Neoliberal Governmentality and Neohumanism: Organizing Suzhi/Value Flow through Labor Recruitment Networks

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> Labor export is a social university *[shehui daxue]* that improves the quality *[suzhi]* of peasants in all respects.
>
> —Jin Yuanju, *Anhui Daily,* 1998

> It is a form of mutual aid between two sides: you [migrant women] can help some [urban] families on the one hand and get rid of your poverty on the other.
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> —Director of a domestic workers' recruitment agency (author's field notes, 1999).

On a hot afternoon in July 1999 in the northern city of Tianjin, a dozen or so young rural women are gathered inside a small waiting room of the municipal Family Service Company. Sitting on a narrow wooden staircase or standing with their bodies leaning against each other, they are waiting for urban families to employ them as domestics. Outside, in the courtyard, more women seek refuge in the shade as they too wait to be called. The room occupied by the waiting women connects to an air-conditioned office through a sliding glass door, which remains closed to keep out both the heat and the women waiting outside. Through its glass panes, however, the office staff inside keep an eye on the women whom the manager privately refers to as "smelly hicks" *(lao ta'er).*

Following the staircase up to the third floor, one can find the office of the general manager. Here the new wooden floor is smooth and gleaming. An air conditioner works quietly in one corner of the room, the abundant coolness in the office testifying to its power. On the wall facing the manager hang several red silk banners awarded for good performance by the municipal government and the city branch of the All China Women's Federation under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. The office is very quiet.

This Family Service Company, the largest among two hundred or so in the city of Tianjin, is officially attached to the Women's Federation although it is financially responsible for its own profits and losses.[1] However, in view of its

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hybrid private/public character, the company is expected not only to be economically profitable *(jingji xiaoyi),* it is also expected to achieve a "social effect" *(shehui xiaoyi)*: the migrant women who find employment there will rid themselves of poverty and develop their *suzhi* (quality), while also serving an important social service in easing the housework burden of the urban families who employ them. Suzhi, for which "quality" is in many respect an inadequate translation, refers to the somewhat ephemeral qualities of civility, self-discipline, and modernity. As I argue below, suzhi marks a sense and sensibility of the self's value in the market economy. As such, it is often used in the negative by the post-Mao state and educational elites to point to the lack of quality of the Chinese laboring masses. Improving the suzhi of China's massive population has become vitally important in the planning of governing elites for China to become a competitive player in the field of global capital. Organizations such as this labor recruitment company facilitate the exchange of labor for poverty relief and suzhi improvement. They are therefore a critical link in the transfer of value from one value domain (economic surplus value) to another (the embodiment of cultural capital).

This article analyzes the phantasmatic production of suzhi as a new ontological valuation and abstraction of human subjectivity through examining the linkages among poverty-relief campaigns, labor migration, and development.[2] I make three arguments linking value, the predication of the subject, and governmentality. First, this new valorization and abstraction of human consciousness for market and development mirrors the valorization and abstraction of human labor in commodity production. In *Capital,* Marx analyzes that a commodity "has value only because abstract human labor is objectified *[vergegenständlicht]* or materialized in it" (1977:129). Although labor is simultaneously individual, concrete, heterogeneous, social, and abstract, value is the abstracted and homogenized human labor expended in production, a radical reduction of heterogeneity to equivalence through abstraction. The subsumption of labor to capital in capitalism enables the dominance of abstraction and reduction of labor articulated through the universal equivalent: the money form of value (Elson 1979:164–165).[3] I argue, therefore, that the emergence of the notion of suzhi marks a subsumption of human subjectivity to the discourse of development and is an abstraction and reduction of heterogeneous human subjectivities into a presumed universal equivalence: Suzhi is a value articulation of human subjectivity. Second, this valorization and fetishization effects an "idealist predication of the subject" while rendering a "materialist predication of the subject" less visible (Spivak 1988)—the two are, in fact, contending interpretations of who produces the wealth of society and what fuels development. More specifically, I examine how the cultural production of the post-Mao concept of suzhi is central to the economic production of surplus value extracted from rural migrant workers and how suzhi functions as an intangible operator in the labor contract. The domination of suzhi facilitates exploitation *and* makes it invisible. Third, the promotion and deployment of the suzhi discourse is central to a neoliberal governmentality that has rearticulated the relationship

between the state, market, and, subjectivity in a formation that could be called neohumanism, as I elaborate below.

Suzhi as Value Coding: Discovering Suzhi Poverty

The centrality of suzhi as a post-Mao discursive figure can be demonstrated by Chinese President Jiang Zeming's 1997 report at the 15th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. He called for "cultivating millions of high-suzhi laborers and skilled technicians to meet the demands of modernization."[4] The 15th Congress was a highly significant landmark in China's drive toward a market economy, as it elevated the private sector to the same level as the state sector in the "socialist market economy." Suzhi perhaps first arose in the early 1980s in the context of the post-Mao eugenics discourse of "superior birth and nurture" *(yousheng youyu).* Stringent population planning has zoomed in on the rural population as an object of intense anxiety for political and intellectual elites. In this light, the rural population appears as a tumorous mass—large in quantity and low in quality—encumbering the national body that strives to join the world of global capital through its policies of "reform and opening" *(gaige kaifang).*[5] The image of abject poverty among rural households, further burdened by "too many" children, marks rural people not only as low-quality and intractable, lacking modern civility and discipline, but perhaps, more importantly, they are seen as lacking a *consciousness* of development that the post-Mao Chinese state has been striving to foster. In the idealist predication of human subjectivity as "the intendedness of the subject toward the object" (Spivak 1988:154), the object here is "development," the desire for which propels the rural migrant to the city as waged labor.

Throughout the previous two decades of reform, suzhi has permeated official as well as everyday speech. For example, one constantly hears statements such as "we must urgently improve the suzhi of the Chinese population." The low suzhi of peasants is so frequently invoked that a reader complained in a letter to the editor of the nationally distributed newspaper *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern Weekend), "the low suzhi of peasants has become an excuse for many things not getting done or not getting done well" (Xiaoyong 1999). Yet despite his complaint, the letter does not argue with the deeply entrenched premise that peasant suzhi needs improvement.[6] An article in a prestigious party magazine (Liu 1996) suggests a more sympathetic view of the rural population, making the point that peasants were the foundation of Chinese civilization and should be treated as the basis for planning development. However, by the end of this article, the author returns from his reverie on the glorious historical achievements of China's peasantry to speak in a more pragmatic tone: "But [we] must admit that, generally speaking, the suzhi of Chinese peasantry is not high. The grave concern is to educate the peasantry. And this adage should be applied to the fullest extent to include all political, economic, and cultural aspects" (1996:41). The lesson to be drawn from history and the current reality is that the peasantry should not be despised as the antithesis of Development, but that they should be placed at the very center of policies directed

toward Development. In this essay *Development* with a capital D refers to the ideology and practices of a developmentalism advocated and promulgated by organizations of North-dominated international capital, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.[7] The ascent of promarket developmentalism has empowered it to become a forceful ideology in state-orchestrated reforms transforming social and economic life at all levels of Chinese society.

Despite its central importance in the discourse of Development, what suzhi *is* eludes precise definition. At a national conference in 1987, scholars disagreed on its exact meaning, but were able to propose four alternative definitions (Li 1988). The first of these divided suzhi into "hardware," or embodied physical quality, and "software," which referred to a wide-range of cultural qualities *(wenhua suzhi),* including psychological quality *(xinli suzhi)* and quality of consciousness *(sixiang suzhi).* The other three proposals offered no fewer than three alternative sets of categories that could be used to evaluate population quality. Despite all this mental labor, the meaning of suzhi remains undefinable. Nonetheless, the conference report states authoritatively that "suzhi [however defined] is for the most part higher in the city than in the countryside, higher in Han areas than in minority areas, higher in the economically advanced areas than in backward areas" (Li 1988:60). On the international level, the commonly heard view is that "the quality of the Chinese as a whole is too low!"[8] And populations in the developed First World have higher suzhi than those in the Third World. What suzhi is, therefore, appears to be most confidently stated in terms of a "differential!"

The phrase "for the most part" in the above statement reveals the hegemonic status of this truth claim. However, this statement betrays a strange logic. The use of suzhi as the key to understanding China's "backwardness"—in particular, the low level of "development" in rural and minority areas—is, in the final analysis, measured and indexed in terms of economic Development. Attempts to define suzhi in this way are, it would seem, tautological. The telos of Development appears at the origin—as the lack of Development—to explicate and reaffirm Development as the endpoint of a necessary process. Such a circular movement gives to the origin a similar ontological status as that granted to the end. Suzhi is, therefore, nothing more (nor less) than Development's phantom child. As Development hardens as the "indisputable truth" *(ying daoli)* that reorients postsocialist China toward global capitalism;[9] suzhi has likewise solidified its substantiality in the social space. It becomes an indisputable mapping of the demographic and cultural landscape that explains various levels of Development in the political imaginary of the Dengist state. The teleological promise of Development to improve the suzhi of the Chinese masses masks this tautological relationship. It hides the politico-historical processes that have produced the *difference* between "developed" and "underdeveloped" areas, the "First World" and the "Third World," and the differentiation of the "Four Worlds" emerging within the Chinese nation-space.[10]

The efforts to treat suzhi as an object for scientific analysis, exemplified by this national conference, presume that suzhi has a substantive existence.

The project of analysis is thus a positivist social scientific endeavor of classification and measurement, representing suzhi as a quantifiable materiality, despite its apparently undefinable character. The most quantifiable index of suzhi is, perhaps, the "valuing" of embodied labor through wages. Such a representation and measurement of human subjectivity through suzhi is achieved through the processes of abstraction and radical suppression of heterogeneity existing among individuals and populations, much as "value" operates as an abstraction and reduction of the radical heterogeneity of concrete and individual aspects of labor. Other articulations and quantifications of suzhi include various kinds of psychological and practical ability tests and IQ tests offered by popular magazines.[11] Beginning in 1995, schools (both public and private) and universities have been revising their curriculum for suzhi education *(suzhi jiaoyu).*[12] For example, Nanjing Normal University now issues a suzhi diploma in addition to its regular academic diploma to enhance opportunities for their graduates in the job market (Xinhua 1999a).[13] What such practices suggest is that the development of suzhi is a project that is by no means limited to rural people but is a general project for improving the quality of the population as a whole, although clearly operating at different levels of socioeconomic privilege, not to mention its packaging as a profitable commodity. In June 1999, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council issued "A Resolution to Deepen Education Reform and Push Forward Suzhi Education on All Fronts." The opening statement of this resolution reads as follows:

> In today's world, science and technology are progressing by leaps and bounds; a knowledge economy *[zhishi jingji]* is emerging; global competition for national strength is increasingly fierce. Education is fundamental to the comprehensive formation of national strength, which is increasingly measured by the suzhi of workers and on the development of a talented human resources pool. This places a more urgent demand on educating and training the new generation for the 21st century. [Xinhua 1999b]

According to the text of this resolution, educational infrastructure and methods lag behind the new demands being made on them and therefore "cannot meet the need for improving the quality of the national population *[guomin suzhi].*"[14] Yet even amidst all the fanfare surrounding educational reform policies to improve suzhi, once again, no definitive meaning is given. A rhyming couplet popular among educators captures the "catch-all" nature of suzhi by suggesting that "suzhi education is a basket into which anything can be put [suzhi jiaoyu shi ge kuang, shenmo dou keyi wang li zhuang]." However, despite its undefinability, the notion of suzhi thrives as a social fact,[15] provoking measurement and quantification.

I argue that the phantasmatic production of suzhi is a new valuation of human subjectivity specific to China's neoliberal reforms. Its specific deployment as a form of value coding inscribes, measures, and mobilizes human subjectivity as the powerhouse for productivity and Development. In Gilles

Deleuze and Felix Guattari's conceptualization, a code establishes relations among "incommensurable flows of different qualities" and "expresses the apparent objective movement according to which the economic forces or productive connections are attributed to an extra-economic instance as though they emanated from it, an instance that serves as a support and an agent of inscription" (1983:247).

The invention of suzhi as value coding establishes a seemingly improbable translation or a transvaluation between human subjectivity, culture, and consciousness on the one hand and the rate of Development on the other hand.[16] It reterritorializes consciousness and culture into the sphere of Development and holds them directly responsible for unleashing its forces. As suzhi evaluates heterogeneous human subjectivities in terms of their capacity for Development, human subjectivity acquires the character of value (worth) and is coded as such. As the late leader Deng Xiaoping's words already attest: "The national strength and the stamina of economic development more and more depend on the suzhi of the laborers" (Zeng 1989:165). As I argue below, this reification of human subjectivity is an idealist move!

The notion of suzhi, applied most frequently to the peasantry and rural migrants, is central to the production of "new peasants" *(xin nongmin)* as the subjects of Development beginning in the 1980s.[17] These "new peasants" first took the form of rural households designated as "specialized households" *(zhuanye hu)* who, emerging as private commodity producers in the dismantling of the rural collectives, were willing to specialize in production of a single commodity for the market. In the early 1980s, when market mechanisms were first being developed, many "specialized households" were among the group able to "get rich first" *(xian fuqilai),* functioning as showcases for the achievements of the decollectivization of the rural economy.[18] In 1983, the *People's Daily,* the most important Party newspaper at the national level, commended the "new peasants" for their "commodity consciousness" *(shangpin yishi)* and for "having broken away from the ideological bind of small peasant self-sufficiency and recasting their gaze from their small plot of land to the vast market inside the country and abroad" (Zi 1983). The task of the party leadership at all levels was to set the peasantry on the path to the market through ideological campaigns and policy designs and to lead, push, and pull the peasantry from being "small producers" to becoming "commodity producers" in the market economy.

Yet the campaign to lead the peasantry to market seems a very arduous task of transforming their antimarket, "traditional," and "feudal" consciousness, which is perceived as deep-rooted among peasants in backward areas, "severely prevent[ing] the development of a commodity economy" (Xue 1986). The *Anhui Daily,* a provincial-level Party newspaper, points out six manifestations of this traditional feudal consciousness: (1) viewing wealth and commercial activity as morally dubious; (2) contentment with merely having sufficient food and clothing and therefore not interested in innovation and competition; (3) egalitarian *(pingjun zhuyi)* sentiments that encourage the expropriation of wealth *(chi dahu),* striking fear in those who get rich first;[19] (4) small peasant

self-sufficiency that directs surplus income to the sphere of household life and festivities rather than using it to expand production; (5) a clan consciousness that favors nepotism and the hiring of incompetent relatives; (6) gambling and superstitious belief in deities and ghosts (Xue 1986).

The logic that collapses, unifies, and inscribes these diverse beliefs and practices as aspects of a "traditional feudal" consciousness is that they all act as impediments to the development of a modern commodity economy. These beliefs and practices are represented as facing backward and as not yet epistemologically advanced to the modern. It bypasses any possibility that some of them may be "forward-looking" expressions of grievance and resistance against effects of the market economy.[20] The invocation of "feudal" here is a strategy that justifies the need for liberalization and enlightenment and thus calls on the market economy as the cure, never as a problem.

In 1992, in a newspaper article entitled "Leading the Peasants to Market," Wang Zhaoyao, the party secretary of Fuyang Prefecture in northwest Anhui, which is one of the more "backward" areas in the province, took pride in the local achievement of a well-established network for commodity circulation in which the "peasantry revolves around the market and the market revolves around prices." He described this as an important lesson from his experiences of governance: "A great deal of practice has revealed to us that only by pushing peasants to market and developing a rural market economy can there be an all-round economic development and prosperity" (Z. Wang 1992).

Wang's view was echoed by many headlines appearing in the provincial Party newspaper throughout the 1980s and 1990s on the transformation of peasant consciousness in connection with the market economy.[21] In the words of the head of Lixing county, Cheng Fengjun (1996), on the "correct handling of the relationship with the peasantry," the number one task for the government is to connect the peasantry to the market "in a thousand and one ways *[qian-fang baiji]*." These "thousand and one" pushes and pulls exerted on the peasantry to bring them to market is a process of reterritorializing the peasantry into the spheres of Market and Development. The "new peasants" are constructed as subjects of the market who, having developed a commodity consciousness, have advanced on the path of Development by producing for the market.

In the face of widespread rural poverty, the discourse of Development sponsored by the party state and the elite is unable to grasp how continuing poverty is integral to the process of marketization and how coastal cities and enterprises of all capital forms build their economic success on the backs of interior rural areas that supply cheap resources and labor. Instead, the discourse transforms this problem of continuing poverty by recoding it, signaled by two neologisms: *wenhua fuping* (cultural poverty relief) and *suzhi fuping* (suzhi poverty relief). These strategies of poverty relief are commended by government officials and the official media as a theoretical breakthrough and "a vital reform in our country's poverty-relief strategy" (*Anhui Daily* 1998). In a seminar

attended by Anhui provincial leaders and researchers from cosmopolitan Shanghai, a research report states:

> Poverty is not just caused by poverty in material resources but is more importantly caused by poverty in social resources *[shehui ziyuan],* that is, poverty in the cultural level of society *[shehui wenhua].* The bottom line is this: Poverty ultimately is caused by poverty in "human subjectivity" itself *[ren zishen de pingkun].*[22] To be thoroughly rid of poverty, our poverty-relief strategies have to undergo a fundamental transformation from assisting poverty *[fuping]* to assisting human subjectivity *[furen]* and implement the strategy of "cultural poverty relief." [*Anhui Daily* 1998]

Through this recoding of the problem of poverty, not only are culture and subjectivity reterritorialized into the field of Development, but they are now placed at the very center as the object for improvement, as they are held directly responsible for holding back economic forces. This new poverty-relief strategy also reconfigures "cultural work" at a time when local state-sponsored cultural stations find themselves in deep crisis with the disjunctures of the reform-era social transition.[23] A newspaper commentary, such as "Today's Culture, Tomorrow's Economy," written by the chief of a cultural station in a small urban area, highlights the ability of "cultural work" to contribute to building a culture of Development (Yu 1995). In the context of the economic transition, this author, having described the desolation of cultural work in terms of dramatic cuts in government funding and the corresponding declines in cultural workers' morale and public recognition, ponders how to redefine the function of cultural work so that it can be linked with the market economy. This question is an indication more generally of how officials and intellectuals working in the cultural sphere are trying to recast the function of cultural work within the market economy so that it too can contribute to the development of the local economy and yield a profit.[24] Cultural work and Development are thereby linked—today's culture *(wenhua),* as a "noun of process" (Williams 1983:87), will unleash forces for tomorrow's Development. The goal of cultural work is to "shed the light of modern civilization on every rural corner . . . to improve the general suzhi of the peasantry" (Wu Yongyun 1997).

The new poverty-relief strategies of the 1990s therefore push the function of suzhi to yet a higher level of idealism. In this deployment of suzhi, idealism is undergirded by positivism. "Cultural poverty relief" is to generate a desire for Development in the consciousness of the peasantry. Development is now conceived as something that should not come from the top down but should be internally generated. This shift is subtly expressed as no longer requiring rural people, as the passive recipients of government aid, to leave poverty *(yao wo tuoping)* but to act on their own desire to leave poverty *(wo yao tuoping)*—from being the object of poverty-relief actions to becoming the subject. This project of producing these desiring subjects is aptly described by one newspaper commentary as "producing [new] human beings" *(zao ren)* (*The Anhui Daily* 1995).[25] Thus the transformation of consciousness is now the key to

solving the problem of Development. It is this discursive link between suzhi, poverty relief, and Development that mobilizes the peasant subject for labor migration to the city.

Suzhi/Value Flow: Suzhi as an "Intangible Operator" in the Labor Contract

Beginning from the 1990s, the massive movement of 100 million migrant laborers has come to be seen by local governments in the sending provinces as a quick means for poverty relief. The benefits of migration encompass not just the money remittances sent home but also the accumulation of suzhi for those who leave ultimately to return after years of labor in the city. Using Wuwei County of Anhui Province as an example, it is estimated that about 230,000 migrants earned about 326 yuan (approx. US$41) per person per month in 1997. Domestics earn about the average monthly income among migrants.[26]

In terms of suzhi, migration brings benefits that cannot be measured in money terms—it effects a transformation from a "traditional" to a "modern" subjectivity producing a power for Development that has been compared by some analysts to the power released by "nuclear fission" (Jin 1998)! The spectacle of migrants driving back from Beijing to Wuwei County for the lunar New Year in over a hundred private cars provides a stunning materialization of this power. As noted by one commentary, "labor migration enables a transformation of peasants from the despised 'hick bumpkin' *[tu laomao]* to HUMAN writ large *[da xie de ren]* in those who have truly realized their full value as human beings" (Jin 1998). This idea of "full value" registers the idea of "the human" as a latent potentiality that can be newly exploited as a frontier of neoliberal capital accumulation.

Because of this promising transformation into HUMAN writ large, labor mobility is celebrated as the third liberation of the peasantry. The first of these was the 1949 national liberation, which carried out the Maoist land reform *(tu gai)* in the countryside, and the second was the post-Mao reform beginning in 1978, which broke up the rural communes and established household-based land use and production. The Dengist negation of Maoist collective farming, carried out in the name of liberating the productive forces *(jiefang shengchanli)* from the fetters of the collective economy, ushered in the transition of the People's Republic of China from a Maoist development state and its collectivist values to the Dengist neoliberal state with its market-oriented policies. In the post-Mao culture of modernity, prosperous and bustling cities are seen as a "comprehensive social university" *(shehui zonghe daxue)* in which millions of peasants can go to develop their suzhi at no cost to the state, requiring no investment! With the erosion of basic education in the rural areas as a consequence of the dismantling of rural collectives and the retreat from the state in discharging its responsibilities to education,[27] migration is celebrated as a substitute to fill the void. The hopeful vision of migrants transformed by the experience in the city returning home with a small fund of accumulated capital, the latest market information, and internalized principles of the market motivates

local governments to see migrants as akin to "students studying abroad" *(liu xuesheng)* (Sun 1995), mirroring the idealized accumulation of suzhi through transnational mobility to the West that is available only to the educated elite.

My examination below of labor recruitment attempts to bring into view how the accumulation of suzhi functions as an "intangible operator" in the labor contract and how the extraction of surplus value is both eclipsed and facilitated by the coding of labor mobility as suzhi mobility. Here I connect back to my description of the Family Service Company in Tianjin. When established in 1992, this company made a great effort to advertise its services through local media (radio, TV, and local newspapers) both in Tianjin to attract urban customers and in poor rural counties, to attract women migrants. The director spoke of these efforts not as a commercial activity but as a form of "social education" *(shehui jiaoyu)* that would bring order to the labor market. From the view of urban clients, the focus of this "social education" was on the labor security and social stability that this company promised to provide by replacing the "black" labor market, the illegality of which is defined by its lying outside the regulative control of the urban government, by a more dependable labor source. Before the establishment of this company, there was a large underground labor market. Hundreds of migrants used to gather in the open space underneath the bridge pilings in the city looking for employment. This unregulated labor market has become associated with social disorder and criminality.[28] In such places, migrants bargain with employers over wages in an unequal relationship of power. Abusive treatment and labor conflicts between buyers and sellers of labor power have no formal means of redress, resulting in desperate measures of revenge and retaliation. In recent years, a number of abductions and murders have been associated with the informal labor market. There were also cases of migrant women who were physically abused by their employers or not paid for their labor, as well as cases in which employers were robbed. To urban citizens, the labor recruitment company promised to provide an organized, "clean," sustainable, and reliable source of labor power.

The cleanliness and security of this labor source is guaranteed by mass recruitment directly at the site of origin by the local labor bureau or more often by the local Women's Federation as a branch office of a nationwide network. "Cleanliness" refers here to whether a domestic has "clean hands and feet" *(shoujiao ganjing)*, referring to whether she has been known to steal or embezzle. But employers also desire young women from interior rural areas as a "clean sheet of paper" *(yizhang baizhi)* who are supposed to be unknowing and more malleable than experienced migrants. The image of the "clean sheet" is connected with its earlier reference to Maoist refashionings of China's citizenry as socialist subjects committed to collective endeavor. Now, however, its original meaning has been stood on its head—one of the many such conceptual somersaults of the post-Mao era that recycle earlier ideological formulations, making them generate new meanings for use in new mobilizations in a market economy. Yet I cannot help thinking of this labor recruitment at the origin as also evoking the "bottled-at-the-source" practice of natural water companies.

The analogy between the commodity of pure bottled water and the commodity of clean labor power goes a long way both literally and metaphorically: after recruitment these women are always escorted by one or two of their county's Women's Federation cadres, crossing hundreds or thousands of kilometers to urban labor markets.[29] They are hand-delivered to the company and their urban clients who consume these women's "fresh" labor power. In contrast to official and popular representations of rural-to-urban labor migration as a "blind flow" *(mangliu)*, this regulated stream of migrant women is bottled at the source. Following a securely channeled flow, the bottled water and bottled labor are not contaminated by suspect influences. Yet once they have acquired urban experience as domestics (in fact, realizing their anticipated development as knowing subjects), these women are viewed as no longer pure, trainable, uncontaminated labor and therefore are no longer desirable.[30] The image of drawing young women from interior rural areas as pure water from its source paradoxically portends their own eventual disposability.

The company also advertises and encourages sustainability and security of the labor power by awarding "good domestic workers." In the first two years of its establishment, the company, emulating the status honors of the Maoist period, selected "good domestic workers" and "good employers" and held ceremonies once a year as part of its publicity effort. A big family service company in Beijing, also attached to its municipal Women's Federation, carries on this evaluation every year, but in this case, only evaluates and selects "good domestic workers" and not employers.[31] An important criterion for a "good domestic worker" in both Tianjin and Beijing is that she must have performed sustained work for one family for at least one year, which means, in the words of the director, "she has staying power" *(neng dai zhu le)*. "Without this criterion, the whole selection would have been meaningless," the director in Tianjin stated matter-of-factly. The ability to stick it out with an employer therefore becomes a necessary measure of the desirability of migrant labor bottled at its source. Urban households of the rising middle class rely on the adaptability and docility of migrant women. However, the longer they stay in the city, the more knowing they become and the more likely they are to quit or change jobs due to homesickness or dissatisfaction with their working conditions.

Moreover, thanks to its affiliation with the nationwide network of the Women's Federation, the labor recruitment company can also attest to the security of its labor flow: a migrant's whereabouts—should she suddenly abandon her contract and her urban employer—can be traced. This ability to keep tabs on workers supplements the public security gap left by the loosening of the Maoist household registration system and eases the anxiety over the rootlessness of migrant labor and its potential to create social disorder. This company prides itself on not having had any serious mishap since its establishment. A telling example testing the security of the labor source system was a recent incident in which a migrant woman disappeared with her employer's beeper and mobile phone. The company had a record showing that her home was in Henan Province and that she had been employed not by a family but by the

owner of a small restaurant. I was told that the woman worked in the restaurant for some days and felt it "was unsuitable *[bu heshi]* for her." So she left suddenly, taking her employer's beeper and mobile phone with her.[32] The company contacted the Women's Federation cadre of the woman's home county who had accompanied her group to Tianjin. The county-level office had a record of the township and village origins of all its migrants and the errant woman was quickly located. With the help of the women's cadre in her township, the young woman was found at home with the beeper and mobile phone intact. The issue was thus settled with the employer's property returned, the integrity of the company restored, and very likely the woman's local reputation irredeemably damaged.[33]

Yet the effort to channel clean and secure labor resources to urban households is not an easy task when labor bureaus or the Women's Federation in some counties are unwilling to collaborate. Wuwei is a case in point. As I was told by a labor bureau cadre in Wuwei:

> There have been many incidents *[chushi]* with migrants in the cities. . . . If they are paid too poorly, given bad food or lodging, bullied, or bad things happen to them, they or their parents would come to us when we were still involved in organizing their migration. But we really could not follow through on these problems— now it is a market economy. So, if they go on their own, they take their own risk. We will not be blamed.

Since the establishment of the economic reforms in 1978, Wuwei became one of the earliest areas to send rural women as migrant laborers for domestic service in the cities. This movement grew rapidly through a snowball effect involving kinship and village-based networks. The local labor bureaus and Women's Federation know that without being able to provide better jobs at the destination or extending certain protections against abuse, they cannot compete with the informal kinship or village networks that migrants can turn to for aid.[34]

The labor recruitment companies in both Tianjin and Beijing have found themselves in the position of having to find their labor supply in poorer and more isolated areas, where there are fewer communally based networks for migration. But this presents yet another problem, as the manager in the Tianjin company complained, "The poorer an area, the more conservative the people. The problem is their unwillingness to come out." On hearing this, a U.S.-trained economist was puzzled, "But don't they want the money?" The company's field recruiters, were not, however, defeated by this lack of desire. In order to make rural women desire migration, even greater efforts are required to incite the subject's "intendedness towards the object!" Local television and radio stations were mobilized to publicize the benefits of migration. Here is where the linkage between Development and suzhi improvement, discussed above, is deployed to persuade both cadres and peasants that labor migration is the only way that can effect a change for the better in their local area, not just through the money remittances that the migrants would send home but also through the change it could effect in local consciousness. Recruiters represented

these benefits as a form of "mutual aid"—a sentimentalization of Marx's ironic description of the labor contract: The owner has the means of production and the worker has the labor! The logic of capital in its restless search for ever-cheaper labor is thereby represented as a *gift* of Development through which the worker is educated by the owner, as are poor areas by more prosperous ones, and the Third World by the First World. These benefits supposedly outweigh the poor wages earned by these women who receive instead the opportunity for suzhi improvement.

The Tianjin company made a concerted effort in its first year of operation to produce a positive demonstration of suzhi improvement through domestic labor. All of the young migrant women recruited that year were assigned to work in the homes of municipal officials, retired cadres, and managers of joint ventures. According to the director, "The working conditions and domestic environment in these homes are superior. Most of these people are quite cultured. So a domestic would not only do housework but would experience a giant leap in consciousness. . . . The effect was indeed obvious." A young woman from rural Henan was sent to work at an elderly cadre's home. When she first arrived, "she was simple, naïve, and a little clueless *[shahuhu de]*." To be shahuhu is to be oblivious to one's environment and oblivious to one's relationship with, and position in, that environment. As Dorothy Solinger observes, rural people are often seen "as uncouth, even nearly imbecilic, an embarrassment to polite Chinese society" (n.d.:24). To the extent that this young woman was perceived as having just such an "imbecilic" character implies that she appeared to have no consciousness of her self-in-the-world; she did not recognize her position in the order of things; and most of all, she was completely unaware of her own inadequacy. As stated in one newspaper commentary, "It is not until they come to the city that they come to know themselves" (Jin 1998). They have to learn their lack of suzhi in order to desire it. Through the pedagogical role of the state and its agents, the subjectivity of the migrant worker has to be transformed to "know" her place in the suzhi hierarchy. Paraphrasing Althusser's (1972) formulation of ideology, the discourse of suzhi functions ideologically by setting the migrant worker up to recognize her "imaginary relationship" to the conditions and terms of her labor.

This young woman's cluelessness seemed to be most effectively captured by her reported expression of wonder at hearing a train whistle—a sound she had apparently never heard before—arousing pity among those urbanites hearing her tale, who in turn found themselves even more dissatisfied when confronted with this small detail attesting to the failure of the nation to achieve a timely development. This macrological desire for national development is micrologically invested in transforming this young woman, who worked for four years for the same family before returning home to marry. The manager, commenting on her transformation in the city, said, "Now when you look at her, although she still has that . . . that kind, that bit of . . . what do you call it . . . about rural people, yet in the way she speaks, she has a certain refinement now, and her air of awareness shows that she has learned a lot, at least in these respects, at the same time

that she was doing the housework." Although some ineffable mark of rurality remains on her, at least as a knowing subject of Development, she knows her deficiencies and is on the right track, unlike other rural young women who, in the eyes of this director, "learned nothing else but cosmetics and bright red lips."[35] Women who exemplify the latter are on the wrong track because they take suzhi improvement as purely a cosmetic matter—in the double sense of the word—without coming to a consciousness of what they lack. But this Henan woman had undergone a transformation into Development, accruing just enough suzhi for her to showcase Development on her return to the village, a fate preordained by the structural limits in the city of "how much" suzhi she might accumulate.

When this young woman returned home to Henan, she became a living demonstration of suzhi improvement through labor migration, facilitating the next round of labor recruitment in her area. The company found this publicity strategy to be very effective. The demonstration of her transformation and of other women like her has further opened the way for the flow of rural labor power to the city. The labor mobility of migrants is coded as a form of accumulation (of suzhi) that will lead to self-development *(ziwo fazhan)* and class mobility. What this coding makes invisible is how the labor power of migrant workers creates surplus value for capital accumulation.

Spivak (1987) links the question of value with the predication of the subject, enabling us to analyze what serves as the subject's "defining characteristic." She approaches the materialist predication of the subject through labor power as a way to critique the idealist predication of the subject centered on consciousness in the spheres of "Truth," "Beauty," and "Goodness" (i.e., the cognitive, aesthetic, and ethical value domains). Spivak defines consciousness not as thought, but as "the subject's irreducible intendedness towards the object" (1988:154). In the discourse of Development, suzhi ranks the subject primarily by her "intendedness" toward Development and this is the defining character of the modern subject in the post-Mao era. However, what effects are produced when the subject is predicated on suzhi or when the value (worth) of the subject is defined in those terms? Suzhi codes the value of the migrant subject in terms of her lack. She is marked by her lack and defined by her lack. Development is her salvation. Suzhi thus masks the materialist predication of the subject. It elides her production of surplus value—it is migrant labor that has produced the wealth of cities, the accumulation of capital, and economic growth. Moreover, with "suzhi improvement" beckoning toward more and more migrants to receive the civilizing education of the city, this idealist predication of the subject facilitates an ever greater quantity of labor power being channeled to the city—an arterial flow feeding a vampiric accumulation.[36]

Speaking on migration as suzhi education, the director of the Beijing company remarks:

> How much money would the state have to invest to propagate this kind of education [now enabled by migration]? This kind of change in the migrant, the suzhi education, cannot be measured by money. When they [migrant women] return

> home, they will practice improved child nurture on their own. [This is] more effective than however much persuasion on the part of family planning cadres.

Here, return migration is represented as enabling a circular dynamic in the production of suzhi. Suzhi acquired in the cities can be brought back to the village so that the rural household can also become a theater of suzhi production. Migrant women will transfer their suzhi development to their children—the next generation of workers—through their improved maternal agency. Their proximity to urban families will teach them to practice better conditions of birth and nurture *(yousheng youyu)* and thereby laying the foundations for raising the quality of the rural population.

The way in which suzhi and its lack codes the value of migrant labor draws us back to the idealist and materialist predications of the subject. As suggested by Ann Anagnost, "Suzhi is in a sense an inverse image of 'value' " insofar as it is premised on value as something that must be added to the body, rather than inherent in the body's capacity for labor (Anagnost in press). Postsocialist China is ideologically *overdetermined* to predicate its development on suzhi rather than the labor theory of value, as the latter necessarily raises the specter of exploitation and Marxian conceptions of class, the tacit disavowal of which is the *raison d'etre* of the post-Mao market reforms.

Neoliberal Governmentality and Neohumanism

How does the operation of these labor recruitment companies prod us to rethink the mode of governmentality of the postsocialist regime through its relationship with the market economy, in which the promotion of suzhi has been central? It is useful to base this discussion on the genesis of these two companies and their operation of labor recruitment through government institutions.[37] Following the economic liberalization, hiring domestics reappeared in the cities in the early 1980s. Prior to that time, a rather circumscribed domestic labor service sector was reserved for high-ranking cadres in the Maoist era whose heavy responsibilities presumably exempted them from the general rule against hired labor. Nonetheless, the presence of domestic servants in their households came under criticism as a bourgeois practice during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). The Beijing company, established in 1983, was first organized on the initiative of the local People's Congress and People's Political Consultative Conference—both being political organizations with high concentrations of political and intellectual elites (especially the later—to address a "crisis" in the domestic labor market: domestic workers were in short supply and those who were available were undisciplined). These initiatives led to several meetings organized by the municipal government to address the problem.[38] It was decided then that the Women's Federation should take charge of creating and supervising the Family Service Company.

Employers' complaints particularly targeted migrant women from Wuwei. The number of migrant women working as domestics in Beijing during the period 1982–88 numbered around 50,000–60,000 (Wang Shanping 1992).[39] Wuwei

County alone supplied over 10,000 domestic workers in the early 1980s. Most rural Wuwei women migrants were young and unmarried, and they moved to the city in a chain migration through kinship and village networks, earning 18–25 yuan (US$10–14) per month in the city.[40] But in the mid-1980s many Beijing employers began to shun rural women from Wuwei, or even from Anhui province as a whole, as they found these domestic workers "ganging up with their *laoxiang* [people from the same native place]." The director of the Beijing company explained the problem with the unregulated labor market as follows:

> The reputation of Wuwei domestics really stank then. Their connection with each other was kinship-based. . . . They would strike or quit on the spot. The salary for them was of course very low. And they jumped from trough to trough *[tiao cao]* too frequently for even a slightly higher pay of 1–2 yuan. Nobody was there to regulate this or put a stop to it. And if one of them had a problem with her employer, they tended to gang up with her against her employer.

These incidents of collective action were attributed to the creation of an "Anhui gang" *(Anhui bang),* the term *bang* being clearly associated with the power of unruly gangs and gangsters in preliberation China. The circulation of this term, at this time, signified a desire to ridicule as well as to signal alarm at the power of domestic servants from Anhui. Kinship and place-based networks played the dominant role in bringing migrant women to Beijing in the 1980s and providing mutual aid among migrants. But such networks often operated on the basis of exclusiveness and according to a resource-based hierarchy. According to my interviewees, Liyang County of Jiangsu Province was also a major supplier of domestic workers in Beijing in the early to mid-1980s. Women from Wuwei and Liyang had exclusive place-based networks, with women from Jiangsu province often looking down on women from Anhui province.[41] As a migrant from Jiangsu described this exclusive relationship:

> None of us had any friends from Anhui. For a long time as soon as I saw them, I felt like looking down on them. I had never worked together with women from Anhui and had never interacted with them. For instance, if two women [from Jiangsu] were chatting between themselves, as soon as they spotted an Anhui woman [another domestic also working in the neighborhood], they immediately would say to each other, "Here comes an Anhui person. I'll talk to you later."

Within the kinship and place-based networks, experienced migrant women who possessed certain resources were likely to function as a leader for a number of younger migrants. The term *baomu tou* (head of the nannies), very rarely used by migrant women themselves, is used by urban employers. The "head" is tacitly recognized because she has a relatively secure position and is on good terms with her employers. This means that if a young migrant woman suddenly finds herself unemployed, the head, who is herself a live-in domestic, may be able to provide temporary lodging for her without raising her employer's ire. The head might also be able to find employment for her and negotiate

a wage with a potential employer. Women who have the ability to do these things usually have been working in the city for a longer period of time and are experienced and well-known in the neighborhood. Other families from the neighborhood may come to her for help in locating a suitable domestic helper. As her reward, the head enjoys the respect, loyalty, and occasional gifts from the migrants she has helped. Young women migrants who lack job security and social experience in the city usually do not have the resources needed to be a head.[42]

For example, migrant women from Liyang in the early to mid-1980s all knew about Grandma Wangfujing *(Wangfujing popo)* who achieved almost a legendary stature as a head. Grandma Wangfujing was so called because she lived in the famous Wangfujing area in Beijing (a shopping district near Tiananmen Square). All had heard of her and talked about her, but only a few had seen her. My informant explained that only the most well-established Liyang migrants, such as her cousin who was also a head, would have the honor to meet her. Grandma Four from Wuwei, a strong-minded woman in her late seventies who spent a good part of her life working in the city, is another such figure. She brought dozens of women from her village and nearby villages to Beijing, giving them help and advice and, when necessary, a scolding. In the early to mid-1980s, a growing number of potential employers relied on old trusted domestics in their neighborhoods or in their friends' neighborhoods to supply new domestic helpers. Or short of such access, they asked their rural relatives to find a trustworthy young woman, often related to the employers, to come to the city to work for them as a domestic helper.

It was in the context of widespread dissatisfaction among urban households over the shortage of labor and the propensity of migrants to "gang up" on their employers that the Family Service Company in Beijing was founded to organize a contract-based system of labor employment. The company in Tianjin was formed to address a similar set of concerns, as discussed above. The network of the Women's Federation and other government organizations provides an important linkage through which labor power in the countryside is connected to these urban companies. Both of the companies in my study are connected with Women's Federation offices or labor bureaus in rural villages, and they relied on their organizing work and their local credibility as a government agency to deliver migrant women to the door of these companies. If local governments in poor rural areas are unwilling to organize labor migration due to fear of the lack of security associated with the urban market, companies attached to the Women's Federation seem to provide a certain security and credibility needed to counterbalance the insecurity of the market. The establishment of over 100 outlets of labor supply from 11 provinces for the company in Beijing is also the result of the promotion of labor migration as the most efficient and cost-effective project for poverty relief and suzhi improvement. This idea is promoted by the Poverty-Relief Office of the Central Government and by lecture tours to poverty-stricken areas organized by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League. In the organization of labor transfer, government

thus functions as an enthusiastic matchmaker between the labor power of poor areas and the urban labor market and as a regulator to act as a check on the violence, capriciousness, and lack of security of the market.

In the 1990s, these contract-based domestic service companies, straddling the line between market and state, have significantly displaced chain migration on the basis of the kinship and place-oriented networks, which have united, disciplined, and regulated domestic workers and claimed their loyalty. In place of these networks, these companies have appointed themselves as the modern institutional locus of identity for these young women to whom they promise to open the pathway to suzhi improvement. In this process, the notion of suzhi, the ghost child of Development, facilitates a balance between economy and stability by appearing as a guardian angel from the *future,* from the teleology of Development, as a supplement for the *present* of these migrant women.

Post-Mao governmentality is all about the constant mediation and balancing of economic growth and the specter of social disorder. Development and stability form the new basis of national cohesion. Central to this shift is the project of constructing a market economy in which the market is not taken to be a natural formation but is both a system and a subjectivity that has to be actively produced and facilitated. The production of "the new peasant" involves both an acute production of a market consciousness among the peasantry and an indictment against the so-called feudal practices and consciousness that do not follow the market principle. The construction of a regulated domestic labor market involving the networking of government institutions and the promotion of suzhi improvement is a displacement of the socially dangerous free labor market that might detract from stability and growth.

This active production of a market economy in postsocialist China puts into practice a similar neoliberal notion of the market promoted by a group of jurists and economists in postwar Germany.[44] Called Ordoliberalen, this group of jurists and economists no longer accepted the liberal version of the market as a "quasi-natural" social reality capable of self-regulation and the corresponding liberal practices of laissez-faire government.[45] The neoliberal notion conceives that "the market is not a natural social reality at all; and what is incumbent on government is to conduct a policy towards society such that it is possible for a market to exist and function" (Gordon 1991:41). What makes this particular conception of market neoliberal, thereby differentiating it from both Adam Smith's laissez-faire liberalism and Keynesian corporate liberalism, is not so much its recognition of the market as not being a natural self-regulating reality, but what this recognition entails for governmentality and social politics. "For the *Ordoliberalen,* the major problem of social politics within this framework is not the anti-social effects of the economic market, but the anti-competitive effects of society" (Gordon 1991:42). Just as neoliberalism compels the idea of market "into a personal moral code" on this side of the Pacific (according to a *Fortune* magazine article [Magnet 1986:68]), the ascendance of neoclassical economics as an imperative worldview "has acquired the force of ethics" in China, as Chinese scholar Wang Hui has observed (2000:94–95).

In the process of post-Mao neoliberal restructuring, the notion of suzhi forces the ethics of market on the individual subject and codes its worth for Development. The president of a well-known company, a representative of the National People's Congress who has received the status honor of "excellent entrepreneur," writes for the *Anhui Daily* about the agency of the human subject for the market and capital: "It is the human subject *(ren)* that directly and ultimately determines the effectivity of capital. Therefore, the human subject constitutes an important part of capital and is its most active, driving, and dynamic element" (Xuan 1994). Here we see how the level of suzhi of the human subject is directly linked to the productivity of capital. The author continues, "Without a high-suzhi human subject, capital cannot increase in value." Just as the root cause of poverty has been discovered to lie in the poverty of human subjectivity, we now learn that it also affects the potential for capital to grow. With the "capitalization of the meaning of life" (Gordon 1991:44) in neoliberal regimes, we have this unprecedented attention to, and exaltation of, human subjectivity as the most important agent for market growth and Development. This exaltation of the power of human subjectivity is what I call neohumanism.

By coining the term *neohumanism,* I wish to continue Marx's critique of humanism as constitutive of a society "where the commodity form is the general form of the labor-product" (Marx 1977:152). Heterogeneous use values produced by heterogeneous human labor can be exchanged because everything sensuous that marks the heterogeneity of things and labor has been extinguished and violently abstracted in its translation into exchange value. A "phantom-like objectivity," in the form of "congealed quantities of homogeneous human labor" is what effects an equivalence and makes exchange possible (Marx 1977:128). As Thomas Keenan points out, "[Humanity itself] arrives only with the domination of the commodity form" (1993:171).

In China's market reform, suzhi abstracts and reduces the heterogeneity of human beings by coding their value (worth) for Development.[46] If exchange value is a "phantom-like objectivity" that measures the worth of the commodity, suzhi can perhaps be said to be a phantom *subjectivity* measuring subjectivity by its intendedness and quality for Development. The human subject is no longer presumed to be the inviolable, autonomous, self-knowing subject in the liberal Enlightenment tradition. Rather, the notion of suzhi in the neoliberal economy compels a conception of the human subject as lacking, in need of constant readjustment, supplementation, and continual retraining *(zhongsheng xuexi).* As the notion of suzhi codes the value of human subjectivity as a crucial productive force for Development, suzhi is the concept of human capital given a neoliberal spin to exceed its original meaning of stored value of education and education-based qualifications to mean the capitalization of subjectivity itself.

The way in which neohumanism fetishizes the agency of the human subject for Development is premised on an idealist predication of the subject, but at the same time, it renders subjectivity inherently unstable and always inadequate.

The agency and instability of the human subject in Development analyzed here would appear to share a similar epistemological position to a poststructural decentering of the Subject, but it is, in fact, its nightmarish mirror image. A poststructural critique, then, cannot be singularly focused on the project of decentering the Enlightenment Subject nor should it celebrate this decentering as a triumph but should take care to locate it in the context of a post–Cold War decentering of capitalism.[47] In the context of the instability of the human subject in Development, the decentered subject is not the agency of poststructural critique alone but is perhaps unwittingly complicit with a globalized neoliberal logic.

Spivak opens her discussion of the question of value by stating the following: "One of the determinations of the question of value is the predication of the subject" (1988:154). From my position as a social scientist, I understand the "subject" in this statement to have a double referent to refer to both the ethnographic subject and the ethnographer as the investigative subject. My analysis above has attempted to show how suzhi operates as a value formation that is rooted in an idealist subject predication in hopes of subverting it through my insistence on elucidating the materialist predication of the migrant woman subject. Considering the contending interpretations of labor mobility and development, one might suggest that one of the determinations of the question of representation is the predication of the *investigative* subject. This predication is perhaps what Spivak calls the critic's "interest" (1988:154). I consider it the task of critical social science to go beyond a mere decentering of the subject to ask what might be the conditions of possibility for the coalescence of a new subject of resistance. If, as Spivak suggests, consciousness is not a thought, but is the subject's "irreducible intendedness towards an object," (1988:154) then what might be the conditions of possibility for a radical revisioning of the subject's intendedness toward Development? Marx once criticized that "the philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; the point is, to change it" (1971:30). Here the task of the critic is to ensure that her interpretations and analyses do not merely reproduce "the irreducible intendedness" toward Development but contribute instead to thinking through alternatives to capitalist development, in which individual striving is not the only way out but collective action across the heterogeneities of the global world system can give rise to a new social force. In so stating, I am taking a position in relation to those who think that a "good" capitalism or a mature capitalism is the best hope for China or for any developing country. But I cannot agree with this due to the exploitative violence on which this is undeniably premised, nor can I, for the moment, articulate a concrete alternative. However, it is my hope that by representing this impasse, readers will also question the notion of a "good" capitalism, an alternative capitalism, or a Third Way and begin to seek a more radical vision.

Notes

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1. This company is one of many "economic bodies" *(jingji shiti)* that sprang from state institutions in the process of the post-Mao economic reform. As hybrids, they challenge the conventional categories of "state" and "private" institutions. This company, attached to the Women's Federation, is only partially a state institution—the top management includes cadres from the Women's Federation who are on the state payroll, but its lower-level staff are contract workers.

2. This study draws on 15 months of fieldwork in Anhui Province and the urban centers of Beijing and Tianjin in 1998–99. My discussion of value and suzhi is inspired by ongoing discussions with Ann Anagnost on Spivak's reading of Marx's notion of value and Deleuzian notions of value coding. I thank Ann for sharing her insights with me and pointing me to key works that have helped me to work through the relationship between suzhi and value in the process of labor recruitment.

3. Elson's elaboration of Marx's value theory of labor and subsumption of labor under capital is to clarify what characterizes labor under capitalism. Elson argues, via Marx, that in a capitalist society "other aspects of labour [individual, private, heterogeneous, social, etc.] are subsumed as expressions of abstract labour. The form of the universal equivalent reflects only abstract labour" (1979:165). Hence, "The real subsumption of labour as a form of capital is a developed form of the real subsumption of the other aspects of labour as expressions of abstract labour in the universal equivalent, the money form of value" (1979:166).

4. To the best of my knowledge, the word suzhi did not circulate in the same way prior to the post-Mao economic reforms beginning in the late 1970s but it has progressively gained density in its articulation of a new social economy in the 1980s and 1990s.

5. See Anagnost (1995) for an analysis of suzhi discourse in the representation of bodies in post-Mao China that is centrally focused on the problem of productivity.

6. The reader then goes on to complain that one of the reasons why peasant suzhi is low is because those who occupy official positions look down on peasants and thereby prevent them from improving their suzhi.

7. Becoming hegemonic since the 1960s and offering an increasingly unrestrained freedom of capital (domestic and international), this promarket developmentalism finds its supporters among the political and business elites in China and other countries in the South. Escobar (1995) and Crush (1995) provide incisive critiques of the discourse of development. Bello (1994) offers a very detailed and statistical analysis of the global effects that developmentalism has produced, specifically through a policy package called "structural adjustment" promoted by IMF and the World Bank. Some intellectuals in China have also begun to adopt a critical stance toward Development (Dushu 2000). The power of developmentalism constrains imaginations of alternative development so that rescuing development from Development is increasingly becoming a critical task.

8. For example, Shao Yanxiang (1999), a well-known intellectual himself, quotes prominent intellectual Li Shenzhi in his call for a curriculum in citizenship, "Mr. [Li] Shenzhi has suggested that the phrase 'the quality of the Chinese is too low' has become generally acknowledged. How can we improve the quality of the Chinese?" Shao argues

that a citizenship class in junior high school, which would teach civil behavior, knowledge of the constitution, law, ethics, etc., would be a good beginning.

9. "Development is the indisputable truth," are the exact words pronounced by late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping when he visited Shenzhen, the city bordering Hong Kong, a special economic zone for overseas capital and an advanced model for China's market transition. After the suppression of the student movement in 1989, the talks given by Deng Xiaoping in 1992, immediately after his tour of the southern provinces, especially Shenzhen, gave the "go ahead" to China's further marketization.

10. Hu Angang et al. (2001) analyze the growth of growing regional economic disparities since 1978 and argue that a structure of Four Worlds now exists in China. High-income and advanced areas such as Shanghai, Beijing, and Shenzhen constitute the First World, with per capita consumption reaching above the average level of upper-middle-income countries (US$8,320). The 1999 per capita GDP in Pudong, a new economic zone in Shanghai, reached US$25,472 (measured by purchasing power parity equivalents). This figure is 83.2 percent of the per capita GDP in the United States. The Second World includes large and medium-sized cities throughout the country, small cities in coastal areas, and some rural areas in wealthy provinces like Guangdong and Fujian. The GDP in the Second World is below the upper-middle-income countries but above lower-middle-income countries (US$3,960). The Third World covers the vast rural areas. The Fourth World encompasses ethnic minority rural areas, border areas, and areas where the income-levels are extremely low.

11. For example, among popular books on display, one can find a Chinese translation of the book *Test Yourself/Test Your IQ* by Jim Barrett, Ken Russell, and Philip Carter, titled in Chinese *Suzhi ceshi shouce* (A Manual for Suzhi Testing) (Liu 2001), with the subtitle: "Testing Your Talent and Character and Predicting Your Career and Future." The cover also reports that the contents reveal recruitment criteria used by the "world's top 500 enterprises."

12. I thank Meng Dengying, a teacher at Beijing Youth Politics College, for this information.

13. This suzhi diploma consists of graded evaluations of student performance in cultural suzhi courses, campus cultural and athletic activities, internship experience, and examinations on suzhi (however defined), computer skills, and English. A newspaper report on this new practice stated: "The quantified data [reported on the suzhi diploma] brought a smile of satisfaction to middle school principals looking for qualified teachers for their schools." In 1999, a private company founded by a Beijing University graduate marketed its services to college students who wanted to improve their suzhi qualifications, offering suzhi evaluation and testing, role playing, lectures, practical training, conversations with successful individuals, and so forth (Yin 1999).

14. The phrase *guomin suzhi* (the quality of the national population) appearing in this Resolution evokes the ghostly presence of *guomin xing* (national character), a discursive figure associated with the May Fourth Movement of 1919 that was briefly revived in the intellectual ferment of the late 1980s. "National character" was then used to repudiate Maoism as reflecting the desire on the part of an unenlightened population for an authoritarian leader. If the latter term seems dated and politically ambiguous today, the notion of guomin suzhi seems up-to-date, objective, politically neutral, and appropriately technocratic in a context where technocratic leaders dominate national politics and politics is itself deployed as a technocracy.

15. Here one recalls Foucault's analysis of the notion of "humanity" in the 18th-century penal reform, "punishment must have 'humanity' as its 'measure', without any

definitive meaning being given to this principle, which nevertheless is regarded as insuperable" (1979:75).

16. I draw the notion of "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" from Deleuze and Guattari (1983) and Brian Massumi's (1992) reading of their work. My reading of Massumi is that the process of deterritorialization (an uprooting of the individual) and reterritorialization (re-implanting) is also a process of decoding ("a change in the pattern of actions affecting it [the subject]") and recoding ("the imposition of new patterns of connection with itself and its surroundings") (1992:51).

17. "Peasantry" is understood here as a subject position coming from a specific political and social genealogy. See Cohen (1994).

18. Following decollectivization, a number of welfare functions were largely disbanded, notably the rural health care system and schooling that had been formerly funded and managed by the rural collective. This process of decollectivization, as part of the strategy of post-Mao development, contributed to a spectralization of the rural that I analyze elsewhere (Yan in press). See also Mobo C. F. Gao (1999) for a rich and rare ethnography of village life in the Mao and post-Mao eras.

19. *Chi dahu* (lit. eating the big house) was a form of popular rebellion practiced before the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949 in which poor peasants would seize and redistribute the food reserves of wealthy landlords during famines.

20. During my fieldwork in rural Wuwei County, I discovered a strong dislike among peasants for the late reform leader Deng Xiaoping. Not a few middle-aged cadres use their nostalgia for Maoist egalitarianism to express their critique of the problems arising in the market economy—the disruption of rural communities, increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, and the attendant problems of alienation among rural individuals and households. See also Dorfman 1996 and Ma 2002.

21. Similar titles proliferated in the 1980s in the provincial party newspaper. For example: "Help Peasants Enhance Their Consciousness of Commodity Production" (Bangzhu nongmin zengqiang shangping shengchan yishi) (Xue Dazhen1985); "Ten Years of Reform Have Changed the Image of Peasants" (Shinian gaige gaibian le nongmin de xingxiang) (Cao 1988); "There Has Been a Great Change in Peasant Consciousness" (Nongmin de guannian qi le hen da de bianhua) (Zhang 1988); "Ten Great Changes in Contemporary Peasant Consciousness" (Dangdai nongmin guannian de shi da biange) (*Anhui Daily* 1987).

22. This Chinese phrase could be translated literally as "poverty in humans themselves." Here poverty is no longer an external condition. The external condition of poverty is a reflection and resultant of an internal poverty, backwardness, and lack existing within human subjectivity itself. Referring to the intrinsic qualities of the self, this figure applies to both the collective and the individualized body in this case. It can reference a population in the context of regional poverty relief, but it can also be understood as referring to individuals in terms of their ability to recognize their individual self-interest. It is this process of "recognition" that is constituted as the problem, one that is not unlike the "culture of poverty idea" of the 1970s and 1980s, in the United States. Poverty therefore becomes a problem of values orientation rather than more material economic forces.

23. In the Maoist era, cultural stations (wenhua zhan), as part of the state ideological apparatus, provided reading rooms for public performances, folk-art exhibits, and so forth.

24. Cultural work is becoming reoriented toward a market sensibility through "short courses" (*duanqi ban*), which have become a lucrative sideline for increasingly entrepreneurialized university professors who go to the local level to give lectures or

who teach local cultural workers who are sent to university campuses to raise their suzhi. These relationships exemplify how restructuring is affecting all levels and bringing them into alignment with the new logic. I thank Ann Anagnost for this point.

25. This author observes, "There are new development projects every year, which are often spectacular at their opening but become desolate in their implementation and dismal in their output." The cause of these failures is coded as a problem of the low suzhi of peasants and their apparent lack of interest in leaving poverty.

26. See Yan (in press) for an analysis of family farming income in Wuwei and how the rural economy is positioned in the restructuring of rural-urban relations in the reform era.

27. The Law on Compulsory Education issued in 1986 charges parents and families with the responsibility of ensuring nine years of basic education for their children but exonerates the state from any obligation of having to provide resources for this. On the difficulties and problems for children of migrant parents to receive education in Beijing, see a very detailed investigation by Han Jialing (2001).

28. This association is certainly not confined to the city of Tianjin. A survey in Shanghai from 1995 revealed that "the perception of criminality is the most important reason for mutual wariness and mutual separation" between migrants and urban residents (Ding and Stockman 1999:126). See also Li Zhang (2001).

29. There is a historical association between a lumpen class and water transport (*jianghu,* lit. "rivers and lakes"). The Chinese classic written in the 12th-century about rebels in the Song Dynasty (960–1279) is titled *Shui hu zhuan* (The Water Margin) (Shi 1996) and Ding Ling's 1933 novel about peasants is titled *Shui* (Water) (Ding 1954), in which water symbolizes a force of resistance and rebellion. The imagery of "flow" *(liudong)* in describing the migrant population today *(liudong renkou)* refers to the unmooring of the household registration system that had formerly checked movement from the country to the city. As Development now demands the labor power of the migrant population, good governance and control lies in the proper channeling *(dao)* of the migrant population instead of blocking it up *(du),* a strategy used by the legendary sage Yu to stop the frequent flooding of the Yellow River. Some economists speak about the flow of migrant labor as if it were water in a reservoir that can be released or dammed up according to market needs. Today the consumption of bottled water has become yet another marker of class distinction (Boland 2001). Occasional scandals about where bottled water is sourced raise alarms about the quality and safety of its consumption.

30. For a more detailed ethnographic account of this outcome, see Yan 2002.

31. The selection process required recommendation letters from employers about their domestic workers and from domestic workers about their employers. Photo displays and videos were produced from the award ceremonies. The practice was later dropped by the Tianjin company because the new director found it to be too much of a bother.

32. *Bu heshi* literally means "not suitable or appropriate," which can give rise to multiple interpretations: the workload was too heavy, the work environment was too demeaning, she had bad relations with her employer, or she was sexually harassed. The precise reason why she found her working conditions to be unsuitable were not given to me by the company—either they did not bother to ask her or she refused to give a reason. But I suspect that sexual harassment was not unlikely. Men usually carry their mobile phones inside their pockets and attach their beepers to their belts. It would be very unusual for a man to leave both his beeper and his mobile phone around where an employee would have access to them.

33. The manager herself was not clear and could not tell me what might have happened to this woman. Her intention was to use the story as a demonstration of how effectively their network functions as a security system. However, given the widespread representation of migrant criminality, especially petty theft, I rather suspect the runaway woman was charged with theft. During my interviews with domestic workers, they often complained bitterly that they are immediately suspect when things are missing or misplaced in the homes where they work. Many of these workers are also aware that employers often test whether their "hands and feet are clean" by leaving purses or cash behind as bait.

34. There is also another reason why the local labor bureau is unwilling to be engaged in organizing labor migration. With the reform of the state-owned enterprises leading to massive layoffs of urban workers nationwide in the 1990s, the central and provincial governments had instructed labor bureaus to center their work on helping laid-off workers by signing them up for minimal welfare and registering them at reemployment centers. Labor bureaus also have to ensure a certain reemployment rate (50 percent in 1998), as related to me by a cadre at Wuwei County's labor bureau. With the labor bureau having to focus on laid-off workers, it does not have the resources to organize rural migrants for labor export.

35. This reading of the mark of the rural in this woman's transformed bodily habitus can be read in relation to Pun Ngai's article (in this issue of *Cultural Anthropology*), in which she shows how others are able to "recognize" migrant workers as migrants, even when they "dress up" as urbanites to perform leisure consumption in the theme park Splendid China. For these women, cosmetics and fashion are more than superficial; they are the material markers of what Development comes to mean—to be a knowing consuming subject.

36. In spite of the limited trickle down effect of migrants' remittances to the countryside, the overall directionality of the value flow to the city has contributed to a "spectralization" of the countryside in both the material and representational realms (Yan in press).

37. A number of scholars of China's political economy have described a variety of institutional models to analyze a market socialism with "Chinese characteristics." See Blecher (1991) for "local developmental state," Oi (1995) for "local state corporatism," or Duckett (2000) for "state entrepreneurialism."

38. Most employers in the late 1970s and early 1980s were high-level cadres and intellectual elites, the majority of whom had a special salary subsidy for hiring a domestic helper, continuing a practice from before the Cultural Revolution. For most urban residents, domestic service was still a novel idea and a sensitive topic. When the company was established in 1983 making paid domestic work a service for purchase, it became a nationwide news story. Most working class families are not able to afford domestic helpers. However, an emergent middle class, who may "not be able to reach the level of the high [as high-level cadres and elite], but are unwilling to stoop to the low *[gaobucheng, dibujiu],*" in the words of the director of the company in Beijing, have contributed to a growing demand for domestic labor. Thus there was apparently a great demand for domestic workers in the 1980s.

39. I thank Delia Davin for making Wang's thesis available to me.

40. The exchange rate between Chinese currency and U.S. dollars during 1975–82 was about US$1 to 1.5–1.97 yuan.

41. Wang Shanping in her thesis also briefly mentions that Wuwei migrants often tried to force women from other provinces out of the neighborhoods dominated by Wuwei women (1992:83).

42. Please also see the work of Li Zhang (2001) for an analysis of how migrants have constructed a network of mutual support based on a shared native-place identity.

43. A fellow villager related to Grandma Four confided with regret that many had benefited from her help, but few appreciated it, because Grandma Four is quite sharp-tongued.

44. My analysis of neoliberal governmentality draws on the late lectures of Foucault as discussed in Gordon (1991). Neoliberalism is associated with the emergence of the New Right in the North Atlantic economies during the Reagan and Thatcher administrations of the 1980s. In the neoliberal vision, the economy furnishes the model for a global organization of the social (Gordon 1991:43). Neoliberalism has two contradictory sides. As Andrew Belsey summarizes, "In its liberal guise, neoliberalism is the politics constructed from the individual, freedom of choice, the market society, laissez-faire, and minimal government. Its neoconservative component builds on strong government, social authoritarianism, disciplined society, hierarchy and subordination, and the nation" (cited in Overbeek and van der Pijl 1993:15). Saskia Sassen also cautions that words such as "deregulation," "financial and trade liberalization," and "privatization" only capture the consequence of struggles and negotiations, but not the process "in which the state participates in setting up the new frameworks through which globalization is furthered; nor do they capture the associated transformations inside the state" (1999:158).

45. Michael Perelman (2000) shows that Adam Smith and other classical political economists were, in their more practical writings, strong advocates of government interventionist policies to force peasants into factories during the process of primitive capital accumulation, despite their economic theories advocating laissez-faire policies toward the market.

46. The question of abstraction is intricately dealt with in Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff's (1999) analysis of an imagined zombie production as the brutal form of extraction and abstraction of pure surplus value in the encounter of rural South Africa with global neoliberalism.

47. Dirlik (2002) argues that the passing of socialism and the rise of eastern Asian societies as a new center of capitalist power in the late 1970s and early 1980s have contributed to a decentering of capitalism. Dirlik's analysis links this decentering of capitalism with the now popular discourse of "multiple modernities."

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