspect has always been present. This is maybe not good. But normally, the environment, and transport [problems], [...] essentially they should be able to resolve them all well.¹⁶

c. Specific support: central government

In terms of condensed categories, more Christians (77%) made negative comments about the central government than did their demographic peers (50%) (Table 37). In detailed categories, more Christians (23% to 4% of demographic peers) said that the current central government served itself and its own interests, a finding replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen (Table 36). One Christian respondent said:

¹⁴ IVC03

¹⁵ IVC04b1, IVC04b2, IVC011213, IVN0921, IVN09211, IVN1021, IVN1221, SIVC01c1, SIVC01c21, SIVN02a2, SIVN04, SIVN06aa1, SIVN06a11, SIVN09c.

¹⁶ IVN09211

To be honest, I feel very disappointed. [...] Why are so many people willing to take the civil service exam? It's because [...] everyone certainly thinks that it is a big conglomerate [集团] that is stable and can earn money, so it's only for this reason that everyone is willing to take the [civil service entry] exam. [...] Actually, [...] in China, civil servants' incomes are really not high on paper [积累账面上]. But because it is very powerful a lot of people hope to be able to enter the civil service system, and turn this power into RMB, a lot of people have this kind of idea. So I think... [...] this is a really contradictory thing. Everyone - that is, a vast majority of people - on the one hand hope that they themselves can enter this system in order to make a profit [来牟利] for themselves. [...] That is, make money. On the one hand, those who enter immediately [...] [start] to really speak for the government. On [the other] hand, those who do not enter really disapprove of the government [很看不惯政府]. That is, it's a very contradictory group. So, most people really dislike the civil service, and really dislike the government, but on the other hand, they also hope that their own children, or they themselves will be able to enter the ranks of kind of civil service.¹⁷

However, respondents also had a lot of good opinions about the current central government, with 57% of Christians and 66% of their demographic peers making positive comments (Table 37). In terms of detailed categories, good points included

¹⁷ SIVC06b

economic success (15%), the perception that the government were trying hard or had good intentions (14%), and that they were reforming or improving (12%) (Table 36):

I think it's [= the central government] OK. After all, my understanding of them comes through the news media. It's been more a case of seeing the changes in today's China. Even though there are a lot of shortcomings [不尽人意的地方], fundamentally I think that for people whose skills are OK, the standard of living has risen.¹⁸

Specific areas of dissatisfaction with the central government that respondents raised included corruption (14%), subsistence problems and social welfare (14%), and a lack of concern for ordinary people (12%).

d. High politics orientations

To gauge respondents' opinions on high politics issues, I presented respondents with six hypothetical dialogues covering themes of selection of political leaders (election or appointment); independent organisations; freedom of conscience; private property; freedom of publication; and the free market. Each dialogue contained a liberal¹⁹ point of view ('Mr Ma believes that multi-candidate elections are the best way of selecting government leaders.') and a non-liberal point of view ('Mr Ding

¹⁸ IVN14c

¹⁹ I am using liberal in the Chinese sense of the word rather than the American sense, i.e. to indicate support for democratic elections, independent civil society, civil liberties, private property and the free market. Such views in China would be considered to be relatively 'right-wing' or 右派.

believes that appointment or single-candidate elections are a more suitable way of choosing government leaders.'). These dialogues can be found in full in Table 38.

On average, respondents chose liberal answers for 5.16 out of the 6 questions; the median number of liberal answers was 6 (Table 38). There was not a great deal of difference between Christians and their demographic peers: Christian respondents gave liberal answers to a mean average of 5.30 questions, whereas their demographic peers gave an average of 5.02 liberal answers; the median of both groups was 6. When disaggregated by city, there was more of a discrepancy between the average numbers of liberal answers of Christians and the comparison group in Shenzhen (5.31 and 4.88 respectively), but this was still not huge.

When we examine individual issues, the only question for which there was a substantial discrepancy²⁰ between the proportions of Christian and comparison groups giving liberal answers was the one about independent organisations. When presented with the hypothetical dialogue 88% of Christians and 71% of their demographic peers chose the statement, 'Organisations which are independent of the government can help build a better, more stable, society and should not be subject to too many restrictions' over, 'This kind of organisation could pose a threat to social stability and so should be subject to strict regulation.' This difference was replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen.

²⁰ Again, here I take 10% as my cut-off point.

The most obvious explanation for this would be that, as members of Protestant house churches,²¹ Christian respondents have a personal stake in this question. A recurring theme amongst these respondents was the desire for greater religious freedom – the ability to meet, worship and evangelise without restrictions from the government.²² Indeed, 30% of Christian respondents²³ said that they themselves or a group to which they belonged had experienced a conflict with government organs, compared to 6% of their demographic peers (Table 67); and all of the conflicts that Christian respondents had been involved in related to issues of religious freedom. For them, this issue was therefore not an ideological abstraction but something with significant implications for their daily lives. I will discuss Christian respondents' organisational activities further in my later section on religious, social, and political activity.

e. Political tolerance

Having completed my first set of interviews in Beijing, and discovering that Christians and non-Christians shared similar levels of liberalism on the six 'high politics' issues, I decided to probe further in my Shenzhen interviews using a set of questions on political tolerance: it is one thing to support freedom of speech in the abstract, but quite another to allow someone who holds views which you vehemently disagree to speak.

²¹ The majority of my Christian respondents – 38 out of 50 – attended unregistered 'house churches'.

²² IVC0112, IVC04b, IVC011212, IVC011213, IVC112133, SIVC01c1, SIVC06b.

²³ Of those who were asked and agreed to answer the question.

To gauge respondents' political tolerance, I presented them with five examples of people who hold views that other people find pernicious or dangerous: someone opposed to all religious belief; a racist; someone who believes that the country should be ruled by the military; a Tibetan separatist; and someone who wants to promote gay marriage. I then asked whether or not respondents thought an internet posting from this person should be deleted; and whether or not he or she should be allowed to teach at a university.²⁴

Because I only asked this set of question to my Shenzhen sample, we must be modest about the conclusions we may draw from the following results; but they are nevertheless interesting.

Overall, members of the Christian and comparison groups displayed similar levels of tolerance. Christians gave an average of 5.46 tolerant answers ('Do not delete person X's post from the internet' or 'Allow person X to teach at a university') to the 10 questions, compared to 5.24 for their demographic peers (Table 39).

However, patterns of tolerance varied between the two groups. Relative to their demographic peers, Christians showed higher levels of tolerance for Tibetan separatists and militarists. Both groups showed similar levels of tolerance for racists

²⁴ This question is based on the US General Social Survey, quoted in Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. pp.480-481. However, in order to adapt the questions to China, I replaced 'a man who admits he is a communist' with 'a Tibetan separatist' (as an example of someone holding a highly controversial and widely disliked political opinion), and 'a man who admits that he is a homosexual' with 'someone who wants to promote gay marriage' (as the latter is a more prominent, concrete issue in China than merely being a homosexual). I also replaced two of the original questions – concerning whether or not the person should be allowed to make a speech in the respondent's city, and whether or not his or her book should be removed from a public library – with the question about whether the person's internet post should be deleted, as this was something my respondents would be able to better relate to. Indeed, some respondents said that their own Weibo posts had been deleted by the government (IVC0112132, IVC0112133, SIVC01b2).

and those opposed to religion (for the latter, fewer Christians would want their internet postings deleted, but fewer would allow them to teach in universities). Christians showed lower levels of tolerance for those promoting gay marriage.

As I explained in Chapter 2, Christians are generally less hawkish than their demographic peers on territorial issues such as Tibet, and this fits with their greater willingness to tolerate Tibetan separatist voices. Their demographic peers were more cautious; as one member of the comparison group said,

Tibetan separatists, some of their behaviour might split China, split the people [分裂中国, 分裂人民的一些行为]. I think this shouldn't be permitted.²⁵

On the issue of homosexuality, 15 of the 50 Christian respondents made some reference to homosexuality during the interview;²⁶ only one of these was not negative.²⁷ When asked their opinions on the USA, 18% of Christian respondents cited homosexuality as evidence of America's excessive levels of freedom and of its moral and spiritual decline (Table 11):²⁸

I have some good opinions of America, but I also have some bad ones. [...] Actually the good parts are also the bad parts.

[Interviewer: Tell me about them.]

²⁵ SIVN06aa2

²⁶ IVC011221, IVC04b, IVC04b2, IVC01121, IVC01122, IVC011213, IVC0112131, IVC0112132, SIVC01b, SIVC01b111, SIVC01b113, SIVC01c2, SIVC06b, SIVC07b, SIVC07c1

²⁷ IVC0112132

²⁸ IVC04b, SIVC01b, SIVC01b111, IVC01122, SIVC01b113, SIVC01c2, SIVC07b, SIVC07c1. Putnam and Campbell also find that more religious people are less tolerant of homosexuals than less religious people. Ibid. pp.479-488.

Some are especially good, for example, the environment, I think America's environment, nature, the environment is especially good. [...] Freedom, democracy, human rights... These are very good. But the bad parts are that it's too democratic [太过于民主]. [...] For example, in this kind of situation, mental emptiness [内心空虚], homosexuality, drug-taking, this kind of... I think legalisation of homosexuality is very bad. But from a human rights point of view, it has to be like this. Because you have rights, another person is gay, he has his rights, it's just that I disapprove, I completely disapprove. So in America, the environment is too comfortable, I think it's very easy for people to become decadent [人容易颓废].²⁹

In contrast, only 5 members of the comparison group mentioned homosexuality,³⁰ and only one of these made a somewhat negative comment:³¹

It seems that amongst our teachers [at the respondent's university] there are also homosexuals. [...] It's not a problem for them to promote [gay marriage]. If gay marriage doesn't influence other people, then it's OK [同性结婚不影响别人就 OK 了].³²

Sexuality, therefore, was the one area in which the attitudes of Christian respondents were consistently less liberal than those of their demographic peers. Despite the persistence of widespread conservative attitudes and disapproval

²⁹ IVC011221

³⁰ IVN1021, SIVN06c, SIVN09a1, SIVN082, SIVN09c

³¹ SIVN06c

³² SIVN06c

towards homosexuality in China at large, opinions amongst both society and the Party-state are becoming gradually more liberal in this area.³³ If China's Protestants do not re-think their attitudes to homosexuality and homosexuals, there is therefore the risk that they will alienate themselves from the young urbanites who might otherwise be attracted to Christianity; indeed, Putnam and Campbell argue that this is what has happened in the USA, where evangelicals have embarked on culture wars at the expense of spreading faith.³⁴

f. Diffuse support: the political system

When asked their opinions of China's political system, more Christians: said that it was autocratic (39% to 20%), said that it should change to become more democratic (24% to 8%), said that the system lacked monitoring mechanisms (20% to 6%) and said that some sort of monitoring (via rule of law, a separation of powers, or similar) should be introduced (20% to 6%), findings that were all replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen (Table 40):

The political system is unique [独一无二的], I don't really approve of it either [不是很认同].

[Interviewer: Why not?]

Because it is one party, if one party governs, then there is no competitive relationship. Maybe, for example, America, it has

³³ Shun-Hing Chan and Ping Huang, "Religion and Homosexuality in Contemporary China," in *Globalized Religion and Sexual Identity: Contexts, Contestations, Voices*, ed. Heather Shipley, International Studies in Religion and Society (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp.170–191.

³⁴ Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. p.132.

multiple parties and implements competition - then it will certainly, in its term in office, or at the time of election, it will approach the common people more [更加去接近老百姓], that is, and then [they] will know what demands they have, or how they will help those people, and only then will they be able to obtain these people's support for them, right? But in China, basically, although we say that we have the right to elect, but I have grown this old, I'm twenty-seven now, I haven't once elected any leaders; it's empty [虚的], at the moment this thing is empty.³⁵

In terms of condensed categories, more Christians made negative comments about the political system (80% to 58%, replicated in Shenzhen and Beijing), and fewer Christians (31% to 46%) and more Shenzhen respondents (45% to 31%) made positive comments, findings replicated across both cities and religious affiliations respectively (Table 41).

As stated in Chapter 2, when I presented respondents with a hypothetical dialogue asking whether they thought the Chinese political system should be changed, most Christians opted for the response that the system was not good and should be changed, whereas the most popular answer amongst the comparison group was that the system was not ideal and should be changed, but not yet (Table 4). It was also

³⁵ SIVC06c1

noted that several respondents amended their answer to emphasise that the kind of change they hoped for was gradual reform, rather than revolution.³⁶

g. Diffuse support: the Communist Party³⁷

As with the political system, Christians were more likely to say that the Party was autocratic (21% to 8%), and less likely to say they had a good opinion of the Party (6% to 24%). Both of these findings were replicated in Beijing and Shenzhen. Their biggest criticism of the Party was that its core beliefs were weak (27% to 12%) (Table 42):

With regards to the Party, or any group, what they pay the most attention to should be their core values... It's only core values that can make people come together and motivate people, I think that Party's core values are very weak... [...] I think I know about a thousand Party members, not any single one of them take these things seriously, that is to make the Communist Party's core values their motivation and truth [真相]. Actually some people who capitalise on the Party's reputation [为 Party 卖命 / 卖名的人], for example like, policemen, they all want to become³⁸ Party members.³⁹

³⁶ e.g. IVC04b2, IVC05, IVC011211, IVC0112131

³⁷ It is questionable as to whether support for the Communist Party constitutes 'specific' or 'diffuse' support. On the one hand, it represents the group of people currently in power in China; on the other hand, unlike political parties in most multiparty liberal democracies, the dominant role of the Party has been embedded in China's political regime to such an extent and for so long that it is difficult to separate the two. For this reason I classed Party support as 'diffuse' support.

³⁸ This word is unclear on the recording.

³⁹ IVC04

This ties in with Christians' concern for the morality of Chinese society – the Party, when it began may have been motivated by a real desire to help people, but it has since abandoned its beliefs and become corrupt:

I think the Communist Party at the very initial period, during the revolution, at that time the role they played for society actually most of it was good. That is, they had a few standpoints [主长], it struggled bitterly itself, it would not take property from the common people, these kind of spirits [精神] all had a very good effect on society. But now, I think it's totally... That is, the Communist Party, this party's spirit, in reality a group of people have misappropriated the Chinese Communist Party's spirit [盗用了中国共产党的精神]. [...] That is, for example, the Chinese Communist Party were originally very good, but now it's a group of people who are doing bad things under a good name, so the impression that people get of the Communist Party is therefore not good.⁴⁰

This concern about Party members not living up to the Party's ethical standards is one that Xi Jinping, judging from the outline of his August 2013 speech, seems to share.⁴¹

⁴⁰ IVC04b1

⁴¹ China Copyright and Media, "Xi Jinping's 19 August Speech Revealed? (Translation)."

As discussed above, Christian respondents were also more likely to disassociate loving the country from loving the Party. When asked if they agreed with the statement ‘To love the country is to love the Party,’⁴² more Christians than non-Christians chose the ‘No’ option, and this was replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen (Table 7).

h. Democracy: salience and meaning

In order to investigate respondents’ views of democracy, I ran a search for all the answers my respondents had given that contained ‘democracy’ (民主), or derivative terms such as ‘democratisation’ (民主化). I then copied all 155 such answers into a new spreadsheet and performed a basic content analysis, coding the different ideas that respondents had linked to ‘democracy’.

(i) The salience of the concept of democracy

Of the 155 answers in which ‘democracy’ was mentioned, 64% (or 99 answers) were given by Christian respondents, and 36% (or 56 answers) by members of the comparison group. This pattern holds if we disaggregate the answers by city (Table 43).

Relative to their demographic peers, more Christian respondents talked about democracy. 74% of Christian respondents mentioned democracy in at least one of their answers, compared to 48% of their demographic peers, a pattern replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen (Table 43).

⁴² This question took the form of a hypothetical dialogue. See Table 3 for details.

However, Christians and non-Christians who talked about democracy discussed it just as often in the course of the average interview. Once respondents who did not mention democracy are removed from calculations, Christian respondents mentioned democracy in a mean average of 2.75 answers, and their demographic peers mentioned democracy in an average of 2.43 answers (Table 43).⁴³

Therefore, whilst a higher percentage of Christians discussed democracy, respondents from both groups who mentioned democracy tended to refer to it a similar number of times.

(ii) The content of the concept of democracy

The findings I have just outlined tell us how often respondents mentioned democracy, but not about how they defined the concept, or whether they thought it was a good or a bad thing. We therefore turn now to the content analysis of the answers, which showed some interesting overall findings, regardless of whether or not the respondents were Christian.

A first point to note is that a higher overall proportion of responses (41%) included positive comments on democracy, or hopes that China would become more democratic (however respondents defined this) than included comments that democracy was not suitable for China or mentioned problems with democracy (14%) (Table 44).

⁴³ When disaggregated by city, Beijing Christian respondents mentioned democracy somewhat more, in an average of 3.12 answers.

At this point I wish to examine respondents' conceptions of democracy according to two different schemas.

Tianjian Shi distinguishes between the populist/socialist conception of democracy - by which he means rule 'by and for the people', covering such ideas as 'the people are masters of the country' and 'the authorities listen to people's opinions' - and 'universal liberal-democratic values' - including 'political rights, institutions, and processes,' and 'freedom and liberty.'⁴⁴ He argues that in China, people think both in terms of populist and liberal ideas of democracy, but that the former conception is more common.

To use Shi's terminology, respondents' ideas of democracy leaned more towards 'liberal' rather than 'populist' concepts. Of the themes appearing in 10% or more of the answers, five - freedom (in general), elections, multiple parties, freedom of expression, and open and tolerant thinking - roughly fit the liberal conception of democracy, whereas only one - the idea of the government listening to the people and/or governing in their interest - fits the populist conception of democracy (Table 44).

In contrast to Shi, Yun-Han Chu and Doh Chull Shin categorise conceptions of democracy as either 'substantive' - emphasising good governance, economic security and social equity - or 'procedural' - emphasising democratic procedures and

⁴⁴ Shi, "Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System." p.215

norms and freedom. Both argue that amongst East Asians, particularly the mainland Chinese, it is the substantive view of democracy that predominates.⁴⁵

My respondents' conceptions of democracy, however, leaned towards the procedural view. Out of the 155 responses mentioning 'democracy', in 29% of responses respondents linked it with freedom (in general), in 15% it was linked to elections, in 11% it was linked to multiple parties, in 10% it was linked to freedom of expression, and in 10% it was linked to open and tolerant thinking. Conversely, in only 8% of responses did respondents link democracy with reduced corruption (a proxy for good governance), in 6% of responses did they link democracy with equality or fairness, and in 5% of responses did they link it with the provision of public goods or basic livelihoods (民生) (Table 44).

This difference between my findings and those of Chu and Shin is most likely down to demographics: In China, younger people, and those with higher levels of education, and those with middle incomes are the most committed to the procedural view of democracy.⁴⁶ My respondents were young and university-educated, though most had above-average incomes. It is therefore no surprise that my respondents tended towards more procedural conceptions of democracy.

Having said that, it would be unwise to draw too stark a division between the 'procedural' and 'substantive' views of democracy. For some respondents, there

⁴⁵ Yun-Han Chu, *How East Asians Understand Democracy*, Talk Delivered at St Antony's College, University of Oxford, March 14, 2014; Doh Chull Shin, *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). pp. 239-243.

⁴⁶ Ibid. pp.250-253.

was an intimate link between both elements of democracy: the lack of democratic supervision or an independent legal system leads to the government being corrupt or out of touch with citizens' needs, which means that ordinary people are not provided for, leading to worsening inequality:

[R]egarding politics, there [should be] fair competition like in Taiwan, all parties should have opportunity. Only with mutual monitoring can you truly do things for the people. At the moment, it's like a lot of power - whether power or money - is all controlled by the government's hands, I just think it's really unfair. And my home is the in the countryside. You know, in China, there is a very, very big gap between the countryside and the cities, so I will be even more dissatisfied. I cannot see what the government is doing for our farmers, and this makes me think that [life] is not fair for the majority of the population^{47 48}.

A third noticeable overall trend is the association that respondents commonly drew between democracy and the West. Nearly one in five of the 155 answers linked democracy to the West. Whilst in five responses (or 3%), respondents said that democracy was not suitable for China, respondents made 14 mentions (9% of the total) of the need for China to learn from democratic societies in the West, or from Taiwan (Table 44).

⁴⁷ This last noun – which I have translated 'the majority of the population' – is unclear.

⁴⁸ IVN092. See also: IVC04b3, IVC01121, IVC0112131

In overall terms then, respondents who mentioned democracy were generally positive about the concept, which they tended to define in liberal, and procedural terms. They also frequently linked democracy with the West, a generally positive example which some claimed that China could learn from. Given the demographic group in question –young, educated urbanites - these views are unsurprising, and they replicate the findings of previous studies that have linked this group to more democratic, liberal, ‘pro-Western’ sentiments.⁴⁹

In terms of the contrasting ways Christians and their demographic peers think about democracy, there are two main findings.

The first is that Christian respondents more commonly discussed democracy in conjunction with the concept of freedom (自由), a finding replicated in both cities across condensed and detailed categories (Tables 44 and 45). When I asked a Beijing entrepreneur what he hoped China would be like in 20 years’ time, he answered:

[M]aybe more democratic and free [更加的民主自由]. [...] [I] hope there can be a more open and free environment, every person will be able to obtain the rights that belong to them, and that each person will be able to have the opportunity to hear and accept faith. Another is maybe that I hope the country's legal system can be more just [公正].⁵⁰

⁴⁹ e.g. Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. pp.72-75; Wang, “Public Support for Democracy in China”; Shi, “Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System.” pp.235-235.

⁵⁰ IVC0112133

The second trend was that, in conjunction with discussing democracy, a higher proportion of Christian respondents voiced dissatisfaction with China's current political system (Table 45). This pattern fits the findings on opinions of China's political system outlined above. However, this pattern of difference only appears when categories are condensed.

I should note here that in terms of the absolute number of answers mentioning certain themes, Christian respondents more frequently raised the issue of freedom and rights; made positive comments about democracy or democratisation; linked democracy to democratic institutions such as elections, multiple parties, and the rule of law; and said that China's current political system was bad (Table 45).

However, when we take into account the fact that Christians talked more about democracy overall, by comparing the percentages of Christian and non-Christian answers mentioning democracy that raised certain themes, then the only two differences that remain are the ones outlined above – that Christian respondents linked democracy with freedom and rights, and expressed dissatisfaction with China's current political system (Table 45).

What this tells us is that whilst Christian respondents discussed democracy more often than their demographic peers, amongst respondents who did discuss democracy, there were few conceptual discrepancies between Christians and their demographic peers.

Both groups were more positive than negative about democracy as a concept, both groups leaned towards a liberal, rather than a populist conception of democracy, and significant proportions of both groups linked democracy with West or Taiwan. Christians discussed freedom and rights more than their demographic peers, and they also more often expressed dissatisfaction with China's political arrangements. But in general, both groups had broadly similar ways of talking about democracy.

Christians therefore deploy liberal democratic ideas in greater proportions than their demographic peers; but there is little evidence of a distinctively Christian way of talking about democracy.

This might point us back to the causal story made in Chapter 3 - that it is not Christianity per se that causes people to develop liberal democratic values; if this were the case, then we might expect Christians' democratic concepts to have a more distinctive flavour than those of their demographic peers who have not been exposed to Christian teaching. Rather, the data here points to Christians adhering to the same liberal democratic ideas that are present in wider society, but in greater numbers. This in turn suggests that it is those to whom liberal democratic ideas are attractive who then become Christians.

3. Summary

So far I have demonstrated that compared to their demographic peers, Christians expressed fewer positive opinions about low politics issues, but only in Shenzhen.

In terms of specific support, Shenzhen respondents held better opinions of their local city government than did Beijing respondents, regardless of religious affiliation. However, on the question of local government efficacy, Shenzheners and members of the comparison group gave more positive appraisals. Christians held more negative opinions about China's current central government.

In terms of high politics orientations, Christians were no more or less liberal than their demographic peers, except on the question of freedom of association, for which more Christians were in favour. Neither were they more tolerant overall; whilst Christians in Shenzhen were more tolerant of Tibetan separatists than their demographic peers, they were less tolerant of advocates of gay marriage. This fits with the relative forbearance on international and territorial issues, and disapproval of homosexuality that Christian respondents demonstrated in answers to other questions. More Christians raised the issue of democracy in the interviews, but they talked about the concept in a similar way to their demographic peers; that is, tending towards the liberal and procedural conceptions of democracy.

On the question of diffuse support, Christian respondents' opinions of China's political system were also more negative than those of their demographic peers, and a higher proportion of them expressed a wish to change the system when given the choice. Similarly, relative to their demographic peers, Christians also held more negative views of the Communist Party, and were more likely to disassociate loving the country from loving the Party.

In Jie Chen's terms, then, Christians have similar low politics orientations to their demographic peers; they have similar specific support for local government but lower specific support for central government. They hold similar high politics orientations and overall levels of political tolerance to their demographic peers, though they also have a stronger preference for democracy. Finally, Christians display lower levels of diffuse support for the regime – the Party and the political system – as a whole.

4. One initial observation: The mountains are low, and the emperor is not far away⁵¹

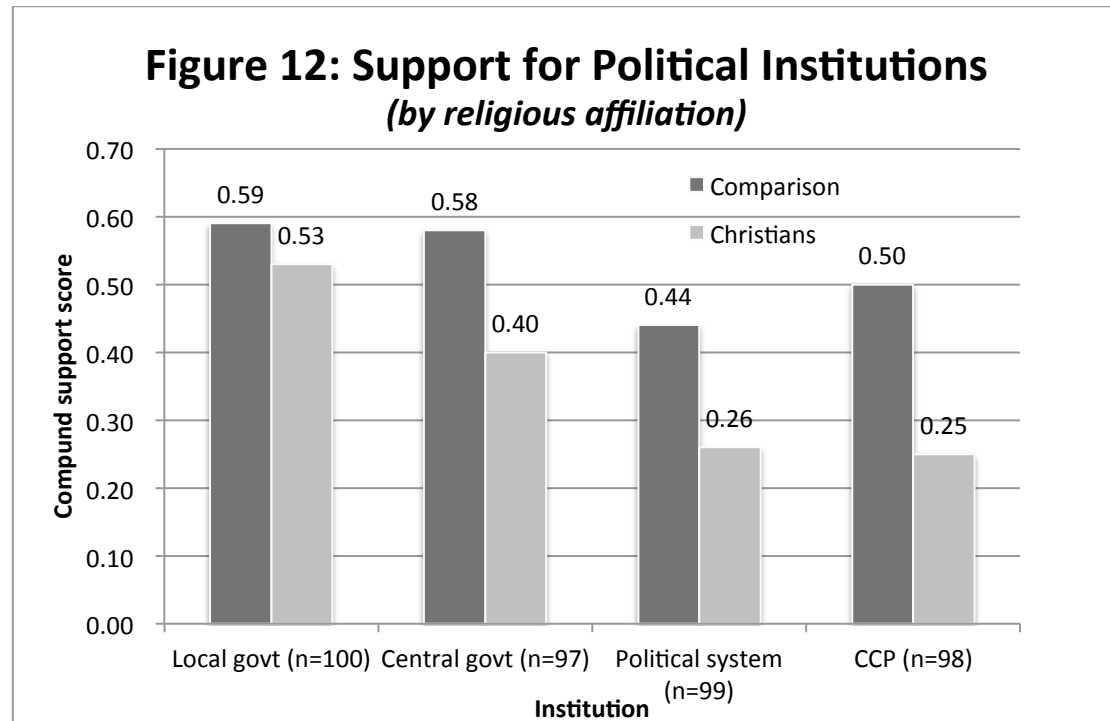
An initial observation at this stage is that as a whole, respondents tended to have positive opinions about local government, slightly less positive opinions of the central government, and less positive opinions still of the political system as a whole and the Communist Party (Table 46, Figure 12). This runs contrary to the findings of previous studies, which found that in China, people generally have less trust for local authorities and higher trust for central authorities and in the system as a whole.⁵²

For my respondents, especially the Christians, the 'hierarchical trust' observed in previous studies is nowhere to be seen; if anything, the reverse is the case: respondents have very favourable views of local government, less favourable views of national government, and even less favourable views of the political system and

⁵¹ The phrase, 'The mountains are high and the emperor is far away' (山高，皇帝远) has been used to describe the perceived long distance between the political centre and the localities in China.

⁵² Lianjiang Li, *Hierarchical Government Trust in China*, Paper Prepared for the IIAS Study Group Workshop on Trust in Public Administration and Citizen Attitudes Held in Seoul, Korea, 2012; Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*; Shi, "Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System." p.229, Figure 9.2.

the Communist Party that is at its core. This trend is most pronounced among Christians, whose support score drops by a greater amount from local government to central government to the political system and the CCP to those of their demographic peers.



Some initial explanations might be that firstly, my respondents are from Beijing and Shenzhen, two of the most economically developed, and in terms of perceptions, least corrupt, cities in China. Their experiences of local governments are therefore likely to be more positive than those of people living in the countryside or in smaller cities; indeed, respondents often compared the local city governments in Beijing and Shenzhen favourably to those elsewhere in China, such as their home towns (see Table 33):

I think the Shenzhen government, compared to inland [内地], that is, other cities' governments, it's relatively open [开放一些], Shenzhen is relatively open. For example, [there are] some

organisations for handling things [办事的机构], for example, the Construction Department [建设局] represents a government structure for handling things. It is willing to listen to everyone's opinions [意见]. On this, it's maybe better than inland governments, it's not like it is inland. For example, when I'm at home [in Shandong] and I go to some government organisations, their attitudes will be really bad [态度很不好]. Here [in Shenzhen] the attitudes are a bit better.⁵³

Secondly, new communication software and transport links mean that political institutions – both central and local - no longer seem as distant. It is easier for individuals to monitor their behaviour, and more difficult to cognitively separate negative phenomena at the local level from negative phenomena at the centre, or for the central government to deny knowledge of local abuses and maintain the aura of a distant benevolent ruler. Similarly, the internet also allows people to see abuses that are occurring elsewhere in China; they may therefore be less likely to see government malpractices as the work of an isolated local despot, and more likely to view them as systemic in nature.⁵⁴ On the role of the internet in monitoring political institutions, one respondent said:

Weibo and the internet can effectively target this problem [= corruption], I think the contribution they make is relatively big. [...]

⁵³ SIVC01b2

⁵⁴ I am grateful to Ewan Smith for this point (personal communication). However, as with offline complaints, the government is willing to redress specific complaints against local officials, 'but aggressively censors anything that could lead to broader mobilization or challenges to state legitimacy.' Jonathan Sullivan, "China's Weibo: Is Faster Different?," *New Media & Society* 16, no. 1 (February 07, 2013): 24–37, doi:10.1177/1461444812472966.p.31

Because previously, for example, if there was a problem or a situation, no-one would know, none of the common people would know, not even the higher level of government would know. For example, If you are a low-level [基层] government, then above there is the central government, if you have an issue, [...] if the channels between you are broken, it will be difficult to resolve. But now there is the internet. If something happens here, [...] [central government] will immediately know, and only then will they be able to resolve the issue.⁵⁵

Likewise, as described above, respondents commented that certain issues were systemic and out of the hands of local government, no matter how well-meaning the latter might be.⁵⁶ This reduced sense of distance between central and local institutions was particularly salient for Beijing respondents:

China has an old saying, “Under the Emperor's feet is the most difficult place to be an official [天子脚下是最难当官的地],” so I think Beijing’s city government is like this. Although there are a lot of shortcomings [不尽人意的地方], but I think that at the moment under this situation, [the fact] that they can do things in this way is already very great.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ IVC0112111

⁵⁶ IVC04b1, IVC04b2, IVC011213, IVN0921, IVN09211, IVN1021, IVN1221, SIVC01c1, SIVC01c21, SIVN02a2, SIVN04, SIVN06aa1, SIVN06a11, SIVN09c.

⁵⁷ IVN14c

Further studies will be necessary to investigate whether the lack of hierarchical trust that I have uncovered amongst my respondents is a common phenomenon among educated urbanites throughout China.

However, in this next section, I will move on to examining how these findings on low politics orientations, specific support, high politics orientations, and diffuse support, fit into Jie Chen's schema outlined in my literature review; in doing so, I also hope to shed further light on the causal relationships between variables.

Chapter 5

Christianity and Political Support (II): Interactions Between Variables

1. Analysis

How do my findings square with Jie Chen's model of political support?

At this point it is necessary to note again that my sample size is small and not randomly selected. The discussion that follows is therefore tentative; should the resources become available and the political climate more amenable, it will be necessary to carry out a large- n randomly-sampled survey and quantitative analysis in order to statistically test the relationships posited here.

To investigate this question, bearing the above caveat in mind, I sliced my sample in various different ways (for example, by religious affiliation, low politics orientations, high politics orientations and city), and examined how the answers differed between different groups of respondents, as shown in Table 47. This helped me to examine differences in opinion whilst taking these various factors into account.

If I found a difference of 10% ($= 0.10$) or more between groups, I would consider this suggestive of a difference of opinion between groups, and therefore that there was

some association between the opinions held by the group and the independent variables.¹

For example, in the top left-hand corner, I contrast the proportions of Christians (0.47) and comparison group respondents (0.62) who hold positive low politics orientations.² As there is more than a 0.10 difference, I class this as an interesting discrepancy, and worthy of further investigation. Further down, I contrast the proportions of liberals³ (0.45) and non-liberals (0.65) holding positive low politics orientations. As there is more than a 0.10 difference, I also class this as an interesting discrepancy.

To dig deeper, I then disaggregate respondents by both religious affiliation and high politics orientation, resulting in four groups: Christian liberals, comparison group liberals, Christian non-liberals, and comparison group non-liberals, with the respective proportions holding positive low politics orientations: 0.43, 0.48, 0.52 and 0.76.

There is only a difference of 0.05 between the proportions of those with positive low politics orientations in the Christian liberal and comparison liberal groups; however, there is a difference of 0.24 between the proportions of those with positive low

¹ As with previous chapters, this is admittedly somewhat of an arbitrary cut-off point; but such differences will serve to highlight key themes in the qualitative data (i.e the interview text) that will merit deeper examination later in the chapter.

² Defined by those who held low politics scores equal to or more than the median of 0.5. The low politics score was an index derived as follows:

(number of low political issues that the respondent perceived to have improved – number of low politics issues that the respondent perceived to have deteriorated + 11) ÷ 22

³ Defined by respondents who give liberal answers to all 6 high politics orientation questions.

politics orientations in the Christian non-liberal and comparison non-liberal groups. Similarly, there is only a difference of 0.09 between liberals and non-liberals within the Christian sample, whereas there is a difference of 0.28 between liberals and non-liberals in the comparison sample. This therefore suggests that respondents' high politics orientations are only associated with their low politics orientations in the comparison group; and that respondent's religious affiliation is only associated with a difference in their low politics orientation among those who hold non-liberal high politics orientations.

After performing an analysis of the whole of Table 47 in this way, I have condensed my findings into Tables 48.1, 48.2 and 48.3. 'Yes' represents associations that hold true even when other variables are taken into account. 'No' represents no association. Where associations only hold true in certain circumstances – for example, for Shenzhen respondents only, when city is taken into account – I specify which circumstances in the relevant cell.

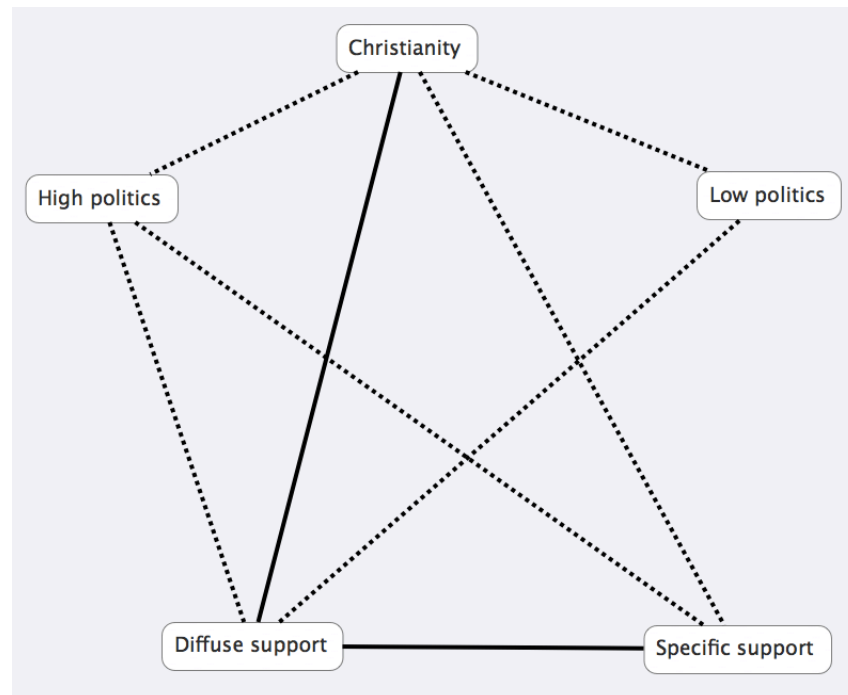
Firstly, these figures suggest that whether a respondent is a Christian or not is directly associated with his opinion of the Communist Party, and whether or not he thinks the political system should be changed. Christians tend to be more negative about the Party and show greater desire for the political system to be changed. This is a point that has already been noted in Chapters 2 and 4. However, here we see that this association still stands even when we take into account the fact that more Christians are liberals, and have negative low politics orientations.

However, the most interesting finding here lies not so much in the direct relationships between religious affiliation and other variables, but the indirect relationships: the data seems to suggest that the way in which the other variables in question – low politics orientations, high politics orientations, specific support and diffuse support – are associated with each other is different for Christians than for their demographic peers.

It therefore makes sense to draw two versions of Jie Chen's model – one for the comparison group, and one for Christian respondents. These are shown in Figure 13 (i) and (ii), based on Tables 48.2 and 48.3.⁴

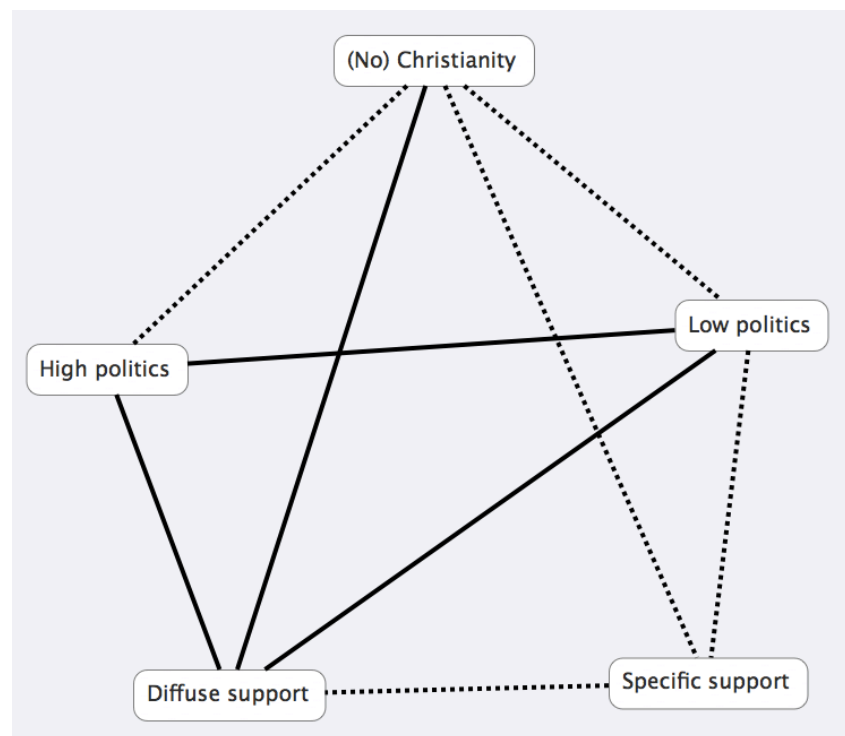
Figure 13: Political Orientations and Political Support

i. Christian group



⁴ So as not to overly complicate matters, I have left out the city variable from these charts. In any case, the only two other variables with which city has a direct association are local government (for the comparison group only), and the question of whether or not the political system should be changed. On the former question, Shenzheners have more positive opinions of their city government; on the latter, Shenzheners are less enthusiastic about changing the political system (Table 18).

ii. Comparison group



NB: Solid lines represent direct relationships⁵, whereas dotted lines represent weak or indirect relationships.⁶

For both Christians and the comparison group, there is a relationship between high politics orientations and diffuse support. For both groups, liberal high politics orientations are directly associated with more negative views of the political system, and greater desire to change that system. Having said that, negative opinions of the Party and disagreement with the statement, 'To love the country is to love the Party' were only related to liberal high politics orientations for the comparison group (when religion was taken into account) and Shenzhen respondents (when city was taken into account). Hence, I have drawn a dotted line in Figure 13(i), representing a weaker relationship between these two factors for Christians.

⁵ Relationships that still stand even when other variables are taken into account, i.e. the Yesses on Tables 48.2 and 48.3.

⁶ Relationships that only hold under certain conditions, e.g. For Christians, high politics orientations are only associated with support in Beijing.

When religion is taken into account, high politics orientations are only linked to respondents' views of central government for the Christian sample (more liberal Christians hold less favourable views of the central government); when city is taken into account, high politics orientations are only linked to respondents' views of central government amongst Beijing respondents (more liberal Beijingers hold less favourable views of the central government). For neither group are different high politics orientations associated with different levels of support for local government. Therefore, in Figure 13(i) the association between high politics orientations and specific support is drawn as a weak dotted line; in Figure 13(ii), there is no association.

We now come to the biggest difference between groups, the role played by the 'low politics orientations' variable.

For Christians, holding positive low politics orientations is associated with being less likely to articulate a preference for changing the political system, and being less likely to agree with the statement, 'to love the country is to love the Party'.

For respondents in the comparison group, holding positive low politics orientations is also associated with not articulating a preference for changing the political system, and agreeing with the statement, 'to love the country is to love the Party'. However, in addition, it is associated with holding more positive opinions of central

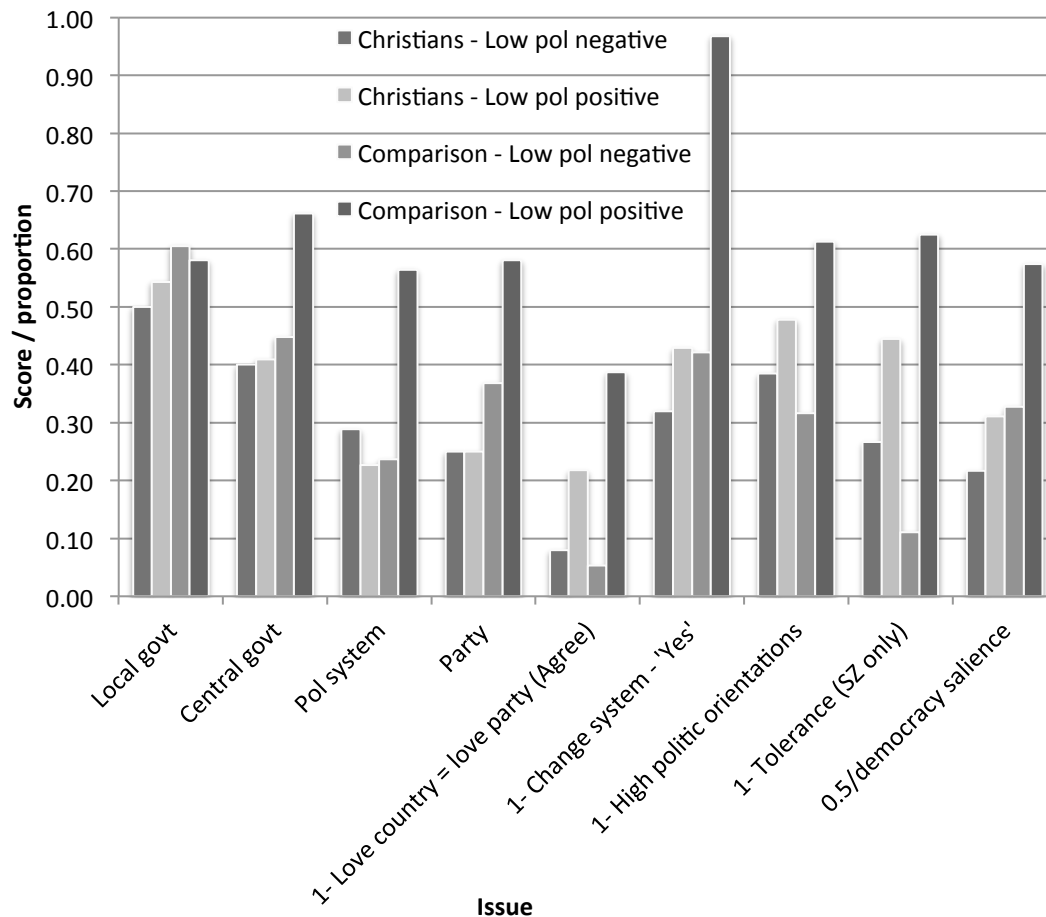
government,⁷ more positive opinions of the political system, more positive opinions of the Party, and less liberal high politics orientations.

Therefore, holding positive low politics orientations is associated with differences in a greater number of variables for the comparison group than for the Christian group. Without wishing to make any judgements about causality yet, the implication is that for respondents in the comparison group, there was a stronger association between their perceptions of everyday political issues and their judgements on other political topics.

Figure 14 provides an interesting graphical representation of what is happening here (see also Table 49). Members of the comparison group with positive low politics orientations show consistently more diffuse support, less liberal high politics orientations, less political tolerance, and less democratic salience than members of the comparison group with negative low politics orientations, Christians with positive low politics orientations, and Christians with negative low politics orientations.

⁷ When city is taken into account, this difference only appears amongst Beijing respondents only. When local government support and central government support are combined in a specific support compound measure, the relationship between low politics and specific support disappears, even for the comparison group. Due to the weak relationship between central government support and low politics amongst the comparison group, I have retained the dotted line between the two factors in Figure 13(ii).

Figure 14: Specific Support, Diffuse Support, and High Politics Orientations
(by religious affiliation and low politics orientations, n=99)



The Christians who have positive perceptions of low politics issues do not associate this with higher diffuse support for the regime or less liberal high political orientations, whereas the members of the comparison group with positive perceptions of low politics do. In other words, this analysis suggests that for non-Christian respondents, their assessments of China's political arrangements are more firmly associated with their evaluations of their performance in terms of tangible results than are the political assessments of Christian respondents.

The alternative story would be that non-Christian respondents let their high politics orientations influence their perceptions of everyday political issues (their low politics orientations), whereas Christians do not. Therefore the association between low politics and diffuse support may be spurious, and merely picking up this relationship between high politics and low politics. To deal with this possibility, I carried out a further analysis, splitting my comparison group into four (liberals with positive low politics orientations, liberals with negative low politics orientations, non-liberals with positive low politics orientations, non-liberals with negative low politics orientations) and tested their relative levels of support for the political system and Party, the proportions in favour of changing the political system, and the proportions disagreeing with 'to love the country is to love the Party' (See the bottom of Table 47). All of these measures with the exception of the last one were still associated with differences in low politics orientations even when high politics orientations were taken into account; it therefore seems reasonable to discount the alternative explanation of the relationship.

What might account for this discrepancy? David Easton has argued that, in the short term at least, an individual's level of diffuse support is normally independent of their evaluation of the regime's performance outputs:

Outputs and beneficial performance may rise and fall while this
[diffuse] support, in the form of generalized attachment,
continues.⁸

⁸ David Easton, "A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support," *British Journal of Political Science* 5, no. 4 (October 1975): 435–57, doi:10.1017/S0007123400008309.

As outlined in my introduction, in an early study, Jie Chen argued that diffuse support for the regime was related to an individual's living conditions and social status, and to their assessment of the incumbent government's policies in areas similar to those in my 'low politics orientations' question.⁹ However, in a later study, he finds that after high politics orientations and demographic factors are controlled for in a multivariate analysis, low-politics orientations have no statistically significant association with diffuse support.¹⁰ Jie Chen's later model therefore seems to work for my Christian group, while his earlier model better fits my comparison group.

Here it is useful to return to the literature on China's official national narrative, which argues that the Party-state has linked the legitimacy of *the CCP regime* (not just its incumbent politicians) to China's economic successes, and to its people's rising living standards.¹¹

In Chapter 2 we established that Christians tended to embrace this national narrative to a lesser extent than their demographic peers. Relative to their demographic peers, Christian respondents tended to prioritise democracy and freedom, morality, and the spread of Christianity, and de-prioritise economic gain and national and territorial assertiveness. In this chapter we also noted that, in addition to mentioning democracy more, Christians also defined it in primarily procedural, rather than substantive terms.

⁹ Chen, Zhong, and Hillard, "The Level and Sources of Popular Support for China's Current Political Regime." p.50

¹⁰ Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*. Table 4.10, pp.116-117.

¹¹ Holbig and Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China"; Vickers, "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimisation of China's Developmental Strategy." Holbig and Gilley note that the CCP is aware of the limitations of this strategy and have sought to develop other sources of legitimacy.

Tianjian Shi and Yun-Han Chu talk about a preference among Asian citizens in general, and Chinese citizens in particular to judge a political system based on its ability to deliver economic and public goods.¹² In his studies of Western post-war societies Ronald Inglehart demonstrated an association between a desire for personal economic gain and security and national economic performance and stability.¹³

Could it therefore be that Christian respondents have less materialistic priorities in life, and it is this that causes them to place diminished importance on actual regime performance when making decisions about China's political arrangements?

To test this, I added an additional variable to my analysis: personal economic salience. When asked if they had a personal goal or ideal for the next 20 years, if a respondent mentioned some kind of economic or material goal, such as buying a house, being financially secure, or getting a higher salary, then I categorised them as having 'high economic salience'; for example, the respondent who gave the following response would be classed as having 'high economic salience':

I don't think I have a very clear goal. I want to have a baby. Raise him or her. Have another apartment. [...] Have a car, have money. I'm pretty pragmatic. Be strong and healthy.¹⁴

¹² Shi, "Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System." p.236; Chu, *How East Asians Understand Democracy*.

¹³ Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*.

¹⁴ SIVN09c

If respondents did not mention such a goal, then I categorised them as having 'low economic salience'.

Overall, I found that a higher proportion of respondents in the comparison group displayed high economic salience than did Christian respondents (36% to 10% respectively) (Table 47). When making comparisons within the Christian group, we must be tentative about our conclusions, as we are working with small numbers: only 5 Christians displayed high economic salience, compared to 44 who displayed low economic salience.

Over my entire sample as a whole, I found higher economic salience to be associated with more positive opinions of the central government and the political system. However, in addition, for the comparison group, economic salience is associated with more positive low politics orientations,¹⁵ more positive views of local government, and less desire for the political system to be changed. I have updated Figure 13 to include this new variable in Figure 15.

In addition, even when economic salience is taken into account,¹⁶ Christians still have less positive low politics orientations,¹⁷ less positive opinions of central

¹⁵ The proportion of Christians with high economic salience with positive low politics orientations was 0.60, and the proportion of Christians with low economic salience was 0.44, which might indicate an association between low politics orientations and economic salience. However, when we compare the proportions of Christians with positive and negative low politics orientations who have high economic salience, the figures are 0.14 and 0.08 respectively, which is not a very large difference. The discrepancy between these two sets of figures is probably due to the small number of Christians with high economic salience (5 respondents). At the risk of picking up a false positive result, I will play safe and conclude that low politics and economic salience are not related for Christian respondents.

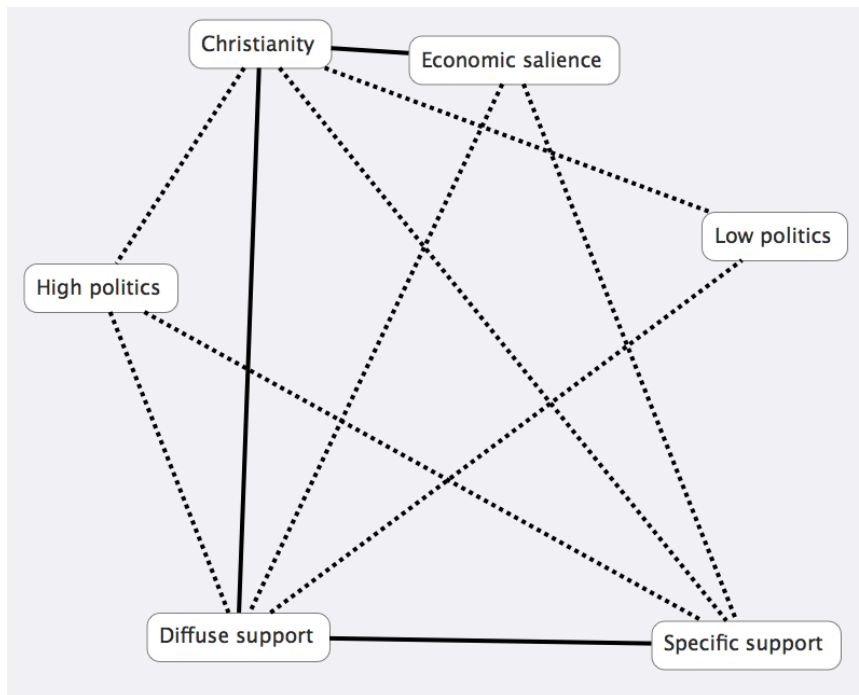
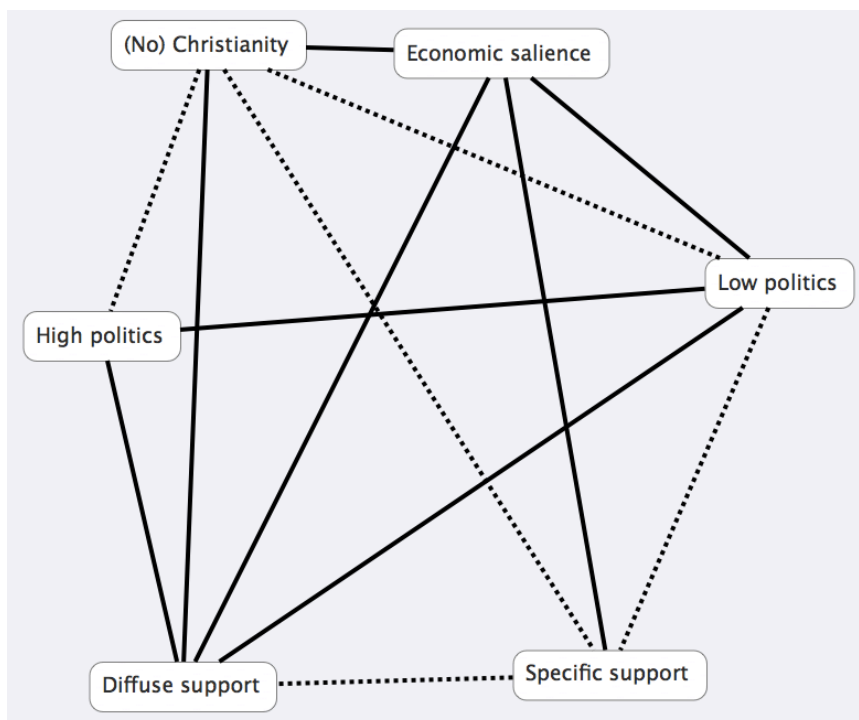
¹⁶ i.e. Christians with low economic salience are compared to non-Christians with low economic salience and Christians with high economic salience are compared to non-Christians with high economic salience.

government, higher democracy salience, lower support for the Party, and a higher proportion in favour of changing the system. The only variables that were associated with levels of economic salience but not directly with Christianity were support for the political system and disagreement with the statement 'To love the country is to love the Party.'¹⁸

What this means is that for my comparison group, those respondents for whom personal material gain was important were also more likely to hold positive perceptions of every day political issues, and of China's political arrangements and its current authorities. For Christian respondents these associations were weaker, if they existed at all. Not only were they less concerned with personal economic gain in general; but even those Christian respondents who did articulate materialistic priorities were less likely than their demographic peers to let these priorities inform, or be informed by, their perceptions of everyday political issues, or the extent to which they supported the regime and its governing authorities.

¹⁷ Although the difference between Christians and members of the comparison group with low economic salience is smaller, at 0.09.

¹⁸ On this, the relationships were different for Christians and the comparison group: Christians with high economic salience were more likely to disagree; members of the comparison group with high economic salience were less likely to disagree. It should also be noted here that both of these variables – lower support for the Party, and disagreement with the statement 'To love the country is to love the Party' are both associated with Christianity indirectly, i.e. when economic salience is not taken into account.

Figure 15: Political Orientations, Political Support, and Economic Salience**i. Christian group****ii. Comparison group**

NB: Solid lines represent direct relationships, whereas dotted lines represent weak or indirect relationships.

In causal terms, this analysis fits well with the discussion in Chapter 3. We have already established that it is primarily those who are moderately disaffected with the state of China's politics and society who become Christians. Relative to their demographic peers, these respondents hold a critical national narrative that emphasises democracy, morality, and the spread of Christianity and cares less about economic growth and assertive territorial and international claims.

Following this analysis, it makes sense to conclude that it is those with low economic salience and/or are unconvinced by the Party-state's¹⁹ appeal to its performance for legitimacy who become Christians in the first place, hence the difference between diagrams 4(i) and 4(ii) and the relatively few number of links between economic salience, low politics and other variables.

Personal economic gain, and the government's provision in the low politics areas outlined are not the primary political 'outputs' that these respondents want.²⁰ One respondent gave this opinion when asked what she thought was the biggest issue China was facing:

Material conditions are developing very fast [长得很快] [...]

[Interviewer: Why do think this is an issue?]

¹⁹ In terms of the questions that I asked respondents, I define the Party-state as the local government, the central government, and the Party. The political system, though designed and dominated by the Party-state, does not count as part of the Party-state per se.

²⁰ The possible exceptions are improvements in corruption, inequality and the rule of law – but these only constitute 3 of the 11 areas. A possible question to ask in a future study that would help clarify this issue further would be to get respondents to rank all of these low politics issues in order of importance.

It's mainly a contrast, that is, morality [道德] has not followed it with a corresponding rise, people's mentalities haven't changed correspondingly [人民的心态没有相应改变]. That is, I think, for example, my family, within the last twenty years, income has increased by 100,000 [RMB]. [...] That is, comparatively speaking, inequality is increasingly wide, then everyone will think that their own lives have improved a bit, but compared to other people's, [you'll] think that you haven't kept up that much with other people [没有别人赶上那么多]. So in this way, one's way of thinking will be unbalanced [不平衡], like this. Then... [...] our current educational system finds it very difficult to make people actively do things in terms of morality [很难让人从道德层面主动地做什么事情].²¹

After expressing concerns about the moral state of society, many Christian respondents voiced scepticism at the Party-state's ability to do anything about it. As I argued in Chapter 2, Christian respondents claimed that the Party had failed to set a good example by preventing corruption; it tacitly permitted a materialistic view of life (as argued by the respondent quoted below); in addition, it had abandoned its own original moral ideals; and now, if anything, its policies had made things worse by actively hindering Christians from spreading theirs.²² When I asked the same

²¹ SIVC01b112

²² On the last point, see IVC05, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b112, SIVC01c21, SIVC06a, SIVC06b.

respondent to what extent she thought the government could solve the problem, she said:

Relatively difficult [比较难]. [...] Regarding legal provisions, religious meetings are all illegal, so if you say how you want to use this to promote morality, that is relatively difficult; I think it's relatively difficult for the government to do something actively.²³

Another respondent argued that:

Our the construction of our spiritual civilisation has not developed as well as the construction of our material civilisation [精神文明建设没有物质文明建设发展好], a lot of people's morality isn't as good as that of the previous generation. Also, the government tacitly consents [默许]... [...] That is... silently permits [默默允许]. That is, it doesn't oppose [the fact that] earning money is the most important thing [不反对赚钱是最重要的].²⁴

In Eastonian terms, then, for Christians the Party-state is unable or unwilling to deliver the 'outputs' necessary – the moral and spiritual renewal of China - for dealing with China's most pressing issues, namely morality in society; and it places restrictions upon Christians' own ability to deliver their own solutions to the problem. Similarly, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 4, the other key issue raised consistently by Christians was the preference for greater democracy; this is another

²³ SIVC01b112

²⁴ SIVC06b

political demand that has been frustrated by the Party-state and the nature of the political system that it leads. One respondent gave the following explanation for the government's reticence to reform:

[The central government] doesn't want to change the current situation [...] they think, the five years they're in power, the five years as chairman, that's one term in office, they think, "Ah, we just need for there not to be any big problems happening in the country, as long as there's no unrest it'll be OK. If the common people are peaceful, that'll be OK." [...] But they don't think about, "What can I bring to the country?" They think that [only] when the problem appears will they grasp the problem, when the problem appears they will need to resolve it, there's no more thinking about "I want to plan some things for the future." [...] For example, for China in ten to twenty years' time.²⁵

This may go some way to explaining the strong link between Christianity and low levels of diffuse support for the regime (the Party and the political system) and specific support for the central government.²⁶ Causally speaking, to reiterate Chapter 3, it is likely that it was those disaffected by society's moral state and political arrangements who became Christians. However, as discussed in Chapter 3 this causality was unlikely to have been mono-directional: Christian teaching and fellowship with like-minded disaffectees is likely to have reinforced contrarian

²⁵ IVC05

²⁶ Although not the local government; in general few Christians held local governments responsible for the moral state of society, preferring to see it as a nationwide and systemic issue.

sentiments after conversion, exacerbated by Christians' encounters with Party-state-imposed constraints upon religious freedom.

For many members of the comparison group, in causal terms it was their perception of the Party-state's achievements, particularly in the economic realm, that led respondents to voice their support for the central government, the Party, and the political system.²⁷ One respondent said of the central government:

I think firstly, I relatively affirm them [比较肯定的], I'm relatively satisfied. Because actually I can see other socialist countries, like North Korea, their public's living standards are extremely low, worse in comparison... [...] Their public's living standards are worse. But China, such a big geographical area, so many people, actually it's very difficult to manage. [...] In such a big country, the level of difficulty [involved] in managing it is extremely large. At the moment, in such a short period of time, I really approve of the fact that everyone's quality of life has been able to improve this much. I really, really approve of it. Then, China's highest level leaders, from what I can see from my level, I also relatively approve of their work [and] political achievements. [...] In the course of development maybe we haven't an older generation to give us a model [我们没有一个前辈去做一个范本], to be an example. [...] In the world there are no other socialist countries that are really great, that

²⁷ IVN0921, IVN101, IVN091, IVN1021, IVN13b, IVN14a, IVN14b, IVN14c, IVN14d, IVN14e, SIVN02a, SIVN03, SIVN06aa11, SIVN06a11, SIVN083, SIVN09b, SIVN09d, SIVN09d12

have done really perfectly. [...] [W]e've got no way of studying others, we can only create for ourselves, we can only grope our way forward [摸索], so we'll certainly go down a few dead-ends. But regarding the overall direction, I really approve of the scale of its development. Because, from when I was little I can see.... when I was little I came to Beijing, I could see that Beijing was actually very backwards [很土], very poor, this kind of city. But today [I] can see that Beijing has already changed and has the feeling of a big metropolis [大都市的这种风格], it's had such a big change. Then up to the present there has also been a striking improvement in the quality of life of the people in my family. On this point, I really approve of China's current government.²⁸

Another said of the Communist Party:

Except corruption, other [things] are OK, good. Because I look right now, there are so many foreigners here. Why does this European Union, this kind of leader come to China to [ask it to] buy the debt? It means our Party so far does a good job. In the future I don't know. Another thing we need to remember is China has 1.3 billion people. So which party can lead so many people to do such a good job? So far we didn't have a war [or a] big fight, so I'm happy. [...] So many government policies are based on [the fact that] China has a big population. For example, one family, one child [= the One

²⁸ IVN14a

Child Policy]. In Sweden and the UK, you can make more babies.

The government is smart, so based on our own situation, [it makes our] own policy.²⁹

2. Summary

To summarise, then, in the previous section I argued that relative to their demographic peers, Christians held more negative views of low politics issues, although this discrepancy only appears in Shenzhen. Overall, high proportions of respondents perceived improvements to their living conditions and social statuses, and low proportions of respondents perceived improvements in the areas of corruption and inequality.

Christians hold similar views on their local government to their demographic peers, with major discrepancies here being between respondents of different cities rather than different religious affiliations. Christians hold more negative views of China's current central government. They hold similar opinions on high politics orientations, with the question of freedom of association being the only area in which they are noticeably more liberal than their demographic peers. They also have similar overall levels of political tolerance. When this is disaggregated, they are more tolerant of Tibetan separatists and less tolerant of advocates of gay marriage. Christians hold more negative opinions about China's Party and political system, and demonstrate greater desire to change the system. Finally, Christians talk more about democracy,

²⁹ SIVN09b

but use similar terms to those of their demographic peers, defining democracy in liberal, rather than populist terms, and procedural, rather than substantive terms.

In this section I have presented an analysis that suggests that not only do Christians hold different political opinions to their demographic peers, but that they also differ in the way that these opinions interlink, and the underlying priorities that inform, them.

Christian respondents are less likely to judge China's governing authorities and political system based on their perceptions of low politics issues. Christians are less likely to articulate personal material concerns, and less likely to associate these concerns with either perception of everyday political issues, or their support for the authorities or the regime.

In causal terms, drawing both on the theoretical literature and on the findings of Chapter 3, I argue that it is primarily those who do not prioritise economic issues, or regard low politics issues as important in making political judgements, who are most likely to be attracted to Christianity. Christians' critique of China's political institutions is not primarily based on their failure to deliver economic growth or everyday political goods, but on their failure to prevent China's perceived moral crisis and their undemocratic, suppressive ruling style. Again, it is primarily those with an existing sense of disaffection who become Christians – although Christian teaching, fellowship with like-minded disaffectees, and encounters with state suppression of religious freedom may amplify this contrarianism further.

3. Conclusion

The findings presented in this and the previous chapter build on those in Chapters 2 and 3 to raise further questions about China's Party-state's legitimation strategy.

In Chapter 2 we noted that Chinese Protestants hold positive opinions about democracy; in Chapter 4, I have argued that they embrace the idea not just of democracy but of liberal and procedural democracy, which links democracy with political freedoms and elections, not the kind of substantive and populist concept of democracy envisioned by the Party-state.

In Chapter 2 we noted that Chinese Protestants are less concerned with economic issues; in this chapter, I have argued that they are not just less concerned with personal economic gain and policy delivery on 'bread and butter' issues, but are less likely to make political judgements based upon these things

Indeed, in Chapter 2 we noted that Chinese Protestants hold more contrarian attitudes towards the Party-state; in this chapter, I have argued that they are not just less supportive of China's political institutions, but question the very criteria upon which the Party-state has largely staked its legitimacy in the past three decades.

If Christians held these political values because they were Christians, then the Party-state would have little to worry about; Protestants as yet comprise a small minority of China's population. However, as I have argued in Chapter 3, Christianity merely taps into an underlying reservoir of growing societal discontent among educated

urbanites, then serious questions will need to be asked about the nature of the Party-state's legitimization strategy.

The Communist Party will therefore need to develop a logic of legitimization rooted in values other than economic growth, nationalism, and political stability.³⁰ There have been signs in recent years that it has been shifting its legitimization strategy towards an emphasis on responsive and effective governance, social justice issues, and Chinese cultural values.³¹ But the findings and analysis presented here question the extent to which, in the short-term at least, this has been able to meet the felt needs of young urbanites. I discuss this further in my conclusion.

In my next section, I will investigate how, and indeed whether, this disaffection outworks itself in my respondents' social and political activities. Relative to their demographic peers, are Christians more socially and politically active, or less? And what is the nature of that activism?

³⁰ Wang, "Public Support for Democracy in China."

³¹ Holbig and Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China."

Chapter 6

Christianity and Social and Political Activity (I): Results

1. Introduction

So far in this thesis I have argued that Protestants generally hold more critical national narratives than their demographic peers, and that it is primarily those who already hold, or are in the process of developing, these critical national narratives who become Protestants, rather than believers developing these narratives post-conversion (see Chapters 2 and 3). Furthermore, in Chapters 4 and 5 I argued that Protestants judge China's rulers and regime based on different criteria from those employed by their non-Protestant demographic peers; Christians are less likely to base such judgements upon their perceptions of everyday political issues. In addition, not only are Christians less concerned with personal economic priorities, but they were less likely to let this concern affect their political judgements.

These findings are an interesting window into how Protestants think about China, its society, and its politics. However, none of these findings tell us how they act socially or politically. For us to gain a more holistic picture of Protestant political engagement, it is therefore necessary to examine believers' social and political activities. The next two chapters are devoted to this task.

In Chapter 1 I devised the following hypotheses around Protestants' social and political activity: Firstly, I hypothesised that Christians' level of social engagement, including church and secular activities, is greater than that of their demographic

peers. This hypothesis is rooted in Putnam and Campbell's finding that in the USA, the more religious people are more socially and civically active.¹ I hypothesise that Christians have larger social networks, and participate in more religious social activities, secular social activities, and charitable activities. Putnam and Campbell also argued that religious people's level of social trust is higher than that of their demographic peers, a relationship I will examine in this chapter with reference to my Protestant respondents.² Fukuyama argued that a group with a radius of trust that extends beyond the boundaries of the group would produce positive externalities for wider society.³ I test this by asking my non-Christian respondents what opinion they have of Christians and Christianity – is the outworking of Christians' beliefs in their behaviour positively or negatively perceived by those outside Christianity? Finally, I examine Protestants' political activity - are Christians more politically active, as in, for example, the USA and South Korea?

In this chapter I argue that Christians generally have higher levels of social engagement and social trust than their non-Christian demographic peers, but this extra engagement and trust is largely confined to within the Christian community. Nevertheless, Protestantism does have positive externalities for wider society: non-Christian respondents generally hold positive views of Christians and Christianity, primarily due to believers' perceived moral behaviour. This contradicts Fukuyama's argument that if a group's radius of trust does not extend beyond group boundaries, then the group will not benefit wider society. It would therefore be wise to

¹ Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*.

² Ibid.

³ Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society*.

distinguish between a group's radius of trust and its perceived radius of benevolence, within which its ethical norms apply.

In terms of political activity, I argue that higher proportions of Christians believe that ordinary people can affect political decision-making,⁴ and that more Christians indicate a sense of responsibility for China, and a desire to see it changed through Christian revival, something I label spiritual efficacy. Fewer Christians are members of the Communist Party, chiefly because they are deterred by its atheistic ideology. However, more Christians are politically active, primarily in terms of making complaints to leaders at work⁵ and making political comments online.

As part of my analysis of Christian's political activity, I then examine in detail the case of Beijing's Shouwang Church, the members of which have been involved in explicit contention against the local authorities. I outline the details of the case, before arguing that this political mobilisation along Christian lines was an exception amongst my respondents, and one that has caused controversy amongst Beijing's Protestants. Most respondents' churches have kept low profiles, and avoided confronting the Party-state; in return, the authorities have mostly left them alone, only stepping in to prevent large-scale meetings and public activities.

I conclude this chapter with the observation that, to use Putnam's terms, my Chinese Protestant respondents exhibited what could be characterised as 'bonding' social capital. That is to say, Christians are more socially connected than their

⁴ Though this finding only applies to Shenzhen once results are disaggregated by city.

⁵ This finding only applies to Beijing.

demographic peers, but these links are mostly with other Christians. This contrasts with Putnam and Campbell's finding that American religious believers (though not just Protestants) exhibit both 'bonding' and 'bridging' capital, enjoying links with each other but also with wider society.⁶

In the next chapter I investigate this variation further. I examine reasons for the differences in social and political activity between Protestants and their demographic peers. I then analyse why my findings supported some hypotheses but not others, arguing that the activities of Chinese believers face cultural, historical, social, and political constraints not found in the societies upon which I based my hypotheses. Finally, I argue that the findings presented in these two chapters suggest that Christians enjoy a greater sense of agency than their demographic peers. The development of this sense of agency is a process that begins before conversion, but is then enhanced by Christian belief and church membership, and outworks itself in transformative activism aimed at the spiritual and moral renewal of Chinese society. This transformative activism, however, is constrained by the cultural, historical, social and political factors outlined above, which channel it into the distinctive shape outlined in these chapters.

⁶ Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*.

2. Findings

- a. **Christians have higher levels of social engagement than their demographic peers, but this extra engagement is largely confined to within the Christian community**
- i. **Christians have larger social networks but this extra network size is mostly confined to other Christians**

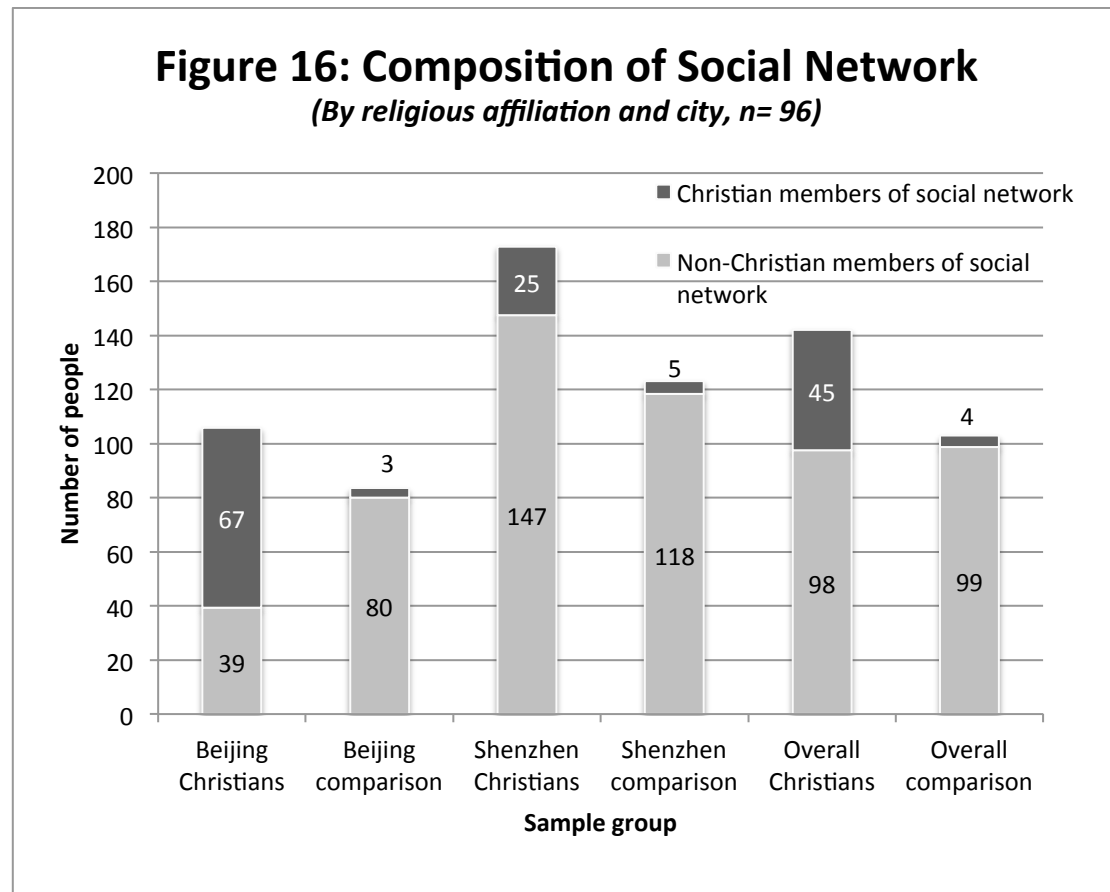
The average self-reported size of Christian respondents' social network was 143 people, whereas that of respondents in the comparison group was 103 people (Figure 16, Table 50).

However, I also asked respondents how many of the people in their social network were Protestant Christians. For Christian respondents, the average number of Christians in their network was 45, whereas for comparison group respondents, it was 4. In other words, all of the extra 40 people in the average Christian's social network are other Christians.⁷

There is an interesting inter-city difference here. In Beijing Christians actually reported smaller non-Christian social networks than the comparison group, but vastly bigger Christian networks. In Shenzhen, by contrast, Christians have larger Christian and non-Christian social networks than the comparison group, but smaller Christian social networks than Christians in Beijing. This suggests that Beijing Christians are more inward-looking in terms of their social circles. In Putnam's terms,

⁷ An analysis of the medians here yields similar results to an analysis of means, though the average network size numbers are lower. The median Christian respondent network size was 100, and included 30 Christians. The median comparison respondent network size was 70 and included 2 Christians. Therefore, for the median Christian respondent, 28 out of the additional 30 members of his network were other Christians.

Beijing Christians have higher levels of ‘bonding’ social capital and lower levels of ‘bridging’ social capital.⁸ I will discuss possible reasons for this in my next chapter.



However, in addition to the accuracy problems of estimating one’s own social network size, such estimates do not tell us anything about the quality of those relationships.⁹

Another metric I could use in this regard is the number of introductions per respondent. This provides an indication of the nature of relationships – being able to find an acquaintance willing to meet and talk to a foreign researcher about

⁸ Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

⁹ Yanjie Bian, “The Formation of Social Capital among Chinese Urbanites,” in *Social Capital - An International Research Program*, ed. Nan Lin and Bonnie H. Erickson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

potentially sensitive topics requires a level of interpersonal trust not captured by estimates of mere personal network size - and it is less easy to fake for a respondent who wants to portray himself to the researcher as a popular socialite.

On average, Christians were able to provide me with 0.84 successful introductions each,¹⁰ and members of the comparison group were able to provide me with 0.62 successful introductions each (Table 51).

These figures are remarkably consistent between cities;¹¹ on average, Christian respondents in both cities were able to individually recruit more respondents than their demographic peers, which suggests that more Christians have access to networks of trusted relationships.¹²

ii. Christians participate in more religious social activities

Beijing Christian respondents participated in a mean average of 2.85 Christian activities per week, and Shenzhen Christian respondents participated in an average of 2.68 Christian activities (the median figures are 2.75 and 2.25 respectively) (Table 52).

¹⁰ i.e. introductions that resulted in an interview.

¹¹ In Beijing, the numbers were 0.86 introductions per Christian respondent and 0.65 per comparison group respondent; in Shenzhen, the numbers were 0.82 and 0.59 respectively.

¹² An alternative explanation here would be that Christians have fewer misgivings about speaking to foreigners. However, if this were the case one would expect to see groups whose respondents were less used to dealing with foreigners to have lower average numbers of successful introductions. Both Christian groups, Beijing and Shenzhen, have similar average numbers of successful introductions, and similar proportions of respondents with deep or sustained foreign interaction. However, of the comparison groups, the proportion of Beijing respondents with deep or sustained foreign interaction is 12% lower than that of the Shenzhen group; but both groups have similar average numbers of successful introductions - if anything, the Beijing figure is slightly higher. This might caution us against putting the differences in the average number of successful introductions down to familiarity with foreign interaction.

By far the most popular of these were Sunday worship (主日崇拜), with 94% of Christian respondents participating each week, and small group Bible studies (查经小组), with 84% of Christian respondents participating each week. Other popular activities included prayer meetings (27%), socialising together with Christians through, for example, sports or eating (20%), training courses (for leadership or discipleship, for example) (20%), choir or worship band practice (16%), and collective evangelism (12%) (Table 53).¹³

For example, one respondent¹⁴ outlined her average Sunday to me:

- 8-10am: Choir practice
- 10.15am: Worship starts (and continues for about 20-30 minutes)
- 10.35-11.35am: Sermon
- 12-12.30pm (or even up to 1pm): Prayer group
- Lunch
- Afternoon: Movie group. Sometimes people will go to play ball games (打球) or go out to have fun (出去玩儿).

This sort of schedule was fairly common amongst Christian respondents.

In addition, of those asked, 79% of Beijing Christians and 69% of Shenzhen Christians performed some kind of service (服侍) in their church or Christian organisation

¹³ An interesting aside is that 9 respondents (18%) mentioned participating in an activity involving a foreigner or an international organisation. Please refer back to Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of the role of foreign interaction in the formation of political opinion and in the lives of Christian respondents.

¹⁴ IVC011

(Table 54). Positions of responsibility included leading or singing in the choir,¹⁵ leading small groups or Bible studies,¹⁶ helping with youth group or Sunday school,¹⁷ and welcoming people at the church doors.¹⁸

When I asked respondents if they had done some kind of evangelistic activity, 94% said that they had at some point (86% of Beijing Christians, 100% of Shenzhen Christians) (Table 55). Evangelistic activity varied by audience – whether aimed at friends¹⁹, strangers,²⁰ or family.²¹ It also varied in whether it was planned²² or ad hoc,²³ personal²⁴ or collective,²⁵ and in the location chosen – in the workplace,²⁶ at church,²⁷ on university campuses,²⁸ on the streets,²⁹ or in parks.³⁰

My most recent time [preaching the gospel] was at the start of this year. Some brothers and sisters from the church choir went to the park together to preach the gospel. Then we talked to people on the street, with people we didn't know, and described what the gospel was. Then we went together to the park [and] we sang praise songs together. This attracted a lot of passers-by, then

¹⁵ IVC011, IVC01121, IVC011213, IVC0112131, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b113, SIVC06a, SIVC06c

¹⁶ IVC011, IVC06, IVC0112111, SIVC01b, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c, SIVC01c1

¹⁷ IVC0112, IVC04, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b111, SIVC01b1111

¹⁸ IVC02, IVC06, SIVC01b112

¹⁹ IVC031, IVC04b, IVC04b3, IVC05, IVC06, IVC01111, IVC01121, IVC011213, IVC011221, IVC0112132, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b111, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b1111, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c21, SIVC06a, SIVC06c, SIVC09d1

²⁰ IVC03, IVC031, IVC04b, IVC04b1, IVC04b2, IVC01111, IVC0112131, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b112, SIVC06a, SIVC07c1

²¹ IVC04b, IVC04b3, IVC06, IVC0112111, SIVC01c, SIVC06a

²² IVC03, IVC031, IVC04b1, IVC04b2, IVC011213, IVC0112131, SIVC01b112, SIVC07b1

²³ IVC031, IVC04b3, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b113, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c1, SIVC06b1, SIVC09d1

²⁴ IVC031, IVC04b, IVC05, IVC06, IVC011211, IVC0112132, SIVC01b, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b111, SIVC01c21, SIVC06c, SIVC07c1

²⁵ IVC03, IVC031, IVC04b, IVC04b1, IVC04b2, IVC01122, IVC011212, IVC011213, IVC0112131

²⁶ IVC031, SIVC09d1

²⁷ IVC05, SIVC01c, SIVC01c21

²⁸ IVC04b, IVC04b1, IVC04b2, SIVC01b1121

²⁹ IVC04b3, IVC01111, IVC01122),

³⁰ IVC03, IVC031, IVC011213, IVC011221, IVC0112131, SIVC07b1

through this method we talked to them about what the gospel was and what Christian faith was.³¹

One problem here is in the comparison with the religious activities of respondents of other or no faith: I did not ask respondents in the comparison group systematically about their own religious activities. When such activities were raised in the interviews, they included attending Buddhist gatherings (法会),³² releasing animals (放生),³³ and attending church abroad³⁴ or in China.³⁵ However, of all these activities, the most regular reported attendance was once a month.

Therefore overall, despite the tricky comparison, it seems reasonable to conclude that on a weekly basis, Christians do participate in more religious social events than their demographic peers.

iii. Christians participate in the same number, or fewer, secular social activities

Christians participated in a mean average of 1.26 social activities per week (other than Christian activities), whereas members of the comparison group participated in an average of 1.50. The median figures were 1.00 and 1.50 respectively (Table 56).

In terms of medians, both Shenzhen and Beijing Christians participated in an average of one secular social activity per week, compared to 1.5 for their demographic peers.

³¹ IVC0112131

³² IVN014b, IVN1021, SIVN06a

³³ IVN14b

³⁴ SIVN02a, SIVC06a1

³⁵ SIVN09b SIVN09d12

In terms of means, Beijing Christians participated in 0.83 social activities per week, compared to 1.35 of the Beijing comparison group; the figures for Shenzhen were 1.66 and 1.64 respectively.

In Shenzhen therefore, Christians at most participate in similar numbers of social activities to those of their demographic peers; in Beijing they participate in fewer social activities by any measure.

At the moment, most of my activities are with the church. Even non-church activities are with people from church. [...] [We] watch films, or go to do exercise,³⁶ chat, eat; my life [friendship] circle is also basically church people, but I can also [do these things] with former classmates, these non-Christians, I have some contact, but not that often. I meet with the church every week, so it's easier to establish this kind of regular contact with them, this kind of relationship.³⁷

The most popular activities – a popularity generally shared across groups- included eating with friends,³⁸ doing sports or exercise,³⁹ watching films together,⁴⁰ meeting

³⁶ This word is unclear on the recording.

³⁷ IVC011

³⁸ IVC011, IVC03, IVC031, IVC04, IVC04b, IVC04b3, IVC05, IVC06, IVC01111, IVC01122, IVC011211, IVC011213, IVC0112111, IVN04b1b1, IVN09, IVN0921, IVN09211, IVN10, IVN101, IVN102, IVN103, IVN11, IVN112, IVN121, IVN14b, SIVC01b, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c2, SIVC06a, SIVC06b, SIVC07c1, SIVC07b1, SIVN02a, SIVN02a2, SIVN03, SIVN04, SIVN06a, SIVN06a11, SIVN081, SIVN082, SIVN083, SIVN09b, SIVN09c

³⁹ IVC011, IVC03, IVC04, IVC04b3, IVC05, IVC0112132, IVN01, IVN09211, IVN1221, IVN04b1b1, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b113, SIVC01b1111, SIVC01c, SIVN03, SIVN05, SIVN082, SIVN083, SIVN09b, SIVN09d12

⁴⁰ IVC011, IVC02, IVC03, IVC011213, IVC0112131, IVN04b1b1, IVN09, IVN10, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01b21, SIVN02a1, SIVN06a, SIVN09d12

friends,⁴¹ and going out to have fun (出去玩儿) or walk on the streets and do window shopping (逛逛街).⁴²

iv. Christians participate in the same number, or fewer, charitable activities

66% of Christians reported having participated in some sort of charitable activity, compared to 76% of their demographic peers (Table 57). This discrepancy was not replicated across cities: in Shenzhen, 76% of the comparison group but only 62% of Christians had participated in charitable activity; in Beijing the figures were 71% and 76% respectively.

Charitable activities included visiting orphanages,⁴³ donating money, books and clothes to poor areas of China,⁴⁴ and volunteering in earthquake-stricken regions such as Wenchuan and Yushu.⁴⁵

In general, a number of Christians who did participate in charitable activities did so through their church, or through charities established by Christians:

The sisters and brothers in our small group might set a date to arrange for us to go to a place called “Guang Ai School” [光爱学校].

I think it means, “Sunlight and Love” [...], it's that kind of school. [...]

This school is not organised by the government, it's organised by a person, this person is a [Christian] brother, he's gathered lots of

⁴¹ IVC0112, IVC01121, IVC04b, IVN01, IVN04b1b1, IVN09211, IVN1021, IVN121, IVN1221, IVN13b, IVN14d, SIVC01b, SIVC01b111, SIVC01b1111, SIVC06b, SIVN06aa2, SIVN09a1

⁴² IVC04b, IVC04b3, IVC06, IVC011212, IVN091, IVN092, IVN101, IVN102, IVN103, IVN14a, IVN14e, SIVC06b, SIVN06a11, SIVN081, SIVN09d12

⁴³ IVC03, IVC031, IVC04b3, IVC05, IVN04, IVN091, SIVN06aa2

⁴⁴ IVC04b1, IVC04b3, IVN04, IVN092, IVN0921, IVN10, IVN102, SIVC01b1, SIVC06a

⁴⁵ IVC04b2, IVC0112133, IVN14c, SIVC06c, SIVN083

children from the streets, they are beggars, and also orphans, and others [who] had become thieves on the street corners, these kinds of people; or the children of migrant workers. Then he puts together all these children whom nobody else cares for, teaches them lessons, organises them. Sometimes we can all go and see them - at festivals we go and give them some things and play with them.⁴⁶

One respondent voiced his reluctance to get involved with secular charitable charities:

Previously [when] there were some charitable activities initiated by the church, I participated more in activities. At the moment, there are none organised by the church,⁴⁷ so I will participate in relatively few. Because it's very difficult to participate in spontaneous charitable activities. Also, there are some charity activities [run by] non-Christian organisations, which are not the same [不一致] in terms of structure and ideas, [...] so they're a bit more difficult to participate in. Now previously, the church organised some charitable activities – for example, donating clothes, disaster aid,

⁴⁶ IVC01111. See also IVC04, IVC05, SIVC01b1, SIVC06a, SIVC06c, SIVC07b.

⁴⁷ This believer is a member of Shouwang, so presumably its charitable activities had ceased at the height of its confrontation with the police. Following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, Shouwang members had donated 200,000 RMB as well as sending volunteers to the region. See Gao [高师宁] and He [何光沪], "Christianity in Contemporary China: Key Issues and Proposed Solutions [当今中国基督教的主要问题与解决设想]."

this kind of activity. When I have suitable conditions, or the energy,
I will participate.⁴⁸

Several of the comparison group, whilst indicating their theoretical approval of charitable work, also said they were suspicious or disappointed with the way it was working in China. One respondent said:

[R]ecently I haven't donated much, either. Because I have
understood that a lot of our donations have not really been sent
into the hands of those who need them.⁴⁹

He then went on to detail the 2011 Guo Meimei scandal, in which an employee of an organisation linked to the Chinese Red Cross was accused of embezzling donated funds.⁵⁰

To briefly summarise this section on Christians' social engagement, the data presents us with a mixed picture. On average, Christians have larger social networks and engage in more social activities. However, these additional social network members are mostly Christians, and the additional social activities are all Christian social activities. Christians participate in the same number or fewer secular social activities than their demographic peers, and Christians had similar or lower rates of participation in charitable activities.

⁴⁸ IVC0112133

⁴⁹ SIVN06aa1

⁵⁰ See Guobin Yang, *The Dramatic Form of Online Collective Action in China*, Paper Presented at the Inter-Asia Roundtable 2012: "Methodological and Conceptual Issues in Cyber Activism Research", Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, 2012.

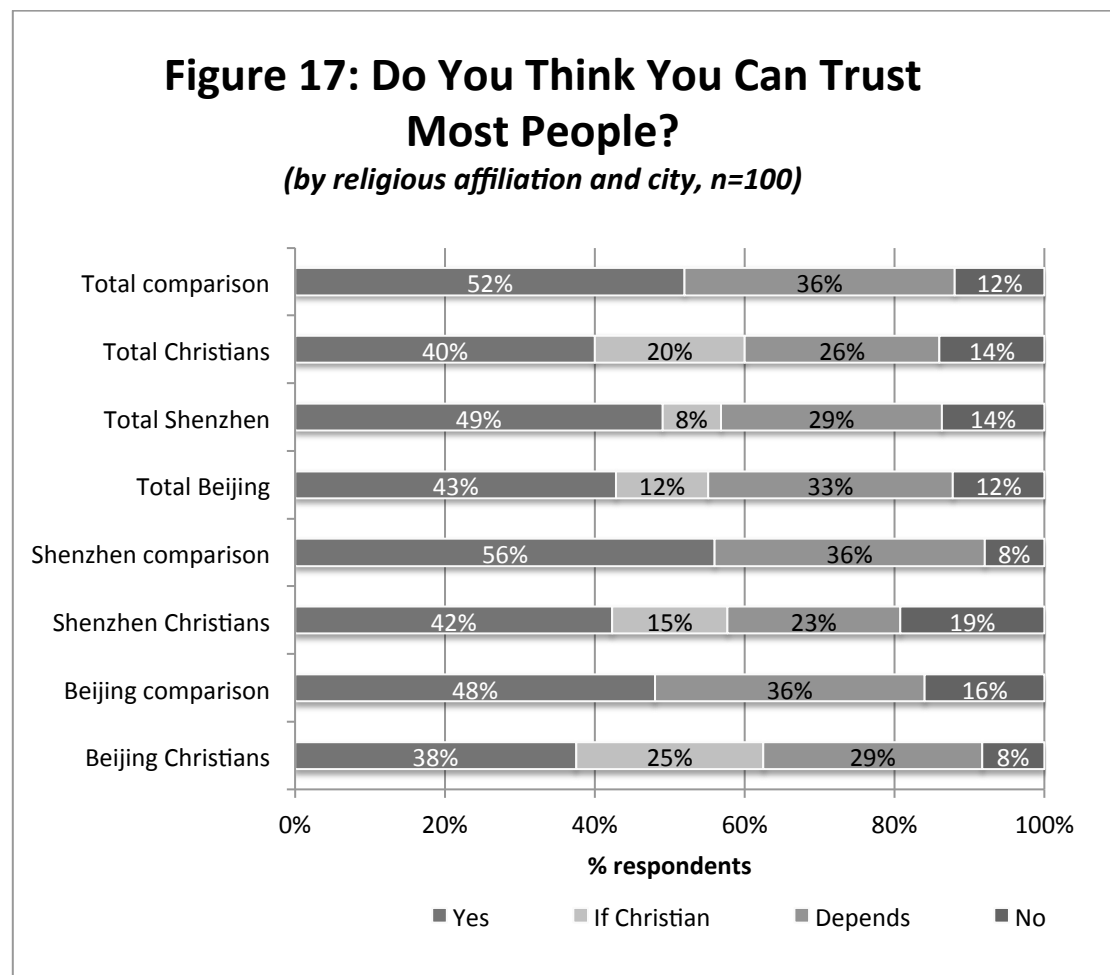
b. Christians' level of general social trust is lower than that of their demographic peers, but they have a high level of trust in each other

When asked the question, 'Do you think you can trust most people?', the proportion of Christians answering with a straight 'Yes,' (40%) was lower than that of their demographic peers (52%), and this was replicated in both Beijing and Shenzhen (Table 58).

However, it is interesting that a proportion of Christian respondents gave the answer 'If they are Christian' (or a similar formulation); if these are added to the Yesses then Christian levels of trust are similar to or higher than those of their demographic peers in Shenzhen and Beijing respectively (see Figure 17). This suggests that despite having overall lower levels of trust, Christians have a relatively high level of trust in each other, a trend that was more pronounced in Beijing.

When asked, 'Whom do you trust the most?', relative to their demographic peers, a higher proportion of Christians said Christian friends or people from church (40% to 0%) and God or Jesus (31% to 2%) (Table 59). A lower proportion of Christians said they most trusted family (54% to 84%), or friends (15% to 26%). For Christian respondents, 'family' was still the most popular most-trusted group. All of these differences were replicated over both cities, although the difference between the proportions of Christians (27%) and non-Christians (36%) in Beijing saying they most trusted friends was small.

When asked ‘Who do you trust the least?’, more Christians (25% to 10% of their demographic peers) said government or officials, replicated across both cities (Table 60) – unsurprising given Christians’ general political contrarianism (see Chapters 2 and 4). For Christians, this was the most commonly mentioned least-trusted group. Similar proportions of Christians (24%) and the comparison group (23%) said ‘No-one’ (i.e. ‘There’s no-one I least trust’); for the comparison group this was the most commonly mentioned least-trusted group.



In order to further investigate social trust in different groups, when I got to Shenzhen halfway through my research I introduced a new question, asking

respondents to score their level of trust in various different groups in five gradations: 'Totally distrust,' 'Trust a little bit,' 'Averagely trust,' 'Mostly trust,' 'Totally trust,' plus a 'No opinion' option. I coded five non-'No opinion' answers 1 to 5 respectively (see Appendix 5).

For both Christians and the comparison group, the most trusted group was family at 4.54 and 4.82 ('Totally trust') respectively (Table 61). For both sample groups government,⁵¹ media,⁵² and strangers⁵³ were the least trusted groups. The biggest difference was that Christians trusted Christians more – Christian respondents gave Christians a score of 4.23 ('Mostly trust'), and the comparison group gave them a score of 3.42 ('Averagely trust'). This further supports our above finding that Christians have high levels of trust in each other.

In Fukuyama's terms, then, the church community provides a 'radius of trust'.⁵⁴ In Putnam's terms, '[N]orm[s] of generalised reciprocity' are operative within such communities.⁵⁵ The language my respondents use also points to this; Christians commonly refer to other Christians as 'brothers and sisters' (弟兄姐妹).⁵⁶ Mayfair Yang discusses 'fictive kinship ties' which 'bring people outside the family group into the circle of familiar and trusted relationships'.⁵⁷ Church membership facilitates the establishment of such ties. Furthermore, Table 59 would seem to imply that to a

⁵¹ Average scores: 2.12 and 2.48 for Christians and the comparison group respectively.

⁵² Average scores: 2.28 and 2.64.

⁵³ Average scores: 2.19 and 2.18.

⁵⁴ *Social Capital and Civil Society*. p.4.

⁵⁵ Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. p.171.

⁵⁶ IVC02, IVC0122, IVC01122, IVC011211, IVC011212.

⁵⁷ Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China*, G - Reference, Information and Interdisciplinary Subjects Series (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). p.114.

certain extent these ties form a substitute for one's biological family; Christian respondents were much less likely than non-Christians to mention family in answering the question 'Who do you most trust?'; they were much more likely to explicitly mention Christian friends or people from church. Many of my respondents' biological families lived in distant cities or provinces, making these fictive kinship ties particularly valuable.

c. Christian activity and belief has positive externalities for society in terms of the positive opinions that non-Christians hold of Christians and of Christianity.

I have already discussed the finding that Christians' rates of participation in charitable activities are similar to or lower than those of their demographic peers (in Beijing and Shenzhen respectively); by this measurement, whilst Christian activity may benefit its members personally and socially, its benefits to wider society are limited.

To further measure the effect of Christianity on wider society, I asked respondents in the comparison group for their opinions about Christianity. Respondents held generally positive views of Christianity and of Christians. 60% made positive comments, and only 14% made negative comments; a sizeable proportion (36%) said they did not know a lot about Christianity, or had not encountered Christians (Table 63).

The most common positive perception – indeed, the most common comment in general – was that Christians were nice, kind or loving, mentioned by 22% of respondents⁵⁸ (Table 62):

I feel that their doctrine is a kind of spirit of universal love [博爱的一种精神]. They help a lot of people.⁵⁹

Further positive comments were that Christianity was good (in general terms) (12%); and that it could help people improve themselves (10%). Other common comments were that Christians had their own norms of behaviour (14%), and that Christianity provided its adherents with a hope or focus in times of trouble (12%) (Table 62).

In terms of negative perceptions, three respondents (6%) said they thought that some Christian beliefs were unreasonable:

There are also unreasonable parts, maybe there are some things that the Bible does not permit, but that the law permits. I think that the Bible, it is a thing from the past [是个以前的东西]. Present day society has improved [进步了]. [...] For example, homosexuality - maybe in the Bible it seems like this is bad, it is not permitted in the Bible. But it seems that in the UK, the law hasn't said that this is a crime, has it?⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Included in this code was also the idea that love was a key teaching of Christianity.

⁵⁹ IVC103

⁶⁰ SIVN06a

Others talked about unwelcome evangelism:

I actually can't understand why they have to unceasingly drag people in to believe their religion [拉人去信他们那个教], I don't really understand that, because I think that as a Chinese person, I've been influenced by Buddhism; I don't think that Buddhism will [try and] drag people in to believe this thing.⁶¹

Whilst some respondents emphasised that they did not believe personally (12%), other respondents (also 12%) said that they found Christianity interesting, or wanted to find out more:

In the beginning I thought my Christian classmates at university, the feeling they gave me was that they were very superstitious, [...] because from when we were little we had been taught atheism, and we believed [it]; from when we were little, they taught us to believe that [...] only communist ideals were correct. That is, no God exists in this world; everything has been brought by people's strength, [we learnt this] from communist education [which emphasises] people's strength. So at the start, when I encountered Christian classmates, I would think they were very superstitious. Why do they think that everything is decreed by God, everything is the [way] God wishes? So I think I could not understand or experience it. Then I didn't understand what their belief represented. But when my husband was in Oxford [as a visiting

⁶¹ IVN101

graduate student], he went to listen to a sermon⁶² at Christ Church. Then later he told me about it. In my eyes, I think this belief most of it isn't about whether God exists or not, it's more about kindness, love, and peace; these basic life principles, that is your attitudes to life, other people, and yourself. A lot of it what [they] said was extremely good. So on the question of whether I believe God exists or not, I'd like to challenge my previous beliefs, and I really want to listen to [some] preaching. But I don't know afterwards whether or not I will change my current atheist situation. I just want to have a try.⁶³

This respondent seems to be going through a time of questioning previously-held beliefs similar to that which several Christian respondents had gone through prior to their conversion, although in this case the eventual outcome is as yet uncertain.

Putnam and Campbell discuss the 'My Friend Al Principle' with reference to the USA: that if you are friends with a believer of a different religion from your own, then your opinions towards that religion, and even other religions, will generally be more positive.⁶⁴ Does this principle hold true here? That is, do members of the comparison group who know Christians personally have more positive perceptions of Christianity?

⁶² This word is unclear. Pinyin: 'jiangjing /jiangjin.'

⁶³ IVN09

⁶⁴ Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. p.531.

Although the numbers here are quite small, the answer is a tentative 'Yes'. 42 out of the 49 non-Christian respondents who answered the question claimed to know Christians personally. 27 of those (64%) made positive comments about Christianity. Of the seven remaining respondents, only three (43%) made positive comments (Table 64) – a lower proportion, but still nearly half of respondents in the (admittedly small) group. An examination of individual answers generally confirms this:

[W]hen I was young, I felt that Christianity was pretty good [还算蛮好]. [...] That is, when I was young, there were lots of people around me, [when] their family was not harmonious they maybe would choose to go to believe in Christ, then go and believe in Jesus, then there were some people who changed a lot [有一些人改变了很多].⁶⁵

Some of the messages, [and] teaching my [Christian] friends passed on [传递], they were a really big inspiration [启发] and help for me.⁶⁶

Based on the perceptions of my non-Christian respondents, therefore, on an individual basis, Christianity has beneficial externalities for Chinese society. Members of wider society, especially those who are personally acquainted with

⁶⁵ SIVN09a1

⁶⁶ SIVN02a

Christians, hold believers in generally positive regard for their teaching and behaviour.

This finding lends empirical support to Wielander's argument:

A fellow Christian of the same church and the same background will be closer to the centre [of a Christian's trusted circle] than a fellow Christian of a different social background or from a different area in China. But while a non-Christian stranger will be felt to be most distant, the individual believer's behaviour and conduct towards this distant stranger will nevertheless have to follow the basic code of virtue as prescribed by their faith. Hence the public perception of the Christian as trustworthy, which leads to the paradox that for the non-Christian individual self, a Christian stranger is perceived to be closer in terms of trustworthiness (but not necessarily in terms of required moral responsibility) than a fellow non-believer.⁶⁷

For the Christian, distrusting a non-Christian individual does not necessarily mean that they will treat that individual badly. This contradicts Fukuyama's claim that if a group's radius of trust does not extend beyond group boundaries, then that group will not produce positive externalities for society.⁶⁸ Fukuyama fails to distinguish clearly between particularistic trust (in which the radius of trust does not transgress group boundaries), and particularistic ethics (in which different standards of ethical

⁶⁷Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China*. p.40

⁶⁸Fukuyama, *Social Capital and Civil Society*.

behaviour apply to insiders and outsiders). My respondents' Christian communities are characterised by the first of these, but not the second. Joining a church gives an individual access to a community of shared norms of trust, although it does not increase her radius of trust beyond the boundaries of this group. It does, however, instil universal ethical principles that can benefit those outside the specific community. It may therefore be useful to separate the radius of trust, within which norms of trust apply, from the concept of a radius of benevolence, the boundary within which ethical norms apply.

d. Christians are more politically active than their demographic peers – in certain ways, but not in others

i. Christians feel a greater sense of political efficacy – but only in Shenzhen

To measure political efficacy, I used a hypothetical dialogue to ask respondents if they thought that ordinary people were able to influence political decision-making, so should therefore express their opinions.⁶⁹ 77% of Christians and 65% of the comparison group responded with (the equivalent of) a straight 'Yes' (Table 65). However, this was not replicated across cities – in Shenzhen 77% of Christians and 54% of the comparison group answered 'Yes,' whereas in Beijing, 76% of both groups gave affirmative answers.

Reasons respondents gave for feeling a sense of political efficacy included the perception that the spread of the internet and Weibo has made speech a bit freer,

⁶⁹ See Appendix 4 and Table 65 for exact wording.

and has forced the government to adjust their policies,⁷⁰ and that if a lot of people speak with the same voice, then it will be influential:⁷¹

I've just talked about Weibo, because of the development of the internet nowadays, or following the greater extent of public information, [...] if more people express their opinion about an issue, as rulers [执政者], they can't ignore these voices. They might need to make changes because of these voices. That is, maybe if your own power is small, your voice is also weak, but when it has become a collective force [群体性的力量], it has the opportunity to change [things].⁷²

One respondent cited the public response to the authorities' handling of the 2011 Wenzhou train crash as an example of collective public opinion leading to political changes – in his example, by resulting in increased compensation for accident victims.⁷³ Another common opinion was that however small the likelihood of your voice being heard, if you don't speak then you certainly won't have any influence:⁷⁴

If you don't speak out then others won't know. If you do speak, it might not be effective either. But if you don't [speak] it certainly won't have an effect.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*.

⁷¹ IVC031, IVC04b1, IVC0112131, IVN04b1b1, IVN101, IVN103, IVN112, IVN13a, IVN14a, SIVC01b, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01c, SIVC06a, SIVC06b1, SIVC09d1, SIVN04, SIVN06a11, SIVN082

⁷² IVC0112131

⁷³ IVC0112111

⁷⁴ IVN04, IVN0921, IVN10, IVN1221, IVN14c, SIVC01b, SIVC01b12, SIVC01c21, SIVC06b1, SIVN083, SIVN09a1, SIVN09d2

⁷⁵ IVN14c

[You] can't influence the country/state [国家], but you can influence the people around you [周围的人].⁷⁶

Reasons given by respondents for not feeling a sense of political efficacy included a perceived lack of government attention to common people,⁷⁷ and a lack of channels or complaint mechanisms.⁷⁸

We cannot change, we cannot elect. It's already been settled a good many years ago. So for the result I will choose, well, no matter what I say, no matter what my attitude is, [the] result might be the same.⁷⁹

ii. Christians feel a sense of spiritual efficacy

According to the above measure, then, relative to their demographic peers, the proportion of Christians feeling a sense of political efficacy is similar (Beijing) or lower (Shenzhen).

However, here it is worth re-visiting some of the findings discussed in Chapter 2: higher proportions of Christians emphasised morality as part of their 'national narrative' (e.g. Table 17); more Christians associated being Chinese with a sense of responsibility towards China (Table 3); and they articulated this responsibility primarily, though not exclusively, in terms of preaching the gospel:

⁷⁶ SIVC07b

⁷⁷ IVN031, SIVC01b1111, SIVN02a

⁷⁸ IVC041, IVC04b, IVC05, IVN11, IVN121, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b21, SIVN02a, SIVN06a

⁷⁹ IVN11

I think as a Chinese I need to let more Chinese people who do not know God to know about God, and to know God [知道和认识神]. Then, I think Chinese people are... they have a lot of their own fixed opinions [有很多自己已经固定的看法], so you need to make them change them. That is, they don't have a very open kind of attitude, I think preaching the gospel is a bit difficult. But if you say it's difficult it'll be difficult, if you say it's easy it'll be easy [说难就难, 说容易就容易], because a lot of people... There are some special experiences, [if] you tell them about them, they [...] maybe [will] have an opportunity to know Jesus Christ. So I think God has put me in this place [神把我放在这个地方]; I need to preach the gospel to more Chinese people.⁸⁰

One respondent, who had recently returned from a period of work in the UK, said:

I really want to change this situation. [...] I really want to use the gospel to change this country. [...] And this is the reason why I'm coming back to China.

[Interviewer: Did you have the choice to stay in Britain?]

Yeah, I did have the choice, in Britain. [...] Yeah, you know, as I told you I had an internship at the [prominent UK media organisation]

⁸⁰ SIVC01b11. See also: IVC0112, IVC04b, IVC01121, IVC01122, IVC011211, IVC0112133, SIVC01b2, SIVC01c1

[...] I did it very well, so, they said if I really want[ed], maybe they could help me to stay on, and they could offer me the job [...] but after I prayed I think God asked me back to... You know, at the beginning I had no idea why I'm back in China, but after a long time delay, then I know that God asked me to [come] back to China to share [the gospel] to the reporters and the... you know, all the journalists. Or some people who are working in the media.⁸¹

Whilst this is not 'political efficacy' in the narrow sense of the previous question – in the sense of having an influence upon policy-makers – it is nevertheless a feeling of being able, and indeed obligated, to effect micro-level societal change via the influence of one's own ethical behaviour, by encouraging others to undergo similar moral and spiritual renewal, and even by asking God to change things through prayer.⁸² Perhaps spiritual efficacy might be a more suitable term.⁸³

Further evidence of a sense of spiritual efficacy amongst Christian respondents can be found in the answers to the question: 'In your opinion, what contribution can Christianity make to China?'⁸⁴ Popular responses included individual-level change (of

⁸¹ SIVC06c1

⁸² SIVC01c

⁸³ It should be noted that the English word 'spiritual' has several Chinese equivalents: Firstly, *Jingshen* (精神), refers to non-material aspects of civilisation, such as culture, mentality, and ideology, as in 'spiritual civilisation' (精神文明) (Barmé, "Introduction: Engineering Chinese Civilisation." pp.xvi-xvii). Secondly, my respondents used the formulations *shuling* (属灵) or *lingxiu* (灵修) to refer to specifically religious or Christian understandings of spirituality and spiritual growth. The terms 'spiritual companions' (属灵伴侣) and 'spiritual elders' (属灵长者) were used by respondents to refer to other Christians at similar or more mature stages of their Christian lives (IVC04b2, SIVC01b12). Respondents also talked about posting on Weibo about spiritual things (属灵方面的东西), i.e. Christian topics, or reading books about spirituality and the gospel (灵修福音类) (SIVC01c, IVC05).

⁸⁴ With hindsight this was somewhat of a leading question, as it assumes that Christians care about or feel some responsibility towards China. Having said that, the responses to other, more open interview questions (for example, 'What does it mean to be Chinese?' and 'What does it mean to be a Christian?') do go part of the way

the respondent and others);⁸⁵ general moral transformation, including the establishment of a value system;⁸⁶ more love and compassion between people;⁸⁷ less materialism and money-worship;⁸⁸ more social stability or 'harmony';⁸⁹ and enabling people to live more meaningfully, with greater direction:⁹⁰

I think firstly [Christianity] can help China establish a system of trust, that is it can recover the feeling of trust between people that will soon disappear. [...] And also, to recover honesty. [...] Then it can also help people understand there's something more than material. And this is very important because while we only pursue material there won't be many valuable, important things that can truly influence us [真真重要地影响我们有价值的东西]. For example, affection between people, conscience, helping underprivileged groups, only these can enable people to realise their values. So I think Christianity in China can help China's people to better understand the meaning of life. It can also resolve the questions that the whole of the society and the community are now asking [追问].⁹¹

to showing that these assumptions have some grounding. If I were to perform the study again, I would ask all respondents, not just the Christians, towards which, if any, communities they felt the most responsible – for example, family, faith group, company, Party, nation, humanity, or the natural environment – and then ask them to define how they perceived themselves to be acting on that responsibility.

⁸⁵ IVC011, IVC04b, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b1121

⁸⁶ IVC041, IVC04b3, IVC0112111, IVC0112131, IVC0112133, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b112, SIVC06b, SIVC06c, SIVC07b

⁸⁷ IVC04, IVC011211, IVC11221, SIVC01a, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b1111

⁸⁸ IVC04, IVC04b1, IVC06, IVC0112131, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b21, IVC03

⁸⁹ SIVC01b2, SIVC01b3, SIVC01c1, SIVC06c, SIVC06b1, SIVC07b, IVC03

⁹⁰ IVC04, IVC0112133, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b21, SIVC06a, SIVC06b, SIVC09d1

⁹¹ IVC04

The more Christians there are, the more harmonious this society will be [基督徒越多，这个社会越和谐吧].⁹²

Several respondents rooted their understanding of this social transformation in the idea that the concept of a transcendent God provides a source of accountability for one's actions that is lacking in the current political system:

For example, [say] I was an official, and someone else gave me money. [...] Now they [= the official] might accept this amount of money, that is, when they do things they don't have a line, a baseline [底线] there. So I think in China most people are atheists and they want to rely on their own conscience [良知], [but] for example, for them to have a concept of morality [道德的观念] to restrict [约束] themselves is actually perhaps a really difficult thing. But if I say that I am aware that there is a God who loves me in this way, then he hopes that I will respond to him with my own love, maybe the power of faith will help me to reject this amount of money.⁹³

However, there was also a sober awareness of the limitations of the role that Christianity could play in the current circumstances, and of the danger of it being used in undesirable ways:⁹⁴

⁹² SIVC01c1

⁹³ SIVC01b11. See also IVC0112131, IVC0112133, SIVC01b1, SIVC01c21, SIVC06b

⁹⁴ IVC01111, IVC0112132

I don't want to make Christianity into a tool [把基督教工具化]. [...]

Then secondly, at the moment I think that Christianity is not yet massively influential on China. Not yet. That is, I think it's only working on the level of the individual, but I don't think it has yet projected influence as an organisation [以组织地发挥影响我觉得还没有].⁹⁵

If Christianity becomes a mainstream culture in society, this country's people may very easily start to use it, that is, because Christian culture is very good, so I will believe in Jesus because I want to obtain a certain benefit; [...] or Christianity may be used in every aspect of society, it may well be that a lot of bad business will be related to Christianity. [...] Yes, this is the crisis [that would occur]. But this is unavoidable. What I mean is that in the USA or UK, countries established upon Christian culture, the church has lost its purity [...] because this is when culture is very easily accepted by people, it's not for reasons of true faith that people follow Jesus and come to church; every kind of person has different motives. But in any case, when Christian culture becomes that country's mainstream culture, it is good for the country. It can change citizens' thinking and ethics.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ IVC011

⁹⁶ IVC041

Demonstrating the diversity of attitudes amongst my respondents, another respondent saw social transformation as a beneficial offshoot, rather than the goal of Christianity:

It was not in order to make some contribution to China that I believed in Christianity; that is, we really don't have this kind of goal. That is, maybe if people have faith, they can make a contribution to China, for example on the aspect of human rights. Because if you believe that people are made in the image of God, then you should respect them, and not for example, trample on them [践踏]. Also, on the aspect of rule of law, or the environment, I think there should be lots of contributions. That is to say we really don't promote [Christianity] or believe in [Christianity] ourselves because of these contributions, it's not [for] this aim. I'm just saying that it can bring some advantages or some contributions.⁹⁷

It is worth mentioning here that this sense of spiritual efficacy was not limited to the desire for spiritual renewal in China. Many respondents mentioned the desire to see the gospel spread from China to Jerusalem, or to Islamic countries;⁹⁸ one respondent had even been on a mission trip to a Central Asian country.⁹⁹ However, there was also a feeling amongst respondents that as Chinese Christians, their primary

⁹⁷ IVC04b2

⁹⁸ IVC04, IVC041, IVC04b, IVC04b2, IVC01121, IVC011221, IVC0112111, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c2, SIVC01c21, SIVC09d1. The idea of taking the gospel 'Back to Jerusalem' has become quite prominent in certain house church circles. See Brother Yun et al., *Back to Jerusalem: Three Chinese House Church Leaders Share Their Vision to Complete the Great Commission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

⁹⁹ IVC04b

responsibility was to China.¹⁰⁰ For example, here are some answers to the question, ‘In your opinion, what contribution can Chinese Christians make to the world church?’:

Now, if this kind of country were to be perfected and saved [健全全和拯救了], then this would be an extremely big testimony [见证], for the world, this would be a really big opportunity to glorify God.¹⁰¹

So I think the biggest contribution that China can make to the world is to make all the Chinese people themselves all believe in Jesus [让中国人自己都信耶稣], I think this is the biggest contribution.¹⁰²

iii. Fewer Christians are members of the Communist Party

As mentioned in Chapter 3, 32% of the comparison group were Party members at the time of interview, compared to only 9% of Christians. In addition, 7% of Christian respondents and 4% of the comparison group used to be Party members but had since left (Table 26).

A common reason given by Christian respondents for not being Party members was that the Party’s atheistic ideology conflicted with their faith.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ IVC041, IVC04b1, IVC01111, IVC011212, IVC0112131, IVC0112132, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b1111, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01c1, SIVC06b, SIVC06c, SIVC06c1, SIVC09d1

¹⁰¹ SIVC01b12

¹⁰² SIVC01c

¹⁰³ IVC04b, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b111, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b113, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c1.

I couldn't [join the Party]. I had the opportunity but I couldn't.

[Interviewer: Why not?]

Because the Communist Party, they require that you cannot have a faith [不能有信仰], so I want to be loyal to my faith [忠于我的信仰], so I... [didn't join].¹⁰⁴

If I had joined the Party, he said, "As long as you just say you don't believe in Jesus, you can join the Party." I said, "I can't say that," so I didn't join. [...] Both last year, and the year before, they said, "As long as you say you don't believe in Jesus, as long as you say you're not a Christian, they will let you join." I said, "I cannot say these words, I don't dare to say these words."¹⁰⁵

Even one member of the comparison group (who described her religious affiliation as 'spiritual belief') rejected Party membership because at university she had been influenced by aspects of Christianity:

Christianity encourages you to look inside yourself, to find who you are and to be good and to do things for others' benefit, while our Party does not encourage us to do that.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ SIVC01b111

¹⁰⁵ SIVC06b1

¹⁰⁶ SIVN09d

iv. More Christians have engaged in specific political activities – complaining at work, and posting online comments

I asked respondents if they had participated in any of the following political activities within the last 12 months (see Table 66):

- a. Voted in an election
- b. Made a complaint to your superiors at work¹⁰⁷
- c. Written a letter or email to a government official
- d. Complained to higher authorities
- e. Taken part in a strike
- f. Taken part in a demonstration
- g. Written a letter or email to a newspaper or magazine
- h. Written an online BBS post or Weibo expressing a political view
- i. Filed a lawsuit
- j. Participated in public affairs via some other method¹⁰⁸

Relative to their demographic peers, twice as many Christians said that they had taken part in at least one of the above political activities in the past 12 months (Table 66), and this was replicated across cities. However, this figure needs to be disaggregated by category. Rates of political activity across most of these categories were very low (less than 10%), with the exception of complaining at work and

¹⁰⁷ Tianjian Shi's study, upon which this set of questions was based, was carried out in the 1980s, when leadership of a work unit was a more politicised position than it is now, hence complaining at work being considered a 'political act'. I nevertheless kept this question, out of interest. See Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing*. Table 3.1, p.94.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix 4.

posting online political comments.¹⁰⁹ I will examine each of these areas in turn, before looking in more detail at one example of a specific political activity not covered by the above list but in which several respondents were involved - the case of Shouwang Church.

A. Complaining at work

A higher proportion of Christians complained at work - 32% compared to 20% of their demographic peers. However, this was not replicated across cities: in Beijing, 41% of Christians and 24% of the comparison group had complained at work; in Shenzhen the figures were 24% and 17% respectively (Table 66).

Among respondents who complained the most common complaint was that they had been given too much work:

[The management] is extremely indifferent, indifferent to the staff.

[...] Also, they're not really concerned about you. They don't care about you. They think our relationship is that of a boss and employers, and that you should go and work, work as hard as you can, this is your job. I think this is very bad. I think the firm uses this as a point of pride, of arrogance. My firm is extremely... it thinks it is a giant, and that all staff members are like ants.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Four Beijing Christian respondents – 18% of the Beijing Christian sample – reported participation in ‘other’ involvement in public affairs. In three out of these four cases, respondents were referring to involvement in the Shouwang incident. Other Shouwang participants did not tick this box as they did not consider it to be a ‘political’ activity. See my discussion on Shouwang below.

¹¹⁰ IVC01111. See also IVN04b1b1, IVN09211, IVN121, IVN14b, IVN14d, SIVN06aa1, SIVC06A1

There were few differences between the kind of complaints made by Christians and those made by their demographic peers. The exception was the two Christian respondents who said that certain work practices were in contradiction with their faith:

[T]here are some things I'm not willing to do because they would go against my belief. [...] For example, when we need to talk about things with customers, I need to give them some service, some economic data, they need to pay for this, this is a public transaction. But the information my leader gives me, [...] [he] takes this information and exaggerates it, actually it doesn't reach 100%, it only has 90% confidence level, he says its 100%, and makes me tell the customer this; he needs to book these things, buy these things, buy my service, but certainly it contains some lies. [...] Because at work, the people you encounter have no faith, they're only out to obtain benefits, they might do this kind of thing.¹¹¹

B. Expressing political opinions online

In terms of political activity, the biggest difference between Christians and their demographic peers was in the area of online political commentary. 45% of Christians and only 20% of the comparison group claimed to have made online political comments on Weibo or online forums in the past 12 months (Table 66). This was replicated across cities, with 50% of Beijing Christians commenting online

¹¹¹ IVC05. See also SIVC01b2.

compared to 20% of the comparison group, and 40% of Shenzhen Christians commenting online compared to 20% of the comparison group.

Christian respondents posted about a range of topics, including social injustice and disadvantaged groups (弱势群体);¹¹² corrupt officials who had fled abroad;¹¹³ rule of law and rights protection (维权);¹¹⁴ petitions;¹¹⁵ the 2011 Wenzhou train crash;¹¹⁶ and the 2012 forced abortion carried out on a woman who was seven months' pregnant.¹¹⁷ Respondents also followed popular Weibo personalities such as Zhao Xiao,¹¹⁸ Yu Jianrong,¹¹⁹ Lü Qiu Luwei,¹²⁰ and 'Homework Book' (作业本) (a pseudonym for Sun Jie).¹²¹ Several respondents said they preferred just to re-post (转发) others' posts rather than write their own:¹²²

That is, at the moment the influence of Weibo is relatively big [新浪微博的影响力比较大]. [...] Also, on there are a lot of opinions leaders. They are more daring about expressing their own opinions. Then, I personally, I might re-post some of their opinions. [...] In China there is a phrase, "Observation can change China." [or "Observe and change China": 围观改变中国] [...] For example, everyone can pay attention to some social incidents [社会事件].

When everyone pays attention, in reality it is to show one's own

¹¹² IVC04b1, IVC0112131

¹¹³ IVC011212, SIVC06b

¹¹⁴ IVC04b1, IVC011211

¹¹⁵ IVC04b1, IVC011213

¹¹⁶ IVC04b1

¹¹⁷ SIVC06a

¹¹⁸ IVC05, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b1

¹¹⁹ IVC011213

¹²⁰ IVC011213

¹²¹ SIVC06a

¹²² IVC04b1, IVC04b2, IVC011211, IVC011213, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b112, SIVC01c1, SIVC06b

opinion. To a certain extent, it can also promote the development of society.¹²³

Respondents in the comparison group posted on generally similar topics: the Wenzhou train crash,¹²⁴ corruption,¹²⁵ and fiscal problems.¹²⁶ In contrast to the Christian sample, two comparison group respondents also posted on China's island disputes.¹²⁷

Four Christian respondents¹²⁸ and two members of the comparison group¹²⁹ reported having their posts deleted or their Weibo accounts blocked for posting politically sensitive comments. One Christian respondent complained to Sina Weibo after her post, a re-posting of a Benetton advert showing Hu Jintao kissing Barack Obama, was deleted.¹³⁰

What was excessive was that all of his information and my information and the person who originally posted it - he re-posted it to others - the whole thread was deleted. [...] Then I said [to Sina's customer services], "What you've done is really shameless behaviour." Then at that time what was very funny was that their customer services replied to me, saying, "In this situation, you can follow a link and make a report." After I had clicked on the link I

¹²³ IVC011213

¹²⁴ IVN09211, IVN112

¹²⁵ IVN112, IVN04b1b

¹²⁶ IVN04b1b

¹²⁷ SIVN04, IVN04b1b

¹²⁸ IVC0112132, IVC0112133, SIVC01b2, SIVC06b

¹²⁹ IVN04b1b, SIVN06aa1

¹³⁰ This is interesting given the generally disapproving attitudes towards homosexuality displayed by other Christian respondents; see discussion in Chapter 4. It is also interesting to note that this respondent herself had experience of working in the media and censoring certain content.

discovered I had no way to enter any content. [...] I after I had clicked on the link, there was no dialogue box, then I couldn't enter any words, I couldn't enter the threads [...] It wasn't a political opinion - OK, you could say it was a political opinion - but I think [...] firstly we didn't attack any national leaders personally; secondly, it was only an advert, then it was just a joke. These people can't be joked about by other people, if you say this is the country's law, I don't think in a modern country you should say, "One person, because he's a leader, people can't make fun of his image," this only exists in a feudal society [封建社会]. [...] I think there's no problem with censorship, I think the state should censor, [but it depends on] what you are censoring. Is your censorship in order to make the media better carry out their responsibilities, or is it just to protect the interests of certain interest groups [某一些利益团的利益]?¹³¹

Does posting political comments online constitute a form of collective contention?¹³²

This is complicated question. Many of the topics could be characterised as 'contentious' in the general sense, that is, opposed to the actions of, and making potentially interest-threatening claims against, Party-state actors, such as corrupt

¹³¹ IVC0112132

¹³² Defined here, following McAdam et al, as 'episodic, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants.' Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). p.5, quoted in Sidney Tarrow, "Transnational Politics: Contention and Institutions in International Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001): 1–20. p.11.

officials or those administering forced abortions, whilst not necessarily challenging the system overall.

However, many posts comprise a form of moral commentary - a voicing of opinion with the desire to persuade, without making direct claims upon Party-state or other actors:

A portion [of what I write] is maybe [about things] I think it can change, [...] that is, some real unfairness, some areas of political wrongdoing, or areas in which Chinese people's views are mistaken, like this. I just have some complaints, [I] complain, "Why are things like this?"¹³³

Observing, reposting, and commenting on Weibo or other sites is a therefore low-risk, low-cost (in terms of time and money), non-professional form of indirect contention that nevertheless provides a feeling of empowerment and involvement in public debate over China as the above quotation demonstrates.

Perhaps this is best characterised as *connective* rather than *collective* action, that is, an action in which individuals join an online conversation, posting and re-posting ideas and information in a manner that is loosely-co-ordinated at best.¹³⁴

¹³³ IVC01121

¹³⁴ W Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, "The Logic of Connective Action," *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 5 (2012): pp.739–768, doi:10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661.

An interesting feature of Christians' online commentary is that for most respondents, they are engaging in such action not explicitly *as* Christians, even less as members of a certain church organisation, but as engaged citizens – though no doubt informed by their underlying Christian values. Of the interview responses associated with online political comment, in five of them respondents touched on political issues associated with Christianity, three referred to posting or reading about Christian topics that were not explicitly political,¹³⁵ and 23 referred to political issues with no mention of Christianity. Therefore, Christians are more active in making online political comments, but they do not do this in an explicitly 'Christian' way.

There are parallels here to our earlier discussion of democracy salience (see Chapter 4), in which I argued that more Christians discuss democracy, but not in a specifically Christian way. These findings are gradually edging us towards the conclusion that Christians are more politically active individuals, but that this activity is not primarily mobilised along Christian lines, for example by deploying specifically or explicitly Christian identity or specifically Christian rhetoric.

The key exception to this pattern is that of the case of Shouwang church, a case that I will now explore in some depth, before discussing the wider question of church-state relations. I then return to the question of what Shouwang tells us about Protestants' political activity in general.

¹³⁵ For example, following pastors' sermons on Weibo.

v. Shouwang Church's outdoor worship

At the time of the interviews, 11 out of my 24 Beijing Christian respondents belonged, or had previously belonged, to Shouwang Church. The following account of Shouwang's case is pieced together from interviews with respondents as well as news reports and online sources.

Shouwang Church has its roots in a Bible study group that began in the early 1990s.¹³⁶ By the early 2010s it had grown to around 800 to 1000 members, who had been meeting in various rented premises.¹³⁷ They had tried to register with the government, but the government required that they join the Three Self Movement, something that the church leadership refused to allow.¹³⁸ Allegedly due to pressure from the local police, they had been repeatedly evicted from their meeting places.¹³⁹ They had also raised money to buy their own premises in which to meet, but that landlord refused to hand over the keys, again, allegedly due to government pressure.¹⁴⁰ In April 2011, over 100 (some respondents estimated 200 to 300) Shouwang members met outside to worship in Zhongguancun Square, in Haidian district, Beijing, and were promptly arrested by the police.¹⁴¹ They were taken to police stations around Beijing for questioning; most were released after a few hours, but some members, including the pastors, were kept under house arrest.¹⁴² The

¹³⁶ Yingxu Xu, "The Meaning of Shouwang," *Pu Shi Institute for Social Sciences*, 2013, <http://www.pacilution.com/english/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=3167>.

¹³⁷ IVC04, IVC01111, IVC01121, IVC011213; Ibid.

¹³⁸ IVC01121; Gao [高师宁] and He [何光沪], "Christianity in Contemporary China: Key Issues and Proposed Solutions [当今中国基督教的主要问题与解决设想]" ; Xu, "The Meaning of Shouwang."

¹³⁹ IVC01121; IVC04; Gao [高师宁] and He [何光沪], "Christianity in Contemporary China: Key Issues and Proposed Solutions [当今中国基督教的主要问题与解决设想]." After a previous eviction in November 2009 they had worshipped outside in the snow at the entrance to Haidian Park.

¹⁴⁰ IVC0112, IVC04, IVC01121; Ibid.

¹⁴¹ IVC01122, IVC04.

¹⁴² IVC0112, IVC04, IVC011213

police phoned the landlords of some of some Shouwang members, telling them to evict them from their homes; others were sacked from their jobs after the police had phoned their employers; some were expelled from Beijing and sent back to their hometowns; one respondent even claims that some were beaten.¹⁴³ In the ensuing weeks and months, a smaller number of believers continued to meet outside in Zhongguancun, only to be arrested each time.¹⁴⁴ Judging from online announcements by Shouwang leaders it seem like these outdoor worship meetings have been continuing at least until June 2014 (the time of writing).¹⁴⁵

In terms of motives for Shouwang's actions, one church member explained it as follows:¹⁴⁶

Because before now we had always been renting a place. Firstly this was expensive; secondly, the landlord could end our contract at any time, and then we would have to leave and wouldn't be able to go there.¹⁴⁷ With renting a place, if we couldn't find somewhere to rent we'd have nowhere to meet. If we bought a place, then this would really reduce the pressure that government would be able to put upon us. Also, if we bought a place big enough, it would aid the development of our church; in the place we originally met, no-one could bring non-Christian friends, it would be too packed [挤], it was like that. But in the church's opinion, Jesus's Great

¹⁴³ IVC04, IVC0112, IVC04b3, IVC01122; Xu, "The Meaning of Shouwang."

¹⁴⁴ IVC01121; Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Shouwang Church [守望教会], "Bulletin: Shouwang Church's Outdoor Worship on 11th May, 2014 [北京守望教会 2014 年 5 月 11 日户外敬拜通报]," 2014, <https://t2.shwchurch.org/2014/05/13/?????2014?5?11?????/>.

¹⁴⁶ These opinions were echoed by other Shouwang members: IVC0112; IVC01121; IVC011213; IVC011211

¹⁴⁷ This last phrase is unclear on the recording.

Commission [最大的托付] is that you have to go and preach the gospel [...]. But I think in the government's opinion our church's present congregation size had reached the limit of what they could tolerate.¹⁴⁸ No matter where our church meets, if we didn't go and buy a place, they would have to think of a way to put pressure on us, because our one thousand people is already over their limit.¹⁴⁹

There were three broad ways in which Shouwang members, and former Shouwang members, characterised the contention.¹⁵⁰ The first was that the congregation's outdoor worship did not constitute a political act, but merely a demand for their own place to worship:

For me, like, I don't see it as a demonstration [示威], because my church don't even see it as a demonstration, the last thing they want to do in the world is to link the Sunday service with something politic[al]. But, I mean people will think that way [...] That is, people will certainly relate this to politics, but we have no other way, but our church's standpoint is that it has nothing to do with politics, so we go on Sunday to go outside to worship.¹⁵¹

Our activity is not political; it's about freedom of worship.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ This last phrase is unclear on the recording.

¹⁴⁹ IVC04

¹⁵⁰ It should be noted that respondents did not necessarily hold to one view exclusively - some respondents expressed a mixture of these opinions.

¹⁵¹ IVC04

¹⁵² IVC01122

The second strand of thinking was that through this action, Shouwang wanted to improve religious freedom in China, to push the government to enable large churches to meet openly:

Shouwang is considered a bellwether [领头羊, lit. 'the leading sheep'] in the Chinese house church. If they win this battle, the house church will take a great step forward.¹⁵³

[O]ur church is called "Shouwang" [守望], it means to watch, a watchman, so maybe our goal, the vision God has given us, is that we can come out of the underground into the public, into mainstream society, so we have always persevered in meeting as a whole, and not splitting.¹⁵⁴

The third opinion amongst Shouwang members (present and former) was that this action was not a good idea:

In China, I don't know that always fighting against the government will get a result. [...] We need to review whether what we're doing is meaningful, and why we're doing it.¹⁵⁵

Of these, some remained in Shouwang but continued to meet with other members in smaller groups, away from Zhongguancun.¹⁵⁶ Others went to other churches in the interim, whilst still considering themselves Shouwang members:

¹⁵³ IVC0112

¹⁵⁴ IVC01121

¹⁵⁵ IVC0112

I don't approve, neither do I participate [in Shouwang's outdoor worship]. [...]

[Interviewer: Why not?]

[...] Because I think the Bible says you should respect the sovereign [尊敬君王]. [...] Also, I approve more of this point: If all our government does to us is restrict our freedom, then we can submit to this. When do we not submit, when do we not listen to the government? It's [if] it forces you to sin - at this point you cannot listen to it. If it only restricts your freedom, then this is not a problem.¹⁵⁷

Still other Shouwang members – including some pastors and deacons - who did not approve of the church's actions in confronting the government left to attend other churches, or even set up new churches.¹⁵⁸ One former Shouwang member questioned whether it was the task of the church to try and promote religious freedom:

I don't think you can say that God is making you play a role in promoting China's social development, promoting a policy of [allowing] public meetings [公开进行聚会的那种决策], I don't agree with this opinion. I don't think this is the church's mission,

¹⁵⁶ IVC0112, IVC011212

¹⁵⁷ IVC011221

¹⁵⁸ IVC011211, IVC0112132, IVC0112133; Xu, "The Meaning of Shouwang."

the church's mission should be to preach the gospel. Certainly, if you were an organisation, if you started an organisation, I would approve. I would approve of the opinion that they have the right to strive for freedom. But as a Christian, what I can't accept is [them] saying that this is the church's mission, that our church's mission is to push for public worship, I can't accept this.¹⁵⁹

The same respondent criticised Shouwang's leaders for their lack of transparency in decision-making:

I need the information that other people give me to be open and complete. What I can't accept is when there are a lot of things they [= the church leaders] don't tell everybody. Or you could say, what I can't understand is when [they] don't explain to me, they just think this is what God has given them, actually I can't accept [this]. [...] I think the church themselves should [...] at least very deeply reconsider things on their side of things. But we didn't see [them make] this gesture. Or they did, but they didn't tell everyone. But I think this has destroyed the relationship of mutual trust in each other.¹⁶⁰

Another former Shouwang member expressed concern about the effect that neglecting formal Sunday worship for outdoors worship was having on members' spiritual lives:

¹⁵⁹ IVC0112132

¹⁶⁰ IVC0112132

[A]s the main body of church, the church should carry out its own responsibilities, that is, pastoring [牧羊], teaching [教道], administering the sacraments [举行圣礼], these I think that as a church, these are more fundamental responsibilities. [...] I think they have done this [= worshipped outside] for too long, this really can't be considered worship, because a lot of brothers and sisters haven't [...] participated in a formal [church] meeting for so long, I think this still has a lot of impact on their lives.¹⁶¹

Members of other churches had mixed opinions about Shouwang's actions, ranging from admiration, to disapproval, to sympathy, to criticism of the government's response.¹⁶² One respondent – who was personally acquainted with several Shouwang members - expressed a combination of these themes:

At the start I thought that what Shouwang was doing was not very good.

[Interviewer: Why not?]

There were some circumstances they didn't make public to their members. [...] That is, they never told [them] that the government had already offered that they could return to the hotel [...] they rented [for church meetings]. They [the leaders] didn't say this,

¹⁶¹ IVC0112133

¹⁶² IVC011, IVC04b, IVC04b3, IVC01111, personal communication with another Beijing Protestant (not a respondent).

they said, “We’re going to take to the streets straight away,” [...] that is, to meet outside. There were some things they didn’t do well enough, it was a little bit autocratic [专制]. [...] Afterwards they got some criticism, for example, “By doing this you’re disobeying the government.” Some people criticised them in this way, some people said, “You shouldn’t do this.” Then I thought that this kind of criticism was not very accurate. This is because each church has a different vision, you can’t evaluate them and say, “Your vision is not from God.” This is very difficult for other people to judge, that’s what I think.

[...]

There’s a girl who went from our church to Shouwang. She’s already been arrested seven to eight times. [...] As a result, she lost her job. Once I invited her to my home, then I heard her share some of this kind of experiences. Then I thought, “I really admire her!” But I don’t dare to approve [不敢认同] of this kind of behaviour. At the very least, in my opinion I haven’t got the confidence [信心] to do the same thing.¹⁶³

One respondent experienced extra restrictions on his own Three Self church’s activities around Spring 2011 because of the Shouwang case:

¹⁶³ IVC011

[A]fter this event had happened with Shouwang, the government paid greater attention to all church activities, whether house church or Three Self, and controlled them more severely. That is to say, at that time our church organised some outdoor activities, for example going out to have fun, [going] to a park, organising activities, but the church would say, “The government says that this is a very sensitive time - do not go.”¹⁶⁴

A Shenzhen respondent also mentioned that her church was normally split into small groups, but would hold monthly meetings of all 300 believers together.¹⁶⁵ The church stopped holding these meetings around May 2011 because the pastor had observed that they were being monitored more closely than normal. This may have been due to the upcoming Shenzhen Universiade rather than the Shouwang incident, but timing would suggest the latter – Shouwang began their outdoor worship in April, but the Universiade was not until August.

vi. Church-state relations – the wider picture

How does the experience of Shouwang members of church state-relations compare to that of other Christian respondents?

The first thing to note is that conflict of that degree of intensity and publicity was exceptional amongst my respondents. Leaders and members of respondents’

¹⁶⁴ IVC05

¹⁶⁵ SIVC01b112

churches know to keep their activities low key,¹⁶⁶ restricting them to Sunday worship, Bible studies, Christmas parties, and personal evangelism, and avoiding gatherings of large numbers of people or high-profile public activities. In return, most church activities remain unchallenged by the authorities. For example, one respondent's church consists of 60 people meeting in a Beijing flat;¹⁶⁷ another claimed to belong to an unregistered church of 500 believers who would meet together;¹⁶⁸ these respondents both said that they had not experienced any problems with the local authorities. Some respondents belonged to a Shenzhen church consisting of several hundred people, but split into small groups of 20 to 30 people; as long as they do not meet together as a whole church, they report no problems with the local authorities.¹⁶⁹

That said, respondents did report occasional tensions with organs of the government. 38% of Beijing Christians and 24% of Shenzhen Christians reported some kind of conflict between themselves or their organisation and the authorities, compared to 8% of the Beijing comparison group and 4% of the Shenzhen comparison group (Table 67). I list some highlights below:

- At the time of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, police officers came to the respondent's house church meeting to listen in, but they did not stop the meeting.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ SIVC01b2

¹⁶⁷ IVC041

¹⁶⁸ IVC01111

¹⁶⁹ SIVC01b1, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b11, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b1121

¹⁷⁰ IVC03

- One respondent was told not to preach the gospel to children at a summer camp her team had organised.¹⁷¹
- A member of a Three Self Church said there were no conflicts as such but that they had to negotiate with the government when planning activities:

We may talk to them: “Why won't you let us do this? What's wrong with this? Or what about it shouldn't we do? Point it out to us and we will improve/modify [改进] it. We want to understand. You can't disallow us from doing an activity without reason.” We will ask the government: “Where are we going wrong? Where are we violating the rules? Please tell us.”¹⁷²

- A Christian documentary filmmaker (and friend of the respondent) was arrested in Beijing.¹⁷³
- A fellowship of university students and teachers in Shenzhen was dispersed by police, and forbidden from meeting.¹⁷⁴
- As mentioned above, a Shenzhen house church discontinued its large monthly gatherings due to heightened police monitoring in 2011.¹⁷⁵
- When one respondent lived in Xi'an, some church leaders were invited to ‘drink tea’ with the police (i.e. received a warning) for attending Christian activities abroad.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ IVC04

¹⁷² IVC05

¹⁷³ SIVC01b

¹⁷⁴ SIVC01b12

¹⁷⁵ SIVC01b112, SIVC01b2

¹⁷⁶ SIVC01c1

- One respondent, when she lived in Shanghai, had gone with some other Christians to worship in a park, but they were kicked out by the park management because there were too many people.¹⁷⁷
- A Shenzhen church cancelled their Christmas performance on the day it was due to take place, allegedly due to government interference.¹⁷⁸
- A group of Christians was dispersed by government personnel when they tried to sing hymns and distribute Christian tracts at an entertainment plaza in Shenzhen.¹⁷⁹
- An inter-church church leaders' training conference in Shenzhen for around 200 participants was stopped by the government.¹⁸⁰

From the above list, then, it is meetings that involve large numbers of participants, are public in nature (such as those taking place outside, or involving widespread invitations), occur at politically sensitive times, that are most likely to elicit a conflictual government response, as are activities involving interaction with foreigners:

[I]f there were foreigners taking part [in our church], this church would be monitored and controlled [监控] by the government. That would be very troublesome [麻烦], so in order to protect ourselves, the church will say that we will do our utmost not to

¹⁷⁷ SIVC01c

¹⁷⁸ SIVC06b

¹⁷⁹ SIVC06b

¹⁸⁰ SIVC07c1

introduce / receive foreigners into the church [尽量不介绍 / 接受
外国人到教会].¹⁸¹

Again, it should be emphasised that such incidents are the exception rather than the norm. If a church's activities are discreet and do not press too many of these 'red buttons', then they are unlikely to concern the state.

[A]t the moment as long as we remain low-key, and are not too obvious, as yet no-one has come and given us trouble.¹⁸²

Respondents also perceived a difference between Beijing and Shenzhen on exactly how large and how public the authorities permitted Christian meetings to be:

In Beijing it's stricter. That is, it is stricter than in other places. But in other places, the government may be a bit better.

[Interviewer: So you think that the current situation (in Shenzhen) is a bit freer?]

A lot [很多了], it's a lot freer.

[Interviewer: How do you judge what is open, what is less open?]

¹⁸¹ IVC04b2. It is unclear on the recording as to whether the respondent said 'introduce' (*jieshao* 介绍) or 'receive' (*jieshou* 接受).

¹⁸² SIVC01b2

Erm, in Beijing, to talk like we are currently talking maybe there will be people [...] alongside us, listening in [在旁边听到]. That is to say, they are maybe government people, they might also be people whom the government arranges to be on the street. Yes. [You] need to be extremely careful. You cannot share the gospel in public in Beijing but in Shenzhen it's more open. I often see people preaching the gospel in a park next to my home, even using that kind of megaphone [喇叭]. [...] Using a megaphone to sing songs, to play music. So I think it's extremely open. Also, when we baptise [people], going to the seaside to baptise [people], there won't be any government interference. But if you are in an extremely public place in Beijing, there will certainly be people [who, when they] see so many people together, they will manage / supervise it [管理]. Also, in Shenzhen there are so many house churches, basically [they] haven't received government control or supervision [管制]. Certainly, during the Universiade, these times, they will be a bit more sensitive, but they won't go and arrest people like they do in Beijing. So it will be a lot better.¹⁸³

In Shenzhen, this place, it's relatively close to Hong Kong, then relatively speaking this kind of religion, these religious activities are more commonplace, the local government does not check [考]

¹⁸³ SIVC06a

them very strictly, there are a lot of these kinds of house churches,
and also a lot of these kinds of small fellowships.¹⁸⁴

How, then, might the Shouwang case be characterised, and what does it tell us about Christians' political engagement in China more widely?

Despite occasional prominent incidents of collective Christian contention around China¹⁸⁵ and ongoing low-level frictions, in general, most Christian respondents, and the churches to which they belonged, were not troubled by the organs of the Party-state.

Overall there is a high level of freedom for Christians to organise and participate in Christian activities, as long as these activities remain low key. Although many Christians have contrarian opinions towards the party-state (see Chapters 2 and 4), in terms of Christian practice, they generally attempt not to aggravate the authorities; on their part, the authorities interfere only rarely.

Indeed, there is a sense of reluctance on the part of Christians to participate in political activity as Christians. As outlined above, Shouwang's critics argued that the main task of the church was not to mobilise for collective action, but to concentrate on its more fundamental responsibilities of pastoring its congregants;¹⁸⁶ another respondent, quoted above, said that she did not want people to turn Christianity

¹⁸⁴ SIVC06b1

¹⁸⁵ One recent case, other than the Shouwang incident, was that of Sanjiang Church in Wenzhou, which was demolished by the authorities. Local believers gathered in protest to stop the demolition. Ian Johnson, "Church-State Clash in China Coalesces Around a Toppled Spire," *New York Times*, May 29, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/30/world/asia/church-state-clash-in-china-coalesces-around-a-toppled-spire.html>.

¹⁸⁶ IVC0112132, IVC0112133

into a political tool.¹⁸⁷ Another respondent expressed distaste at how this seemed to have happened in the USA:

[A]t the moment, America is [...] in a very chaotic era [混乱的时代],
[...] On many occasions America will mix religion and politics too
much [太混在一起了], that is, it seems like whether [or not] you
uphold a political opinion has a very big relationship to which
religious denomination [教派] you belong to. In my opinion,
America is going downhill [美国在衰落中].¹⁸⁸

Another respondent said:

In church, we usually don't talk about politics with each other –
with outsiders it's OK – because we don't want to confuse the
government and possibly attract government persecution. We've
got principles but there is no need to speak. We do things and
receive people's approval. Then we can do things that we wouldn't
be able to do [otherwise], for example, sex education and drugs
rehabilitation. These things are more important than having a clear
political viewpoint.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ IVC011

¹⁸⁸ SIVC01b

¹⁸⁹ SIVC07c1. Unfortunately, as we were pressed for time, I did not get the chance to ask this respondent about the nature of his church's sex education and drug rehabilitation programmes, information that may have shed further light on his congregation's social engagement.

This is further supported by our discussion of respondent's online political commentary, which, though informed by underlying Christian values, is not narrated in primarily Christian terms.

These findings question the extent to which Chinese Protestantism could be considered a Party-state-challenging social movement.¹⁹⁰ My respondents, except for the Shouwang members, tended to participate in Christian activity not linked to politics, and/or participate in political activity not as Christians. As argued above, even some Shouwang members claimed their activity was not political, just aimed at securing freedom of worship - although it is questionable whether it is possible to fully separate the two in a society as highly politicised and penetrated by the Party-state as China.

I will add one further note of caution to these findings. Since collecting my data, China's government has changed hands (in late 2012), and has since launched what appears to be a campaign to attack Christianity, at least in its more public forms. This has been most prominently manifested in the demolition of Sanjiang Church in Wenzhou in 2014. Journalist Ian Johnson has written of the church's

national battle with a Communist Party increasingly suspicious of Christianity and the Western values it represents. Since March, at least a dozen other churches across Zhejiang Province have been told to remove their crosses or have received demolition orders, a

¹⁹⁰ As argued by, for example, Vala, "The Free Spaces of Unregistered Protestantism in Contemporary China: Alternative Values, Skills, and Networks."

significant escalation in a party campaign to counter the influence of China's fastest-growing religion.¹⁹¹

Future studies will be necessary in order to chart whether this is mere journalistic hyperbole, or a genuine hardening of the Party-state's policies towards Protestantism.

3. Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I hypothesised that Christians' level of social engagement, including church and secular activities, would be greater than that of their demographic peers; that Protestants' level of social trust would be higher than that of their demographic peers; that Christianity would produce positive externalities for wider society; and that Christians would be more politically active than their demographic peers.

The findings presented in this chapter partly support the hypothesis that Christians are more socially engaged than their demographic peers: on the one hand, Christian respondents had larger social networks than their demographic peers; they participated in more religious social activities; and many had responsibilities at church or participated in evangelism. On the other hand, the extra members of Christians' social networks were mostly drawn from within the Christian community; and relative to their demographic peers, Christians participated in the same number, or fewer secular social activities and charitable activities.

¹⁹¹ Johnson, "Church-State Clash in China Coalesces Around a Toppled Spire."

The discussion of Christians' levels of social trust does not support the hypothesis that Christians are more trusting than their demographic peers. On the one hand, they have high levels of trust in each other, but on the other hand their general social trust is lower.

Taken as a whole, the above findings on Christians' social activity point fairly strongly towards the conclusion that, to use Putnam's terms, joining a church comprises a form of 'bonding' social capital, which bonds together members of the same group, rather than 'bridging' social capital, which bonds together members of different groups.¹⁹² These findings contrast with the results of Putnam and Campbell's study into the relationship between religious observance and social engagement in the USA.¹⁹³ As outlined in Chapter 1, Putnam and Campbell found that the more religious people were more active in religious activities, secular social activities, and charitable activities; they also had higher levels of social trust in others, and enjoyed greater levels of trust from others.¹⁹⁴ In America, therefore, there is a strong component of 'bridging' in religious people's social capital.

One element of Christians' interaction with society that could suggest an element of 'bridging' is the favourable perception of Christians amongst their demographic peers, due primarily to their perceived good moral behaviour and teaching. This finding supports the hypothesis that Christians and Christianity produce positive

¹⁹² Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. p.23.

¹⁹³ Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* pp.456-457.

externalities for society. It also challenges Fukuyama's contention that groups that have particularistic social trust also have particularistic social ethics.

In terms of political activity, my findings support in some ways but not in others the hypothesis that Christians are more politically active than their demographic peers.

Christians had similar or higher levels of political efficacy – a feeling that political activity can change policy - relative to their demographic peers. However, Christians' ideas of the changes that they wanted to bring about in society were somewhat wider than 'politics' in the narrow sense of the word: Christians felt a responsibility for bringing about spiritual and moral renewal on the personal and societal level, primarily through preaching the gospel. I call this spiritual efficacy.

Fewer Christians were Party members, with several citing the Party's atheistic ideology as a reason for not joining. Most of the specific political activities I asked about had very low participation rates amongst my respondents. Higher proportions of Christians complained more at work, though only in Beijing; and more Christians made political comments online. A key finding here was that although more Christians engaged in these activities, they neither mobilised along Christian or church lines, nor employed specifically Christian vocabulary whilst doing so.

One case in which Christians did mobilise along Christian lines to make demands upon the Party-state was the Shouwang incident. However, such mobilisation was rare amongst my respondents. Despite experiencing occasional conflict with the

authorities, most churches kept their activities low key; in return, the authorities have tended to leave them alone.

The case of Shouwang does illustrate the ongoing debate amongst Protestants about their role in society as individual Christians and as a collective church. In general there is a fear that political action along explicitly Christian lines may firstly bring government repression and, secondly, contaminate or distract the church.

Drawing these findings together, then, I find that my Christian respondents' social and political activity had a distinctive shape, relative to that of their demographic peers. However, this shape did not always conform to the hypotheses I derived from studies of other societies and the theoretical literature on social capital.

In my next chapter, I firstly discuss reasons for the possible differences between the social and political activities of Christian respondents and their demographic peers. I then investigate why the findings presented in this chapter supported only some of the hypotheses. I end the chapter by arguing that these findings suggest that Christians demonstrate a greater sense of agency than their demographic peers.

Chapter 7

Christianity and Social and Political Activity (II): Discussion

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the social and political activities of my Christian respondents, and contrasted them with those of my demographic peers. In this chapter I investigate these variations in greater detail: why do Christians differ from their demographic peers in terms of their social and political activities? And why do they differ from the American religious believers in Putnam and Campbell's study?

The first section of this chapter examines the first of these questions. I argue that Christians' larger social networks and greater number of Christian activities are both a cause and result of their conversion. These activities can crowd out secular social activities and charitable involvement, although here Christians' lower levels of participation may also be due to their lower levels of social trust. These low levels of social trust are primarily due to the fact that it is those with low social trust who are attracted to Christianity, rather than Christianity causing its adherents to become less trustful. Part of the attraction of Christianity to such people is the perception that Christians form a community of trust. Conversely, the data suggests that Christians' perceived moral behaviour is primarily a result of Christian conversion.

I note that causality is difficult to determine in the question of why Christians' levels of political efficacy are higher than those of their demographic peers in Shenzhen, but not in Beijing. However, their sense of spiritual efficacy seems largely rooted in

Christian teaching. Christians' lower levels of Party membership can be explained not just in terms of their suspicion of its atheistic ideology, but also due to the very different underlying values that inform individuals' decisions to join the Party or become Christians.

Turning to the question of specific political activities, I argue that while Christians' higher levels of participation in online commentary can be partly explained by their greater political disaffection and membership of trusted social networks, even when these factors are accounted for, higher proportions of Christians participate in online commentary; whether this is a result or cause of their faith (or neither) is difficult to establish without further data. On the Shouwang issue, I posit that this exceptional incident of Christian mobilisation may have been due to the church leaders' goals, the model of church organisation, and the attitudes of the local authorities.

In the second section of this chapter, I investigated why some of my findings diverged from my hypotheses. I argue that in China there are contextual constraints on Protestants' social and political activity that are not present in the American context from which some of my hypotheses are derived, namely the particularistic nature of social trust in China, the sometimes tense historical relationship between Protestantism and Chinese society, the perceived novelty and minority status of Protestantism, and political barriers imposed by the Party-state. These constraints deter direct Christian political mobilisation, and channel believers' activity away from 'bridging' and into 'bonding' forms of interaction.

In the third and final section, I argue that the findings presented in this chapter, linked to those of the previous chapters suggest Protestantism catalyses a sense of agency among its adherents. In Chapter 1, I defined a sense of agency as *a sense that one has the responsibility for, and ability to make one's own conscious value judgements via a process of critical reflection on predominant social norms and, based on these judgements, to intentionally adjust one's own behaviour and take actions to shape the wider social environment.*¹ This sense of agency is present before conversion, but is enhanced with adherence to Christianity and church membership, and outworks itself in the transformative activism outlined in these two chapters.

I conclude by arguing that Protestants' social and political activities present little challenge to the Party-state in and of themselves. However, the growth of morally agentic individualism in Chinese society, of which Protestantism is one catalyst, will present governance challenges to a Party-state that has long regarded itself as China's primary moral agent.

¹ There is a complex debate about the meaning of 'agency' that I do not have time to elaborate upon here. My working concept draws mainly on the work of Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What Is Agency?," *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 4 (1998): pp.962–1023; Alasdair MacIntyre, "Social Structures and Their Threats to Moral Agency," *Philosophy*, no. 03 (1999): pp.311–329, doi:null; Xiaoying Wang, "The Post-Communist Personality: The Spectre of China's Capitalist Market Reforms," *The China Journal* 47, no. 47 (2002): pp.1–17.. It is important to note that here I do not deal with the question of whether my respondents actually *have* agency in their given life situations; this would require a lengthy philosophical discussion. I am merely claiming that they themselves *feel* that such agency exists.

2. Examining the variation between Christians and their demographic peers

a. Social activity

In the previous chapter I observed that Christians have larger social networks than their demographic peers, but that a large proportion, if not all, of the additional members of Christians' networks were other Christians.² Do Christians gain these large social networks as a result of their conversion, or do those with large social networks tend to become Christians?

Many respondents had known Christians on an individual basis prior to conversion: in recounting the process of coming to believe in Protestantism, 36% of respondents mentioned the influence of a classmate or fellow student, 32% mentioned family, 24% mentioned an unspecified Christian acquaintance, and 18% mentioned a friend. However, the sheer size of believers' 'Christian' networks, an average of 40 people per respondent, implies not just an acquaintance with Christians on an individual basis, but on some kind of organised scale (Table 50).

Does, then, the evidence point to respondents becoming Christians because of contact with organised groups of Christians, or to respondents coming into contact with groups of Christians due to conversion?

Firstly, church or some kind of church-related activity was factor mentioned by 78% of respondents in their conversion accounts (Table 20). It is therefore fair to say that contact with organised groups of Christians was instrumental in the majority of

² In Beijing, all of the additional network members were Christians; in Shenzhen 50% of them were.

respondents' conversions. Some respondents had grown up going to church, and either believed as children or in later life.³ Some respondents came into contact with a church, and believed relatively soon afterwards.⁴ However, this process could also be quite long and drawn out over several months or even years.⁵

Once I was in a lesson, "The History of Sociological Thought" [社会学思想史] [...] then that teacher, I thought that he gave people a different feeling. I thought he was a Buddhist. Then I spoke to him about my confusion. [...] Then he said... He didn't answer my questions directly, but he said, "We've got a small group Bible study on Thursday; you should come." [...] Then I was very interested, so I went and kept going,⁶ then after a few months had passed there was a pastor, who is now [name of church]'s current pastor, he spoke about Jesus' resurrection. Then he made an appeal, "If you want to believe that Jesus Christ died for you... and so on." Then at that time I thought that what he had said made real sense, I felt like I believed it, so then I believed.⁷

One respondent said she originally went to church explicitly not in order to believe, but to increase her social circle:

³ IVC02, IVC04b1, IVC05, IVC01122, IVC011212, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b111, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c1

⁴ IVC0112131, SIVC01b1121

⁵ IVC011, IVC03, IVC031, IVC041, IVC04b2, IVC04b3, IVC06, IVC01111, IVC01121, IVC011211, IVC011221, IVC0112133, SIVC01b, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b11, SIVC01c2, SIVC01c21, SIVC06c1, SIVC07b. Other respondents became Christians after contact with church, but did not specify a timescale: IVC011213, SIVC01a, SIVC06a, SIVC06b, SIVC06b1, SIVC07b1

⁶ This phrase is unclear on the recording.

⁷ IVC011

[W]hen I was in my fourth year at university, the fourth year had just started, I thought I started to face all kinds of problems. The starting point [of the problems] was not from my faith, but from my life, because I started to think, “What kind of work do I want to find? Should I continue studying? Should I go abroad to study? Or should I choose to work? Or take the entrance exam for domestic postgraduate studies?” So I had a lot of these kinds of [questions]... that is, at that time I was extremely confused. Then later, I thought, “Ey, actually I'll go to church, it's a channel by which I can expand my network of contacts [拓宽我的人脉].”

[Interviewer: What does “*renmai*” [人脉] mean?]

[...] This is actually a bit like your social circle [社交圈]. [...] That is, it is... interrelationships; it's that kind of thing. [...] You know a person, then you meet a lot more people, a lot of these people will be very helpful for your future development. This kind of thing. The more people you know, it proves that your network of contacts is better. Now, you might only know a few. Then I thought that going to church was like a place where you could expand your social network, you can meet lots of different people, a lot more than I could meet at my school - because [at] the school [they're] all the same age [同龄人] - their opinions about life, about work, perhaps there would be people who might be able to help my work, and

[people who] might be able to give me some advice [参考意见]
about going abroad to study later on.⁸

Once this respondent had started attending church, she began to search for answers there, and eventually became a Christian herself. Other respondents, however, believed through the influence of individual Christian contacts, then joined churches afterwards.⁹

In general, then, the causality here seems to work in both directions: an individual's contact with a group of Christians is coterminous with a process of exploration of Christianity over a period of time. If this process leads to full conversion, the individual is likely to remain part of a church or Christian group.

This line of causality can also apply to Christian respondents' levels of Christian activities; as observed above, most respondents participated in some kind of church activity in the process of beginning to believe. After believing, they persist in those activities, sometimes taking up responsibilities within the church and evangelism.

Why, however, do Christians participate to a similar or lesser extent in charitable or secular social activities relative to their demographic peers?

One obvious answer, as discussed above, is that given the limits upon respondents' leisure time, church activities tend to crowd out other social activities:

⁸ SIVC01b1

⁹ IVC04, IVC04b, IVC0112132, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b112, SIVC01c, SIVC09d1

Monday to Fridays I work, Sundays I go to church, so I just have Saturdays for other stuff, so normally Saturdays I have other social activities, for example, going with friends to stroll around on the streets [逛逛街] [or] to eat.¹⁰

However, this disengagement from secular social activities may also be associated with Christian's relatively low levels of social trust in wider society outside the Christian community, which I discuss below. Indeed, Gerda Wielander argues that some Christians involve themselves in church activities to the extent that they minimise their contact with wider society,

in order to limit as much as possible the degree of conflict between their own inner moral universe, which is shared by fellow Christians in their church, and the pluralistic moral practices that make up the contemporary Chinese moral landscape.¹¹

With regard to charitable activity, Chinese society's trust in NGOs, relative to other institutions, is also low; this distrust has only been exacerbated by recent scandals such as that involving Guo Meimei.¹² For their part, Christians are more reluctant to participate in charities that do not share their beliefs or ideas, and this is probably also associated with their general distrust of wider society. It is also highly likely that the high number of church activities that Christian respondents participate in in the

¹⁰ IVC06. See also SIVC011

¹¹ *Christian Values in Communist China*. p.43.

¹² Shi, "Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System." Fig. 9.2, p.230. Yang, *The Dramatic Form of Online Collective Action in China*.

average week also serves to limit the amount of time and effort they are able to devote to charity work.

Turning now to the question of social trust, I argued in my previous chapter that Christian respondents held lower levels of social trust than their demographic peers. Is it the case that distrustful people become Christians, or does Christianity engender a feeling of mistrust in wider society?

One respondent explicitly said that she had become a Christian after experiencing a crisis of trust. She had been dating her boyfriend for three to four years, and they were preparing to get married, when she discovered that he had been seeing another woman:

I told everything to my friend, [...] a colleague who was older than me, a 40 year old woman with whom I had a very good relationship, then I spoke and cried at the same time [边说边哭边流眼泪]. Certainly, this colleague extremely disliked this boy, but she also comforted me saying, "Actually, if you want to get married, you need to accept a reality, that is, that all men are like this, all men." They have affairs, they confess to you, or they lie really well to you. Then she told me about a lot of [...] behaviour in the company. [...] Also, some stories, I discovered, "Wow!" A lot of colleagues in my company whom I previously thought treated their wives and families very well, [...] sometimes they would go to brothels [妓院]. [...] There was a lot of this. [...] Then my friend used the

opportunity to teach me a lesson, she said, "After you've got married, do not check your husband's phone, don't do this." She said, "You should check before you get married, whether your boyfriend is right, but after you get married, it's best if you don't check his mobile phone, don't check his email, do not go and investigate him [调查他], even if you want to check, because checking can certainly cause problems, because all men are like this." Then another good friend gave me the same verdict. [...] My worldview really collapsed [我的世界观很坍塌], I thought, "How could the world be so different from what I thought?" [...] Previously, from when I was young until when I was grown up, the world that I believed in [认为] was: Dad really loves Mum, then husbands really love their wives. How could it be that in their eyes and in a lot of stories that I knew about, all of the men betrayed their wives [背叛妻子] although they hadn't betrayed [their wives] over a long period of time, there would be once or twice that they betrayed [their wives], it was this kind of conclusion.¹³

A different friend then told the respondent about Christianity, and introduced her to a missionary couple who prayed for her, which began the process by which she embraced Christianity.

¹³ SIVC06b

Seven out of 50 Christian respondents (14%) cited their perception that Christians were trustworthy as a reason for deciding to believe themselves (Table 21); this was sometimes compared favourably with the rest of China's society:

That is, the main one [= reason I became a Christian] was the people around me who had become Christians, they influenced me. Christians influenced me, that is to say, because the first time I went to church I would feel their love for me, that is, I could completely let go of my sense of guardedness [完全放下我的戒备心] and come into their midst. Last time [= in our last recording session], I told you that in China the biggest problem is that people do not trust each other, right? That is, there is a sense of guardedness [戒备]. But after I was in church I discovered that I could put down this guardedness. [...] Because they were extremely happy to help me. Then, also, the friends around me, because they believed in Christ I felt that their lives had changed, their life attitudes had changed.¹⁴

In general, then, it appears that Christianity attracts people who already hold distrustful attitudes towards society, and it provides them with a new community of trust.

¹⁴ SIVC01c2

Might a respondent's trust levels have been influenced post-conversion by Christian teaching, for example on sin? Two respondents cited this as a reason for not trusting people:

I think that those whom I truly believe are my parents, only my parents. [...] From a Christian point of view, people are all sinners, [they] will always have their own problems. Also, I think that in reality Chinese people do not speak very sincerely [不讲诚信].¹⁵

However, conversely, three respondents also said they had become more trusting since believing in Christianity, or cited theological reasons for trusting people:

I believe that everybody is good. Actually, especially after I became a Christian, I have been more trusting [更加的信任人]. [...] It's like Jesus said, only if you first love others can you then obtain others' love for you [你要先去爱人，你才能够地得到人家对你的爱], now I will always think that if I trust them, then I will also be able to obtain their trust in me.¹⁶

On balance, then, there is more evidence to suggest that it is those who have low levels of social trust who become Christians rather than vice versa. This fits in with the discussion in Chapter 3, that it is primarily individuals disaffected with China's current society and politics, notably on moral issues, who become Christians: if you think that society is in a bad moral state, then you are less likely feel a sense of social

¹⁵ IVC011213. See also IVC0112132

¹⁶ SIVC06c1. See also: SIVC06c, IVC041

trust. Similarly, as mentioned in the introduction, Almond and Verba, along with Tang, have argued that social trust is associated with support for the political system;¹⁷ if this is the case it is unsurprising that political disaffecteds who are attracted to Christianity also have low social trust.

Finally, for this section, is Christians' perceived positive moral behaviour due to their faith, or is it individuals who are perceived as more moral who embrace Christianity? This is a tricky question, as I do not have data on what non-Christian respondents thought about their (now Christian) friends before they had become Christians. In Chapter 3 I concluded that was respondents who had moral concerns about Chinese society who were more likely to become Christians. However, voicing moral concern does not necessarily lead to good moral behaviour.

Some Christian respondents claimed that, morally speaking, Christianity had had a good effect on their lives:

When I was young, my relationship with Dad was not particularly close [亲密], so after I believed in the Lord I would actively make up for this [弥补这一些], every week I would actively phone him, then chat with him. Actually, he did not have anything to say [他没有什么好说的], I would also actively go and find some topics to talk to him about. [...] He would also especially like [the fact that] I would talk to him more. But he is a relatively reserved person [沉

¹⁷ Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*; Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. Table 5.1, p.103

默的人], so I communicate with him through this kind of method.

Then gradually, the topics we [talked about] would increase, then I would often be concerned with my parents. For example, at festivals I will send them greetings. On their birthdays, I will always phone them. So my father, because he has noticed my phone calls, he has slowly [started to] not reject this faith, also he supports and upholds [拥护支持] [the fact that] I believe in Jesus.¹⁸

Similarly, some Christians began to believe because they observed positive changes in others;¹⁹ and some members of the comparison group had seen other people's lives change in a positive way - morally or otherwise - since they had become Christians.²⁰ These perceptions suggest that some kind of perceived positive behavioural change occurs as a result of Christian conversion.

To summarise this section, then, it is in the process of becoming a Christian that respondents generally come into contact with groups of Christians, and this contact remains if the respondent chooses to convert. Large social networks containing significant proportions of Christian contacts are therefore both a cause and consequence of Christian conversion. The same is true for participation in church activities, although church responsibilities are most likely to be assumed after becoming a Christian. Generally speaking, it is individuals with low levels of social trust who become Christians, and the prospect of belonging to a community of trust

¹⁸ IVC011212. See also IVC06, IVC011221, IVC0112111, IVC0112131, SIVC06b.

¹⁹ SIVC01c, SIVC01c2

²⁰ SIVN09a1, SIVC09c, SIVC09d

is an attractive feature of Christianity to them; Christian teaching itself can then either exacerbate distrust or enhance trust, something that varies from individual to individual. In terms of positive perceptions of Christians, whilst there is no firm data here, interview responses suggest that becoming a Christian is linked to a perceived positive moral change in the individual.

b. Political activity

I now turn to examining possible reasons for the differences in political activity between Christians and their demographic peers.

The first thing to note is that the difference in political efficacy levels is difficult to explain without further data. Relative to the other three groups, a much lower proportion of the Shenzhen comparison group feels a sense of political efficacy; the reasons these respondents give for feeling or not feeling a sense of political efficacy are not noticeably different from those of other groups of respondents, as quoted in our discussion in the previous chapter: on the positive side, they concern the beneficial effect of the internet on the influence power of public opinion,²¹ the need to speak no matter how small your voice,²² and the power of combined voices;²³ on the negative side, a lack of government feedback or monitoring mechanisms,²⁴ and government censorship of the voices it dislikes.²⁵

²¹ SIVN02a1, SIVN09a, SIVN09a1

²² SIVN02a2, SIVN04, SIVN06c, SIVN09a1, SIVN09d2, SIVN09d12

²³ SIVN04, SIVN06a11, SIVN082

²⁴ SIVN02a, SIVN06aa2, SIVN09a1

²⁵ SIVN06a

On the wider question of spiritual efficacy – the feeling of being able to bring about societal change through spiritual and moral renewal – this is something that seems to be largely rooted in Christian teaching that respondents have received, whether from their churches or other sources. As I will shortly discuss with reference to Christians' sense of agency, respondents often talked about Christian mission,²⁶ the biblical teaching that Christians should be 'salt and light',²⁷ and Jesus's 'Great Commission' to preach the gospel to the world.²⁸

As discussed in the previous chapter, in general, Christian respondents were deterred from joining the Communist Party because of its atheistic ideology. However, in Chapter 3, I also noted that Christian respondents' motives for adhering to Christianity and Party members' motives for joining the Party were quite different. Christian conversion narratives frequently mentioned a search for meaning or direction, trouble in life, or a felt need for love, peace and community – which could be read as symptoms of underlying societal malaise (Table 20 and 21). Conversely, respondents joined the Party in order to advance their careers, or because it was a sign of academic excellence (Table 28).

In addition, respondents who had become Party members and those who had become Christians held national narratives that more often than not diverged from those of their demographic peers in polar opposite directions (Table 29). That is to say, whilst Christian respondents were more in favour of democracy and political

²⁶ IVC0112, IVC04, IVC04b, IVC04b2, IVC06, IVC01121, IVC011213, IVC011221, IVC0112132, IVC0112133, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b12, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c1, SIVC06c1, SIVC07b, SIVC07c1, SIVC09d1

²⁷ IVC011, IVC011221, SIVC01c

²⁸ IVC04, IVC0112133

change, less concerned with economic growth and less assertive on international and territorial issues relative to their non-Christian demographic peers, Party members were less favourably inclined towards democracy and political change, more concerned with economic growth, and more assertive on international and territorial issues. Both groups, did however, share a concern with morality.

Therefore, Protestantism and the Party attract adherents motivated by very different sets of underlying values; and it is this, aside from respondents' straightforward theological objections, that explains lower rates of Party membership amongst Christians.

Turning to levels of participation in specific political activities, in the previous chapter I demonstrated that Christians have higher rates of participation overall; when this is disaggregated by activity type, more Christians complained to their leaders at work²⁹ and engaged in online political commentary.

Firstly, it is necessary to ask: are Christians more politically active only because they have more negative opinions about China's government and political system?

That is to say, I need to examine the hypothesis that there is nothing about Christianity per se that is linked to increased political activity; rather, it is because Christianity attracts disaffected people, and disaffected people are more likely to be politically active. If I compare like with like – the Christians who hold contrarian

²⁹ This difference, however, only appeared in Beijing and was not replicated in Shenzhen.

political opinions with their demographic peers who hold contrarian opinions – is there still an observable difference in terms of levels of political activity?

To test this I devised a 'Disaffection Index' (see Table 68). I classed respondents who scored equal to or above the median of 0.375 as "disaffected."

On the overall binary measure of political activity, higher proportions of both disaffected and non-disaffected Christians were politically active than their demographic peers at equivalent levels of (dis)affection; for both the Christian and comparison groups, higher proportions of the disaffected were politically active.

In terms of the most popular political activity, again, higher proportions of both disaffected and non-disaffected Christians posted online comments relative to their demographic peers, and for both religious affiliations it was a higher proportion of the disaffected who posted.

Similar proportions of disaffected Christians, non-disaffected Christians, and disaffected comparison group members complained at work (31%, 33%, and 27% respectively); non-disaffected members of the comparison group complained less (15%). Likewise, similar proportions of disaffected and non-disaffected Christians engaged in 'other' political activities; the only difference between Christians and the comparison group were between respondents who were not disaffected.

The non-disaffected comparison group stand out as having the highest proportion of respondents who had voted in the past 12 months; this may be because all three of those in the comparison group who had voted in the past 12 months were Party members;³⁰ they elected NPC delegates³¹ and grass-roots government officials.³² Indeed, Tianjian Shi saw voting in China as primarily regime-supporting political activity.³³

This data therefore implies that overall levels of political activity amongst respondents are associated with them both being Christian and being disaffected - although when disaggregated by activity type, this relationship holds only for levels of participation in online political commentary.

A further question that merits study here is whether the association between Christianity and higher levels of political activity remains when I take into account the fact that more Christians belong to trusted social networks.³⁴

I investigated this by splitting both Christian and comparison groups according to who had successfully introduced me to at least one other respondent and those who had not (Table 68);³⁵ and then by contrasting the levels of political activity of each

³⁰ SIVN06c, SIVN06a1, SIVN1021

³¹ SIVN1021

³² SIVN06c

³³ Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing*. pp.95-96.

³⁴ Putnam and Campbell, for example, argue that it is not just religiosity, nor just belonging to social networks, that predict respondents' levels of civic engagement, but belonging to religious social networks. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. pp.471-472.

³⁵ See the previous chapter for my justification of using this as an indicator that the respondent belonged to a trusted social network.

newly-created group. Again, I took a difference of 0.10 in the levels of political activity of two groups to be suggestive of an underlying difference.

Here I find that in terms of overall activity, Christians had higher levels of participation, but these levels did not vary greatly according to whether or not a respondent was part of a trusted social network. When disaggregated, the only activity in which the figures suggest a difference in participation rates between groups is online political commentary; here, Christians participated more even when trusting social networks were taken into account; and those with trusting social networks participated more even when religious affiliation was accounted for.

It is unsurprising that more political disaffecteds than non-disaffecteds make online political comments: of the 31 respondents who said that they had made political comments online, 19 of these mentioned making some kind of complaint or contrarian comment, for example:

On Weibo I might re-post some things, not my own posts, maybe it's things that other people say that I think are correct, I will re-post. [...] About for example, the high-speed rail crash, also some problems of disadvantaged groups [弱势群体] which have been ignored, also some lawyers who have been secretly imprisoned by the government [被政府秘密的关押], or punished or been

assaulted; also some common people's petitions, that is, they petition the government.³⁶

In contrast, 12 respondents did not explicitly say their comments were either contrarian or supportive; no respondents said they had made comments that were supportive of the Party-state or its stance on certain issues.

Similarly, neither is it surprising that there is an association between trusting social networks and higher levels of online commentary: respondents talked about communicating with their friends online, following their Weibo, re-posting their posts, and commenting themselves:³⁷ offline social networks translate into online social networks, which can in turn, though not in every case, facilitate online political discussion.

However, even when these above factors are taken into account, Christians are still more politically active than their demographic peers – chiefly in terms of online commentary, and this suggests an association between being a Christian per se and higher levels of participation.

At this point, making causal claims becomes tricky, as I do not have any data about these respondents' pre-conversion levels of political activity. Either it is the most politically active individuals who become Christians, or Christianity makes people more politically active than they otherwise would have been; or there may be an

³⁶ IVC01121

³⁷ IVC04, IVC01121, IVC0112131, IVC0112132, IVC0112133, SIVC06b.

undetected third factor – other than political disaffection or social networks – that is related to both Christianity and political activity in a causal manner. Such a question will need to be left to future studies.

Similarly, with the case of Shouwang, the question arises of how confrontation with actors of the Party-state, mobilised along specifically Christian lines, erupted in this case but not in others. My data, along with other commentaries, suggests certain factors that may have been at play here.

Firstly, one of the key features of Shouwang that has provoked governmental opposition has been its leaders' emphasis – indeed, insistence – on gathering as a whole church rather than as separate small groups.³⁸ Whilst pastors of other churches were keen to keep their churches' activities low-key and avoid frictions with the government, with large congregations meeting as smaller groups if necessary, from the accounts outlined above it seems that Shouwang's pastors had a more confrontational attitude towards the Party-state.

A second factor may have been the model of church organisation. Not all church leaders would have the ability to mobilise over one hundred of their congregants to engage in collective action – this may be an indication of a tighter model of organisation. By contrast, a respondent at another church described a very different style of leadership:

³⁸ IVC0112, IVC01121; Xu, "The Meaning of Shouwang."

My church has a free style [自由风格]. [...] That is, a 'free style', that is, no one administers us. The pastor just pays attention to his own sermons. [...] It's like a very loose organisation [...] No-one organises it. The way our pastor treats us is that everyone manages themselves.³⁹

Finally, there is the attitude of the local authorities towards religious organisations. This may be connected with timing. The Shouwang issue came to a head in early 2011, at a time when China's leaders were particularly vigilant due to the Arab Spring; similarly, some Shenzhen respondents mention receiving more police attention in the run up to, and during the 2011 Universiade.⁴⁰ It also varies by location. As I will outline below, several respondents felt that in Shenzhen the government gave the churches great leeway for their activities than did the authorities in the more politically sensitive city of Beijing.

At this stage, all of the above factors remain hypotheses; further investigation will be needed in order to develop a general theory of how relations between the Party-state and the church in China assume a confrontational nature.

3. Contextual constraints on Christians' social and political activity

So far in this chapter, I have examined possible reasons for the differences between the social and political activities of Protestants and their non-Protestant demographic peers.

³⁹ IVC01111

⁴⁰ SIVC01a, SIVC01b112

I have argued that Christians' larger social networks, the additional members of which are mostly Christians, are both a cause and result of their Christian conversion. Similarly, participation in Christian activities can precede and encourage adherence to Christian belief, but also stem from it; and that believers then take up church responsibilities or get involved in evangelistic activities. However, these church activities can crowd out participation in other social and charitable activities in Christians' lives, hence their similar-to-lower rates of participation in these relative to their demographic peers.

Lower rates of involvement in secular social activities and charity may also be due to Christians' lower levels of social trust relative to their demographic peers. These lower levels of social trust amongst Christians are primarily a feature of the fact that Christianity tends to attract those moderately disaffected with, and distrustful of, wider Chinese society and its values. Such individuals are attracted to, amongst other things, the perceived sense of trust within the Christian community. Indeed, my findings indicate that Christian respondents did enjoy higher levels of trust in each other, in contrast to their low levels of social trust towards wider society.

In the previous chapter, I argued that non-Christian respondents generally perceived Christians and Christianity in a positive light, chiefly due to the morally positive behaviour of believers. Whilst noting that establishing causality here was tricky, in this chapter I argued that in terms of perceptions at least, it was Christian faith that caused respondents' lives to change for the positive, rather than respondents who already exhibited positive behavioural traits becoming Christians.

Whilst differences between the political efficacy levels of Christians and their demographic peers are small and not easy to explain, Christians' sense of spiritual efficacy seems to have its roots largely in Christian teaching.

In the previous chapter, I noted that lower proportions of Christian respondents were members of the Communist Party and argued that it was the Party's atheistic ideology that deterred them from joining. In this chapter, I supplemented this explanation by arguing that there are noticeable differences in the underlying values and motivations of respondents who eventually become Christians and those who become Party members.

In the previous chapter, I noted that Christians were more politically active on aggregate over all the specific political activities I asked about, and that when disaggregated by activity type, the biggest difference between the two groups was that higher proportions of Christians made political comments online. In this chapter I argued that this was partly due to the fact that more Christians were politically disaffected and more disaffected respondents made comments online; and that more Christians also had trusted social networks, which tended to facilitate online comment. However, even when these two factors were accounted for, higher proportions of Christians commented online. Without further data, however, it is difficult to establish whether this was a cause or result of Christian conversion, or mediated by some other factor.

In terms of the Shouwang case, outlined in the previous chapter, I suggested some reasons why confrontation may have emerged in this exceptional case, despite church-state relations being relatively peaceful on the whole. These included, the attitudes of the church leaders, the church's organisational model, and the attitudes of local authorities towards religious organisations. However, further research will be needed to analyse the relative importance of these factors in driving contentious Protestant mobilisation in China.

In my conclusion to the previous chapter, I noted that there were important differences between these findings and the findings of research into other societies upon which my hypotheses were based.

Most interestingly, whereas Putnam and Campbell found that in America, relative to their less religious demographic peers, the more religious people were not only more active in terms of religious activities and had more trust in other religious people, but were also more active in secular social activities, charitable activities, and political activity, and had higher levels of trust in people outside their religious group, too. In Putnam's terms, whereas relative to their demographic peers, Chinese Christians exhibit stronger 'bonding' social capital, religious Americans exhibit both 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital, forming links both within their groups and with those in wider society as well.

It is therefore necessary to ask what factors are constraining Christians' social and political engagement. Here I return to some of the factors mentioned in the

literature review in Chapter 1, namely: the particularistic nature of social trust in China; the sometimes antagonistic relationship that Protestantism has had with Chinese society; the perception of Christianity as a new minority; and political barriers to social and political activism.

Most of these constraints could be classified as ‘contextual’ – features of China’s culture, history, society, and politics and that place limitations on Christians’ role in collectively and individually shaping society.

Before I begin, it should be noted that my study compared Christians and non-Christians, whereas Putnam and Campbell compared more and less religious people (whatever their religion). To make comparisons between my research and theirs, is not strictly comparing like with like. However, most of my non-Christian respondents (39 out of 50) had no religion, and, as discussed above, few reported regular religious activity; and the majority of respondents in Putnam and Campbell’s study would have adhered to some form of Christianity. While therefore not mapping directly onto Putnam and Campbell’s schema, there is enough in common to draw parallels from which interesting observations can be drawn. It is, however, worth bearing in mind that some of the variation in our results may be down to this difference.

a. The particularistic nature of social trust in China

To briefly recap, in Chapter 1, I mentioned that in surveys, Chinese people have consistently demonstrated high level of social trust.⁴¹ However, Ren Liying has argued that when answering this question of social trust, people in China are referring to their level of trust in friends and family (particularised social trust) rather than in people they have met for the first time (generalised social trust).⁴² In other words, in China, overall social trust is stronger, but concentrated in a small number of familiar people. In countries such as Germany and the USA, social trust is lower overall, but directed towards a wider range of people.⁴³

The nature of Christians' social trust therefore reflects the nature of social trust in wider Chinese society. Belonging to a church community⁴⁴ gives one a new set of relationships to whom particularised social trust is directed. As argued earlier in this chapter, this makes Christianity particularly attractive for those whose levels of social trust are low. However, with a few exceptions amongst my respondents,⁴⁵ it does not seem to have engendered a feeling of generalised social trust:

In a culture where family relations used to determine levels of trust, morality and responsibility, the fact that Christians refer to one another as 'brothers and sisters' gains added significance here. Therefore, while faith leads to increased social trust, at the same

⁴¹ Ren, "Surveying Public Opinion in Transitional China: An Examination of Survey Response." p.132.

⁴² Ibid.pp.141-142.

⁴³ Ibid.Fig.10, pp.143-144

⁴⁴ I use this phrase because it covers both the more formal collective aspects of church activity, such as Sunday meetings and Bible studies, but also the informal aspects such as friendships developed between church members.

⁴⁵ SIVC06c1, SIVC06c, IVC041.

time, shared faith also leads to the creation of new in-groups and out-groups.⁴⁶

In the USA, in contrast, belonging to a religious community seems to amplify the generalised social trust already present in that society.

b. The history of Protestant Christianity in China

I noted in my introduction that the relationship between Protestant Christians and wider Chinese society throughout history has sometimes been quite tense. Protestantism has been variously accused of being heretical, inimical to Chinese culture, imperialistic, and anti-modern.⁴⁷ Despite generally positive opinions about Christians and Christianity amongst my comparison group, a few respondents still associated Christianity with the West,⁴⁸ and some viewed it as somewhat alien to China:

I think that most people's impression is that [...] they think that Jesus was a Westerner [耶稣就是西方人], that Christianity is a Western people's faith [西方人的信仰], [and] that Chinese people if they have a faith, should believe in Buddhism, or believe in Taoism.

[Interviewer: Do you yourself agree with this kind of idea?]

⁴⁶ Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China*.p.39.

⁴⁷ Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism 1860-70*; Hodous, "The Anti-Christian Movement in China"; Grim and Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century*.

⁴⁸ IVN14c, IVN101, IVN112, SIVN06aa2.

At present, I agree. I still think that Buddhism, compared to Christianity... I believe in Buddhism a bit more; if I had a religious faith I think it should be Buddhism.⁴⁹

I think in my mind I can't really accept Chinese people believing in a Western religion.⁵⁰

In contrast, the USA has a history of generally good relations between the state, society and religious groups, despite occasional incidents of persecution such as that directed towards the Mormons in the nineteenth century.⁵¹ There is wider acceptance of the positive role of religion in society. It is therefore no surprise that religious believers and groups find it easier to foster positive attitudes towards and build constructive links with wider society in the USA than they do in China.

c. Protestants as a new minority

Further to the above point, another possible constraint on Christians' social and political activity, particularly its ability to build 'bridging' links, is its perceived novelty amongst wider Chinese society. As mentioned in my introduction and the previous chapter, Putnam and Campbell discuss the 'My Friend Al Principle' - that social or

⁴⁹ SIVN06aa2

⁵⁰ IVN101

⁵¹ Brian J Grim, *Religion and Socio-Economic Wellbeing / Sociological Research on the Impact of Restrictions on Religious Freedom*, Lecture Delivered at Peking University Center for Constitutional and Administrative Law and Pu Shi Institute for Social Science Religion and Rule of Law Summer Program, Beijing, 2011.

familial contact with a member of a certain religious group tends to be associated with positive views of that religious group and other religions, too.⁵²

In my discussion in the previous chapter, I have argued that my data suggests a similar pattern in China – amongst the comparison group, a higher proportion of respondents who knew Christians made positive comments about Christianity relative to respondents who did not know any Christians. A large majority of non-Christian respondents (42 out of 49) claimed to know Christians personally, and therefore have largely positive assessments of Christians and Christianity. However, these respondents belong to the most educated, internationally open, and politically liberal demographic group; it is likely that those of other demographic characteristics – particularly those of more conservative persuasions - regard Christianity with more suspicion, not least due to the historical reasons highlighted above in point (b).

This is confirmed by some of my respondent's accounts of their parents' reaction to their Christian conversion:

I am the first Christian in my family. After I had believed, my family were particularly opposed. When I started I didn't dare tell them. Later I told other people and they [my family] found out later. Then there was one period of time when they phoned me everyday to make me abandon this decision. Previously, my mother had hoped that I could be a civil servant. She thought that if I didn't enter the Party, it would be very difficult for me to be a civil servant, so she

⁵² Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, p.526, p.531.

thought that this belief would impact on my future prospects. Also, they were thinking about it from the perspective of security. Because my Mum knows about the events of 1989, that is, 6.4,⁵³ so she thought, “My one little girl is in Beijing, she's so young and doesn't understand anything, she's still a student.” She was afraid that I would get involved in some events, then she didn't know what [would happen to me] so she was really opposed. Then other people in my family were the same, so they phoned me every day in order to make me abandon this decision. My Dad said, “Agghh, I'm going to go to Beijing and bring her back home,” this [kind of] feeling.⁵⁴

However, one comparison group respondent with no personal religious belief, gave an indication that attitudes might be changing:

Christians here in China are growing more and more; it is an inevitable influence on Chinese religion as well as politics. The leadership or the government must face this question and, you know, to make all religions live peacefully here in China.

[Interviewer: How do you think they should do that?]

⁵³ The massacre of student demonstrators in Beijing on 4th June, 1989.

⁵⁴ IVC04b. See also IVC05, IVC0112132, SIVC01b, SIVC01b11, SIVC06c1. It is also interesting to note that in several of these cases, parental opposition lessened as understanding between parents and their Christian children improved – again, supporting Putnam and Campbell's argument.

There must be a change in people's minds [to believe] that Christianity is not a bad thing, is not an evil thing, it's just as Buddhism and Muslims [sic].

[Interviewer: Do you think people think it's a bad thing in China?]

In my generation or in my parent's generation?

[Interviewer: Either.]

In my generation, I don't think so. I think, you know, people in my generation with well [sic] education can accept it. When I say accept it, I didn't mean to be a Christian, but to recognise it as a common religion. But, you know, in my parent's generation, I don't think they will do. Because they have this old concept, this old impression that anything from the Western world, especially religious things, can be evil, can bring their children to evil.⁵⁵

d. Political barriers

In China, as I outline in my introduction, the Party-state is wary of independent organisations, particularly religious ones and particularly ones that form linkages across social boundaries.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ IVN11

⁵⁶ Madsen, "The Upsurge of Religion in China"; Teets, "Let Many Civil Societies Bloom: The Rise of Consultative Authoritarianism in China."

[The government] really worries about losing its position of control [很担心失去自己的统治地位], it will worry that if you believe in this religion, don't you have some kind of political motive [政治动力]. Do you want to rob me of my power? This [kind of] thing. So it is not willing to truly, significantly open up [放开], it will [maintain] control. Also, it sees politics as more important than any other thing, it will think that if you believe in this religion you certainly have a [ulterior] purpose [目的], they won't think that actually you only believe because it truly exists, so they won't open up easily or lightly.⁵⁷

As I discussed in the previous chapter, from my respondents' accounts, local authorities are more likely to crack down upon church activities that involve large numbers of participants, are public in nature, occur at politically sensitive times, or involve interaction with foreigners. In practice, these restrictions mean that for many churches the dominant strategy has been to keep their activities low-key:

Our church is actually very low profile [低调]. [...] We do our best to avoid conflicts with the government. [...] Our church is very small, so the government doesn't pay us too much attention.⁵⁸

The opportunities for Christians to mobilise for collective action through their churches – whether or not this action would involve making political demands upon

⁵⁷ SIVC0c21

⁵⁸ IVC011

the Party-state - is therefore tightly circumscribed; and on the rare occasions when such action does occur, such as in Shouwang's case, the official response is unequivocal and repressive.

Furthermore, if the church's beliefs and activities remain largely hidden to members of wider society, then as outlined above, the latter are more likely to treat it with suspicion. This, in turn, makes evangelism more difficult, and also hinders the task of establishing 'bridging' social capital - namely 'My Friend Al'-style relationships and trust between believers and non-believers.

The irony here is that 'bridging' social capital is a key source of social trust, norm creation, public-spiritedness, and, ultimately, social stability.⁵⁹ Many of my respondents (of all religious affiliations and none) identified these as things that Chinese society needs at the moment.⁶⁰ Rather than aiding social stability, the prevention of the development of a truly independent public sphere may be damaging it. In recent years, government organs have become increasingly liberal in some aspects of social management – or at least, more subtle and less direct in their control over social organisations.⁶¹ If this continues, and the social capital theorists are correct, then we should expect to see the development of more 'bridging' capital in Chinese society in the future.⁶²

⁵⁹ Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. p.362.

⁶⁰ IVC05, IVC06, IVC1121, IVC11211, IVN09, IVN091, IVN103, IVN13b, SIVN02a2.

⁶¹ Teets, "Let Many Civil Societies Bloom: The Rise of Consultative Authoritarianism in China."

⁶² Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China*.

It is interesting that in Shenzhen, where church-state relations were less conflictual, or at least perceived to be so, with fewer Christians reporting conflict with government organs, that by some measures Christians demonstrated more 'bridging' capital than their fellow believers in Beijing. Relative to Beijing Christians, Shenzhen's believers had larger social networks (Table 50), had higher levels of involvement with secular social activities (Table 56), and were more likely to say that they most distrusted 'No-one' (Table 60). However, their rate of participation in charitable activities was lower than both Christians in Beijing and the comparison group in Shenzhen (Table 57). Overall, though, this suggests that Party-state repression can engender a kind of 'bunker mentality' amongst Christians, causing them to turn inwards to their churches and Christian friends and disengaging from secular society in terms of trust and activity.

A second political barrier preventing greater Christian engagement with society is the exclusion of religious believers from the Communist Party. Whilst this ban is not always enforced in practice,⁶³ as discussed above the Party's insistence with and propagation of atheism acts as a powerful deterrent to Christians, serving in some ways to marginalise those who might otherwise wish to engage in political activism through institutionalised channels.⁶⁴

⁶³ Several religious believers amongst my respondents, both Christian and Buddhists were Party members: IVC01111, IVN1021, IVN14b, SIVC01c21, SIVC06b, SIVC07b1, SIVN06a, SIVN06a1.

⁶⁴ Lily Tsai has argued that in rural China, the Party's bar on village officials from joining churches has circumscribed the role that churches are able to play in holding local officials to account, and therefore enhancing public goods provision. "Solidary Groups, Informal Accountability, and Local Public Goods Provision in Rural China," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (2007): 355–72.

e. Implications for social and political activity

To what extent do these contextual constraints limit Christians' social and political activity?

Firstly, it is fairly obvious that what Christians are able to accomplish politically – either as individuals or collectively – is heavily restricted. Churches are prevented from meeting in large groups and engaging in public activities; when they do so, it elicits a repressive response. On the individual level, Christians are subject to the same constraints on political activity as their demographic peers.

One respondent compared the situation of Chinese churches unfavourably to that in South Korea, where she had initially come into contact with Christianity as an exchange student:

But I would still think, "South Korean churches are very good," I would still have this kind of feeling, because after all, China has a lot of, [things that] cannot be organised [组织不起来], and a lot of government aspects... pressure from the government, these kinds of things. If they arranged for people to go out [to do Christian activities] [组织人出去], they would really worry that people would phone the police, there would be that kind of situation, so they [= the church] have organised very few activities, I think this was really different from South Korea.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ SIVC01b11

Secondly, in terms of Christians' lack of engagement with secular society – or 'bridging capital' – by spending less social time with those who do not share their beliefs, Christians are reducing the influence they might otherwise potentially have over wider society. As argued above, this may hinder evangelism and prevent the establishment of 'My Friend AI' relationships that could diminish distrust between Christians and wider society – a vicious circle effect. This in turn, may discourage the establishment of generalised social trust – the very trust that several respondents said that Christians could help promote.⁶⁶

However, on the other hand, it could be argued that rather than completely preventing Christians from undertaking social and political activity, these contextual factors merely serve to channel it. Given these constraints, and the limited time available to each individual, how do Christian respondents best actuate their desire to act socially and politically?

The answer that my respondents and their church communities have come up with may have been further influenced by the fact that, as argued in Chapter 3, many respondents have arrived at Christianity out of a feeling of political and social disaffection and distrust; it may have also been influenced by conservative evangelical theology, which – in the USA at least – tends encourage believers to participate in more inward-focussed church activities rather than engaging with wider society.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ IVC04, IVC05, SIVC01c21.

⁶⁷ Most of my Christian respondents' theology could be roughly described as conservative and evangelical (福音派), emphasising the Bible, salvation through Jesus dying to forgive sins, and conversion (IV031, IVC04, IVC05,

From the data presented in this chapter, the focus of respondents' social and political activity has been on building Christian community bound together by shared norms and trust; encouraging personal spiritual growth, with the desired outcome of more moral behaviour; and the practical tasks associated with these aims – leading worship or Bible study, welcoming people at the church door, or cleaning the church. In addition, Christians pray for China, evangelise, and engage in online political commentary. It is into this kind of transformative action that respondents pour their time and energy, rather than – with the exception of online political commentary - a more widespread engagement with the secular world or a confrontation with the Party-state.

Even if there were opportunities to engage in more openly political activity, Christians might choose not to get involved – at least, in a way that mobilises people along Christian lines - for fear it might become a distraction to the central task of bringing spiritual revival; this thinking is evident in some of my respondents' critical comments about Shouwang church that I have reproduced above.

4. Protestantism and a sense of agency

So far I have observed that relative to their demographic peers, higher proportions of Protestant Christians engage in online commentary; carry out evangelistic activity; believe that speaking out can effect political change (though only in Shenzhen); and in rare instances engage in explicit collective action (in the case of Shouwang); prior

IVC11212, IVC112132). In the USA, Evangelicals were found to be just as socially active as mainline Protestants, but their social activity (volunteering, giving etc.) is focussed inward around church activities rather than outward towards the wider community, Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Ch.4.

to this, in Chapter 2 I had established that Christians feel a sense of responsibility towards China. In addition, Christians also take up responsibilities within church, and are generally positively regarded amongst their demographic peers for their good moral behaviour.

This points to Christians having a greater sense of agency relative to their demographic peers.

As mentioned in my introduction, in this thesis I define ‘sense of agency’ as *a sense that one has the responsibility for, and ability to make one’s own conscious value judgements via a process of critical reflection on predominant social norms and, based on these judgements, to intentionally adjust one’s own behaviour and take actions to shape the wider social environment.*

That is to say, on the personal level, Christians feel a sense of moral direction and accountability; on the wider level, more Christians feel responsible for the state of China, believe that they can effect macro-level change in China, and are engaging in transformative activism⁶⁸ to effect that change on the micro-level.

This transformative activism may take explicitly Christian forms, such as evangelism, church service, and Shouwang’s contention, or secular forms informed by underlying

⁶⁸ By ‘transformative activism’, I mean any activity undertaken with the aim of changing China in a way that conforms with my respondents’ Christian understanding of how China should be. This term encompasses action normally considered ‘political’ such as online political commentary and Shouwang’s outdoor worship, but also includes attempting to influence those around via personal evangelism and moral behavior, and serving the church community (even in small capacities, such as cleaning the church floor) in order to better help it to achieve its mission. See Emirbayer and Mische, “What Is Agency?”. p.973.

Christian values, such as online comment or general moral behaviour, although the boundary between these is somewhat artificial and blurry.

Is this because people with an enhanced sense of agency become Christians, or because Christianity gives believers an enhanced sense of agency? The first thing to note is that the very act of becoming a Christian is, according to my above definition, symptomatic of a sense of agency.

Most respondents had not grown up as Christians (Table 19); they had grown up under an education system that promotes Marxism and atheism.⁶⁹

[I]n our textbooks especially Politics and Ideological Morality [...] that's like thinking and ethics [...], they say that religion is... They have a definition of religion, their definition has still not changed even to this day, it has had a particularly deep influence on people. They have a fixed definition of religion, [...] religion is a kind of psychological comfort that people themselves seek. [...] They think like this, they say God, or any gods, [they] have all been thought up by people. [...] Then this is something that has left an impression on every Chinese student's heart, from old to young, we'll all think it's like that. [...] Yes, we have this definition, so its influence on people, especially children, is especially big. From when we were young we have been indoctrinated in this way, indoctrinated in our brains; we will think like this, it's very difficult to accept religion, [and]

⁶⁹ IVC04, IVC05, SIVC01b112, SIVC01b21, SIVC01c2, SIVC01c21, SIVC09d1; Vickers, "Selling 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics': 'Thought and Politics' and the Legitimisation of China's Developmental Strategy."

religious thought. Also, they think that people who believe in religion are extremely stupid, it's only because these people are extremely weak, inside they are extremely weak, [...], it's only these kind of people who believe in religion.

[Interviewer: So how did you discard this thinking? Because if its influence on you was very deep, how did you...?]

Because I always had doubts about what other people, especially the government said. [...] Yes, I think I'm relatively doubtful about the things the government says. Regarding a person or an event, if the government stresses that black is black, white is white, I might doubt them. I might think, "Why are they saying this?" Also, some television series and films I watched, and some of the things in the education I received when I was young, I couldn't understand them, or I thought they were really laughable. That is, it always said the Communist Party is always good, always right, and has no wrong, and for example, the Japanese aggressors were always bad, always negative, including Taiwan's Chiang Kai-Shek [...], on television he always seems very gloomy, very terrifying, and has a very negative image, he's always got a negative image. But I think it's not like this. I think every person has a good and a bad side; everything has a bad and a good side. You can't reject every other story, and only take the parts you want, so I think that there are problems with

this kind of government, or this way of dealing with things. It is very bigoted.⁷⁰

In such circumstances, choosing to convert to a minority belief system suggests an ability to critically reflect on prevailing social norms, and to make decisions contrary to them. As I note in Chapter 3, even respondents who had been brought up in Christian homes would at some point need to judge between what they were being taught at home and church, and what they were being taught at school. The development of a critical national narrative – which, as I argue in Chapter 3 is primarily a precursor to Christian conversion – is also an agentic act,⁷¹ since, by definition, it requires critical reflection on the national narrative propagated by the Party state and the values present among respondent's demographic peers.

However, numerous respondents also reported a new sense of direction and purpose *after* conversion. In answering the question, 'What does it mean to be a Christian?' 80% of respondents asked mentioned some facet of the above definition of a sense of agency as a feature of their post-conversion lives (Table 68):

[I] now have a mission [使命]. [...] That is, I need to be a disciple [做一个门徒吧].⁷²

Maybe I'll think that there is a kind of strength inside me. Then maybe I will think that I am loved, and paid attention to [被爱的,

⁷⁰ IVC01111

⁷¹ Or, to be more precise, a 'sense-of-agentic' act, i.e. an act that is symptomatic of a sense of agency.

⁷² SIVC01b1

被关注的]. It also tells me that I need to live more actively [更加积极地生活]. When I encounter difficulties, I have something to rely on, then I also have hope [盼望] for the future. I don't think that my life is just a rustling in the trees [飒飒的], or that I can freely waste it.⁷³

I am extremely energetic every day [我每天非常有精力的]. Yes. Also, the things I do have a sense of direction. Now, when I encounter problems, I will first pray, [for?] someone [to] come to me, and help me to choose. Yes. So I will think that when I do things, I really have a sense of direction [做事会非常有方向性].⁷⁴

[As] a Christian, I think I have more responsibility [更多的责任]. It's not like before, [when I] maybe thought, "So long as I myself am OK, it'll be OK." Now, [you] will think more about your relationship with society and the people around you, whether it's colleagues, family, friends, it's all related to them. As a Christian, you need to let them understand this faith more. Also, in more of your consciousness, you'll think that you are someone who needs to serve other people, to help other people. You'll think you have more responsibility – for example, at work I should to do the work I should do well. At home I need to be a good daughter [我要扮演好我做一个女儿], or as

⁷³ SIVC01b21

⁷⁴ SIVC06c1

another person's wife, these roles I need to play well. As a Christian, [...] in every level of life, you need to do well that which you should do.⁷⁵

Respondents mentioned three interlinked facets of Christian teaching relating to agency: firstly, a sense of meaning, emphasising the significance and direction of human life, a future hope past one's immediate troubles, and therefore the importance of living intentionally;⁷⁶ secondly, a sense of morality, emphasising individual moral responsibility and accountability before God as well as specific aspects such as being honest or not needing to chase excessive material wealth;⁷⁷ and thirdly, a sense of mission, emphasising the task of being 'salt and light' (作光作盐),⁷⁸ of changing China by influencing those around and engaging in wider transformative action.⁷⁹

So, although the act becoming a Christian itself generally requires some sense of agency, my respondents' answers lead us to conclude that this sense of agency is enhanced post-conversion. As Wielander argues, though not in these terms, Protestants' faith 'provides an empowering sense of self, which enables them to

⁷⁵ IVC0112131

⁷⁶ IVC03, IVC031, IVC041, IVC04b, IVC04b1, IVC04b2, IVC04b3, IVC01111, IVC0112111, IVC0112133, SIVC01b, SIVC01b11, SIVC01c1, SIVC01c2, SIVC01c21, SIVC06b1, SIVC06c1, SIVC07c1, SIVC09d1

⁷⁷ IVC031, IVC05, IVC06, IVC011213, IVC0112111, IVC0112132, IVC0112133, SIVC01b2, SIVC01b113, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01c21, SIVC06b, SIVC07b, SIVC07b1

⁷⁸ SIVC01c

⁷⁹ IVC04b, IVC04b1, IVC05, IVC01121, IVC011221, IVC0112131, SIVC01a, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b111, SIVC01c, SIVC01c2, SIVC07b1

follow its corresponding moral code and guidance.⁸⁰ Figure 18 illustrates the role of Protestant Christianity in the social and political lives of my respondents.

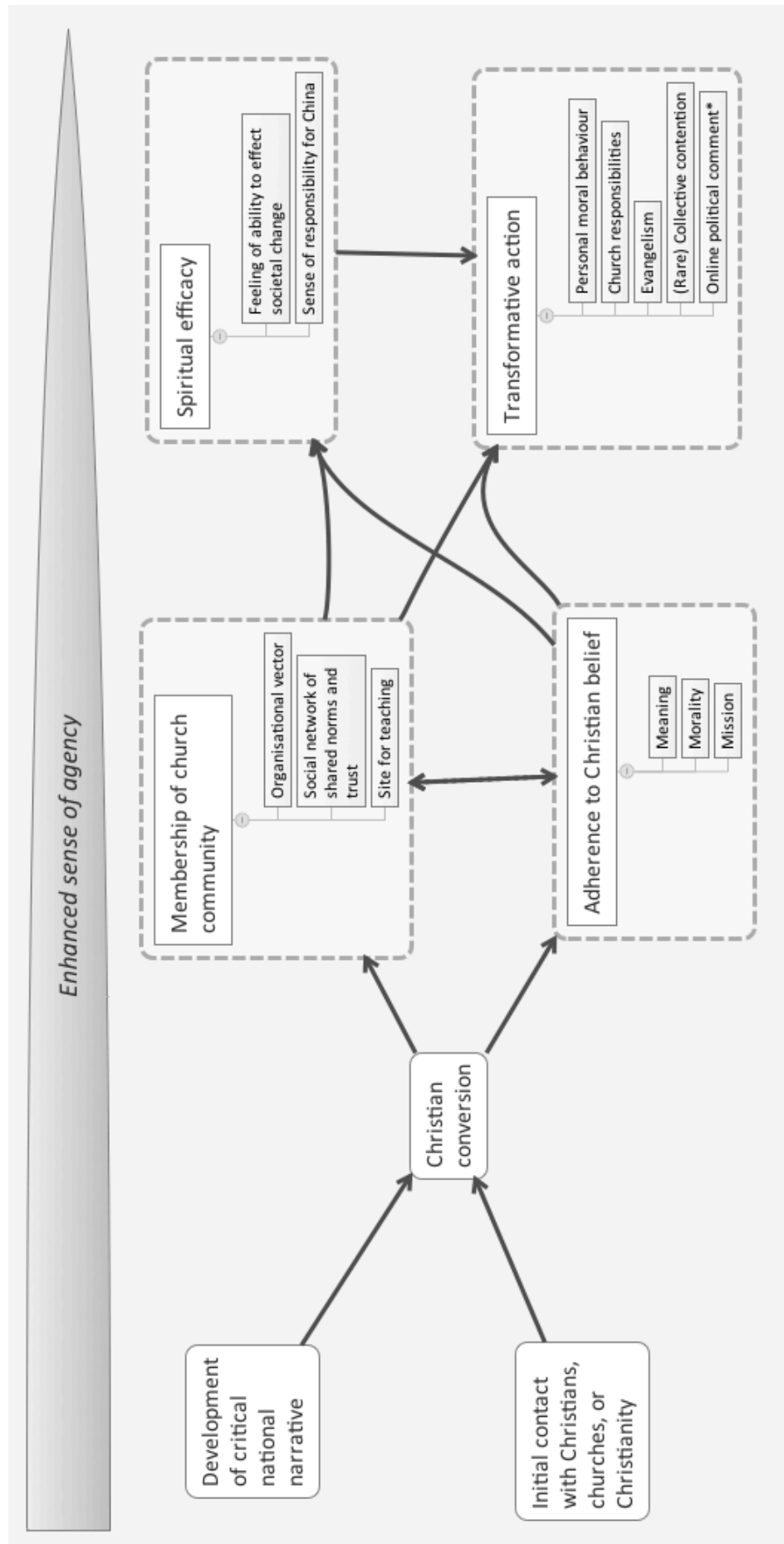
Rather than a distinct variable in and of itself (to be inserted into the diagram as a separate box), the development of a sense of agency is best thought of as a process running coterminous with, and embedded in an individual's thoughts and actions leading to and emanating from Christian belief.

This sense of agency develops as an individual begins to question the values of society and the Party-state,⁸¹ and to cultivate a national narrative that is typically more critical of these values than the national narratives of the individual's demographic peers (see Chapter 3). This process often occurs at university, and sometimes follows a period of personal difficulty. Contact with Christian individuals, churches or Christian teaching may lead some of these individuals to decide to convert to Christianity.

⁸⁰ Wielander, *Christian Values in Communist China*.

⁸¹ Or, in the case of childhood converts, to weigh these up against the competing claims being made by the respondent's own family and church.

Figure 18: Protestantism and Sense of Agency



* Causality unclear – online political commentators may be more likely to be become Christians, rather than their online commentary resulting from Christian conversion. I have placed it here for tidiness' sake.

It should be noted here that neither the national narrative that the Party-state promotes, nor the political system it leads contain much institutional or dialogic space for legitimate, legal, contrarian action for those who are disaffected by the status quo and still wish to exercise their sense of agency to influence China's society and politics in a way that transcends the redress of specific, localised demands. On the institutional side, China lacks, for example, established independent opposition parties or candidates;⁸² on the dialogic side, the party's national narrative, in casting the Communist Party as China's sole legitimate ruling Party, leaves little room for those who would disagree.⁸³ But then, none of my respondents explicitly cited the goal of influencing China's politics as a reason for converting to Christianity (see Table 21).

After conversion, this sense of agency is further enhanced as the individual embraces Christian teaching on morality, meaning, and mission, and participates in a church community of believers who share and uphold the values in this teaching, are bound together by mutual trust, and can provide organisational resources for transformative action. As such, a church community can act both as an incubator for a respondent's sense of agency, and as a vector for its expression.

The concrete outcomes of belonging to a church community and adhering to Christian beliefs are a sense of spiritual efficacy – of the responsibility and ability to change China's society for the better via moral and spiritual renewal – and the outworking of this in terms of transformative activism.

⁸² Holbig and Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China." pp.411-414.

⁸³ Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China*.

As stated above, this transformative activism is constrained by factors in the cultural, historical, social and political context. The particularistic nature of social trust in Chinese society, the chequered historical relationship between Protestantism and Chinese society, and the perception of Protestantism as a new minority religion make it relatively difficult to establish bonds of trust between Christians and wider society; political barriers prevent expressions of faith that are public in nature or draw together large numbers of people, obstruct political mobilisation along Christian lines, and block believers from joining the Communist Party. However, rather than completely impeding transformative activism, these barriers serve to channel it in certain directions, ranging from personal moral behaviour and evangelism, to serving the church in some capacity.⁸⁴ In exceptional cases such as that of Shouwang Church, Christians do attempt to challenge the constraints listed above by engaging in collective contention. ‘Successful’ – or even ‘unsuccessful’ – activism may, in turn, further enhance a sense of agency.⁸⁵ One Shouwang member said of her experience of participating in outdoor worship and getting arrested:

So over all, this was a very good experience. [...] A lot of people think my church leader was quite irresponsible [towards church] members. They think it’s too inconsiderate to send the believers out and suffer so much, but I think for people that [are] really inside and experience [it], I think in my opinion, it’s not a suffer [sic], it’s a blessing. In my opinion I gain something, not lose

⁸⁴ As outlined above, more Protestants also engaged in online commentary than did their demographic peers – but it is uncertain as to whether this is an outcome of Christian belief, one of its causes, or indirectly related via some other factor.

⁸⁵ Kevin J O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, “Popular Contention and Its Impact in Rural China,” *Comparative Political Studies* 38, no. 3 (April 01, 2005): pp.235–259, doi:10.1177/0010414004272528.

something, even if I now have to move house, or one day they went and threat [sic] my company, [...] actually I think that in this process I experienced God and his presence, I feel very blessed. Because when I was in the police station, I felt God really was with me, [it was] very vivid, very real, I feel that it was a really precious experience.⁸⁶

I should note here that this schema is 'ideal typical'. Not all Christians develop critical national narratives pre-conversion, and not all, or even most, of those who develop critical national narratives become Christians. Not all Christians embrace or obey all aspects of Christian teaching,⁸⁷ not all Christians shared a sense of spiritual efficacy, and not all Christians are active in transformative activism such as evangelism or online political commentary. But this schema provides an outline to make sense of the data as a whole as it pertains to my respondents.

5. Summary

In the first part of this chapter, I examined possible reasons for the variation between the social and political activities of Christians and those of their demographic peers. I argued that Christians had larger social networks, a significant proportion of which consisted of other Christians, as both a cause and result of their conversion to Christianity; the same was true of their greater participation in Christian activities. Their similar-to-lower levels of participation in secular social

⁸⁶ IVC04

⁸⁷ For example:

We Christians shouldn't say bad words or complain, but sometimes I complain, say bad things, [and] hit the table when I speak. [IVC031]

activities and charitable activities may be due to their time being taken up by Christian activities, or by their lower levels of social trust.

On the question of social trust, I argued that it was primarily those with low levels of social trust who were attracted to Christianity in the first place; and one of the things that attracted them was their perception of Christian churches as communities of trust. Hence Christians demonstrating low levels of social trust in general, but high levels of trust in each other. A number of Christians, and a few non-Christians mentioned observing positive moral changes occurring in Christians' lives after conversion, implying that this is primarily a result rather than a cause of Christian conversion.

In terms of political activity, whilst causality is difficult to establish for political efficacy, Protestants' sense of spiritual efficacy seems to derive largely from Christian teaching on mission and social responsibility. Christians' lower levels of Party membership are due both to the surface issue of believers being deterred by the Party's requirement of atheism for its members, but also because the kinds of respondents who joined the Party and those who became Christians appeared motivated by different sets of underlying values.

Participation in specific political activities, chiefly online political comment, was associated with both political disaffection and belonging to trusted social networks, both of which are more prevalent amongst Protestant respondents. However, even once these factors were taken into account, higher proportions of Protestants still

participated in online political commentary. However, it is difficult to establish causally whether those who often comment online become Christians, or vice versa.

Finally in this section, noting that Shouwang was a rare case of Christians mobilising politically along Christian lines, I posited some hypotheses for factors that may lead to such mobilisation occurring, namely a church's leadership's goals, its organisational model, and the attitude of the local authorities towards religion.

In the second section of this chapter, I examined why some of my hypotheses, based on the social and political activities of Protestants in other societies as well as the theoretical literature, were not supported by my findings. I argued that the particularistic nature of social trust in Chinese society, the sometimes tense historical relationship between Protestantism and wider Chinese society, the perceived novelty of Protestantism, and political barriers, made it difficult for believers from establishing 'bridging' capital with wider society or from mobilising politically as Christians. They therefore channel their energies into activities such as personal spiritual growth and moral behaviour; building Christian community via church meetings and church responsibilities; evangelism; and online political comments. Through these activities, Protestant believers aim to bring about spiritual and moral renewal in China; even if they could engage in political mobilisation, many would see this as at best secondary and at worst a diversion from this main task.

In the third section of this chapter, I argued that these findings, taken as a whole and combined with results outlined in prior chapters, point to Protestants having a greater sense of agency relative to their demographic peers. That is to say, they reflect critically on predominant social norms, adjust their behaviour based on this critical reflection, and take action to influence wider society. The development of a critical national narrative, the decision to convert to a minority religion, the normative adjustment of one's behaviour, the feeling of responsibility towards Chinese society, the sense of ability and desire to change things, and the outworking of this desire in transformative activism, albeit constrained by the factors outlined above, are all reflections of a growing sense of agency among the Christian respondents in this study.

6. Conclusion

What Protestant Christianity does amongst these young Chinese urbanites is to attract those disaffected with China's current political and social arrangements and the national narrative of the Party-state, to provide them with a community and belief system that further enhances their sense of agency, and to funnel this sense of agency into transformative activism aimed at the spiritual renewal of China.

Most of the time this transformative activism works within, or around, the contextual limits imposed by society, culture, and the Party-state. It is generally ignored or tacitly permitted by the latter. When Christians do openly challenge aspects of China's political arrangements, they tend to do so online and do not mobilise along Christian lines. Only on rare occasions do Christians mobilise as

Christians to participate in contentious action, and even then the effectiveness of this contention is both debatable and debated; the Party-state tends to meet it with a coercive response.

This is not to say that all transformative Christian activism is ineffective. Those of other faiths or none generally hold Christians in high regard for their moral teaching and behaviour. Whilst a minority have negative views of Christianity for being too pushy, too unreasonable, or too Western, others are attracted by it and want to investigate further, either with a view to converting, or to embracing certain elements of the Christian value system.

At the moment, then, Protestant Christianity represents little threat to China's Party-state-led political status quo. The main goal of Christian activism is personal spiritual growth and national spiritual renewal; any political changes are secondary. Whilst many have complaints about the Party-state, and they do not want it to control their churches, neither do they want to see it destroyed, at least, not in a rapid revolutionary manner (see Chapter 2).

Nevertheless, Christianity does represent an alternative project of national renewal, one that places the work of God in individuals' lives and in Chinese society as of higher importance than the role of the Party-state. It enhances individuals' sense of agency, giving them a sense of direction, responsibility and morality. By Xiaoying

Wang's definition, Protestantism is one catalyst for the development of individualism amongst China's urbanites:⁸⁸

By individualism I mean those ideas and practices, very broadly construed, in which each person is treated as a moral agent capable of choosing and carrying out his or her own life plan while respecting the same capacity on the part of others. At the heart of this doctrine is the formation of a self with the ability to subject one's desires to the direction of one's own will.⁸⁹

The effects of the growth of this individualism, informed by a sense of agency, upon China's society and politics is beyond the remit of this study, but they are likely to be profound. At the very least, the Party-state will have to develop new methods of governance, communication, and education that treat citizens as moral agents:

[T]he area of education certainly needs to be improved. That is to say, this improvement does not mean how many PhD students we have, how many Masters students we have, or how many undergraduate students we have, these are all no use, rather, [we?] should improve the whole content and methods [内容, 方式] of education, and not to blindly teach people what to do, what is right, rather it should teach people to think [思考], or teach people to truly have the ability to think about problems independently, and not, "I tell you: This is correct; I tell you: I am good, others are bad",

⁸⁸ I say 'one' catalyst because I do not rule out that other such catalysts exist; it could, for example, be argued that the growth of public moral debate via micro-blogging is another one. Whether or not this is the case is a question for future studies.

⁸⁹ Wang, "The Post-Communist Personality: The Spectre of China's Capitalist Market Reforms." p.8

not this kind [of education]. So why does our citizens' character/
suzhi [公民素质] never improve, [it's] because from when we were
 young we have received this kind of education, then we basically
 don't care about how other people are living, we just care about
 the interests in front of our own eyes [自己眼前的利益]. So this
 needs to change.⁹⁰

However, such a change may prove jarring in a polity with a long tradition of
 'rectifying names', in which the state assumes primary agentic responsible for
 assigning moral categories.⁹¹ As mentioned in the introduction, Shue argues that it
 was the provision of an alternative moral discourse that got Falun Gong into trouble
 in the late 1990s.⁹²

How the Party-state will negotiate this tension between maintaining its control
 whilst allowing citizens enough room to exercise their sense of individual agency is a
 further question raised by this study, and one that will require more future research
 in order to answer.

⁹⁰ SIVC01c21

⁹¹ Without wishing to essentialise, it should be noted that this tradition preceded the communist takeover of China. For example, Jonathan Fenby writes of Chiang Kai-shek's self-image,

In Chiang's ideal world, China would have been the traditional family on which the country's society was based. The 480 million children would look up unquestioningly to their father figure, following his dictates and showing endless fortitude as they eliminated the noxious influence of the wayward Communist son and repaired the damage done by the aggressive Japanese neighbour. The paterfamilias did not need to be liked, but he had to be respected as the embodiment of national salvation. [...] The national family needed to be told what to do rather than having a voice in its own affairs.

Jonathan Fenby, *Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the China He Lost* (London: Free Press, 2003). pp.225-226.

⁹² Shue, "Legitimacy Crisis in China?". p.48

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This thesis has investigated how Chinese Protestant Christians engage with politics, a crucial question for understanding today's China. As a small but growing religious minority, China's Protestants are interesting in and of themselves, and merit study. However, perhaps more significantly, studying Protestantism in China is important for what it tells us about the trends changing wider Chinese society.

From my findings there is little evidence to suggest that Protestant churches in China will form a social movement that will rise up and challenge the Party-state. However, Protestantism amongst young urbanites reflects, and in some cases catalyses, underlying social transformations occurring in Chinese society, and these changes have worrying implications for Party-state legitimacy. Key among these shifts is the emergence of a constituency of critical individuals who hold alternative national narratives to those of the Party-state; who do not judge the Party-state primarily on its performance in delivering everyday political goods, but on its level of democracy, freedom and morality; and who have a sense of individualistic moral agency.

In this conclusion, I briefly flesh out these key findings and examine how they speak to the existing literature, before exploring their wider implications for Party-state legitimacy. I then outline the further questions that this research raises, and highlight potentially fruitful avenues for future study.

1. Synopsis of findings

In this thesis, I used data from 100 in-depth qualitative interviews of young urbanites to analyse three areas of political engagement. I did this by comparing the responses of 50 Christian respondents with those of 50 respondents of other or no religious affiliation.

I firstly investigated Christians' national narratives (Chapters 2 and 3), arguing that believers' views diverge further from the national narrative of the Party-state than do those of their demographic peers. Christians and non-Christians had similar ideas about the meaning of China, and what it means to be Chinese, and Christians saw no contradiction between their national and religious identities. However, Christians held more negative views of the Party-state, were less concerned with economic issues, and were more forbearing on international and territorial issues. They shared the Party-state's concern for morality but tended to discuss it in terms other than the official discourse of *suzhi*; they saw the Party-state as complicit in China's moral problems, and argued that the solution to China's moral problems was to preach the gospel and spread Christianity.

I then argued, on the basis of the data collected, that rather than Christian faith causing individuals to develop critical national narratives, it is primarily the case that those individuals who are already developing these critical narratives are also those who are attracted to Christianity. The growth of Protestantism among young urbanites could therefore be seen as a symptom of the growth in numbers of critical individuals who are moderately disaffected with the Party-state.

Secondly, I unpacked Christians' political views in order to examine them in greater depth (Chapters 4 and 5). My key finding in these chapters was that Christians generally had lower levels of diffuse support for China's political regime. Unlike those of their demographic peers, believers' levels of diffuse support were unconnected to their perceptions of everyday political issues. Similarly, lower proportions of Christians voiced personal economic goals, and even those who did were less likely than their demographic peers to let these priorities inform their political views.

Thirdly, I examined how Christians act socially and politically. I argued that Christians have an enhanced sense of agency relative to their demographic peers. This sense of agency develops before conversion as an individual comes to acquire a critical national narrative, but is enhanced after conversion by Christian community and teaching. Individuals gain a sense of spiritual efficacy – a desire for the moral and spiritual renewal of China – that they put into practice through transformative activism. This transformative activism is in turn channelled in certain directions by factors in China's cultural, social, historical, and political context. Firstly, Christians' social lives are marked by 'bonding' rather than 'bridging' social capital; that is, their social networks, social activities, and social trust are all largely confined within their church communities. Secondly, Christians are more politically active in some ways – such as online political commentary – but not in others – such as Party membership. Explicit contention is rare, and seen by many believers as a distraction from the main task of bringing spiritual and moral renewal to China via individual and collective spiritual growth and evangelism.

2. Engagement with the literature

My findings support those of Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan,¹ Fenggang Yang,² and Gerda Wielander,³ all of whom generally argue that Protestant conversion is an indication of disaffection with society and politics. Many of my respondents converted out of an explicit or implicit rejection of societal norms, or following a time of amorphous personal malaise and questioning of previously-held beliefs, which often occurred at university. Contrary to Yang, however, the perception that Christianity was 'modern' played no part in my respondents' stated reasons for converting.

My Christian respondents rejected many of the tenets of official Party-state nationalism. Whilst regarding national identity as important, in no way contradictory to faith, and in some cases God-given, they held onto it lightly, sometimes emphasising that God and faith transcend any one nation. As outlined above, they held a critical attitude towards China's Party-state. They also questioned the primacy of economic concerns, and were less hawkish in their attitudes towards China's international and territorial issues. In other words, Christian respondents, and to a lesser extent their demographic peers, exhibited selective national narratives, embracing the parts of official nationalism that they liked and discarding those that they did not. As I argued in Chapter 2, this finding calls into question Ann-Marie Brady's assertion that – in this demographic group at

¹ *Protestantism in Contemporary China*.

² "Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China."

³ *Christian Values in Communist China*.

least – Chinese citizens have swallowed whole the Party-state’s propaganda.⁴ It might also cause us to question how strong the ‘growing tide of popular nationalism’ described by Susan Shirk really is, and how much of Chinese society it really encompasses.⁵

My finding that, for non-Christian respondents, low politics orientations are associated with diffuse regime support is consistent with the results of Jie Chen’s earlier study, which found a similar association.⁶ However, it contradicts the findings of his later study, in which the association disappears when he takes into account high politics orientations.⁷ This may be due to a number of factors. The first is that I only examined the views of one demographic group, whereas Chen’s data covered the whole of Beijing. Whilst all of Chen’s respondents were Beijing residents, half of mine were living in Shenzhen; and even amongst my Beijing sample, a majority of respondents were originally from outside Beijing. It may therefore be the case that there are demographic and regional variations in the ways in which low politics orientations interact with other political opinions.

However, as noted in Chapter 5, it may also be the case that since the time of Jie Chen’s study in the late 1990s, the CCP have been successful in their attempt to credit China’s economic performance and its rising living standards to the regime itself, rather than merely the incumbent authorities. The establishment of

⁴ *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China, Asia/Pacific/perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), p.193.

⁵ *China: Fragile Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.62.

⁶ Chen, Zhong, and Hillard, “The Level and Sources of Popular Support for China’s Current Political Regime.”

⁷ *Popular Political Support in Urban China*.

performance-based legitimacy has enabled the regime to maintain popular support.⁸

However there are risks in pursuing this kind of legitimization strategy; as Holbig and Gilley argue,

[T]he CCP is aware of both the fleeting and the subjective nature of growth-based legitimization. It has to struggle constantly to maintain this source of legitimacy.⁹

I discuss the Party-state's legitimacy challenges further below.

On this topic of political support, my respondents had more favourable views of local government, and less favourable views of central government, the political system and the Party.¹⁰ In contrast, previous studies have argued that Chinese citizens exhibit 'hierarchical trust', trusting central political institutions more than their local equivalents. My findings indicate that this notion of 'hierarchical trust' needs to be interrogated further.

In Chapter 4, I posited several possible reasons for the lack of hierarchical trust amongst my respondents: firstly, the perceived wealth and efficiency of Beijing and Shenzhen's city governments; secondly, Beijing and Shenzhen's administrative (and for Beijing, physical) proximity to the political centre; and finally, the growth of communication and social networking technology. This technology has impeded the ability of central institutions to disavow responsibility for local abuses, and has alerted the public to their systemic nature. It may therefore be that whether or not

⁸ Holbig and Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China."

⁹ Ibid. p.401.

¹⁰ Li, *Hierarchical Government Trust in China*; Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*; Shi, "Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System." p.229, Figure 9.2.

a respondent exhibits hierarchical support depends on his location and level of social media usage, or possibly both. I discuss possible avenues for the further investigation of this question below.

On the issue of Protestants' social and political activity, the results presented here show that whilst some of Putnam and Campbell's findings about the social and political lives of American religious believers make it across the Pacific in one piece, others do not.¹¹ Christian respondents were indeed more socially active in certain ways, namely in terms of possessing larger personal social networks and participating in more religious social activities. However, whereas religious Americans were also more active in secular social activities and charity work, my Chinese Protestant respondents largely confined their extra social engagement to within their church communities. In other words, whereas the social lives of religious Americans were characterised by both 'bridging' and 'bonding' social capital, Chinese Protestants only demonstrated 'bonding' social capital. In terms of political activity, my Christian respondents were more active in online political commentary, but unlike their American equivalents they rarely mobilised politically as Christians. The significant exception here was the congregation of Shouwang Church. Indeed, Carsten Vala's argument that 'Chinese Protestantism may be considered a form of emerging social movement'¹² may be somewhat of an exaggeration.

¹¹ It should be noted that Putnam and Campbell do not claim their arguments apply to China.

¹² Vala, "The Free Spaces of Unregistered Protestantism in Contemporary China: Alternative Values, Skills, and Networks." p.30.

I have demonstrated that the particularistic trust that Ren Liying and Yunxiang Yan argue is prevalent in China also applies to my Protestant respondents.¹³ Rather than enjoying the higher levels of generalised social trust that characterise American religious believers, Christians in my study had high levels of trust in each other but lower general social trust. Part of the reason for this may be that Christianity in China tends to attract those who are disaffected with society, and are therefore less trusting. However, in Chapter 6 I demonstrate the positive regard with which Christians' behaviour is held in the eyes of their demographic peers. I then argue that, contrary to Fukuyama, this shows that the existence of a group can still bring benefits to wider society, even if that group is itself characterised by particularistic trust that does not extend beyond group boundaries. It is therefore helpful to distinguish between a group's radius of trust and its perceived radius of benevolence.

I argued that these differences between my findings and those of Putnam and Campbell reflect cultural, historical, social and political differences regarding the respective positioning of Protestantism in Chinese and American society. In China, a series of contextual factors has obstructed the establishment of 'bridging' capital amongst Protestants, and served to channel their transformative activism into other forms. The main contextual factors I identified were the particularistic nature of social trust, the historically tense relationship between Protestantism and Chinese society, the perceived novelty of Protestantism in China, and political constraints. The latter include restrictions on the size and public nature of Christians' activities, as well as the ban on religious believers from joining the Communist Party.

¹³ Ren, "Surveying Public Opinion in Transitional China: An Examination of Survey Response"; Yan, "The Changing Moral Landscape."

3. Implications for Party-state legitimacy

Amongst educated urbanites, Protestantism draws its converts primarily from among those who are moderately disaffected with China's social and political status quo. This result suggests that when the Party-state or others designate Christianity as primarily a cause of 'westernisation' or of liberal democratic attitudes, they are misunderstanding the direction of causality.

Some individuals choose to become Christians out of an explicit rejection of societal and/or political norms; others feel a more amorphous sense of discontent, and experience a time of questioning previously-held beliefs. Christianity offers these people a framework through which they can make sense of this malaise. It provides a community of trusted relationships; a normative guide to action for spiritual and moral renewal on both the personal and societal levels; and the opportunity to act on one's developing sense of agency by engaging in transformative activism to bring about such moral and spiritual renewal. Given the constraints emanating from China's social, historical, and political context, this sense of agency is channelled primarily into church activities and responsibilities, evangelism, and online political commentary, and away from engagement with secular society and, with certain exceptions, explicit collective contention.

As such, Protestantism's first challenge to Party-state legitimacy is in what it represents: a symptom of an underlying sense of social and political malaise. This includes a feeling of scepticism towards the primacy of economic enrichment and

national assertiveness, as well as towards the Party-state's attempt to legitimise its authoritarian rule based upon these values.

Protestantism's second challenge to Party-state legitimacy is in its catalysis of the emergence of a critical sense of morally agentic individualism that anchors its worldview in a discourse outside the control of the Party-state. This worldview transcends national identity and Chinese exceptionalism, whilst simultaneously placing upon its adherents the responsibility for renewing China spiritually and morally - a role that the Party-state has traditionally bestowed upon itself as modern Chinese history's primary moral agent. It is important to note that neither of the above constitutes conscious attempts on the part of Christians or churches to undermine Party-state legitimacy. The first is a cause of Christian belief; the political implications of the second are largely an unintended consequence.

The emergence of such malaise, and of a sense of morally agentic individualism, suggests that the Party-state's legitimisation strategy has not yet satisfied this demographic group. We do not know the proportions of young urbanites who feel the same way as the disaffected in my study – and it is also clear from my study that a proportion of young urbanites *are* relatively satisfied with China's current social and political arrangements. However, it must surely be a concern that such disaffection exists in one of the wealthiest, best educated groups in society, who are in many ways the 'winners' of China's current social, political and economic arrangements.

Protestantism attracts those moderately disaffected with China's current political arrangements, not necessarily because they are dissatisfied with its performance on bread-and-butter issues - though some are - but rather because of deeper concerns about its autocratic nature and suppression of rights. One respondent encapsulated this view in the following way:

A lot of people, they will think that, for example, China's rapidly developing economy could be a point of pride. But I don't think this. Because behind this rapid development, there is actually a really high price that needs to be paid [在这个快速发展的背后其实有很多很多的是要付出代价的]. It's just like - do you know about that train accident [列车事故]? Last year's Wenzhou [train crash]? Yes. It was extremely rapid, then after the incident had happened, they wouldn't think about how to resolve the question of how to serve people. They only thought about how to resolve this problem, then they wanted cover up the true situation [这事实的真相], and did not want to let more people know [about it]. So I'm not very... If you just ask me whom do I trust the least, then it's the Chinese government.¹⁴

These respondents are concerned with democracy, and not just in the Party-state's preferred terms of consultation and substantive policy delivery, but in its procedural, liberal form. They are concerned with morality; but relative to their demographic peers they tend to avoid employing the Party-state's *suzhi* discourse, and some

¹⁴ SIVC06c1

blamed the Party-state for China's perceived moral crisis. The main solution to this problem, in their opinion, is a spiritual and moral renewal of society for which they as Christians, and not the Party-state, are primarily responsible for bringing about.

The Communist Party has proven its adaptability in the face of past legitimacy problems, and continues to modify its ruling practices and discourses in order to maintain its right to rule. Holbig and Gilley outline how the Party has shifted its focus in recent years: whilst still maintaining an emphasis on economic performance and nationalism, it has also attempted to diversify its sources of legitimacy through ideological reform, greater emphasis on culturalism, and democracy and governance.¹⁵ In addition, since Xi Jinping's assumption of office, he has emphasised the concept of 'The China Dream', and launched an anti-corruption drive.¹⁶

The effectiveness of these measures in improving Party-state legitimacy is not an issue on which this study has enough data to draw any firm conclusions; indeed, Xi Jinping assumed office shortly after I had completed my fieldwork. It is nonetheless worth discussing the extent to which these measures address respondents' concerns about morality and democracy. However, it should be noted that the following discussion is tentative. As I explain in my section below on potential future research, further investigation into this question will be necessary.

¹⁵ Holbig and Gilley, "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China."

¹⁶ Zheng Wang, "The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 19, no. 1 (December 13, 2013): 1–13, doi:10.1007/s11366-013-9272-0; Joseph Fewsmith, "Xi Jinping's Fast Start," *China Leadership Monitor*, 2013.

On the issue of democratisation, Holbig and Gilley claim that the Party has been 'walking the tightrope of democracy and governance', attempting to cleanse and institutionalise governance structures, and broaden participation and consultation whilst maintaining its hold on power.¹⁷ Steve Tsang has argued that China's political system is moving towards 'consultative Leninism', characterised by greater Party-state sensitivity towards public opinion.¹⁸ James Reilly has argued that the Party-state has become more responsive to expressions of popular opinion, albeit in a selective and controlled manner.¹⁹ Indeed, several of my respondents shared this perception, and saw it in a positive light.²⁰ However, my respondents, whilst commenting positively on responsive governance, especially at the local level (Table 33), tended to define democracy primarily in procedural terms (see Chapter 4). It remains to be seen to what extent the Party-state's own vision and pace of democratisation is satisfying this constituency; as yet, my Protestant respondents' preference for more democratisation and their negative views of China's political arrangements seems to indicate that dissatisfaction was still present at the time I carried out my fieldwork (mid-2011 to late-2012). Furthermore, Zhu Yuchao argues that in implementing increasingly responsive governance, the Party-state may inadvertently raise citizens' demands and expectations further in a kind of ratchet effect.²¹ Indeed, this is the 'uncomfortable in-between world' I described in Chapter 3, in which new demands have been created but not met.

¹⁷ "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China." p.411.

¹⁸ "Consultative Leninism: China's New Political Framework," *Journal of Contemporary China* 18, no. 62 (November 2009): 865–80, doi:10.1080/10670560903174705.

¹⁹ Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China's Japan Policy*.

²⁰ IVN03, IVC01121, IVC0112111, IVC0112131, IVN091, IVN0921, IVN103, SIVC01b11, SIVC01c, SIVC01c1, SIVN02a1, SIVN09a

²¹ "'Performance Legitimacy' and China's Political Adaptation Strategy," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16, no. 2 (February 09, 2011): 123–40, doi:10.1007/s11366-011-9140-8.

In sum, then, my respondents certainly welcome more responsive governance. However, it is uncertain as to whether or not the CCP will be able to keep pace with their demands; and it may be that enhanced responsiveness will raise those demands further.

On the issue of morality, there exist some key questions about the extent to which the Party-state's move towards culturalism and the promotion of 'traditional Chinese values' will aid the Party-state's legitimacy. The first concerns the nature of 'traditional Chinese values' and the question of who gets to define them. Holbig and Gilley argue that the CCP has seized upon and essentialised the aspects of Confucianism and 'traditional Chinese values' that are most suited to the task of justifying its authoritarian rule.²² Educated Chinese citizens with an awareness of the Confucian classics may see through such an instrumental appropriation of China's history. Indeed, given the CCP's perceived complicity in the Cultural Revolution in the not-so-distant past,²³ such a move may be regarded with some cynicism. In the recent past, other groups with their own readings of 'traditional Chinese values', from liberal Confucians to Falun Gong, have arisen to contest the Party-state's interpretations.²⁴

The second question, raised by Yan Yunxiang, is whether traditional Chinese values are suitable for instilling a societal system of morality, or whether they would risk re-creating what Yan sees as a pre-modern system of particularistic ethics, with low

²² "Reclaiming Legitimacy in China."

²³ E.g. IVC04b2, IVN092, SIVC01b112, SIVC01c21

²⁴ Ibid.

levels of trust in, or compassion towards, strangers.²⁵ Thirdly, as outlined in Chapter 2, unless the Party-state can be seen to be acting in a clean, ethically upright way, any attempts to promote morality amongst its citizenry will be met with cynicism.²⁶ It is too early to gauge the extent to which Xi's anti-corruption campaign has been effective in this regard. Fourthly, will the manner in which these values are taught engender a sense of moral agency amongst the Chinese citizenry, one that equips and empowers people to make their own moral decisions? Or will it follow the Party-state-as-moral-tutor and citizen-as-student model of previous campaigns? The growth of a sense of moral agency amongst young Chinese urbanites, of which Protestantism is a catalyst, implies that the first kind of teaching stands a better chance of resonating amongst this group than does the second.

In short, the promotion of traditional Chinese values risks essentialising a complex tradition, instilling particularistic ethics, and creating cynicism; on the other hand, it could provide another source of moral agency in Chinese society, thereby stemming China's perceived moral crisis and reducing social, and maybe even political, disaffection.

The Chinese Communist Party and the state it dominates have proven resilient,²⁷ or at least managed to survive,²⁸ through decades of tumultuous social and economic change. Similarly, at the moment, the Party-state enjoys a high level of support

²⁵ Yan, "The Changing Moral Landscape."

²⁶ Ibid. p.70.

²⁷ Andrew J Nathan, "Authoritarian Resilience," *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 1 (2003).

²⁸ Minxin Pei, "Is CCP Rule Fragile or Resilient?," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 1 (2012): 27–41, doi:10.1353/jod.2012.0008.

among the Chinese population at large.²⁹ The young, educated urban respondents in my study represent only a small minority of the entire population, and not all of them could be considered disaffected. As yet, then, the legitimacy challenges outlined above remain relatively contained. Future research will be needed to gauge whether or not this group of moderate disaffectees is growing, shrinking, or remaining constant as a proportion of China's population. Similarly, it is unclear as to whether there is a life-cycle effect or a generational effect involved. In other words, will these young disaffectees become less politically contrarian as they grow older, or do members of this birth cohort (1972 to 1992) exhibit stable patterns of political opinion throughout their lives? I will discuss this further below.

4. Potential further research

My study has addressed a number of interesting and important issues regarding Chinese politics and society, but has also raised a new set of as-yet unanswered questions. I now examine potential future research projects into these questions: firstly, a follow-up study to examine how my respondents' opinions have changed over time; secondly, an examination of the selective consumption of official nationalism; thirdly, a study of the relationship between foreign interaction and political and social opinion; fourthly, a broader examination of group membership and political engagement in China; fifthly, further investigation into the nature of hierarchical trust in China; and finally, an analysis of the role of generation or birth cohort in Chinese politics.

²⁹ Shi, "Democratic Values Supporting an Authoritarian System."

The first question is whether my respondents, interviewed between 2011 and 2012, have changed their opinions over the intervening period of 2013 to 2014. A follow up study of the 100 respondents would be valuable in this regard. Have levels of disaffection risen or fallen, and why? Have those who have become disaffected become Christians? Or have those who are Christians become more disaffected? Which areas of Xi Jinping's policies and 'China Dream' discourse have resonated, and which have not? Have Christians become more or less politically active? And what has become of the Shouwang Church members I interviewed – have they kept worshipping outside and getting arrested, continued to meet in different locations as Shouwang, or joined other churches?³⁰ In addition, I could be more explicit in asking respondents which criteria they use to make political judgements. This would enable me to confirm, or indeed falsify, my findings on the way in which the relationship between low politics and political support differs between Christians and their demographic peers. Such a study would help shore up the conclusions of this study, and suggest answers to some of the more difficult causal questions.

Secondly, my study demonstrates the way in which citizens selectively consume official nationalism. Future studies will need to ask: Which parts of official nationalism do people embrace, and why? Which parts do people reject, and why? Do different demographics embrace and reject different parts of the national narrative? Fortunately, recent studies have begun to engage with this issue,³¹ but

³⁰ It might also be worth talking to some of the officials responsible in SARA or the public security apparatus about how they have handled this case, and whether their methods have changed over time.

³¹ Elina Sinkkonen, "Nationalism, Patriotism and Foreign Policy Attitudes among Chinese University Students," *The China Quarterly* 216 (2013): pp.1045–1063, doi:10.1017/S0305741013001094; Robert Hoffmann and Jeremy Larner, "The Demography of Chinese Nationalism: A Field-Experimental Approach," *The China Quarterly* 213 (2013): pp.189–204, doi:10.1017/S0305741013000271.

there remain a great many unanswered questions. Additionally, at the more theoretical level, further work is needed to refine the working concept of 'national narrative' that I presented in the introduction to my thesis, in order to ensure its conceptual clarity and its utility in future research.

Thirdly, and relatedly, a study of the relationship between foreign interaction and political and social opinion would be valuable. As argued in Chapter 3, my respondents' interactions with other countries and peoples were associated with a mix of political opinions. Some were indeed impressed by the freedom and lack of corruption in America, and contrasted this favourably with the situation in China; others felt personally offended when people in other countries criticised China; one respondent compared China's development favourably with that of the former-USSR, and had negative attitudes towards democratisation in China. It may have been the case that respondents approached these encounters with foreign cultures with pre-existing views, so it is difficult to say that encounter X caused opinion Y.

A key task of future research will be to unpick the ways in which young Chinese interact with the outside world and the ways in which these shape (or do not shape) their own worldviews. There is a good deal of scholarship on Chinese immigrant and tourist experiences, but most of it examines these experiences in terms of acculturation or individual psychological effects;³² there is little mention of effects

³² For example: Ah Keng Kau and Pei Shan Lim, "Clustering of Chinese Tourists to Singapore: An Analysis of Their Motivations, Values and Satisfaction," *International Journal of Tourism Research* 7, no. 4–5 (2005): 231–48, doi:10.1002/jtr.537; Shuguang Wang and Lucia Lo, "Chinese Immigrants in Canada: Their Changing Composition and Economic Performance1," *International Migration* 43, no. 3 (2005): 35–71, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2435.2005.00325.x; Qing Gu, Michele Schweisfurth, and Christopher Day, "Learning and Growing in a 'foreign'

on political views. Grasping the ways in which foreign interaction affects, and is affected, by political views is vital as increasing numbers of Chinese people gain opportunities to interact meaningfully with the outside world. Research in this area will help us to understand not just China, but the globalisation process in general.

A valuable approach for future studies to take might be a before-during-and-after ethnographic study of young Chinese travelling abroad for the first time. What preconceptions do they have about their destination country? How, if at all, do these change when they travel and interact with the local culture(s)? And how, if at all, are their views on China, its society and its politics, affected by this?

An interesting addition to this question relates to the sources from where young, urban Protestants obtain their religious teaching. Do their ideas and methods, for example, of biblical interpretation, have a long indigenous lineage in Chinese Christian teaching? Or are they primarily derived from foreign sources? If the latter is the case, from which foreign sources do they derive? My respondents reported contact with Christians or Christian teaching from America,³³ Canada,³⁴ the UK,³⁵ Ireland,³⁶ Hong Kong,³⁷ Taiwan,³⁸ Singapore,³⁹ South Korea,⁴⁰ Indonesia,⁴¹ the

Context: Intercultural Experiences of International Students," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 40, no. 1 (2010): 7–23, doi:10.1080/03057920903115983.

³³ IVC02, IVC03, IVC031, IVC04, IVC041, IVC01111, IVC04b, SIVC01b3, SIVC01b1, SIVC01b11, SIVC01c2, SIVC01c21, SIVC09d1, IVC011221

³⁴ SIVC01b111

³⁵ IVC011211, IVC0112132, SIVC01b, SIVC01c1, SIVC01c2, SIVC06c, SIVC07b

³⁶ SIVC06c1

³⁷ SIVC01b, SIVC01b111, SIVC06c1, SIVC07c1, SIVC01b2

³⁸ IVC011213

³⁹ SIVC01b1121

⁴⁰ SIVC01b11, SIVC01b, IVC011221, IVC0112111, SIVC01b1121, SIVC01c, SIVC01c1, SIVC01c2, SIVC07b1

⁴¹ IVC04b3, IVC05, IVC01121, SIVC01b1121, SIVC07b1

Philippines,⁴² as well as overseas Chinese sources.⁴³ Indeed, another area in which the Party-state misunderstands Protestantism is in the fact that much missionary activity in China, or directed towards Chinese people, does not originate from ‘U.S.-led Western countries’⁴⁴ but rather from Protestants from other Asian societies and the overseas Chinese diaspora. Future studies should aim both to trace the sources and content of Christian teaching, and also gauge its reception: How do believers engage with it? Which parts do they embrace and which do they reject? And how does this process affect - or how is it affected by - their political views?

Fourthly, this thesis compared the political engagement of Protestants and non-Protestants. However, in future research, a broader comparative study of the ways in which members of different groups in Chinese society engage with politics - and whether or not there are common features across all groups - will be valuable. Are there other groups in society that attract political disaffectees? Are there groups that specifically attract non-disaffectees (as I found was the case for the Communist Party)? What kinds of groups best engender social trust - particularistic or generalised - amongst their members? And do such groups support the contention made in this thesis that a group with particularistic social trust can still benefit its non-members? Do other groups provide their members with a sense of agency? And if so, what channels exist for group members to realise this sense of agency in different kinds of activism?

⁴² SIVC07c1

⁴³ SIVC06b, IVC04b3, IVC05, SIVC01b113

⁴⁴ Document of the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Zhong Ban Fa No. 18, “Notice on “Suggestions for Doing a Good Job of Resisting Foreign Use of Religion to Infiltrate Institutes of Higher Education and Preventing Campus Evangelism.””

Fifthly, as mentioned above, the absence of hierarchical trust amongst my respondents indicates that this notion needs to be further examined. In particular, future research needs to investigate in which contexts and amongst which demographics such hierarchical trust arises. Further research should test the hypotheses that I have outlined in Chapter 4, namely that local government performance, proximity to the political centre, online social network use, and certain demographic factors are associated with decreased hierarchical trust. Such research will provide insight into the extent to which central Party-state actors are able to dismiss local abuses as the work of a few 'bad apples', rather than products of China's systemic arrangements.

Finally, my thesis has raised issues of generational identity. Respondents would employ generational terms such as 'Angry Youth' (愤青),⁴⁵ 'Second Generation Rich' (富二代), 'Second Generation Officials' (官二代),⁴⁶ 'post-1970s generation' (70 后), 'post-1980s generation' (80 后), and 'post-1990s generation' (90 后).⁴⁷ An investigation into the birth and usage of these terms will yield useful insights into the political opinions of young Chinese.

Perhaps more importantly, future research should aim to analyse the role of generation, as opposed to life-cycle effects, on political opinion. That is, do China's young people hold certain opinions because they are young, opinions that will change as they get older? Or do Chinese born at a particular time embrace certain

⁴⁵ SIVC01b, SIVC01b1, SIVC01c2, SIVN04, SIVN09a1

⁴⁶ IVC0112132, IVC0112133, SIVC06b, SIVC06c1

⁴⁷ IVN01, SIVC01b, SIVC06b1, SIVN09a, SIVC01c

opinions that remain with them throughout life? If generational effects are found to exist, it raises a further question: do political beliefs move from 'materialist' to 'post-materialist' as formative affluence increases?⁴⁸ The findings I report in Chapter 3 lay this open to question, at least with regard to my own respondents. Alternatively, do generations go through cyclical patterns, as William Strauss and Neil Howe argue with regard to the USA?⁴⁹ Lastly, is the popular conceptualisation of 'post-1970s', 'post-1980s', and 'post-1990s' as distinct groups marked by distinct political and social values valid? Or might we be better off demarcating generations in a different way – for example, a post-Cultural Revolution generation born after 1976, or a post-One Child Policy generation born after 1979? Some initial studies have already been carried out,⁵⁰ but large-*n* panel data will be needed if we are to answer these questions in a truly satisfying way.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis has, within the methodological limitations outlined in my introduction, provided a detailed picture of how Protestant Christians engage with politics, and of what this tells us about political engagement in wider Chinese society. Among young urban professionals, Protestantism is symptomatic of the existence of an emerging constituency of critical, moderately disaffected individuals who base their evaluations of the CCP-led political regime on considerations other than their

⁴⁸ Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*.

⁴⁹ Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (HarperCollins, 1992).

⁵⁰ Vanessa L. Fong, *Only Hope: Coming of Age Under China's One-Child Policy*, Studies in Social Inequality Series (Stanford University Press, 2004); Lisa Cameron et al., "Little Emperors: Behavioral Impacts of China's One-Child Policy," *Science* 339, no. 6122 (February 22, 2013): 953–57, doi:10.1126/science.1230221; Hongping Lian, "The Post-1980s Generation in China: Exploring Its Theoretical Underpinning," *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2014, 1–17, doi:10.1080/13676261.2013.878786.

delivery of economic growth and everyday political goods. To these individuals, Protestantism gives an enhanced sense of moral agency and provides a guide for its outworking in transformative activism. In turn, this transformative activism is itself shaped by factors in China's cultural, historical, social, and political contexts.

Quoting Jesus, somewhat fittingly for this study, Inglehart argues that, "Man does not live by bread alone," particularly when he has plenty of bread.⁵¹ To date, the Party-state has adapted itself to the rise of the materialist individual with a large degree of success. However, it is adapting to the emergence of these more critical individuals, who possess a sense of their own agency and a desire to act on it, that will constitute a major test of Communist Party legitimacy in the next few decades. Whilst not as acute as an economic crisis, terrorist act, or external threat, the challenge this presents is subtle, complex and long-term, and will require a skilful and nuanced response on the part of the Party and the state it leads.

⁵¹ Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. p.43.

Appendix 1: Charts

Chart 2: Shenzhen RDS sample trees



Key

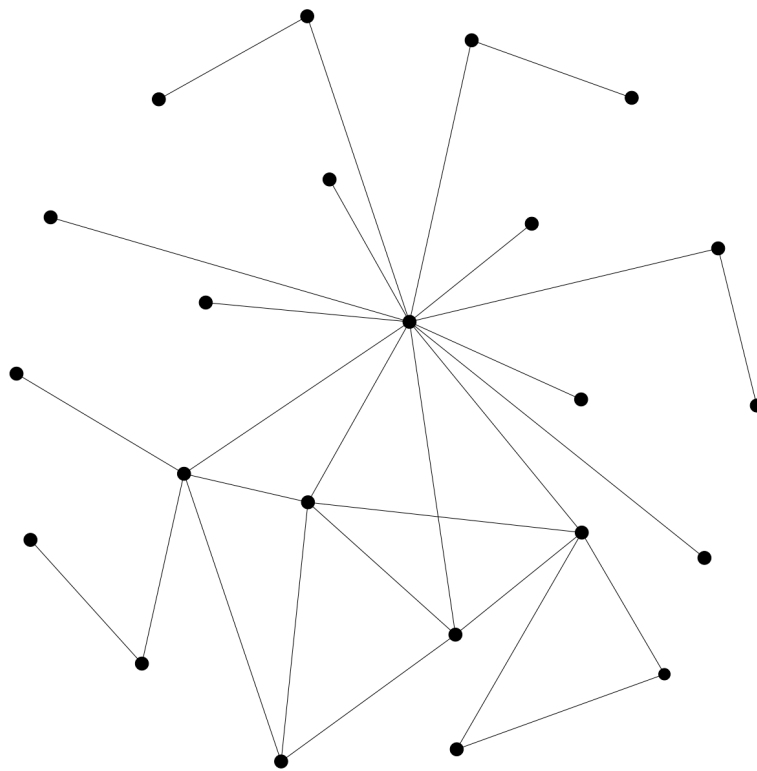
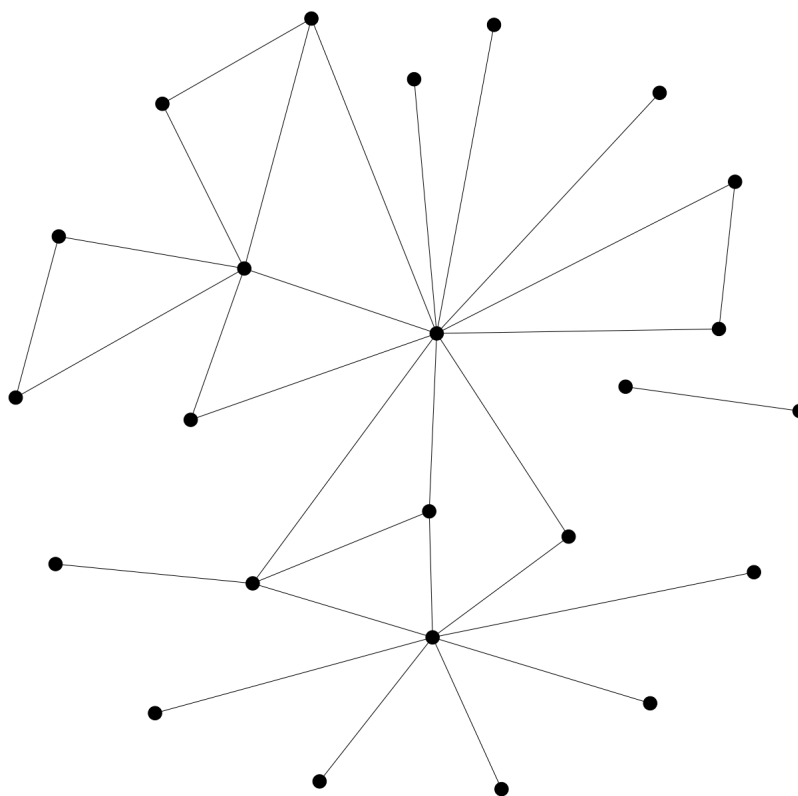
Christian interviewed

Christian not interviewed (ineligible or refused)

Comparison interviewed

Comparison not interviewed (ineligible or refused)

Ineligible seed (provided contacts but ineligible themselves)

Chart 3: Protestant Churches in Beijing**Chart 4: Protestant Churches in Shenzhen**

Appendix 2: Data tables

NB:

- Each table excludes respondents who were not asked the question; unless otherwise stated, those who were asked, but did not answer are included.
- Original questions are given when different from the table title.

Table 1: Recruitment Channels of Christian respondents by other Christian respondents**Question:** What relationship do you have with the person who introduced you to me?

	Total Christians	
	Number	%
Same church (past or present)	26	70%
Former classmates (middle school or university)	4	11%
Work colleagues	3	8%
Non-church based Christian activity	3	8%
Husband or wife	1	3%
Total n	37	

Table 2: What does 'China' mean to you?**Question:** In your opinion, what meaning / significance does 'China' have?

Issue raised	Total	Total Comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ Comparison	SZ Christian	BJ Comparison	BJ Christian
Birthed and nourished me / grew up here / birthplace / living place	33%	28%	38%	33%	33%	20%	46%	36%	29%
Motherland / homeland/mother	30%	30%	30%	33%	27%	32%	35%	28%	25%
Identity / belonging / mark / where I'm from	22%	24%	20%	20%	24%	20%	19%	28%	21%
Despite problems / whether good or bad need to love	22%	22%	22%	22%	22%	24%	19%	20%	25%
Love country / patriotic /like country	19%	16%	22%	22%	16%	8%	35%	24%	8%
Home / hometown	18%	24%	12%	18%	18%	24%	12%	24%	13%
Culture/ tradition / philosophy (positive or neutral)	15%	22%	8%	18%	12%	24%	12%	20%	4%
Proud / happy to be Chinese	13%	20%	6%	14%	12%	24%	4%	16%	8%
Hope it can be better	12%	2%	22%	12%	12%	0%	23%	4%	21%
Geography / borders / land /a place /scenery	12%	16%	8%	10%	14%	20%	0%	12%	17%
Don't like Party or govt / Party and govt separable from China / politics negative	11%	6%	16%	10%	12%	4%	15%	8%	17%
<i>n</i>	100	50	50	51	49	25	26	25	24

Table 3: What does it mean to be Chinese?

Issue raised	Total	Total Comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ Comparison	SZ Christian	BJ Comparison	BJ Christian
Identity / belonging	24%	22%	26%	20%	28%	12%	27%	32%	24%
Culture/ tradition / philosophy (positive or neutral)	23%	24%	21%	16%	30%	12%	19%	36%	24%
Nothing special / no difference with people from other countries	19%	22%	15%	25%	11%	40%	12%	4%	19%
Proud	18%	24%	11%	16%	20%	24%	8%	24%	14%
Responsibility towards China / want to change China	14%	0%	30%	12%	17%	0%	23%	0%	38%
God put me here / calling / plan for China	12%	4%	21%	10%	15%	4%	15%	4%	29%
History	12%	18%	6%	6%	20%	8%	4%	28%	10%
Don't know / don't think about it too much	11%	12%	11%	12%	11%	16%	8%	8%	14%
Spread the gospel / (Christian) mission / Christianity	10%	0%	21%	10%	11%	0%	19%	0%	24%
Geography / borders / land	10%	6%	15%	8%	13%	0%	15%	12%	14%
n	97	50	47	51	46	25	26	25	21

Table 4: Should China's political system be changed?

Question:

With whose opinion do you agree more: Mr Fang says China's current political system is very good and should not be changed. Mr Sun says that the political system is not ideal and should be changed, but now it's too early [to change it]. Mr Yin says that the political system is not good and should be changed.

	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Change (Yin)	24%	63%	35%	51%	16%	54%	32%	75%
Not Yet (Sun)	50%	35%	49%	36%	56%	42%	44%	25%
Do not change (Fang)	2%	0%	2%	0%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Other	22%	0%	12%	11%	24%	0%	20%	0%
No answer	2%	2%	2%	2%	0%	4%	4%	0%
n	50	46	51	45	25	26	25	20

Table 5: What aspects of China make you feel proud?

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Chinese people's characteristics (inc view of family)	56%	56%	55%	67%	43%	60%	73%	52%	33%
History	41%	54%	28%	41%	41%	52%	31%	56%	24%
Culture / Tradition	36%	34%	38%	41%	30%	36%	46%	32%	29%
Economic development	30%	36%	23%	31%	28%	36%	27%	36%	19%
Mentioned problems / disappointments	30%	28%	32%	29%	30%	24%	35%	32%	29%
n	97	50	47	51	46	25	26	25	21

Table 6: What aspects of China make you feel ashamed?

* indicates condensed category

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Behaviour / suzhi / morality (M)*	65%	54%	76%	61%	69%	48%	73%	60%	80%
Chinese people negative behaviour (M3)	58%	46%	72%	57%	60%	48%	65%	44%	80%
Corruption	34%	32%	37%	35%	33%	28%	42%	36%	30%
Politics (general)	28%	12%	46%	33%	22%	12%	54%	12%	35%
Morality / values (M2)	24%	18%	30%	25%	22%	16%	35%	20%	25%
Politics - Media / info freedom	22%	20%	24%	25%	18%	28%	23%	12%	25%
Suzhi / civilisation (M1)	22%	28%	15%	18%	27%	24%	12%	32%	20%
n	96	50	46	51	45	25	26	25	20

Table 7: Responses to the statement: 'To love the country is to love the Party.'

Question:

With whose opinion do you agree more: Miss Yang says that to love the country is to love the Party. Miss Hao says that you can love the country, but it does not mean you have to love the Party.

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
No (Hao)	83%	76%	91%	78%	89%	72%	84%	79%	100%
Yes (Yang)	7%	10%	4%	10%	5%	12%	8%	8%	0%
Other	5%	8%	2%	6%	5%	8%	4%	8%	0%
No answer	4%	6%	2%	6%	2%	8%	4%	4%	0%
n	94	49	45	50	44	25	25	24	20

Table 8: Do you have an ideal or goal for 20 years' time? (Condensed categories)

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Career advancement	61%	62%	59%	53%	69%	48%	58%	76%	61%
Family (find spouse, raise children, etc.)	49%	58%	41%	53%	46%	56%	50%	60%	30%
Go abroad (study, travel, live)	35%	40%	31%	33%	38%	32%	35%	48%	26%
Christian spirituality / service	32%	0%	65%	33%	31%	0%	65%	0%	65%
Material possessions (get house, car etc.) / finances (earn more money etc.)	23%	36%	10%	25%	21%	36%	15%	36%	4%
Study	22%	24%	20%	18%	27%	20%	15%	28%	26%
Don't know / not clear	21%	16%	27%	22%	21%	20%	23%	12%	30%
n	99	50	49	51	48	25	26	25	23

Table 9: What do you hope China will be like in 20 years' time? (detailed categories)

+ indicates category did not rank highly overall, but is included in table for interests' sake.

(Detailed categories)	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	SZ total	BJ total	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
More democratic / more public participation / less autocratic	34%	24%	44%	27%	41%	12%	42%	36%	46%
Quality of life improves	24%	22%	26%	29%	18%	24%	35%	20%	17%
More freedom /rights (general)	21%	10%	32%	20%	22%	4%	35%	16%	29%
More economic growth /other economic hope	20%	38%	2%	22%	18%	40%	4%	36%	0%
More Christians / revival / more open to gospel	17%	0%	34%	16%	18%	0%	31%	0%	38%
Better social security / welfare /benefits	15%	26%	4%	16%	14%	24%	8%	28%	0%
More equal / Less unequal	15%	24%	6%	12%	18%	12%	12%	36%	0%
Fairer / more just	13%	12%	14%	16%	10%	12%	19%	12%	8%
+Better <i>suzhi</i> / civilisation (sub-category of M1)	10%	14%	6%	12%	8%	12%	12%	16%	0%
+More love and compassion and respect between people (sub-category of M3)	10%	8%	12%	14%	6%	8%	19%	8%	4%
+Christianity influences Chinese society	10%	0%	20%	8%	12%	0%	15%	0%	25%
+Better international position/ influence / respect / stronger	8%	16%	0%	12%	4%	24%	0%	8%	0%
n	100	50	50	51	49	25	26	25	24

Table 10: What do you hope China will be like in 20 years' time? (condensed categories)

(Condensed categories)	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Political system	46%	38%	54%	45%	47%	36%	54%	40%	54%
Economics	41%	58%	24%	45%	37%	60%	31%	56%	17%
Behaviour / suzhi / morality (M)	41%	34%	48%	41%	41%	32%	50%	36%	46%
Political freedoms	36%	22%	50%	29%	43%	12%	46%	32%	54%
Public /social policy	33%	50%	16%	37%	29%	44%	31%	56%	0%
Quality of life	30%	32%	28%	37%	22%	36%	38%	28%	17%
Religion / Christianity	27%	4%	50%	29%	24%	8%	50%	0%	50%
Morality (M2)	22%	16%	28%	22%	22%	20%	23%	12%	33%
Corruption	21%	20%	22%	22%	20%	20%	23%	20%	21%
Inequality	21%	30%	12%	16%	27%	12%	19%	48%	4%
Behaviour/ characteristics (M3)	21%	18%	24%	25%	16%	24%	27%	12%	21%
International affairs	21%	32%	10%	24%	18%	40%	8%	24%	13%
+Suzhi (M1)	12%	16%	8%	14%	10%	12%	15%	20%	0%
n	100	50	50	51	49	25	26	25	24

Table 11: What is your opinion of America?

+ indicates category did not rank highly overall, but is included in table for interests' sake.

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Political freedom – positive	38%	36%	40%	37%	39%	24%	50%	48%	29%
Political system – positive	33%	26%	40%	27%	39%	28%	27%	24%	54%
International behaviour – negative	32%	38%	26%	31%	33%	40%	23%	36%	29%
Social issues positive	26%	28%	24%	31%	20%	28%	35%	28%	13%
Science and technology – positive	22%	28%	16%	24%	20%	20%	27%	36%	4%
Economics – positive	22%	28%	16%	29%	14%	32%	27%	24%	4%
International behaviour negative - Hegemony (sub code)	14%	22%	6%	18%	10%	24%	12%	20%	0%
Christianity – positive	14%	2%	26%	14%	14%	4%	23%	0%	29%
Social issues - negative	13%	6%	20%	14%	12%	4%	23%	8%	17%
+ Homosexuality – negative	9%	0%	18%	8%	10%	0%	15%	0%	21%
+ Christianity – negative (weak / in decline)	8%	0%	16%	6%	10%	0%	12%	0%	21%
+ Guns – negative	7%	6%	8%	8%	6%	4%	12%	8%	4%
n	100	50	50	51	49	25	26	25	24

Table 12: Is the USA China's enemy or China's ally?

Question:

With whose opinion do you agree more: Mr Fu thinks that America is China's enemy, [and that] it is a country that wants to obstruct China's rise. Mr Guo thinks that America is China's ally, [and that] it is an indispensable partner in international economic and political co-operation.

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Ally (Guo)	64%	62%	65%	59%	69%	60%	58%	64%	75%
Both / Neither	33%	38%	28%	37%	29%	40%	35%	36%	20%
Enemy (Fu)	2%	0%	4%	2%	2%	0%	4%	0%	5%
No answer	1%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
n	96	50	46	51	45	25	26	25	20

Table 13: What is your opinion of Japan?

* indicates condensed category

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
History – negative (invaded China etc.)	55%	64%	46%	49%	62%	64%	35%	64%	60%
Japanese people's characteristics – other - positive	52%	54%	50%	53%	51%	52%	54%	56%	45%
Ethnicity – positive (unified, etc.)	25%	20%	30%	20%	31%	8%	31%	32%	30%
I don't blame or hate all Japanese people	24%	16%	33%	24%	24%	20%	27%	12%	40%
Economics – positive	21%	22%	20%	14%	29%	12%	15%	32%	25%
Japanese people's characteristics – other – negative	20%	16%	24%	25%	13%	20%	31%	12%	15%
n	96	50	46	51	45	25	26	25	20

Table 14: Should Japan pay a price for past atrocities against China, or should China forgive Japan?

Question:

With whose opinion do you agree more: Mr Zhu says that they should pay a price for their past atrocities against China. Mr Cai says that these things happened many years ago, now China should forgive Japan.

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ
China should forgive (Cai)	47%	32%	64%	16%	65%	48%	61%	41%	53%
Both/ Neither	32%	42%	20%	48%	23%	36%	17%	35%	28%
Japan should pay (Zhu)	18%	22%	14%	32%	8%	12%	22%	20%	16%
No answer	3%	4%	2%	4%	4%	4%	0%	4%	2%
n	94	50	44	25	26	25	18	51	43

Table 15: What is your opinion on the Taiwan issue?

*Indicates condensed category

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Taiwan is part of China	47%	60%	33%	43%	51%	48%	38%	72%	27%
* Should / will unify (in any way)	45%	42%	48%	39%	51%	36%	42%	48%	55%
Should / will unify (unspecified)	22%	24%	21%	20%	26%	20%	19%	28%	23%
Ethnicity same as mainland Chinese / all one family	21%	18%	25%	18%	26%	12%	23%	24%	27%
History / historical problem	15%	16%	15%	12%	19%	12%	12%	20%	18%
Peaceful resolution (in whatever form) / no war	15%	14%	17%	20%	11%	28%	12%	0%	23%
Cross-straits co-operation – positive	14%	6%	23%	22%	6%	8%	35%	4%	9%
Should / will unify (1 country, 2 systems)	12%	14%	10%	16%	9%	16%	15%	12%	5%
International involvement – negative (US should not interfere, etc.)	10%	16%	4%	6%	15%	8%	4%	24%	5%
Taiwanese don't want to return / I can understand why Taiwanese don't want to return	10%	6%	15%	12%	9%	4%	19%	8%	9%
Should / will unify (democratic China / KMT rule mainland / share power)	10%	4%	17%	4%	17%	0%	8%	8%	27%
Status quo positive	10%	6%	15%	8%	13%	0%	15%	12%	14%
n	98	50	48	51	47	25	26	25	22

Table 16: What is your opinion on the issues of Tibet and Xinjiang?

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Should / will remain part of China / should not split	35%	29%	41%	42%	27%	35%	48%	24%	32%
Tibet / Xinjiang are parts of China	34%	33%	34%	25%	43%	17%	32%	48%	37%
Ethnicity – negative (discriminated against by Han etc.)	24%	17%	32%	17%	32%	4%	28%	28%	37%
Government policy – negative (looting of resources etc.)	18%	10%	27%	10%	27%	4%	16%	16%	42%
Violence - negative	18%	25%	11%	15%	23%	17%	12%	32%	11%
Political control = bad (govt should control less)	15%	13%	18%	6%	25%	4%	8%	20%	32%
TB/XJ do not acknowledge they are part of China = bad	15%	17%	14%	17%	14%	17%	16%	16%	11%
Co-operation should improve	12%	13%	11%	17%	7%	13%	20%	12%	0%
Political control = good (govt needs more control)	10%	15%	5%	8%	11%	13%	4%	16%	5%
n ('no answers' excluded)	92	48	44	48	44	23	25	25	19

Table 17: In your opinion, what is the biggest issue facing China today?

* Indicates condensed category

+ indicates category did not rank highly overall, but is included in table for interests' sake.

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Politics (in general)	30%	26%	33%	24%	36%	16%	31%	36%	36%
Behaviour / <i>suzhi</i> / morality (M)*	30%	18%	42%	27%	32%	12%	42%	24%	41%
Inequality	23%	22%	25%	16%	32%	4%	27%	40%	23%
Chinese people negative behaviour (M3)	21%	18%	25%	18%	26%	12%	23%	24%	27%
Lack of religion / Christianity	17%	2%	33%	18%	17%	4%	31%	0%	36%
Corruption	15%	18%	13%	18%	13%	24%	12%	12%	14%
Morality / values (M2)	15%	4%	27%	20%	11%	4%	35%	4%	18%
Economic issues – other	12%	16%	8%	22%	2%	28%	15%	4%	0%
People's livelihoods	11%	14%	8%	14%	9%	12%	15%	16%	0%
Public /social policy	11%	18%	4%	10%	13%	12%	8%	24%	0%
Economic issues – House prices	10%	12%	8%	12%	9%	12%	12%	12%	5%
+ Suzhi / civilisation (M1)	1%	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	5%
n	98	50	48	51	47	25	26	25	22

Table 18: Parents' occupation

Question (on fieldwork handout):

What job do your father and mother do?

a. Father _____

b. Mother _____

(If your parents have already retired, please write their previous job(s).)

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Farmer	11%	12%	11%	10%	13%	12%	8%	12%	14%
Working class	15%	18%	13%	16%	15%	28%	4%	8%	24%
Lower middle class	30%	26%	34%	31%	28%	24%	38%	28%	29%
Middle class	43%	44%	43%	43%	43%	36%	50%	52%	33%
n	97	50	47	51	46	25	26	25	21

Table 19: When did you become a Christian?

Question: When did you start to believe in Christ?

	Total Christians	SZ Christians	BJ Christians
Before university	14%	23%	4%
At university	58%	54%	63%
After university	16%	15%	17%
Combination of the above	12%	8%	17%
n	50	26	24

Table 20: How did you become a Christian?

* indicates condensed category

	Total Christian	SZ Christian	BJ Christian
*Church / related activities	78%	73%	83%
Church	58%	58%	58%
University	50%	62%	38%
Bible study / small group / campus fellowship / evangelistic meeting (not in normal church service) / Christmas party	46%	58%	33%
Several stages, >1 yr	40%	42%	38%
Classmate / another student	36%	38%	33%
*Trouble (physical / emotional / life)	34%	38%	29%
Search for value / meaning / forgiveness /faith	32%	27%	38%
Family	32%	35%	29%
Other trouble in life / emotional difficulty	30%	35%	25%
* Foreign / international involvement	30%	31%	29%
Bible	26%	31%	21%
Before university / as a child	26%	31%	21%
n	50	26	24

Table 21: Why did you become a Christian? (detailed categories)

Question: Why did you become a Christian? What elements in Christianity attracted you?

(Detailed categories)	Total Christian	SZ Christian	BJ Christian
Experience of God	30%	31%	29%
Church	24%	12%	38%
Influenced by reading Bible	22%	19%	25%
Trouble - general unhappiness	22%	27%	17%
Christians - love for people	20%	19%	21%
Christians – helped people	20%	19%	21%
Christians – different from rest of society	18%	15%	21%
Idea of God's love	18%	12%	25%
Christian moral teaching	16%	23%	8%
Idea of Jesus's forgiveness	16%	15%	17%
Positive life change	14%	12%	17%
Could see God's plan	14%	19%	8%
Christians – trustworthy / honest	14%	12%	17%
Wanted/found comfort / reassurance / peace / emotional healing	12%	8%	17%
Wanted /found truth / meaning / significance	12%	8%	17%
n	50	26	24

Table 22: Why did you become a Christian? (condensed categories)

(Condensed categories)	Total Christian (%)	SZ Christian (%)	BJ Christian
Theological idea (existence of God, God's love, creation, forgiveness, etc.)	48%	46%	50%
Christians' lives / community attractive	44%	46%	42%
Fulfilled want / satisfied need	42%	35%	50%
Experience of God	40%	46%	33%
Trouble in life (lost, unhappy, physically ill, etc.)	30%	38%	21%
Church	28%	15%	42%
Influenced by reading Bible / book / article	28%	27%	29%
Christian moral teaching	16%	23%	8%
Positive life change	14%	12%	17%
Believed in God / Jesus since young	14%	19%	8%
n	50	26	24

Table 23: Have you ever been abroad?

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Yes	48%	50%	46%	61%	35%	56%	65%	44%	25%
No	52%	50%	54%	39%	65%	44%	35%	56%	75%
n	100	50	50	51	49	25	26	25	24

Table 24: Do you know any foreigners here in China?

Question: (Other than me) do you know any foreigners?

(I would sometimes add 'here in China' to stress that those met abroad did not count)

	n	Yes (%)	No (%)
Total	100	91%	9%
Total comparison	50	88%	12%
Total Christian	50	94%	6%
Total SZ	51	92%	8%
Total BJ	49	90%	10%
SZ comparison	25	88%	12%
SZ Christian	26	96%	4%
BJ comparison	25	88%	12%
BJ Christian	24	92%	8%

Table 25: Proportions of respondents having deep or sustained interaction with foreigners*

*Coded from respondents' descriptions of their interaction with foreigners. 'Deep or sustained interaction' was defined as: A period of study or work abroad (during which there was considerable interaction between the respondent and non-Chinese); an exchange programme (during which the respondent stayed with a local host family); marriage; long-term friendships with foreigners based in China (via church, university, work or other). Meeting a foreigner once, having a foreign teacher at high school, having casual acquaintance with foreigners at church or work, or going on a foreign holiday as part of a tour group do not count.

	n	Yes (%)	No (%)
Total	100	39%	61%
Total comparison	50	26%	74%
Total Christian	50	52%	48%
Total SZ	51	43%	57%
Total BJ	49	35%	65%
SZ comparison	25	32%	68%
SZ Christian	26	54%	46%
BJ comparison	25	20%	80%
BJ Christian	24	50%	50%

Table 26: Levels of Respondents' Party Membership

Original question: Are you a Party member?

	Current Party members	Previous Party members	n (excluding those who were not asked or did not answer)	Current Party Members (%)	Previous Party Members (%)
Beijing Christians	1	1	20	5%	5%
Beijing comparison	7	0	25	28%	0%
Shenzhen Christians	3	2	25	12%	8%
Shenzhen comparison	9	2	25	36%	8%
Total Christians	4	3	45	9%	7%
Total comparison	16	2	50	32%	4%
Total	20	5	95	21%	5%

Table 27: When did you join the Party?

All CCP members (inc former CCP members)		
Before university	1	4%
At university	22	88%
After university	2	8%
n	25	

Table 28: Why did you join the Party?

	Only current CCP members
Ideology / belief	20%
Don't know	5%
Prove excellence / an honour	55%
Family reasons	5%
Get job / benefits	50%
Not because of political belief	5%
Have influence / serve / contribute	10%
Everyone else did / social pressure	25%
n	20

Table 29: Comparison of Party members and non-Party members: 12 key issues

Methodology: Answers coded 0 or 1, (1 = issue raised / yes; 0 = issue not raised / no) mean average taken across all answers of relevant group. NB: Because the following tables are aggregates of answers to several questions, the *n* (excluding those respondents I did not ask or did not respond) may differ between questions. Therefore, the *n* in the column headings refers to total members of the relevant group, not the total number of those who asked and responded to each question.

(Excludes those who were not asked or did not respond to Party membership question. * indicates condensed category.)

		Proportion of respondents raising issue / giving answer		
		Current Party members (n=20)	Non-party members (n=75)	Total average (n=95)
Do you have a goal for 20 years' time?	*Material goal (money etc.)	55%	16%	24%
What do you hope China will be like in 20 years' time?	*Economy	50%	40%	42%
	*Morality	35%	20%	23%
	More democratic	20%	36%	33%
What is it about China that makes you proud?	Econ growth	45%	26%	30%
What is it about China that makes you ashamed?	Morality	30%	23%	25%
Should China's political system be changed?	Yes	15%	50%	43%
What is your opinion of the USA?	*International behaviour negative	60%	24%	32%
	Hegemony	30%	11%	15%
Is the USA China's enemy or China's ally?	Ally	55%	66%	63%
Should Japan pay, or should China forgive?	Forgive	30%	51%	47%
What is your opinion of the Taiwan issue?	TW part of China	60%	45%	48%

Table 30: Comparison of Party members and non-Party members: 12 key issues (Disaggregated by religious affiliation)

		Proportion of respondents raising issue / giving answer			
		Comparison Party members (n=16)	Comparison non-Party (n=34)	Christian Party members (n=4)	Christian non-Party (n=41)
Do you have a goal for 20 years' time?	*Material goal (money etc.)	63%	24%	25%	10%
What do you hope China will be like in 20 years' time?	*Economy	56%	59%	25%	24%
	*Morality	31%	9%	50%	29%
	More democratic	13%	29%	50%	41%
What is it about China that makes you proud?	Economic growth	50%	29%	25%	23%
What is it about China that makes you ashamed?	Morality	25%	15%	50%	31%
Should China's political system be changed?	Yes	6%	32%	50%	65%
What is your opinion of the USA?	*International behaviour negative	63%	26%	50%	22%
	Hegemony	31%	18%	25%	5%
Is the USA China's enemy or China's ally?	Ally	50%	68%	75%	64%
Should Japan pay, or should China forgive?	Forgive	19%	38%	75%	63%
What is your opinion of the Taiwan issue?	TW part of China	63%	59%	50%	33%

Table 31: Low politics orientations

Question: In the past 5 years, which of the following situations have got better, and which have got worse?

(Table indicates % of 'Better' answers)

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Living conditions	78%	84%	72%	71%	86%	80%	62%	88%	83%
Status	63%	62%	63%	63%	63%	64%	62%	60%	65%
Law & order	36%	48%	24%	41%	31%	56%	27%	40%	22%
Healthcare	43%	48%	39%	32%	55%	44%	19%	52%	58%
Education	39%	48%	31%	26%	53%	36%	15%	60%	46%
Environment	26%	40%	12%	24%	28%	36%	12%	44%	13%
Old people	33%	38%	29%	32%	35%	40%	23%	36%	35%
Transport	32%	22%	42%	41%	23%	32%	50%	12%	33%
Inequality	3%	2%	4%	6%	0%	4%	8%	0%	0%
Corruption	8%	10%	6%	14%	2%	16%	12%	4%	0%
Legal system	30%	34%	27%	34%	27%	44%	23%	24%	30%
Proportion of respondents giving median or above number (i.e. 4 or more) of 'better' answers	57%	47%	66%	49%	65%	68%	31%	64%	65%

Table 32: Low politics - responsibility

Question: Who is responsible for dealing with the following situations? (NB: respondents could make more than one choice.)

	Government	Individual	Other groups
Living conditions - Comparison	72%	92%	12%
Living conditions - Christian	69%	96%	8%
Status - Comparison	32%	96%	28%
Status - Christian	35%	96%	19%
Law & order - Comparison	96%	32%	40%
Law & order - Christian	100%	35%	38%
Healthcare - Comparison	96%	40%	28%
Healthcare - Christian	92%	35%	38%
Education - Comparison	88%	60%	32%
Education - Christian	96%	50%	50%
Environment - Comparison	96%	88%	84%
Environment- Christian	96%	73%	62%
Elderly - Comparison	96%	84%	52%
Elderly - Christian	88%	77%	38%
Transport - Comparison	96%	60%	48%
Transport - Christian	100%	42%	23%

Inequality - Comparison	88%	44%	28%
Inequality - Christian	92%	38%	27%
Corruption - Comparison	100%	38%	42%
Corruption - Christian	96%	32%	56%
Legal system - Comparison	96%	44%	52%
Legal system - Christian	92%	12%	27%

Table 33: Opinions of local government (detailed categories)

Question: What is your opinion of Beijing/Shenzhen's local / city government?

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Good - Better than governments in other areas	42%	32%	52%	55%	29%	52%	58%	12%	46%
Good – general	25%	24%	26%	33%	16%	32%	35%	16%	17%
Good – efficient / serve people	24%	16%	32%	37%	10%	20%	54%	12%	8%
Problem – lack capability / low effectiveness	16%	12%	20%	10%	22%	8%	12%	16%	29%
Good – reformist / open	13%	12%	14%	25%	0%	24%	27%	0%	0%
Good – rule of law / standardised	12%	6%	18%	20%	4%	12%	27%	0%	8%
Problem – General / bad parts	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	8%	15%	16%	8%
Problem - Corruption	12%	6%	18%	16%	8%	4%	27%	8%	8%
Modifying factor - Immigrant city, diverse / New city	11%	16%	6%	20%	2%	28%	12%	4%	0%
Good – public transport	10%	14%	6%	8%	12%	16%	0%	12%	13%
Problem – transport problems	7%	6%	8%	0%	14%	0%	0%	12%	17%
Good – good structures for handling things	6%	6%	6%	12%	0%	12%	12%	0%	0%
Problem - Hukou issue	6%	6%	6%	0%	12%	0%	0%	12%	13%

Table 34: Opinions of local government (condensed categories)

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Good points	66%	64%	68%	80%	51%	88%	73%	40%	63%
Problems	54%	46%	62%	45%	63%	28%	62%	64%	63%
Don't know /no opinion / no interaction	39%	46%	32%	29%	49%	36%	23%	56%	42%
Neutral points / modifying factor	29%	28%	30%	35%	22%	36%	35%	20%	25%
No answer	1%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Mean average local government compound score*	0.56	0.59	0.53	0.68	0.44	0.80	0.56	0.38	0.50

*** Local government compound score:**

Each respondent was assigned a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a positive comment about local government; they were also designated a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a negative comment about local government. A respondent's 'positive' score was deducted from her 'negative' score. The following function was then performed to produce a 'local government score', a number between 0 and 1:

$$(\text{positive score} - \text{negative score} + 1) \div 2$$

Table 35: Local government efficacy (condensed categories)

Question: In your opinion, to what extent is the city government able to resolve everyday problems?

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Good points - total	55%	59%	50%	64%	44%	68%	60%	50%	35%
Bad points - total	43%	33%	55%	38%	49%	24%	52%	42%	59%
Good overall	42%	49%	33%	54%	27%	64%	44%	33%	18%
Mixture	37%	35%	40%	40%	34%	32%	48%	38%	29%
Bad overall	31%	24%	38%	22%	41%	16%	28%	33%	53%

Table 36: Opinions of central government (detailed categories)

Question: What is your opinion of the current Chinese government?

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Don't know / no opinion	23%	24%	21%	26%	19%	28%	24%	20%	18%
Change - Hope that they will improve / need reform	22%	16%	28%	12%	32%	8%	16%	24%	41%
Good in general / praise	22%	22%	21%	22%	21%	20%	24%	24%	18%
Good – economic success	15%	26%	4%	12%	19%	16%	8%	36%	0%
Problem - Bad in general / dissatisfied / problems	15%	16%	15%	12%	19%	20%	4%	12%	27%
Good – Hard-working / good intentions	14%	12%	17%	12%	17%	8%	16%	16%	18%
Problem – corruption	14%	8%	21%	16%	13%	12%	20%	4%	23%
Problem – subsistence problems / social welfare / public services / inflation	14%	12%	17%	14%	15%	12%	16%	12%	18%
Problem – maintain their own power and interests / minority interest group / serve themselves	13%	4%	23%	10%	17%	0%	20%	8%	27%
Good – they are reforming / other improvement	12%	12%	13%	10%	15%	8%	12%	16%	14%
Modifying factor - China has lots of problems / government doing a difficult job	12%	16%	9%	12%	13%	20%	4%	12%	14%
Problem –Does not care about people / unresponsive	12%	10%	15%	10%	15%	8%	12%	12%	18%
Good – Close to the people / serve the people	11%	12%	11%	14%	9%	12%	16%	12%	5%
Problem – Not transparent / open	11%	10%	13%	12%	11%	16%	8%	4%	18%

Problem – Dishonest / empty words	11%	6%	17%	12%	11%	8%	16%	4%	18%
Problem – No capability / helpless	11%	8%	15%	16%	6%	8%	24%	8%	5%
Good – capable / smart	9%	10%	9%	12%	6%	12%	12%	8%	5%
Problem – Lack of freedom / interferes too much	9%	4%	15%	10%	9%	8%	12%	0%	18%
Problem – Resistant to change / outdated thinking	9%	4%	15%	6%	13%	4%	8%	4%	23%
Good – handle disasters well (EQ, SARS)	6%	8%	4%	6%	6%	4%	8%	12%	0%

Table 37: Opinions of central government (condensed categories)

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Bad points / problems	63%	50%	77%	64%	62%	56%	72%	44%	82%
Good points	62%	66%	57%	60%	64%	56%	64%	76%	50%
Mitigating factor	27%	28%	26%	28%	26%	32%	24%	24%	27%
Don't know / Don't care / distant from me	26%	28%	23%	28%	23%	28%	28%	28%	18%
Change - Hope that they will improve / should change	22%	16%	28%	12%	32%	8%	16%	24%	41%
Mean average central government compound score*	0.49	0.58	0.40	0.48	0.51	0.50	0.46	0.66	0.34

Central government compound score: Each respondent was assigned a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a positive comment about central government; they were also designated a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a negative comment about the central government. A respondent's 'positive' score was deducted from her 'negative' score. The following function was then performed to produce a 'central government score', a number between 0 and 1:

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{positive score} \\ - \text{negative score} + 1 \end{array} \right) \div 2$$

Table 38: High politics orientations

% 'liberal' answers to high politics questions.

Question:

In each of the following questions, with whose opinion do you agree with the most (please tick)?

1. Mr Ma believes that multi-candidate elections are the best way of selecting government leaders. Mr Ding believes that appointment or single-candidate elections are a more suitable way of choosing government leaders.
2. Teacher Xu believes that organisations which are independent of the government and the CCP can help build a better, more stable, society and should not be subject to too many restrictions; Teacher Wu believes that this kind of organisation could pose a threat to social stability and so should be subject to strict regulation.
3. Mrs Liang believes that people who hold dangerous political opinions have forfeited their rights; Mrs Zhang believes that whatever their political opinions, all individuals have the same rights.
4. Mr Liu believes that people's private property is inviolable, and should be protected by the government; Mr Gao believes that if it provides compensation, the government can appropriate it for its own use.
5. Mr Wang believes that people should be able to express their opinions via the media; Mr Li believes that expressing these opinions may endanger social stability, so they should be restricted.
6. Mrs Zhou believes that China's economy relies too much on the free market, and that the government should not attempt to carry out further market reforms. Mrs Jing believes that China's economy relies too much on state-owned enterprises, and that the government should institute further economic reforms.

(See overleaf for table.)

	Total	Total Comparison	Total Christians	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ Comparison	SZ Christians	BJ Comparison	BJ Christians
1. Competitive elections (Ma)	83%	80%	86%	82%	84%	80%	85%	80%	88%
2. Independent organisations (Xu)	80%	71%	88%	80%	80%	71%	88%	72%	88%
3. Free thought (Zhang)	91%	90%	92%	88%	94%	84%	92%	96%	92%
4. Private property (Liu)	88%	88%	88%	88%	88%	84%	92%	92%	83%
5. Free media (Wang)	90%	86%	94%	92%	88%	88%	96%	84%	92%
6. Free market / economic reform (Jing)	85%	88%	82%	80%	90%	84%	77%	92%	88%
Mean number liberal answers /6	5.16	5.02	5.30	5.10	5.22	4.88	5.31	5.16	5.29
Median number liberal answers /6	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	6

Table 39: Political tolerance

Question:

Some people hold opinions that other people believe are dangerous or evil. For example: someone who is opposed to all religious belief; a racist; someone who believes that the country should be ruled by the military; a Tibetan separatist; someone who wants to promote gay marriage.

1. If this person expresses their opinion on the internet or on Weibo, should what they have written be deleted?
2. Should this person be allowed to teach at a university?

	Total	SZ Comparison	SZ Christians
Against religion - do not delete	73%	68%	77%
Against religion - allow teach	53%	60%	46%
Racist - do not delete	53%	52%	54%
Racist - allow teach	25%	24%	27%
Militarist - do not delete	73%	64%	81%
Militarist - allow teach	45%	40%	50%
Tibetan separatist - do not delete	53%	40%	65%
Tibetan separatist - allow teach	33%	20%	46%
Gay marriage - do not delete	73%	84%	62%
Gay marriage - allow teach	53%	72%	35%
Average 'tolerant' answers /10	5.35	5.24	5.46

Table 40: Opinions of the political system – detailed categories

Question: What is your opinion of China's political system?

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Problem – Autocratic	29%	20%	39%	33%	25%	28%	38%	12%	39%
Don't understand / don't know	20%	26%	14%	22%	19%	28%	15%	24%	13%
Good – Suits China's situation	18%	22%	14%	16%	21%	16%	15%	28%	13%
Problem - Lack of citizen participation	18%	14%	22%	18%	19%	12%	23%	16%	22%
Change- more democratic	16%	8%	24%	10%	23%	4%	15%	12%	35%
Change – Government should be restricted by law / monitoring	13%	6%	20%	16%	10%	8%	23%	4%	17%
Problem – Lacks monitoring	13%	6%	20%	12%	15%	8%	15%	4%	26%
Problem – Bad in general	12%	10%	14%	8%	17%	4%	12%	16%	17%
Good – general	10%	14%	6%	14%	6%	20%	8%	8%	4%
Problem – Does not care about people	10%	14%	6%	10%	10%	8%	12%	20%	0%
Problem – Corruption	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	12%	8%	8%	13%

Table 41: Opinions of the political system – condensed categories

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Problems / bad points	69%	58%	80%	67%	71%	60%	73%	56%	87%
Change	44%	38%	51%	47%	42%	44%	50%	32%	52%
Good points	38%	46%	31%	45%	31%	52%	38%	40%	22%
Don't understand / don't know	20%	26%	14%	22%	19%	28%	15%	24%	13%
Qualified good	11%	20%	2%	10%	13%	20%	0%	20%	4%

Table 42: Opinions of the Communist Party

Question: What is your opinion of the Communist Party?

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Problem – Core beliefs weak / people become party members for benefits	19%	12%	27%	14%	26%	8%	19%	16%	36%
Problem- Only represents its own interests; cannot represent the majority of the people	16%	12%	21%	20%	13%	12%	27%	12%	14%
Good - Good opinion / affirm their achievements	15%	24%	6%	20%	11%	28%	12%	20%	0%
Problem – Autocratic / One party rule / Lack of competition	14%	8%	21%	12%	17%	4%	19%	12%	23%
No opinion – Means nothing to me / no opinion	13%	18%	8%	14%	13%	24%	4%	12%	14%
Problem – Corruption	13%	12%	15%	12%	15%	16%	8%	8%	23%
Problem – Good in the past (before 1949 / civil war / war against Japan), not now	13%	16%	10%	8%	19%	8%	8%	24%	14%
Good – Econ development	10%	12%	8%	16%	4%	24%	8%	0%	9%
Neutral - Government = party (neutral) / same opinions of party and government	10%	10%	10%	16%	4%	12%	19%	8%	0%

Table 43: Democracy - salience

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
% of total mentions of democracy made by each group	100%	36%	64%	46%	54%	15%	30%	21%	34%
% of group mentioning democracy	61%	48%	74%	59%	63%	40%	77%	56%	71%
Average numbers of mentions of democracy per respondent	1.55	1.12	1.98	1.37	1.89	0.96	1.77	1.28	2.21
Average numbers of mentions of democracy per respondent (of those who did mention democracy)	2.63	2.43	2.75	2.41	2.96	2.40	2.42	2.46	3.12

Table 44: Democracy – meaning (detailed categories)

[L] indicates liberal conception of democracy, [P] indicates populist conception of democracy
 + indicates category did not rank highly overall, but is included in table for interests' sake.

% of answers mentioning democracy that linked the concept to....	Total	Total Comparison	Total Christians	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ Comparison	SZ Christians	BJ Comparison	BJ Christians
Hope/ desire for democracy (however defined)	34%	29%	36%	31%	36%	21%	36%	34%	37%
[L] Freedom / liberty	29%	16%	36%	15%	40%	0%	23%	28%	48%
Westernisation / Western culture Western countries / European countries	19%	18%	20%	17%	21%	4%	23%	28%	17%
USA = democratic (general)	17%	21%	15%	13%	21%	21%	9%	22%	21%
[L] Elections / Competitive elections	15%	14%	15%	15%	14%	17%	15%	13%	15%
China is not democratic = bad	12%	7%	14%	17%	7%	8%	21%	6%	8%
[P] Listening to the people / public interest	12%	11%	12%	17%	7%	17%	17%	6%	8%
[L] Multiple parties / competition between parties	11%	7%	13%	18%	5%	8%	23%	6%	4%
Cf. Autocracy / dictatorship / power too concentrated / no competition / too centralised	10%	7%	12%	14%	7%	8%	17%	6%	8%
China's current system = bad / problems	10%	5%	13%	7%	13%	4%	9%	6%	17%
[L] Freedom of expression / right to speak /freedom of media	10%	9%	10%	13%	7%	13%	13%	6%	8%
[L] Open thinking / open minded /tolerance	10%	13%	8%	11%	8%	21%	6%	6%	10%
China should learn from / be more like the West / Taiwan	9%	9%	9%	7%	11%	4%	9%	13%	9%
+ Mitigates corruption	8%	7%	9%	7%	10%	4%	9%	9%	10%
+ Equality / fairness (explicitly linked with the concept of democracy)	6%	5%	7%	6%	7%	0%	9%	9%	6%
+ Provision of public goods / livelihood / subsistence	5%	7%	3%	6%	4%	4%	6%	9%	0%
Democracy not suitable for China / cannot be implemented in China	3%	7%	1%	3%	4%	4%	2%	9%	0%
n	155	56	99	71	84	24	47	32	52

Table 45: Democracy – meaning (condensed categories)

Number / 155	Total	Total Comparison	Total Christians	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ Comparison	SZ Christians	BJ Comparison	BJ Christians
Freedom & rights	73	19	54	28	45	5	23	14	31
Other societies / countries = democratic	73	27	46	29	44	8	21	19	25
Good / hope for	63	21	42	29	34	9	20	12	22
Democratic institutions (rule of law, elections, parties etc.)	63	20	43	29	34	10	19	10	24
Negatives - what democracy is not...	53	14	39	28	25	6	22	8	17
Political reform / political change	36	16	20	24	12	12	12	4	8
China's current system = bad / problems	33	7	26	17	16	3	14	4	12
Lack of democratic institutions	28	8	20	13	15	3	10	5	10
Democratic values: Equality / fairness / tolerance etc.	28	13	15	13	15	6	7	7	8
China is not democratic (good or bad thing)	23	6	17	15	8	3	12	3	5
China's current system = good / democracy = problems	22	10	12	14	8	5	9	5	3
Not free / no rights	20	3	17	11	9	1	10	2	7
Listening to the people / serve the public interest	18	6	12	12	6	4	8	2	4

%	Total	Total Comparison	Total Christians	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ Comparison	SZ Christians	BJ Comparison	BJ Christians
Freedom & rights	47%	34%	55%	39%	54%	21%	49%	44%	60%
Other societies / countries = democratic	47%	48%	46%	41%	52%	33%	45%	59%	48%
Good / hope for	41%	38%	42%	41%	40%	38%	43%	38%	42%
Democratic institutions (rule of law, elections, parties etc.)	41%	36%	43%	41%	40%	42%	40%	31%	46%
Negatives - what democracy is not...	34%	25%	39%	39%	30%	25%	47%	25%	33%
Political reform / political change	23%	29%	20%	34%	14%	50%	26%	13%	15%
China's current system = bad / problems	21%	13%	26%	24%	19%	13%	30%	13%	23%
Lack of democratic institutions	18%	14%	20%	18%	18%	13%	21%	16%	19%
Democratic values: Equality / fairness / tolerance etc.	18%	23%	15%	18%	18%	25%	15%	22%	15%
China is not democratic (good or bad thing)	15%	11%	17%	21%	10%	13%	26%	9%	10%
China's current system = good / democracy = problems	14%	18%	12%	20%	10%	21%	19%	16%	6%
Not free / no rights	13%	5%	17%	15%	11%	4%	21%	6%	13%
Listening to the people / serve the public interest	12%	11%	12%	17%	7%	17%	17%	6%	8%

Table 46: Support for Political Institutions

	Compound scores	
	Comparison	Christians
Local government (n=100)	0.59	0.53
Central government (n=97)	0.58	0.40
Political system (n=99)	0.44	0.26
CCP (n=98)	0.50	0.25

Explanation of variables - See Table 47.

Table 47: Interactions between variables: Low politics orientations, high politics orientations, specific support and diffuse support

	Low politics	Local govt	Central govt	High politics	Tolerance (Shenzhen only)	Democracy salience	Economic salience	Political system	Party	"Change system" = Yes	"Love Country = Love party" = Disagree
Total Christians	0.47	0.53	0.40	0.58	0.67	1.98	0.10	0.26	0.25	0.63	0.84
Total Comparison	0.62	0.59	0.58	0.50	0.56	1.12	0.36	0.44	0.50	0.24	0.74
Low pol Positive	1.00	0.56	0.56	0.44	0.44	1.19	0.32	0.42	0.44	0.25	0.69
Low pol Negative	0.00	0.54	0.42	0.64	0.79	1.98	0.13	0.27	0.30	0.64	0.93
Christian - Low pol positive (n=23)	1.00	0.54	0.41	0.52	0.56	1.61	0.14	0.23	0.25	0.57	0.78
Comp - Low pol positive (n=31)	1.00	0.58	0.66	0.39	0.38	0.87	0.45	0.56	0.58	0.03	0.61
Christian - Low pol negative (n=26)	0.00	0.50	0.40	0.62	0.73	2.31	0.08	0.29	0.25	0.68	0.92
Comp - Low pol negative (n=19)	0.00	0.61	0.45	0.68	0.89	1.53	0.21	0.24	0.37	0.58	0.95
Liberals	0.45	0.56	0.46	1.00	0.63	1.96	0.21	0.20	0.34	0.57	0.87
Non-liberals	0.65	0.57	0.53	0.00	0.60	1.07	0.26	0.52	0.42	0.27	0.69
Christian liberals (n=29)	0.43	0.52	0.34	1.00	0.62	2.41	0.11	0.14	0.25	0.77	0.83
Comp liberals (n=25)	0.48	0.60	0.60	1.00	0.64	1.44	0.32	0.28	0.44	0.36	0.92
Christian non-liberals (n=21)	0.52	0.55	0.50	0.00	0.73	1.38	0.10	0.43	0.25	0.45	0.85
Comp non-liberals (n=25)	0.76	0.58	0.56	0.00	0.50	0.80	0.40	0.60	0.56	0.12	0.56

	Low politics	Local govt	Central govt	High politics	Tolerance (Shenzhen only)	Democracy salience	Economic salience	Political system	Party	"Change system" = Yes	"Love Country = Love party" = Disagree
BJ Christians	0.52	0.50	0.34	0.63	NA	2.21	0.04	0.17	0.18	0.75	0.83
BJ comp	0.60	0.38	0.66	0.56	NA	1.28	0.36	0.42	0.46	0.32	0.76
SZ Christians	0.42	0.56	0.46	0.54	0.67	1.77	0.15	0.33	0.31	0.54	0.84
SZ comp	0.64	0.80	0.50	0.44	0.56	0.96	0.36	0.46	0.54	0.16	0.72
BJ low pol positive (n=27)	1.00	0.43	0.59	0.48	NA	1.68	0.27	0.37	0.38	0.36	0.74
BJ low pol negative (n=21)	0.00	0.43	0.40	0.71	NA	1.82	0.14	0.24	0.26	0.70	0.90
SZ low pol positive (n=27)	1.00	0.70	0.52	0.41	0.44	0.89	0.37	0.48	0.50	0.15	0.63
SZ low pol negative (n=24)	0.00	0.65	0.44	0.58	0.79	1.92	0.13	0.29	0.33	0.58	0.96
BJ liberals (n= 29)	0.46	0.47	0.46	1.00	NA	2.24	0.14	0.16	0.32	0.62	0.83
BJ non-liberals (n=20)	0.70	0.40	0.58	0.00	NA	1.00	0.30	0.53	0.34	0.37	0.75
SZ liberals (n=25)	0.44	0.66	0.46	1.00	0.63	1.64	0.28	0.26	0.36	0.52	0.92
SZ non-liberals (n=26)	0.62	0.69	0.50	0.00	0.60	1.12	0.23	0.52	0.48	0.19	0.64
BJ total	0.56	0.44	0.51	0.59	NA	1.73	0.21	0.30	0.33	0.51	0.80
SZ total	0.53	0.68	0.48	0.49	0.61	1.37	0.25	0.39	0.42	0.35	0.78

	Low politics	Local govt	Central govt	High politics	Tolerance (Shenzhen only)	Democracy salience	Economic salience	Political system	Party	"Change system" = Yes	"Love Country = Love party" = Disagree
Economic salience high	0.74	0.63	0.63	0.48	0.42	1.30	1.00	0.61	0.48	0.26	0.74
Economic salience low	0.48	0.53	0.45	0.55	0.68	1.64	0.00	0.27	0.35	0.48	0.80
Christians high econ salience (n=5)	0.60	0.50	0.50	0.60	0.67	2.40	1.00	0.40	0.30	0.60	1.00
Christians low econ salience (n=44)	0.44	0.52	0.39	0.57	0.67	1.98	0.00	0.24	0.25	0.63	0.81
Comp high econ salience (n=18)	0.78	0.67	0.67	0.44	0.33	1.00	1.00	0.67	0.53	0.17	0.67
Comp low econ salience (n=32)	0.53	0.55	0.53	0.53	0.69	1.19	0.00	0.31	0.48	0.28	0.78
Specific support high (n=68)	0.57	NA	NA	0.49	0.55	1.22	0.28	0.39	0.42	0.33	0.78
Specific support low (n=29)	0.48	NA	NA	0.69	0.82	2.31	0.14	0.26	0.28	0.68	0.86
Christians high specific support (n=27)	0.48	NA	NA	0.48	0.63	1.67	0.08	0.27	0.29	0.56	0.88
Christians low specific support (n=20)	0.45	NA	NA	0.75	0.75	2.45	0.15	0.23	0.18	0.79	0.85
Comp specific support high (n=41)	0.63	NA	NA	0.49	0.50	0.93	0.41	0.46	0.50	0.20	0.71
Comp specific support low (n=9)	0.56	NA	NA	0.56	1.00	2.00	0.11	0.33	0.50	0.44	0.89

	Low politics	Local govt	Central govt	High politics	Tolerance (Shenzhen only)	Democracy salience	Economic salience	Political system	Party	"Change system" = Yes	"Love Country = Love party" = Disagree
BJ specific support high (n=30)	0.60	NA	NA	0.53	NA	1.20	0.31	0.36	0.36	0.43	0.80
BJ specific support low (n=17)	0.53	NA	NA	0.71	NA	2.65	0.06	0.21	0.26	0.69	0.82
SZ specific support high (n=38)	0.55	NA	NA	0.45	0.55	1.24	0.26	0.41	0.46	0.26	0.76
SZ specific support low (n=12)	0.42	NA	NA	0.67	0.82	1.83	0.25	0.33	0.29	0.67	0.92
High specific support, high econ salience (N=19)	0.79	NA	NA	0.42	0.40	1.16	1.00	0.63	0.53	0.21	0.68
High specific support, low econ salience (n=48)	0.48	NA	NA	0.50	0.61	1.27	0.00	0.30	0.38	0.38	0.81
Low specific support, high econ salience (n=4)	0.50	NA	NA	0.75	0.50	2.00	1.00	0.50	0.25	0.50	1.00
Low specific support, no econ salience (n=25)	0.48	NA	NA	0.68	0.89	2.36	0.00	0.22	0.28	0.71	0.84

	Low politics	Local govt	Central govt	High politics	Tolerance (Shenzhen only)	Democracy salience	Economic salience	Political system	Party	"Change system" = Yes	"Love Country = Love party" = Disagree
Comp Negative low pol Liberal high pol	---		---	---	---	---	---	0.15	0.35	0.69	0.92
Comp Negative Low pol non-liberal high pol	---		---	---	---	---	---	0.42	0.42	0.33	1.00
Comp Positive low pol Liberal high pol	---		---	---	---	---	---	0.42	0.54	0.00	0.92
Comp Positive low pol non-liberal high pol	---		---	---	---	---	---	0.66	0.61	0.05	0.42

Explanation of variables

Columns:

Low politics: the proportion of those who held more than the median low politics score of 0.5. The low politics score was an index derived as follows:

$$\left(\frac{\text{number of low political issues that the respondent perceived to have improved}}{\text{number of low politics issues that the respondent perceived to have deteriorated} + 11} \right) \div 22$$

Local government: the average 'local government compound score' of group members.

Each respondent was assigned a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a positive comment about local government; they were also designated a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a negative comment about local government. A respondent's 'positive' score was deducted from her 'negative' score. The following function was then performed to produce a 'local government score', a number between 0 and 1:

$$\left(\frac{\text{positive score}}{\text{negative score} + 1} \right) \div 2$$

Central government: the average 'central government compound score' of group members.

Each respondent was assigned a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a positive comment about central government; they were also designated a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a negative comment about the central government. A respondent's 'positive' score was deducted from her 'negative' score. The following function was then performed to produce a 'central government score', a number between 0 and 1:

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{positive score} \\ - \text{negative score} + 1 \end{array} \right) \div 2$$

High politics: the proportion of respondents giving liberal answers to all 6 high politics orientation questions.

Tolerance: the proportion of respondents giving equal to or more than the median of 5 'tolerant' answers to the political 10 tolerance questions.

Democracy salience: the average number of mentions of a democracy in each respondent's interview. For the purposes of this analysis, I will take a difference in democracy salience of more than 0.30 as suggestive of an underlying difference.

Economic salience: the proportion of respondents mentioning some kind of economic or material goal when asked if they had a personal goal or ideal for the next 20 years.

Political system: the average 'political system score' of group members.

Each respondent was assigned a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a positive comment about the political system; they were also designated a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a negative comment about the political system. A respondent's 'positive' score was deducted from her 'negative' score. The following function was then performed to produce a 'political system score', a number between 0 and 1:

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{positive score} \\ - \text{negative score} + 1 \end{array} \right) \div 2$$

Party: the average 'Party score' of group members.

Each respondent was assigned a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a positive comment about the Communist Party; they were also designated a 1 or a 0 depending on whether or not they had made a negative comment about the Party. A respondent's 'positive' score was deducted from her 'negative' score. The following function was then performed to produce a 'Party score', a number between 0 and 1:

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} \text{positive score} \\ - \text{negative score} + 1 \end{array} \right) \div 2$$

"Change system" = Yes: The proportion of respondents choosing the statement 'Mr Yin says that the political system is not good and should be changed,' when presented with the hypothetical dialogue outlined in Table 12.

"Love Country = Love party" = Disagree: The proportion of respondents choosing the statement 'Miss Hao says that you can love the country, but it does not mean you have to love the Party, ' when presented with the hypothetical dialogue outlined in Table 14.

Rows:

Low politics positive: respondents who held low politics scores equal to or more than the median of 0.5.

Low politics negative: respondents who held low politics scores less than the median of 0.5.

Liberals: respondents who gave liberal answers to all 6 high politics orientation questions.

Non-liberals: respondents who gave liberal answers to fewer than 6 high politics orientation questions.

Economic salience high: respondents who mentioned some kind of economic or material goal when asked if they had a personal goal or ideal for the next 20 years.

Economic salience low: respondents who did not mention some kind of economic or material goal when asked if they had a personal goal or ideal for the next 20 years

Specific support high: respondents who held specific support scores equal to or more than the median of 0.5. (See below)

Specific support low: respondents who held specific support scores less than the median of 0.5.

Specific support: An index combining central government and local government compound scores
 $(\text{Local government compound score} + \text{Central government compound score}) \div 2$

Table 48.1: Interactions between variables: Low politics orientations, high politics orientations, specific support and diffuse support (Overall)

	Low politics	High politics	Specific support	Religion	City	Economic salience
Local government	No	No	---	Low politics negative only, high econ salience only	Comp only	Comp only
Central government	Comp only, BJ only	Christians only, BJ only	---	BJ only; liberals only; low politics positive only	No	Yes
Democracy salience	SZ only	Yes	Yes	Yes	Low pol positive only; liberals only	Christians only
Pol system	Comp only	Yes	Comp only, BJ only, high econ salience only	Low pol positive only, high econ salience only	Christians only, low pol positive only, liberals only	Yes
Party	Comp only	Comp only; SZ only	Christians only	Yes	Christians only; low pol positive only, non-liberals only	No
Change system?	Yes (stronger for comp)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Comp only
Love country = love party?	Yes (stronger for comp and SZ)	Comp only; SZ only	SZ only, comp only, low econ salience only	Positive low pol only; non-liberals only; SZ only	No	Different for comps (negative association) and Christians (positive association)
Low Politics		Comp only (small difference for Christians)	No	SZ only; non-liberals only; high econ salience only	No	Comp only
High Politics	Comp only (small difference for Christians)	---	Christians only	Low pol positive only, SZ only; high econ salience only	Comp only; Low pol negative only	No
Economic salience	Comp only	No	Comp only, BJ only	Yes	Christians only; low pol positive only; liberals only	

Table 48.2: Interactions between variables: Low politics orientations, high politics orientations, specific support and diffuse support (Christians)

	Low politics	High politics	Specific support	City	Economic salience
Local govt	No	No	---	No	No
Central govt	No	BJ only	---	No	Yes
Democracy salience	SZ only	Yes	Yes	Positive low pol only; liberals only	Yes
Pol system	No	Yes	No	Low pol positive only, liberals only	Yes
Party	No	No	Yes	Low pol positive only, non-liberals only	No
Change system?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Love country = love party?	Yes	No	No	No	Different for comps (negative association) and Christians (positive association)
Low Politics	---	No	No	No	No
High Politics	No	---	Yes	No	No
Economic salience	No	No	No	Low pol positive only; liberals only	---

Table 48.3: Interactions between variables: Low politics orientations, high politics orientations, specific support and diffuse support (Comparison group)

	Low politics	High politics	Specific support	City	Economic salience
Local govt	No	No	---	Yes	Yes
Central govt	BJ only	No	---	No	Yes
Democracy salience	SZ only	Yes	Yes	Positive low pol only; liberals only	No
Pol system	Yes	Yes	BJ only, Econ salience only	No	Yes
Party	Yes	SZ only	No	No	No
Change system?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Love country = love party?	Yes	SZ only	SZ only, low econ salience only	No	Different for comps (negative association) and Christians (positive association)
Low Politics	---	Yes	No	No	Yes
High Politics	Yes		No	Comp only; Low pol negative only	No
Econ salience	Yes	No	BJ only	No	---

Table 49: Specific Support, Diffuse Support, and High Politics Orientations (by religious affiliation and low politics orientations)

For explanation of variables, see notes on Table 47.

	Local govt	Central govt	Pol system	Party	Love country = love party (Do not disagree)	1- (Change system = 'Yes')	1- High politic orientations	1- Tolerance (SZ only)	0.5/ democracy salience	n
Christians - Low pol negative	0.50	0.40	0.29	0.25	0.08	0.32	0.38	0.27	0.22	26
Christians - Low pol positive	0.54	0.41	0.23	0.25	0.22	0.43	0.48	0.44	0.31	23
Comparison - Low pol negative	0.61	0.45	0.24	0.37	0.05	0.42	0.32	0.11	0.33	19
Comparison - Low pol positive	0.58	0.66	0.56	0.58	0.39	0.97	0.61	0.63	0.57	31

Table 50: Social Network Size**Question:**

- My research's target demographic is:
20-40 years old
Live in Beijing/Shenzhen
Graduated from university (with an undergraduate degree)
Currently doing a white collar job
- In this demographic group, roughly how many people do you know? (If you know their name, you can recognize their face, you have had dealings with them in the past 12 months, then that is considered 'knowing' somebody.)
- Within the above demographic group, roughly how many Christians do you know?

n = 96	Total network size (number of people)	Non-Christians in network	Christians in network	% of network Christian
Beijing Christian	106	39	67	63%
Beijing Comparison	84	80	3	4%
Shenzhen Christian	173	147	25	15%
Shenzhen Comparison	123	118	5	4%
Total Christian	142	98	45	31%
Total Comparison	103	99	4	4%

Table 51: Number of Introductions per Respondent

NB: 'n' excludes those respondents whom I did not ask for introductions.

n = 83	Mean averages			Median averages		
	Total number of introductions	Number of successful introductions	Number of unsuccessful introductions	Total number of introductions	Number of successful introductions	Number of unsuccessful introductions
Beijing Christian	1.05	0.86	0.18	0.50	0.00	0.00
Beijing Comparison	0.88	0.65	0.24	1.00	0.00	0.00
Shenzhen Christian	0.87	0.82	0.05	1.00	0.50	0.00
Shenzhen Comparison	0.59	0.59	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Christian	0.96	0.84	0.11	1.00	0.00	0.00
Total Comparison	0.72	0.62	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table 52: Number of Christian activities per week

Question: In an average week, how many Christian activities do you participate in?

n = 50	Average weekly number of Christian activities	
	Mean	Median
Beijing Christians	2.85	2.75
Shenzhen Christians	2.68	2.25
Total	2.76	2.50

Table 53: Type of Christian activities**Question:** Which Christian activities do you participate in?

	Total	Shenzhen Christian	Beijing Christian
Sunday worship (主日崇拜 etc.)	94%	92%	96%
Bible Study / small group (查经小组) – including if part of Sunday worship	84%	76%	92%
Other - film group, watch videos, occasional/ special meetings / other service / cleaning church/ family group / retreat / college fellowships / young persons' fellowship – as participant / entrepreneurs' fellowship	35%	44%	25%
Prayer meeting (祷告会)	27%	20%	33%
Activities together - Eat together, play sports etc.	20%	24%	17%
Training / leaders' training / discipleship training	20%	28%	13%
Extra code – foreigner / foreign organisation involved (in leading or participating)	18%	12%	25%
Choir practice / worship band practice	16%	16%	17%
Evangelism	12%	16%	8%
n	49	25	24

Table 54: Church Responsibilities**Question:** Do you have any responsibilities in your church?

	% who have church responsibilities	n
Beijing Christians	79%	14
Shenzhen Christians	69%	26
Total	73%	40

Table 55: Evangelistic activity**Question:** Do you spread the gospel?

	% who do evangelism	n
Beijing Christians	86%	22
Shenzhen Christians	100%	25
Total	94%	47

Table 56: Number of Secular Social Activities Per Week

Question: In an average week, how many times do you participate in (other) social activities?

n = 98	Average weekly number social activities	
	Mean	Median
Beijing Christians	0.83	1.00
Beijing comparison	1.35	1.50
Shenzhen Christians	1.64	1.00
Shenzhen comparison	1.66	1.50
Total Christians	1.26	1.00
Total comparison	1.50	1.50

Table 57: Charitable activity**Question:** Do you participate in charitable activities?

n = 97	% who have participated in charitable activities	n
Beijing Christians	71%	21
Beijing comparison	76%	25
Shenzhen Christians	62%	26
Shenzhen comparison	76%	25
Total Christians	66%	47
Total comparison	76%	50

Table 58: Levels of Social Trust**Question:** Do you think you can trust most people?

n=100	Number of respondents answering....				n
	Yes	If Christian	Depends	No	
Beijing Christians	38%	25%	29%	8%	24
Beijing comparison	48%	0%	36%	16%	25
Shenzhen Christians	42%	15%	23%	19%	26
Shenzhen comparison	56%	0%	36%	8%	25
Total Beijing	43%	12%	33%	12%	49
Total Shenzhen	49%	8%	29%	14%	51
Total Christians	40%	20%	26%	14%	50
Total comparison	52%	0%	36%	12%	50

Table 59: Objects of Social Trust**Question:** Whom do you trust the most?

NB: Respondents could give more than one answer.

n = 98	Total comparison	Total Christian	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Family	84%	54%	80%	50%	88%	59%
Friends	26%	15%	16%	4%	36%	27%
Christian friends / People from Church	0%	40%	0%	35%	0%	45%
God / Jesus	2%	31%	4%	42%	0%	18%
Myself	8%	0%	12%	0%	4%	0%
Other	0%	4%	0%	4%	0%	5%
n	50	48	25	26	25	22

Table 60: Objects of social distrust**Question:** Whom do you trust the least?

NB: Respondents could give more than one answer.

	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
No-one	24%	23%	25%	21%	20%	31%	28%	14%
Government / officials / CCP	10%	25%	18%	17%	12%	23%	8%	27%
Strangers / People I don't understand	16%	13%	14%	15%	16%	12%	16%	14%
Other	8%	17%	14%	11%	16%	12%	0%	23%
Business people / salespeople	10%	13%	8%	15%	8%	8%	12%	18%
Colleagues / work clients / partners /	6%	8%	6%	9%	4%	8%	8%	9%
Don't know / haven't thought about it	12%	2%	6%	9%	8%	4%	16%	0%
Boss / leader at work	12%	2%	4%	11%	8%	0%	16%	5%
Over-familiar people, false friends	6%	4%	4%	6%	8%	0%	4%	9%

Table 61: Mean level of trust in different social groups

Question:

For each of the groups below, to what extent do you trust them? (respondents were then asked to tick the appropriate box out of the following: Totally distrust (1); Trust a little bit (2); Averagely trust (3); Mostly trust (4); Totally trust (5); No opinion.)

Mean average level of trust in.... (Scale 1 to 5, 1= totally distrust, 5 = totally trust, 'No opinions' excluded)									
	Colleagues	Family	Government	Christians	Media	Strangers	Friends	Non-believers*	Acquaintances
Christian	3.38	4.52	2.12	4.23	2.28	2.19	3.96	2.81	3.65
Comparison	3.96	4.84	2.48	3.42	2.64	2.18	4.02	2.77	3.60
Total	3.67	4.68	2.29	3.96	2.46	2.19	3.99	2.79	3.63
n	51	51	48	39	50	48	51	39	51

*defined as those not believing in any religion.

Table 62: Non-Christian opinions of Christianity (detailed categories)**Question:** What does the word 'Christianity' mean to you? What opinion do you have of Christianity? (Answers coded together)

	% of respondents answering		
	Total comparison	SZ comparison	BJ comparison
Kind / loving / love / nice / friendly / universal love	22%	16%	28%
Don't understand / superficial understanding	20%	32%	8%
Haven't thought about / no meaning / don't have any opinions / haven't encountered / haven't experienced	16%	20%	12%
Have their own norms of behaviour / principles / values / rules	14%	8%	20%
A religious denomination 派别 / a religion / a faith / a spiritual belief / a kind of opinion	14%	16%	12%
Focus / release / give vent to depression/ can pray if in trouble / believe if unhappy with life situation / can face trouble	12%	12%	12%
Good (general) / perfect / opinion changed – more positive	12%	20%	4%
Want to learn more / curious / interesting	12%	4%	20%
Do not personally believe / not persuaded / can't accept personally	12%	20%	4%
Bible - neutral	12%	16%	8%
Believe in God / all-powerful God	10%	12%	8%
Can help people improve themselves / encourages people to do good / helps people live more positively / seen people change positively / lives are complete	10%	12%	8%
n	50	25	25

Table 63: Non-Christian opinions of Christianity (condensed categories)

	Total comparison	SZ comparison	BJ comparison
Good / positive point	60%	52%	68%
Doctrine / feature of belief	52%	48%	56%
Characteristics of believers	46%	40%	52%
Don't understand / Not thought about	36%	52%	20%
Personal relation to Christianity	26%	20%	32%
Relation to Buddhism / other religions	16%	16%	16%
Bible	16%	16%	16%
Problems / negative points	14%	16%	12%
Relation to society	8%	16%	0%
Western belief / Westerners are Christian	6%	4%	8%
Church / help	2%	0%	4%
No answer	2%	0%	4%
n	50	25	25

Table 64: The 'My Friend Al' Principle

n = 49	Respondents making positive comments about Christianity	
	%	n
Respondents who said they knew Christians personally	64%	42
Respondents who said they didn't know Christians personally	43%	7

Table 65: Political efficacy**Question:**

With whose opinion do you agree more: Teacher Deng says that ordinary people are able to influence political decision-making if they express their opinions, so they should therefore express their opinions. Teacher Jia says that ordinary people have no influence, so there is no use in expressing one's opinions.

	Total	Total comparison	Total Christian	Total SZ	Total BJ	SZ comparison	SZ Christian	BJ comparison	BJ Christian
Should express opinions (Deng)	71%	65%	77%	66%	76%	54%	77%	76%	76%
No use in expressing opinions (Jia)	15%	18%	11%	16%	13%	21%	12%	16%	10%
Both / neither / other	14%	16%	11%	16%	11%	25%	8%	8%	14%
No answer	1%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
n	96	49	47	50	46	24	26	25	21

Table 66: Levels of political activity**Question:**

- ii. In the past 12 months have you:
 - a. Voted in an election?
 - b. Made a complaint to your superiors at work?
 - c. Written a letter or email to a government official?
 - d. Complained to higher authorities?
 - e. Taken part in a strike?
 - f. Taken part in a demonstration?
 - g. Written a letter or email to a newspaper or magazine?
 - h. Written an online BBS post or Weibo expressing a political view?
 - i. Filed a lawsuit?
 - j. Participated in public affairs via some other method?

(See overleaf for table)

	Voted	Complained at work	Written to govt official	Complained to higher level of govt	Strike	Demo	Written to newspaper	Online political comment	Sued	Other	Any political activity	n
Total	6%	26%	3%	1%	0%	0%	3%	32%	2%	9%	52%	96
Total Comparison	6%	20%	2%	2%	0%	0%	4%	20%	2%	6%	35%	49
Total Christians	6%	32%	4%	0%	0%	0%	2%	45%	2%	13%	70%	47
Total SZ	10%	20%	4%	2%	0%	0%	4%	31%	2%	8%	49%	49
Total BJ	2%	32%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	34%	2%	11%	55%	47
SZ Comparison	8%	17%	4%	4%	0%	0%	8%	21%	4%	8%	33%	24
SZ Christians	12%	24%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	40%	0%	8%	64%	25
BJ Comparison	4%	24%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	4%	36%	25
BJ Christians	0%	41%	5%	0%	0%	0%	5%	50%	5%	18%	77%	22

Table 67: Levels of conflict with government

Question: Have you, or a group which you belonged to, ever experienced a conflict with government departments?

	% respondents reporting conflict with government departments	n
Beijing Christians	38%	21
Beijing comparison	8%	25
Shenzhen Christians	24%	25
Shenzhen comparison	4%	24
Beijing total	22%	46
Shenzhen total	14%	49
Total Christians	30%	46
Total comparison	6%	49

Table 68: Factors related to political activity

	Voted	Complained at work	Written to govt official?	Complained to higher level of govt?	Strike	Demo	Written to newspaper	Online political comment	Sued	Other	Any political activity
Disaffected Christians (n=36)	6%	31%	6%	0%	0%	0%	3%	53%	3%	11%	75%
Non-disaffected Christians (n=14)	8%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	0%	17%	50%
Disaffected comparison (n=22)	0%	27%	5%	0%	0%	0%	5%	36%	5%	5%	45%
Non-disaffected comparison (n=28)	11%	15%	0%	4%	0%	0%	4%	7%	0%	7%	26%
Christian high intros (n = 21)	0%	30%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	55%	0%	10%	65%
Christian low intros (n = 23)	10%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	29%	5%	14%	71%
Comparison high intros (n = 16)	6%	25%	6%	6%	0%	0%	6%	25%	6%	6%	31%
Comparison low intros (n = 23)	9%	23%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	14%	0%	9%	36%

Explanation of variables

Disaffection

This is measured by an index:

If respondent answers 'politics' or 'government' when asked what it is about China that makes her ashamed, then code 1

If respondent answers 'officials' or 'government' when asked whom she least trusts, then code 1

If respondent's Local government support compound index = 0 (see Table 46), then code 1

If respondent's Central government support compound index = 0 (see Table 46), then code 1

If respondent's Political system support compound index = 0 (see Table 46), then code 1

If respondent's Party support compound index = 0 (see Table 46), then code 1

If respondent answers 'Yes' to change system (i.e. chooses Mr Yin – see Table 4), then code 1

If respondent disagrees with the statement 'To love the country is to love the Party' (i.e. chooses Miss Hao – see Table 7), then code 1

Add up all the codes and divide by the number of above questions that the respondent was asked to give a number between 0 and 1.

If number is equal to or above the median score of 0.375, then respondent is considered 'disaffected'; if it is under 0.375, then the respondent is considered 'non-disaffected'.

Introductions

If a respondent, when requested, introduces me to at least one other respondent, and this results in a successful interview, then the respondent is considered to have a high number of introductions ('high intros'); if the respondent, when requested, introduces me to no new respondents, then that respondent is considered to have a low number of introduction ('low intros').

Table 69: Post-conversion sense of agency

Question: What does it mean to you to be a 'Christian'?

	% mentioning some aspect of a post-conversion sense of agency	n
Beijing Christians	85%	20
Shenzhen Christians	77%	26
Total	80%	46

I define 'sense of agency' as *a sense that one has the responsibility for, and ability to make one's own conscious value judgements via a process of critical reflection on predominant social norms and, based on these judgements, to intentionally adjust one's own behaviour and take actions to shape the wider social environment.*

Examples of evidence of post-conversion agency in respondent answers: a new sense of morality, a new sense of purpose, a new sense of direction, a new sense of hope, greater consciousness of one's actions.

Appendix 3: Fieldwork handout

NB: Original Chinese translations of the Fieldwork Handout, Interview Questions, and Respondent Sheet are available on request.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

University of Oxford, Manor Road, Oxford OX1 3UQ United Kingdom 英国
Tel: +44 1865 285947 Fax: +44 1865 278725
Email: philip.entwistle@merton.ox.ac.uk www.politics.ox.ac.uk

Philip Entwistle, DPhil student



Interview ref: _____

Participant information

Please read the following before the interview.

Name of study: The Dragon and the Lamb: Christianity and Social Attitudes⁷³⁶ in China

Name of researcher: Phil Entwistle

Affiliation: DPhil Politics student, University of Oxford

Researcher's contact details:

Email: philip.entwistle@merton.ox.ac.uk
Phone: 15801427746
Address:

Nature of research: I am researching the relationship between Christianity and social attitudes in China. The data collected in the interviews will form the basis of my DPhil thesis. This research project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

Interview contents: I will ask questions about your social and religious beliefs. If you do not feel comfortable about answering any question, please say so; you do not need to answer, and we will move on to the next one.

Recording of interview:

Do I have your permission to record this interview on my iPod?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(Only my supervisor and I will listen to it)

Do I have your permission to make notes on paper during the interview?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Use of data: Anything you say will be anonymous. I will write a transcript of the interview and quote interview content in my research, but I will never publicly associate these views with your name. I will never use your name in print. I will use the data obtained from this interview in my DPhil thesis, as well as other publications, mostly in English, but also potentially in Chinese. My DPhil thesis and other publications will be available for public viewing online.

Storage of data: I will hold your personal details (name, email, phone number) on my computer in a separate file, secured with a password, and linked to the interview transcript with a key. I will continue to hold the data securely after the end of the research project. In future, other researchers may wish to access transcript data or contact you in order to verify the findings of my research. Their storage and use of this data will be subject to the same conditions as specified here. If you **do not** want me to pass your details or transcript data onto any other researcher, **please tick this box** ☐

If you have any questions about the interview, please ask me now. If you wish to make a formal complaint about any aspect of this project, please contact:

Dr Chris Ballinger, Social Sciences Division, 75 George St, Oxford, OX1 2BQ, UK. Email address: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk

If you wish to withdraw from the interview at any stage, there is no penalty.

⁷³⁶ NB: I used the term 'social attitudes' rather than 'political engagement' in my fieldwork materials because it is a less politically sensitive term in China.

Participant Consent Form

1. I have read the 'Participant information' sheet.
2. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and have received satisfactory answers to questions, and any additional details requested.
3. I understand that I may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time.
4. I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.
5. I agree to be recorded by the researcher, unless I opted out by ticking the participant information sheet.
6. I understand that the research will be written up as the researcher's thesis and that this thesis will be available for public viewing online.
7. I understand that the researcher may quote my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs in both English and Chinese but he will not link them with my name.
8. I understand that my personal data (name, email, telephone number, etc.) collected in the project will be stored separately from any records of the interview in a password protected file, linked only with a key code.
9. If on the 'participant information' sheet I did not give permission for the sharing of my data with other researchers, then other than Phil Entwistle and his supervisor, no other person will have access to my personal data.
10. If on the participant observation sheet I gave permission for other researchers to use my personal data, I understand that they will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of that data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.
11. I understand that other researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs according to the terms I have specified in this form.
12. I understand how to raise a concern and make a complaint.
13. I agree to participate in this study.

Signed (participant) _____

Month / Year _____

Signed (researcher) _____

Month / Year _____

Please answer the following questions before the interview

1. What is your year of birth? _____ Year
2. Where were you born?
3. Where is your home town?
4. Where did you grow up?
5. What are your parents' jobs?
 - a. Father _____
 - b. Mother _____(If your parents have retired, please indicate their previous jobs.)
6. Do you have any brothers or sisters? _____
7. Please describe your educational experience:
Primary school: _____ Start and end dates: _____
Lower middle school: _____ Start and end dates: _____
Upper middle school: _____ Start and end dates: _____
University (Undergraduate): _____ Subject: _____ Start and end dates: _____
University (Masters): _____ Subject: _____ Start and end dates: _____
University (PhD): _____ Subject: _____ Start and end dates: _____
8. What job do you do now? _____
9. How would you rank your economic status (please tick)?
 - a. ☐ Upper,
 - b. ☐ Upper-middle
 - c. ☐ Middle
 - d. ☐ Lower-middle
 - e. ☐ Lower
10. Where do you live now? _____ (Beijing /Shenzhen district)
11. Are you married? Yes ☐ No ☐
12. Do you have any children? Yes ☐ No ☐
 - a. If so:
 - i. How many girls? _____ How many boys? _____
 - ii. How old are they? _____
13. Which nationality are you? ☐ Han ☐ Other _____
14. What activities do you like to do in your free time? _____

15. In an average week, roughly
 - a. how many hours of television do you watch? _____
 - i. Which programmes/channels? _____

 - b. how long do you spend on the internet for leisure? _____
 - i. Which websites do you most often visit? _____

 - c. how long do you spend listening to the radio (online or offline)? _____
 - i. Which stations? _____
 - d. which newspapers or magazines do you read? _____
 - e. how many films do you watch? _____

i. Which genres do you like?

f. How many books do you read? _____

i. What type of books do you like to read? _____

16. What is your religious belief?

- a. ☐ Taoist
- b. ☐ Buddhist
- c. ☐ Christian – Catholic
- d. ☐ Christian – Protestant
- e. ☐ Muslim
- f. ☐ None

Appendix 4: Interview questions

Ref: _____ [Space to write interview code] Asked for intros? ☐

General questions: Personal situation, aspirations, foreign interaction

- What relationship do you have with the person who introduced you to me?
- My research's target demographic is:
 - 20-40 years old
 - Live in Beijing/Shenzhen
 - Graduated from university (with an undergraduate degree)
 - Currently doing a white collar job
- In order to ensure representativeness, I would like to ask you:
 - In this demographic group, roughly how many people do you know?
 - (If you know their name, you can recognize their face, you have had dealings with them in the past 12 months, then that is considered 'knowing' somebody.)
- What work have you done since graduating from university? (Please explain simply the name of the company, how long you worked there, your position, the kind of work you did, etc.)
- What job do you do now?
- What is your monthly income?
- Have you ever been abroad?
 - If so, please summarise your experience:
 - Which countries have you been to?
 - How many times have you been?
 - Why did you go?
 - How much interaction did you have with the local people and culture?
- Do you know any foreigners?
 - If yes:
 - How did you meet them?
 - Briefly describe your relationship with them.
 - What impression do/did you have of them?
- Do you write a blog or visit internet forums?
- How happy would you say you are at the moment? (in the short-term)
 - 0: Completely unhappy
 - 5: Average
 - 10: Extremely happy
- Can you explain your answer?
- In the whole of your life, how satisfied would you say you are? (in the long-term)
 - 0: Completely dissatisfied
 - 5: Average
 - 10: Extremely satisfied
- Can you explain your answer?

-
- Do you have a personal dream or goal for your life in the next 20 years? If so, please could you describe it to me?
 - What do you hope China will be like in 20 years' time?
 - Do you think that you can trust most people?¹
 - Who do you trust the most?
 - Who do you trust the least?
 - Respondent sheet questions A & B.
 - What aspects of China make you feel proud?
 - What aspects of China make you feel ashamed?
 - Which opinion do you most agree with?
 - The world is mostly good; we should be content with it.
 - The world is mostly bad; we should escape it.
 - The world is both good and bad, we should change it.

For Christians: Christianity and religious activity (1)

- When did you become a Christian?
- How did you become a Christian?
- Why did you become a Christian? (What elements of Christianity attracted you?)
- Are your family members Christians?

Political opinions and political support questions

Respondent sheet question C.

- What is your opinion of Beijing/Shenzhen's city government?
- In your opinion, to what extent is the city government able to resolve everyday problems?
- What is your opinion on the issue of corruption?
- How serious / important do you think the issue is?
- How well do you think the Chinese government is able to deal with the corruption issue?
- Have you ever personally encountered any instances of corruption? How did you deal with the situation?
- How important to China do you think it is that the Chinese government handles religious issues well?
- In your opinion, how should the government handle religious issues?
- How well do you think the government is dealing with religious issues?
- What is your opinion of the current Chinese government?

¹ This question is based on the 1990 World Values Survey (including China); 2000 World Values Survey (including China); 1992 Urban Social Survey; 1999 Six-City Survey; Research Center for Contemporary China 2004. See Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. Table 5.1, p.103.

-
- In your opinion, what is the biggest problem facing China today?
 - How do you think this problem can be resolved?
 - To what extent do you think the government can resolve this problem effectively?

Respondent sheet question D & E.

- What is your opinion of China's political system?
- What is your opinion of the Chinese Communist Party?

Respondent Sheet question F.

National Identity and Nationalism

- In your opinion, what meaning / significance does "China" have?
- What does it mean to be Chinese?
- How often do you discuss issues of Chinese national identity?
- In your opinion how important is this kind of issue?

Respondent sheet, question G.

- What is your opinion of America?

Respondent sheet, question H

- What is your opinion of Japan?

Respondent sheet, question I

- What is your opinion on the issue of Tibet/Xinjiang/Taiwan?
- In your opinion, what does [the term] 'Western culture' mean?

Social trust and social and political activity

- How interested are you in current affairs? (Not at all, a little, very)²
- Do you usually talk about current affairs with your friends and relatives?
- Which current issues have you most recently discussed with your friends or online? Can you give me an example?

Respondent sheet, question K.

- Are you a Party member?

² This question draws on Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*. p.101: '1. How much are you interested in politics?', which itself draws upon Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. p.88.

-
- [If yes:] When did you join the Party?
 - Why did you join the Party?
 - As a Party member, in what activities do you participate?

Respondent sheet, question L.

Questions for non-Christians: Social activity and religion

- In an average week, how many time do you participate in social activities? Which social activities do you participate in?
- Do you participate in public welfare activities (e.g. charitable activities)?
- Have you, or a group which you belonged to, ever experienced a conflict with the government departments? Which authorities? How did it happen? How was it resolved?
- In your opinion, how important is religious faith?
- What does the word 'Christianity' mean to you? What opinion do you have of Christianity?
- Within the above demographic group, roughly how many Christians do you know? How do you know them? What is your impression of them?
- What role do you think Christianity could play in Chinese society?

For Christians: Social activity, Christianity and religious activity (2)

- What does it mean to you to be a 'Christian'?
- In your opinion, how important is religious faith?
- Which church do you go to?
- Could you describe your church to me? (How many people, how old are they, etc.)
- Does your church belong to a house church network?
- Could you tell me about the history of church involvement? (When did you join etc.)
- In an average week, how many Christian activities do you participate in? Which activities?
- In an average week, how many times do you participate in other social activities? Which social activities do you participate in?
- Do you participate in public welfare activities (e.g. charitable activities)?
- Do you spread the gospel?
- Do you know any Christians from other churches? Please could you describe your interactions with them?
- [For Christians who attend a house church] What is your opinion of the Three Self Movement?
 - Do you know any believers from Three Self Churches? If so, please could you describe your relationship with them?
- [For Christians who attend a Three Self church] What is your opinion of the house church movement?

-
- Do you know any believers from the house church? If so, please could you describe your relationship with them.
 - Has your church been subject to any restrictions [upon its activities]?
 - Have you ever met any Christians from abroad?
 - Please could you describe your relationship with them.
 - Did they have any interaction with your church?
 - If they did, what influence did they have over your church?
 - Have you, or a group which you belonged to, ever experienced a conflict with government departments? Which authorities? How did it happen? How was it resolved?
 - Do you have any other channels of Christian teaching apart from that which you receive at church?
 - Many years ago, it was said: 'One more Christian, one fewer Chinese.' What is your opinion on this saying?
 - In your opinion, what contribution can Christianity make to China?
 - In your opinion, what can contribution can Chinese Christians make to the world church?

Appendix 5: Respondent sheet

Ref: _____ [Space to write interview code]

A.

For each of the groups below, to what extent do you trust them? (Please tick X)

	Totally distrust	Trust a little bit	Averagely trust	Mostly trust	Totally trust	No opinion
Colleagues						
Family						
Government						
Christians						
Media						
Strangers						
Friends						
Non-believers ⁷³⁹						
Acquaintances						

B.

With whose opinion do you agree the most (please tick):

- The world is mostly a good place.
- The world is mostly a bad place.
- The world has its good bits and its bad bits.

Regarding this world, with whose opinion do you agree the most (please tick):

- We should escape from it.
- We should improve it.
- We should be satisfied with it.

⁷³⁹ defined as those not believing in any religion.

C.

Please tick:

	Who is responsible for dealing with the following situations?			In the past 5 years, which of the following situations have got better, and which have got worse?		
	Individuals	Government	Other groups and organisations	Better	Worse	Same
Your own living conditions (Income, housing etc.)						
Your own social status (Work position, etc.) ⁷⁴⁰						
Law & order						
Healthcare						
Education						
Environmental protection						
The condition of the elderly						
Transport						
Inequality ⁷⁴¹						
Corruption						
The legal system						

D

In each of the following questions, with whose opinion do you agree with the most (please tick)?⁷⁴²

7. Mr Ma believes that multi-candidate elections are the best way of selecting government leaders. Mr Ding believes that appointment or single-candidate elections are a more suitable way of choosing government leaders.⁷⁴³
8. Teacher Xu believes that organisations which are independent of the government and the CCP can help build a better, more stable, society and should not be subject to too many restrictions; Teacher Wu believes that this kind of

⁷⁴⁰ Questions 1 and 2 draw on Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*. pp.109-110, who bifurcates 'satisfaction' into these two aspects.

⁷⁴¹ This list draws on Ibid., pp.37-49.

⁷⁴² These indices of liberalism in part draw on Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. p.95, questions C8_d and C8_g.

⁷⁴³ This draws on Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*. p.35: 'Elections to governmental positions should be conducted in such a way that there is more than one candidate for each post.'

organisation could pose a threat to social stability and so should be subject to strict regulation.

9. Mrs Liang believes that people who hold dangerous political opinions have forfeited their rights; Mrs Zhang believes that whatever their political opinions, all individuals have the same rights.⁷⁴⁴
10. Mr Liu believes that people's private property is inviolable, and should be protected by the government; Mr Gao believes that if it provides compensation, the government can appropriate it for its own use.⁷⁴⁵
11. Mr Wang believes that people should be able to express their opinions via the media; Mr Li believes that expressing these opinions may endanger social stability, so they should be restricted.
12. Mrs Zhou believes that China's economy relies too much on the free market, and that the government should not attempt to carry out further market reforms. Mrs Jing believes that China's economy relies too much on state-owned enterprises, and that the government should institute further economic reforms.⁷⁴⁶

E.⁷⁴⁷

Some people hold opinions that other people believe are dangerous or evil. For example:

Someone who is opposed to all religious belief

A racist

Someone who believes that the country should be ruled by the military

A Tibetan separatist

Someone who wants to promote gay marriage

3. If this person expresses their opinion on the internet or on Weibo, should what they have written be deleted?
4. Should this person be allowed to teach at a university?
(Please write Y for 'Yes', N for 'No'.)

	Delete from the internet?	Allow to teach at university?
Someone who is opposed to all religious belief		
A racist		
Someone who believes that the country should		

⁷⁴⁴ This draws on Ibid. p.35.: 'Regardless of one's political beliefs, he or she is entitled to the same rights and protections as anyone else.'

⁷⁴⁵ This is based on "Constitution of the People's Republic of China," accessed July 11, 2014, http://english.gov.cn/2005-08/05/content_20813.htm., Article 13 and its amended form (in Amendment Four, Approved on March 14, 2004, by the 10th NPC at its 2nd Session).

⁷⁴⁶ This draws on Tang's questions regarding reform Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*., pp.59-70.

⁷⁴⁷ This question is based on the US General Social Survey, quoted in Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. pp.480-481.

be ruled by the military		
A Tibetan separatist		
Someone who wants to promote gay marriage		

F.

With whose opinion do you agree more: Mr Fang says China's current political system is very good and should not be changed. Mr Sun says that the political system is not ideal and should be changed, but now it's too early [to change it]. Mr Yin says that the political system is not good and should be changed.⁷⁴⁸

G.

With whose opinion do you agree more: Miss Yang says that to love the country is to love the Party. Miss Hao says that you can love the country, but it does not mean you have to love the Party.⁷⁴⁹

H.

With whose opinion do you agree more: Mr Fu thinks that America is China's enemy, [and that] it is a country that wants to obstruct China's rise. Mr Guo thinks that America is China's ally, [and that] it is an indispensable partner in international economic and political co-operation.

I.

With whose opinion do you agree more: Mr Zhu says that they should pay a price for their past atrocities against China. Mr Cai says that these things happened many years ago, now China should forgive Japan.

J.

With whose opinion do you agree more: Mrs Yu says China can learn from the West's cultural and historical experiences. Mrs Zhou says China should not try to learn from the West, but should instead learn from China's own cultural and historical experiences.

K.

With whose opinion do you agree more: Teacher Deng says that ordinary people are able to influence political decision-making if they express their opinions, so they

⁷⁴⁸ This draws on question E6 asked by Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. p.94: 'do you think the current single-party system should be changed? Possible responses were (0) should be changed, (1) is irrelevant if life is good, (2) no alternative so status quo, and (3) is very good and should continue.'

⁷⁴⁹ See Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*. p.107; Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*. p.95, q. C8_h.

should therefore express their opinions. Teacher Jia says that ordinary people have no influence, so there is no use in expressing one's opinions.⁷⁵⁰

L.

I would now like to ask you some questions about your participation in political activity. I should point out that some people who have engaged in some of the following political activities have been prosecuted by the government. Therefore, if you do not want to answer these questions, you do not have to; we can stop here. and it will not be a problem.

- iii. In the past 12 months have you:
- a. Voted in an election?
 - b. Made a complaint to your superiors at work?
 - c. Written a letter or email to a government official?
 - d. Complained to higher authorities?
 - e. Taken part in a strike?
 - f. Taken part in a demonstration?
 - g. Written a letter or email to a newspaper or magazine?
 - h. Written an online BBS post expressing a political view?
 - i. Filed a lawsuit?
 - j. Participated in public affairs via some other method?⁷⁵¹

⁷⁵⁰ This draws upon Ibid. p.95: "people like us can affect social development as long as we often voice our opinions" (question C8_a) and "ordinary people can affect government decision making" (question C8_b)'.
⁷⁵¹ This list is an abbreviated and updated version of the one in, Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing*. Table 3.1, p.94.

Interview data and Bibliography

Interview data

Names of respondents have been replaced with codes for confidentiality.

IV = Beijing interview

C = Christian group,

SIV = Shenzhen interview

N = Comparison group.

Beijing

IVC011 (Summer, 2011)	IVC011212 (Autumn, 2011)	IVN101 (Spring, 2012)
IVC0112 (Summer, 2011)	IVC011213 (Autumn, 2011)	IVN102 (Spring, 2012)
IVC02 (Summer, 2011)	IVC011221 (Autumn, 2011)	IVN103 (Spring, 2012)
IVC03 (Summer, 2011)	IVC0112111 (Autumn, 2011)	IVN1021 (Spring, 2012)
IVC031 (Autumn, 2011)	IVC0112131 (Autumn, 2011)	IVN11 (Spring, 2012)
IVC04 (Summer, 2011)	IVC0112132 (Winter, 2012)	IVN112 (Spring, 2012)
IVC041 (Summer, 2011)	IVC0112133 (Winter, 2012)	IVN121 (Spring, 2012)
IVC04b (Autumn, 2011)	IVN01 (Summer, 2011)	IVN1221 (Spring, 2012)
IVC04b1 (Winter, 2012)	IVN04 (Summer, 2011)	IVN13a (Spring, 2012)
IVC04b2 (Winter, 2012)	IVN04b1b (Winter, 2012)	IVN13b (Spring, 2012)
IVC04b3 (Autumn, 2011)	IVN04b1b1 (Spring, 2012)	IVN14a (Spring, 2012)
IVC05 (Autumn, 2011)	IVN09 (Spring, 2012)	IVN14b (Spring, 2012)
IVC06 (Autumn, 2011)	IVN091 (Spring, 2012)	IVN14c (Spring, 2012)
IVC01111 (Summer, 2011)	IVN092 (Spring, 2012)	IVN14d (Spring, 2012)
IVC01121 (Summer, 2011)	IVN0921 (Spring, 2012)	IVN14e (Spring, 2012)
IVC01122 (Summer, 2011)	IVN09211 (Spring, 2012)	
IVC011211 (Autumn, 2011)	IVN10 (Spring, 2012)	

Shenzhen

SIVC01a (Spring, 2012)	SIVC06a (Summer, 2012)	SIVN06aa11 (Summer, 2012)
SIVC01b (Summer, 2012)	SIVC06b (Summer, 2012)	SIVN06a (Summer, 2012)
SIVC01b1 (Summer, 2012)	SIVC06c (Summer, 2012)	SIVN06c (Summer, 2012)
SIVC01b2 (Summer, 2012)	SIVC06b1 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN06a1 (Summer, 2012)
SIVC01b3 (Summer, 2012)	SIVC06c1 (Autumn, 2012)	SIVN06a11 (Summer, 2012)
SIVC01b11 (Summer, 2012)	SIVC07b (Summer, 2012)	SIVN08 (Summer, 2012)
SIVC01b12 (Summer, 2012)	SIVC07c1 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN081 (Summer, 2012)
SIVC01b111 (Summer, 2012)	SIVC07b1 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN082 (Summer, 2012)
SIVC01b112 (Summer, 2012)	SIVC09d1 (Autumn, 2012)	SIVN083 (Autumn, 2012)
SIVC01b113 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN02a (Spring, 2012)	SIVN09a (Autumn, 2012)
SIVC01b1111 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN02a1 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN09b (Autumn, 2012)
SIVC01b1121 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN02a2 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN09c (Autumn, 2012)
SIVC01b21 (Autumn, 2012)	SIVN03 (Spring, 2012)	SIVN09d (Autumn, 2012)
SIVC01c (Summer, 2012)	SIVN04 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN09a1 (Autumn, 2012)
SIVC01c1 (Autumn, 2012)	SIVN05 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN09d1 (Autumn, 2012)
SIVC01c2 (Autumn, 2012)	SIVN06aa1 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN09d2 (Autumn, 2012)
SIVC01c21 (Autumn, 2012)	SIVN06aa2 (Summer, 2012)	SIVN09d12 (Autumn, 2012)

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