

Commodifying *Suzhi*: Transformations in Discourses of *Suzhi* in
Contemporary Shanghai.

by

Yuumi Noto
BA, University of Victoria, 2006

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of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

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While studies of the discourse of suzhi, which can be roughly translated as “quality,” are a rapidly growing field in contemporary China, few scholars have addressed the relationship between suzhi and commodity among Chinese women. Through this lens, this thesis examines the politics and contradictions of suzhi by focusing on urban and rural migrant women in Shanghai. In this project, I investigate the materialization and transformation of suzhi into different forms of capital based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. I explore how the concept of suzhi justifies and normalizes socio-economic inequalities between rural and urban areas. I employ several methodologies including a literature review, an interview survey, and a photo-based survey. Through these methods, I explore how the concept of suzhi and its commodification are embedded in contemporary China. My results illustrate that suzhi is not just a personal quality or disposition, but can also be a tangible commodity. As well, my results suggest that there is a close connection between what is perceived as personal quality and monetary value. These relationships show the intersection and complexities of evolving ideas regarding individual performance through personal quality, financial ability, and fashion.

Key Words: Suzhi, Commodification, China, Migration, Capital

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Dedication

I dedicate this to every woman who graciously shared her experiences with me.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines the politics and contradictions of *suzhi* in contemporary China. *Suzhi* is roughly translated into English as “quality.” Since the early 1980s, the meaning of *suzhi* has been transformed from just “quality” to “quality that can differentiate one from other.”¹ This shift has been accomplished through two major state campaigns. The first was the birth control propaganda (*renkou suzhi* 人口素质) of the early 1980s. The birth control propaganda generated anxiety among urban and rural parents because they were now limited to having one very “high-quality” child. The second was the education propaganda (*suzhi jiaoyu* 素质教育) of the late 1980s.² Post-Mao China’s reform had two main goals: one was achieving material (*wuzhi*) development within the market economy; and the second was achieving spiritual civilization (*jingsheng wenmin*). In other words, according to Jiang Zemin, who was the president of China (1989-2003), China’s reform was to be a simultaneous project of marketization and modernization, with a focus on *renkou suzhi* (population quality).³

The contemporary definition of *suzhi* is now a product of many gradual shifts, indicating that there was a process through which *suzhi* developed into a hegemonic discourse broadly accepted and appropriated by the populace for different purposes. It now encompasses nuances regarding the natural talents and nurtured characteristics of a person, including intelligence, physical skill, and ideological and philosophical thought. Normally, *suzhi* is thought of as any personal quality that can be acquired through

¹Yan, Hairong. 2003. Neoliberal governmentality and neohumanism: Organizing Suzhi/value flow through labor recruitment networks. *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol 18 (4): 493-523. 497

²Kipnis, Andrew. 2006. Suzhi: A keyword approach. *China Quarterly*, Vol: 295-313. 297

³Xu, Feng. 2000. *Women migrant workers in China's economic reform*. International political economy series. Houndmills, Basingstoke : New York: Macmillan ; St. Martin's Press. 34-35

education such as personality, etiquette, or manners. However, in the popular discourse of *suzhi*, it plays a significant role in “differentiation” between the rural and the urban populations. Through the field research that I conducted with young Shanghainese women and young rural migrant women in June 2010, I found that people’s knowledge of what *suzhi* should be is broadly shared by both Shanghainese and outsiders (外地人 *waidiren*). What *suzhi* is in practice, as a material and embedded form, is also broadly shared by rural migrants and Shanghainese.

This thesis achieves three goals. First, I discuss what *suzhi* means by reviewing the existing literature. Second, I demonstrate how the concept of *suzhi* justifies and normalizes socio-economic inequality between rural and urban areas. Third, I describe the results of field research I conducted in June 2010 in Shanghai. This field research shows the materialization of *suzhi* and transformation of *suzhi* into different forms of capital.

Suzhi as a form of capital

This section discusses *suzhi* as a form of capital. I situate results in terms of Bourdieu’s theory of capital, viewing *suzhi* as a form of capital that can be transformed and used to reproduce social inequality. According to Bourdieu, in order to investigate the rationale behind the practices of people, an event or social phenomenon, a researcher needs not only to look at what was said or what has happened, but also to examine the social space in which interactions, transactions and events occurred.⁴ In order to analyze people’s conceptualization of *suzhi*, it was important for me to examine the field, Shanghai, as an important urban centre. It is fundamental to understand Shanghai within

⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre. 2005. *The Social Structure and The Economy*. Cambridge: Polity Press; 185

the context of economic growth because the social differentiation between Shanghainese and rural migrants is becoming wider and wider. This social differentiation, I will show, is central to changing ideas about Shanghai.

Shanghai is China's largest city. The city has a population of 18.4 million. 13.7 million are "registered residents" and 4.7 million are migrants. Its land area was 6,341 square km in 2006. The city government reports directly to the central government, and its status is similar to that of a province.⁵ The number of shops increased by 417.4 percent from 1978 to 2000, and by 197.5 percent from 1990 to 2000, the second largest increase in all building types. This trend continued in the 2000s, when the number of shops increased by 292 percent from 2000 to 2006.⁶ Gross Domestic Product per capita in 2000 was 14.8 percent whereas that of Hong Kong in 2000 was 0.1 percent.⁷ Shanghai has experienced the most rapid economic and demographic growth in China in the last few decades. Shanghai residents are extremely proud of their urban identity, and that sentiment has led to historical discrimination against and stigmatization of rural migrants such as people from the *Subei* area or *Anhui* province.⁸

⁵ Tingwei Zhang. 2009. "Striving to be a global city from below" in *Shanghai Rising : State power and local transformations in a global megacity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 171

⁶ *Ibid* 174

⁷ Tai-lok Lui and Stephen W.K. Chiu. 2009. "Becoming A Chinese Global City – Hong Kong (and Shanghai) Beyond The Global-Local Duality" in *Shanghai rising : State power and local transformations in a global megacity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 113

⁸ Honing, Emily. 1992. *Creating Chinese ethnicity : Subei people in Shanghai, 1850-1980*. New Haven: Yale University Press.



Figure 1: Shopping areas popular with many local Shanghainese



Figure 2: Shopping areas popular with rural migrant workers.

Conceptual Framework

In order to explore whether *suzhi* reflects socio-economic differentiation, I apply Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus. I suggest *suzhi* is a form of habitus. Bourdieu defines habitus as a property of social agents (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprise a "structured and structuring structure."⁹ It is "structured" by one's past and present circumstances, such as family upbringing and educational experiences. It is "structuring" in that one's habitus helps to shape one's present and future practices. It is a "structure" in that it is systematically ordered rather than random or un-patterned. This "structure" comprises a system of dispositions which generate perceptions, appreciations and practices. For example, my results show that Shanghainese with high levels of education and a middle-class family background are considered to have high *suzhi* regardless of individual social reality (structured).

Bourdieu argues that we base our everyday decisions on habitus and on assumptions about the predictable character, behaviour and attitudes of others. Applying this concept to *suzhi*, *suzhi* emerges when someone recognizes it or when there is someone who is supposed to recognize it. *Suzhi* is produced through a person's day-to-day life in his/her relation to other people. The individual's daily social practices are characterized by regularities, which differ from other people's daily practices. Yet there are no explicit rules dictating such practices.

Bourdieu suggests that the concept of capital can explain how social differences are patterned. Thus, ideas and practices about *suzhi* structure one's regular routine practices,

⁹ Bourdieu, P. 1990. *In Other Words: Essay Towards Reflexive Sociology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 170

which are nonetheless different from the regular routine practices of others. This difference is vital.

Bourdieu's concept of capital is based on a labour theory of value. He explains that capital represents power over the accumulated products of past labour.¹⁰ This "labour" can be embodied in four generic types of capital: Economic capital (money and property), cultural capital (cultural goods and services including educational credentials), social capital (acquaintances, networks or *guanxi*), and symbolic capital (legitimization).¹¹ In this thesis, I will be focusing on economic, cultural, and symbolic capital.

In this thesis, I will argue that *suzhi* functions as capital that is objectified, embodied, and institutionalized. It can also be commodified so that people can purchase and acquire it. In particular, I will explore whether *suzhi* is cultural capital. I suggest *suzhi* is visualized in bodily movements and material objects, and elaborated as sophisticated "taste" required in order to perform well-cultivated *suzhi*. I suggest tastes of style and etiquette as a form of cultural capital are not distributed evenly among the population and subpopulations. Rather they are one of the ways in which the powerful urban elite groups distinguish themselves from rural migrant workers. *Suzhi* can be found in the accumulation of corporeal evidence, where certain tastes of style and etiquette communicate more significance to the trained eye of people from the same "class."¹²

¹⁰ Bourdieu, Pierre, and John B. Thompson. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. 230

¹¹ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1981. "The Forms of Capital" in *Handbook of Theory and Research for Sociology of Education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood. 241-58

¹² Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction : A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. 241-258

I will also explore whether *suzhi* is symbolic capital. Symbolic capital exists in a symbolic system and enables peoples' exercise of power. Bourdieu stresses that taken-for-granted assumptions and practices are enacted in the constitution and maintenance of power relationships. He calls this "symbolic violence." It is the capacity to impose the means of adapting to society by demonstrating economic, cultural and social capital in disguised and taken-for-granted forms.¹³ In other words, in China today, *suzhi* justifies the politico-socio-economic inequalities in post-Mao society. *Suzhi* as a symbolic power conceals existing socio-economic inequalities and disguises them as a hegemonic common understanding. I suggest that the discourse of *suzhi* is a form of symbolic power that conceals socio-economic inequality, and disguises it as "commonsense." The taken-for-granted assumption is that cultural, economic, and social capital is unevenly distributed in China, where urban-born residents are privileged, and rural born residents are marginalized. This mentality is perpetuated as a hegemony and unreflexive system of consciousness that constitutes the symbolic system of *suzhi*.

Methodology

Studying *suzhi* as a form of capital has required two main methodologies. First, I conducted an extensive literature review of works of *suzhi* and of key transformations in contemporary Chinese society. In particular, I explored arguments about the potential commodification of *suzhi* and its usage in reinforcing inequalities between Shanghainese and rural migrants. The second method I employed was to conduct research in Shanghai over a four week period in 2010. In order to explore how my research subjects—local Shanghainese women and rural migrant women—understood and valued *suzhi*, I

¹³ Bourdieu, Pierre 1991: 163-4

conducted a structured interview survey, which involved open-ended questions and photo based survey techniques, as well as limited participant observation.

My background provided me with some important skills and insights. I have a Bachelor of Art's degree in Pacific and Asian Studies from the University of Victoria. In 2004 I was given an opportunity to study Mandarin in Shanghai for a year, and during my stay there, I was struck by the socio-economic inequality that fundamentally constructs society in Shanghai. I started thinking about the roots of the observed inequalities. I chose to go back to Shanghai in June 2010 to conduct field research because Shanghai was hosting the World Expo. At that time the state propaganda to improve population quality was a lot more apparent than in the past.

I stayed in Shanghai for four weeks to conduct field research. I chose women to be my interviewees because women have been targets of the state discourse of *suzhi* mainly because women are thought to have less *suzhi* than men and because women become mothers to raise high-*suzhi* children.¹⁴ I focused on how female Shanghainese use the concept of *suzhi* to differentiate themselves from migrant workers, and how migrant workers use it to differentiate themselves from Shanghainese. I interviewed a total of fifty-seven women. I chose Shanghainese women and rural migrant women who were in their late teens to mid thirties as my respondents for this research. I chose the respondents randomly on the streets of Shanghai who appeared to be in the age of twenty to forty. I approached them to ask whether if they would have fifteen minutes to discuss their perception of *suzhi* for an academic project. Then, the interview survey was handed to them so they could write down their answers. I sat with them while they were

¹⁴ see Judd, Ellen R. 2002. *The Chinese Women's Movement Between State and Market*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

answering the questions, and occasionally asked them to answer with more detail. I also asked respondents several questions aside from those on the interview survey such as whether *suzhi* for men and women were different. The majority of the respondents said it is different, and some even gave me concrete examples such as bodily movements that represent women with high *suzhi*. Then, I filtered the respondents according to income levels. I eliminated Shanghainese who were not working (i.e. students and housewives), and I eliminated rural migrant workers from Taiwan and Hong Kong, as they earn significantly higher income than do Shanghainese. The total number of surveys I discuss in this thesis is forty-six: twenty-three completed by Shanghainese women and twenty-three completed by rural migrant women.

Interviewing is a great way to learn about attitudes and values; moreover, it is a great way to find out what people *think* they do.¹⁵ This is a significant point because what I am interested in is not what *suzhi* actually is, but rather what people think *suzhi* is. One limitation I had was that my language ability was just adequate enough to understand day-to-day conversation; therefore, it was difficult to understand subtle nuances in a conversation. Consequently, since I only had one chance to interview respondents, and because of my language limitations, I felt the structured interview survey style was the best choice.¹⁶ This type of interview survey has some of the flexibility that the unstructured interview style has while it is also based on the use of an interview protocol.¹⁷ I looked for respondents on Huaihailu, or Huaihai Road, where a number of Western brand shops such as Cartier and Louis Vuitton are located. The street is known

¹⁵ Bernard, H. Russell. 2001. *Research methods in anthropology : Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. 3rd ed ed. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. 413

¹⁶ Bernard 2001: 212

¹⁷ Bernard 2001: 212

as the most popular place for Shanghainese to hang out. In that area there are also many females from outside of Shanghai in the twenties to thirties age range who take good care of their appearance.



Figure 3: Huaihai Lu, a centre of shopping for Shanghainese.

In addition, I conducted a photo-based survey. This photo-based survey is a type of photo eliciting research methodology. Photo eliciting methodology simply means researchers take photographs and insert them into interviews. It is said that images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than words alone can do.¹⁸ This method is particularly effective for assessing the cultural, economic, and symbolic capital of *suzhi*.

¹⁸ Harper, Douglas. 2002. Talking About Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation. *Visual Studies* 17 (1): 13-14

In order to assess how people associate material objects with the concept of *suzhi*, I employed a photo-scoring technique. In order to assess the widely shared ideas of what represent *suzhi* for rural migrants, I chose iconic images that were publicly available. Then, I conducted field tests with Chinese students at the University of Victoria to ensure that the images I selected were evocative and generated strong responses. One important thing to note here is that I am not interested in the actual level of *suzhi* of rural people and their consumption habits. I am interested in whether, and how, urban people make connections between their own *suzhi*, that of rural people and certain objects.

After a few demographic questions (regarding age, gender, income level, etc.), respondents were asked questions about their perceptions of their own *suzhi* and rural migrants' *suzhi*. Then, they were shown a number of photographs of material objects (e.g. Louis Vuitton purses) and of kinds of behaviour (e.g. speaking English). Each photograph had six criteria (cultural/un-cultural, expensive/inexpensive, high-*suzhi*/ low *suzhi*, easy to have/difficult to have, respectful/non-respectful, and city-like/rural-like) and each respondent was asked to rank each photo, using a scale from 1 to 7 for each criterion (see appendix 2).¹⁹

I also employed some participant observation. Participant observation involves “going out and staying out, learning a new language, and experiencing the lives of the people you are studying as much as you can.”²⁰ It was not only about “stalking culture in the wild,” but also about preparing myself before carrying out interviews.²¹ Participant

¹⁹ The semantic differential is usually measured on a 7-points scale. Bernard 2001: 337

²⁰ Bernard 2001: 344

²¹ Bernard 2001: 344

observation has several advantages. First, it opens research up and makes it possible to collect all kinds of data. Second, it reduces the reactivity of respondents. Third, it helps me to ask sensitive questions. Fourth, it gives me a chance to confirm data that I collected from the interviews and the survey. And last, it lets me observe people's day-to-day lives in ways not possible in a literature review.²²

I used these three methods to check inferences drawn from one set of data sources.²³ By conducting interview surveys, I was able to gain insights into how local Shanghainese see their *suzhi* and migrant workers' *suzhi*, while photo-based survey enabled me to gain insights into how they make connections between the concept of *suzhi* and material objects. Moreover, by conducting participant observation, I could confirm the strength of these results.

I encountered several methodological challenges in carrying out my research. First of all, I discovered when I was in Shanghai that I do not speak Mandarin fluently enough to do in-depth interviews. In order to solve this problem, I handed the interview script to respondents so they could hand write their answers. My reading ability of Chinese is much better than listening; therefore, by letting them write their answers on the interview script, I could understand their opinions much better. Another challenge that I faced was that I was not a part of Shanghai society. However, I possessed other qualities that made me a good researcher for this study. First of all, I am a female who is in her late twenties and who has a similar perspective on life and on material objects as the respondents I

²² Bernard 2001: 355-56

²³ Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson. 2007. *Ethnography : Principles in Practice*. 3rd ed ed. London; New York: Routledge. 183

chose. Second, I myself have an interest in fashion and material objects. Third, I speak some Mandarin and have some experiences of the Shanghainese lifestyle.

Organization of Thesis

The thesis aims to reveal how socio-economic conditions of a society shape the discourse of *suzhi*, especially in relation to its commodification. The central task of this study is to investigate the discursive formation of *suzhi* in the three core chapters of this thesis. Chapter 2 is dedicated to summarizing the existing scholarly understanding of *suzhi*. My main focus is to discuss the shift of *suzhi* discourse from a state discourse to a hegemonic discourse, and to consider how this discourse is not governed by the market. In Chapter 3, I theorize the concept of *suzhi* from the two most utilized approaches—the Marxist class struggle approach and the Foucauldian governmentality approach. Then, I introduce a new approach based on Bourdieu’s concepts of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital which I employ to analyze the concept of *suzhi*. In chapter 4, I discuss the contemporary notion of *suzhi* in Shanghai drawing on research results from June 2010. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first discusses the respondent’s generic concept of what *suzhi* is supposed to be. Then, the second section analyzes the materialization of *suzhi* and how Shanghainese women and rural migrant women respectively understand *suzhi* as embedded in material objects and behaviours. The concluding chapter is dedicated to summarizing my findings and analysis and to discussing the possibilities of future topics of study on this subject.

Chapter 2: *Suzhi* and Contemporary Culture

In this chapter, I will examine the understanding of the concept of *suzhi* in current scholarship, analyzing how the concept started as a state discourse, and how it has grown to become a hegemonic discourse. In other words, I am primarily interested here in how the governmental usage of *suzhi* discourse has been normalized among Chinese citizens. I will also discuss how the development of *suzhi* discourse has been linked with the socio-economic position of women as well as with neoliberalism. My first goal is to lay out the transition of *suzhi* discourse from a state discourse to a hegemonic mass discourse through two state policies—the One-Child Policy and the Household Registration policy. Then, I will examine the hegemonic discourse of *suzhi* within the context of gender representations and global market capitalism. It is vital to understand that *suzhi* discourse has a complex connection with the political, economic, and social aspects of contemporary life in China. Its reach and effects seem like a spider’s web, in which each aspect is interconnected with another. This means the *suzhi* discourse is very complex and dynamic.

According to Andrew Kipnis (2006) and Tamara Jacka (2006), there is no official definition of *suzhi*. *Suzhi* (素质) is roughly translated into English as “quality,” but has various nuances regarding the natural talents and nurtured characteristics of a person including intelligence, physical skill, and ideological and philosophical thought. The term was originally closely related to the inborn characteristics of a person. Similarly, the word *suyang* (素养) describes the embodied characteristics a person has acquired through upbringing and the cultivation of his/her individuality. However, the meaning

and connotation of *suzhi* has shifted since the late 1970s, or more precisely with Deng Xiaoping's Open Door Policy.

The linguistic history of *suzhi* clearly shows that the word initially did not have the contemporary hegemonic connotation—something that differentiates between rural and urban. *Suzhi* is a compound of the characters *su* (素) and *zhi* (质). *Zhi* means “nature, character or matter,” while *su* has multiple meanings including unadorned, plain, white and essence.²⁴ Before the late 1970s, these characters together, originally meant “unadorned or plain or essential character of something.”

Since then, this concept has come to mean more than just “nature, character or matter.” In the 1970s, under Deng Xiaoping's regime, people started realizing the key to China's achieving a recognized position in the global community was modernity. Within the state modernization discourse, a new population policy was adopted. The new propaganda was called “Population Quality” (*renkou suzhi*) in which *suzhi* was combined with “population” in the demographic sense. This particular concept of *suzhi* has a political connotation, rather than being just a description of personhood. Whether one has *suzhi* or not immediately puts him or her into a category. He or she becomes labelled as either a “person of quality (*you suzhi*)” or a “person without or with low quality (*suzhi cha/di*)”.²⁵ As the meaning of *suzhi* shifted from just “quality” to “quality that can make a difference,” the power of *suzhi* has been created.²⁶ *Suzhi* discourse, which is applied most frequently to the peasantry and to rural migrants, is central to the production of an idea of “new peasants” (*xin nongmin*) as the subjects of Development (with a capital *D*)

²⁴ Kipnis 2006: 296-7

²⁵ Anagnost 2004: 297.

²⁶ Hairong 2003: 497

beginning in the 1980s.²⁷ In order to understand *suzhi*, one needs to grasp the socio-economic background of contemporary China. In post-Mao China, the Communist Party of China (hereafter CCP) faced the urgent task of modernizing the country so that they could rebuild the country after the Great Leap Forward (1958-61) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) under Mao's regime. They also sought to seek a way to gain a recognized position in the global economy.²⁸ Placed within the context of state-led "modernization," the concept of *suzhi* was gradually politicized.

However, what is *suzhi*? How can one define it? Despite the central significance of the concept to the discourse of Development and state modernization, it is difficult to find a precise and uniform definition of *suzhi*.²⁹ This is mainly because the concept is tremendously flexible and changing. It is easily understood in multiple ways, and it is used in multiple discourses. People may use the word *suzhi* to describe the backwardness of rural people as in "lack of *suzhi*," or people may use the word to illustrate their child's educational achievement.

The most important point is that the multiplicity of meanings of *suzhi* is dependent on socio-economic context. The meanings and the usage of *suzhi* have undergone a significant transformation and proliferation since the late 1970's. The state documents concluded that rural poverty in China had resulted in China's failure to modernize the population.

At a National Conference in 1987, Chinese scholars could not decide on a universal definition of *suzhi*, but presented a few definitions. First they divided *suzhi* into

²⁷ Development with a capital D in this thesis means that it is ideology and practices of developmentalism.

²⁸ Meisner, Maurice. 1999. *Mao's China and After; A History of The People's Republic* NY: The Free Press. 449-479

²⁹ *Ibid.* 498.

“hardware” or embodied material *suzhi* including such things as physical strength and beautiful appearance, and as “software” or invisible, spiritual *suzhi*, including cultural *suzhi* (*Wenhua Suzhi*), psychological *suzhi* (*Xinli Suzhi*) and *suzhi* of consciousness (*Sixiang Suzhi*).³⁰ However, the negative of the term was often used to compare areas of China’s perceived backwardness, such as its underdeveloped rural and minority areas, with urban areas on the southern coast such as Shanghai.³¹ This conceptualization of *suzhi* within the discourse of modernity was reflective of an important shift in state ideology from regulating birth to improving the quality of the population as a whole. In other words, this was meant to be a shift from quantity to quality.³² There were three major changes that occurred in the 1970s that transformed the meaning of the word. First, *suzhi* no longer connoted the natural in a nature/nurture dichotomy. Instead, the word differentiated between nature and nurture rather than defining one’s natural talent. Secondly, contemporary usage was limited to individually embodied human personal qualities. Thirdly, *suzhi* had taken on sacred overtones. It now marked the hierarchical and moral distinction between high and low *suzhi* holders.³³ I suggest that the transformation of *suzhi* has happened through two major political policies of the CCP. The first one is the implementation of the One-Child policy, and the other one is the enforcement of the Household Registration system (*hukou* system).

Suzhi manifests itself in various state programs and discourses such as propaganda for the One-Child Policy and *hukou* systems. These are about “raising quality” (*tigao suzhi*) or “developing talent” (*chengcai*), and more importantly there are a great deal of nuances

³⁰ Hairong 2003: 496.

³¹ Kipnis 2006: 296.

³² Anagnost 2004: 190

³³ Kipnis 2006: 297

and implications in it.³⁴ Jiang Zemin, who was the president of China from 1993 to 2003 made a notable speech in 1989:

Socialism does not only aim to realize material prosperity, but also to achieve all-around social progress. Our basic direction is to grasp socialist material civilization and spiritual civilization [*jingshen wenming*] together. The construction of spiritual civilization ultimately demands raising the quality of the entire nation, to develop the new socialist person with ideals, morality, education and discipline... Developing education and science is a hundred-year strategy that has great and far-reaching significance for rising society's forces of production and the nation's quality.³⁵

In the speech, it is obvious that the discourse of *suzhi*, which includes ideology, morality, education and discipline to raise the *suzhi* of the whole nation, originally belonged to the state. First of all, Jiang Zemin emphasized the significance of developing not only material civilization but also spiritual civilization in order for China to gain a position in the global community. More importantly, he suggested that it is *suzhi* that lies at the heart of spiritual civilization. Another significant point of this speech is that he emphasized the importance of education and science. He said the purpose of developing education and science was for raising the nation's quality. As Greenhalgh and Winkler suggest, managing the population, to the CCP, to some extent means controlling the nation's biology.³⁶ Within the CCP, there is an explicit desire to improve *suzhi* in the education system (*suzhi jiaoyu*) and the *suzhi* of the population (*renkou suzhi*). Such a

³⁴ Judd, Ellen R. 2002. *The Chinese Women's Movement Between State and Market*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press. 19

³⁵ Jiang Zemin 1989, cited in Judd 2002: 20

³⁶ Greenhalgh, Susan, and Edwin A. Winckler. 2005. *Governing China's Population : From Leninist to Neoliberal Biopolitics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 1-2

setting shaped the basis for national modernization in preparation for more market-oriented global society. The selective absorption of Western science and the larger “scientization” of politics and society was considered to be the best way to readdress the legitimacy of CCP power.

As a result, the state discourse of *suzhi* gradually shifted into a hegemonic discourse that differentiated “educated urban people” from “uneducated rural people”. Due to the fact that the state paid so much attention to education and science and that there were a lot more opportunities to access them in the urban areas than in the countryside, this approach generated the social perception that urban people must be more educated and superior. This perception enabled the shift of *suzhi* into a hegemonic mass discourse.

***Suzhi* discourse and the One-Child Policy**

The first step in the shift of *suzhi* was the implementation of the One-Child policy. This was fully implemented in 1983; it is considered to be “hard” birth control compared with the “soft” birth control under Mao’s regime. The post-Mao population management project was part of a larger modernization project. After the political and social disasters under Mao’s regime, class struggle and Marxist ideology seemed to be outdated, and the party’s reputation was ruined. It was at that time that the state re-evaluated the importance of modernization and, especially science-based programs. There was a strong belief among state leaders that population growth was evidence of China’s backwardness. Because of its high population growth, they believed China could not achieve the legitimate global position that they could otherwise have had.³⁷ More precisely, they believed that the rapid population growth in rural areas produced relatively uneducated

³⁷ Greenhalgh, Susan. 2003. “Science, Modernity, and Making China’s One-Child Policy” in *Population and Development Review* 29 (2) Jun. 175

and unskilled people who would hold the country back. Control over the rural population was deemed necessary.³⁸

To the CCP, population policy, which was rooted in nature and the body, was a key site for the construction and expansion of the new trend of scientific authority.³⁹ The concept of population is seen in relation to the political issue of quantity. It is now a biological, reproductive process in which individuals are aggregated into a larger mass population. The population of each region was no longer a mere classification. It had become a classification distinguishing quality, or *suzhi*, based on the dichotomy of rural and urban. Finally, difference between the genders is defined by differences between women and men in reproductive structure and function, in which women are always considered the natural and nurturing primary reproducer.⁴⁰ This portrayal of women as having the essential responsibility in reproduction has caused the discussion about *suzhi* discourse to target women. Women are responsible not only for reproducing their offspring, but also for reproducing a whole nation's future.

Governing the mother's birth means the control of sexual desire and reproductive behaviour.⁴¹ Through this channel, the CCP introduced eugenic concept to population management. Individuals became classified in the hierarchy of *suzhi*. At the bottom of the eugenic *suzhi* pyramid, there were the physically and mentally disadvantaged. According to the Ministry of Health, in 1989 China had nearly 52 million "disabled"

³⁸ *Ibid* 164

³⁹ Greenhalgh, Susan, and Edwin A. Winckler. 2005. *Governing china's population: From Leninist to neoliberal biopolitics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 215, see also Evans, H. 2000. Marketing femininity: Images of the modern chinese woman. *CHINA BEYOND THE HEADLINES*: 217-44.

⁴⁰ Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005: 214

⁴¹ Bakken, BÅrge. 2000. *The exemplary society: Human Improvement, Social Control, and the Dangers of Modernity in China*. Oxford [England] New York: Oxford University Press. 67

people, over 10 million “mentally disadvantaged” people, and more than 30 million people who had been officially defined as “defective.”⁴² Politically highly significant was that about 380,000 babies with physical and mental defects are born in China yearly around 1990.⁴³ The physical and mental characteristics of a newborn child were considered to have a key contribution to the future of China. The rationale of the One-Child policy is seen in this statement from 1988:

To have good offspring not only creates happy families, but also influences the growth of the state and the prosperity of the nation. For plants and animals we already have good seeds and breeds: should we also not use such methods on mankind itself to improve the quality of the population?⁴⁴

This quote summarizes the eugenic character of the *suzhi* discourse. There are three significant points. First, within the discourse, there was a notion that it was crucial to have “better” offspring to construct a better society. This meant not only a more civilized society but also a wealthier society. It also suggested that it was critical for a nation to eliminate inferior offspring and only save well-selected children. This implied that it was crucial for China to be selective regarding children in order to construct a spiritually and materially rich society. Second, this goal is achievable. With the collective effort and knowledge of the state and each individual, this statement suggests that it is possible to achieve breeding of physically and mentally healthier children. Thirdly, the explicit logic was that if people could manage to breed plants and animals, why not human beings? This aspect of population control was considered “scientific management.” The importance of this statement is, in fact, officials were seeing the population within a

⁴² Dikotter, Frank. 1998. *Imperfect Conceptions, Medical Defects, and Eugenics in China*. London: Hurst. 162

⁴³ *China Daily*, 4 July 1991 4

⁴⁴ Wang Guolong. 1988. *Guannian Xidaihua yi bai ti* (One Hundred Concepts of Modernity). Beijing: Yejin Chubanshe. cited in Bakken. 68

pseudo-scientific discourse. That is to say, regulating people's sexual desire and reproductive behaviours is taken for granted as dictated by objective science that is governed by quantitative and qualitative data.

This trend was enhanced by the introduction of the "Eugenic Law", which was later renamed the "Maternal and Infant Health Law." This law was particularly aimed at preventing women giving birth to a child with physical or mental disabilities. Such "inferior births" have "zero *suzhi*" (*ling suzhi*) and could make no contribution to the society.⁴⁵ From the party-state's point of view, China needed children with better physical *suzhi* and better spiritual *suzhi*. *Suzhi* was a part of the language needed to construct this eugenic discourse. Within the hegemonic discourse of *suzhi* of the population (*renkou suzhi*), it was urban born children who carry high *suzhi*. Zhou Xiaozheng, a Chinese newspaper writer with a specialty in population studies, wrote in 1989 that educated people in the cities had the highest quality. He believed that urban marriage and birth rates were fairly low but that the rural population in the educationally stagnant countryside had much higher birth rates. In other words, he believed that the one-child policy had only served to restrict people of relatively high quality and relatively superior urban environments from having children, which there had been no control of those with low quality or from relatively backward rural environments.⁴⁶ This included migrant workers in the cities. They were perceived to have high fertility.

⁴⁵ Dikotter, Frank 1998: 161

⁴⁶ Zhou Xiaozheng. 1989. "Renkou suzhi shi wo guo rekou wenti de guanjian (Population Quality Is The Key To The Problem To The China's Population)" in *Fuin Baokan Ziliao*, C5, Renkouxue, No. 5. 83-90. Cited in Bakken (2000) 68

The state's concern with this group's "excessive birth" (*chaosheng*), led to intensified measures to monitor migrant fertility practices.⁴⁷ In other words, the one-child policy, which the habitus of *suzhi* reinforced, led to unequal perceptions and treatments of urban and rural areas. It is important to note here that Zhou did not question what state policies had led to the difference in levels of education in rural and urban areas, nor did he acknowledge the different educational opportunities between rural and urban areas. Rather he helped in constructing a binary opposition of urban/rural in terms of *suzhi*, with the rural occupying a lower position, based on marriage patterns and birth rates.

The state's shift of focus from the quantity to the perceived quality of the population contributed to new upwardly mobile parents' aspirations for their "one" child, and it has followed a distinctive trajectory. First, the shift encouraged parents to embrace certain ideals of health and education. More importantly, the *suzhi* project helped to produce self-regulating, "autonomous," neoliberal subjects that the market economy desires.⁴⁸ In other words, under the neoliberal *suzhi* discourse, children and mothers are targets of the market. Like state policy, the market economy functioned to reshape and expand the *suzhi* discourse. Educational commodities such as educational equipment, brain stimulating foods, and language lessons have enormous and diverse markets in contemporary China, especially in urban areas. Second, the shift put its focus on two reconfigured objects of social investment and control: the "quality child" and the "good mother." A child was now (again, but in a new way) a site for his or her family to invest their economic, as well as social and cultural, capital. Finally, the shift relocated

⁴⁷ Zhang, Li. 2001. *Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks Within china's floating population*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. 37

⁴⁸ The 'autonomy' here should not be considered as mere the exercise of free will, but the product of practices of government developed by the state bureaucracy, the professional disciplines, and the market.

governmental power over the population from the state bureaucracy to a much more wide-ranging set of authorities—the markets. Each political authority set standards of health and education for parents to adopt, and the market economy managed to maintain their authority.⁴⁹ For example, food and pharmaceutical companies introduced a huge trend of infant, baby, and toddler products associated with science, modernity, foreignness, and progress. In the early 1990s, items such as chocolate and potato chips were considered to be modern food which gave the child *suzhi* by “opening up child intelligence.”⁵⁰ It was these corporations that played an important role in establishing and installing the norms of what *suzhi* was. Parental anxieties, corporate interests, scientific professionals, and the state all combined to create the new concept of *suzhi* under the neoliberal biopolitics of post-Deng China.

This commodification of *suzhi* also functioned to widen the urban/rural dichotomy by limiting accesses to those products via an economic barrier. Foods that were supposed to raise children’s *suzhi* and special curriculum to enrich children’s intellectual *suzhi* require certain levels of economic capital. By setting prices for those products/services high, markets allow high-income families to improve their *suzhi* and leave the *suzhi* level of low-income families low.

The One-Child Policy is not just a merely quantitative regulation. It controls peoples’ sexual desires and reproductive activities with the political intention of raising the quality of the nation as well as widening the binary between the “uneducated” rural and the “educated” urban. It contributed to the construct of the perception that the rural is lacking in *suzhi* and that the urban cultivates *suzhi*.

⁴⁹ Greenhalgh and Winckler 2005: 217

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 242

Suzhi discourse and the Household Registration System

The second factor that contributed to the transformation of the state discourse of *suzhi* to a hegemonic mass discourses is the *hukou* (户口) (Household Registration) system. As Jacka and Gaetano suggest, a thorough understanding of the *hukou* system is required for any contemporary analysis regarding rural-to-urban migration.⁵¹ After being strictly tied to their birthplace with life-long assigned jobs since the 1950s, people started to enjoy a new mobility in the 1980s, although it was still regulated by the government through the *hukou* system. Most notable was the massive labour exodus from the countryside, called “*mingong chao*” or “waves of rural labour”.⁵² In the mid-1950s, China had experienced massive industrialization, which resulted in a widened economic gap between the coastal cities and interior towns. Given the allure of coastal cities and the poverty of China’s interior, those who had so far been kept out of the rapid economic growth in urban areas had no choice but to migrate to the cities for economic betterment.⁵³ They were considered as a “floating population” (*liudou renkou*), which means those who were engaged in partial temporary relocation to the cities while their *hukou* were still in their birthplace in the countryside.⁵⁴ From 1949 to 1957, China’s cities absorbed up to 26.27 million individuals from the countryside, which accounted for

⁵¹ Jacka, Tamara and Arianne M. Gaetano. 2004 “Introduction: Focusing on Migrant Women” in *On the Move: Women in Rural-to-Uban Migration in Contemporary China* NY: Columbia University Press. 14

⁵² K. W. Chan et al. 1999. “*Hukou* and Non-*hukou* Migrations in China: Comparisons and Contrasts” in *International Journal Of Population Geography* Int. J. Popul. Geogr. 5, 425-448. 425

⁵³ Windrow, Hayden and Anik Guha. 2005. “The *Hukou* System, Migrant Workers, & State Power in the People’s Republic of China” in *Northwestern University Journal of International Human Rights*. Volume 3 available online at <https://www.law.northwestern.edu/journals/jihr/v3/3/Windrow.pdf> p2

⁵⁴ Solinger, D. J. 1993. “China’s Transient And The State: A Form Of Civil Society?” in *Politics Society*. 21: 91

70% of urban growth.⁵⁵ Shanghai's floating population was much larger than that in the rest of the coastal cities.⁵⁶

Under these circumstances, the central government saw potential threats of social unrest due to uncontrolled urban population growth, and these could ultimately endanger economic development. Paradoxically, the rural population provided the physical labour that the industrializing cities needed. The rural labour power was critical for the urban economy to develop.⁵⁷ This set of dilemmas has returned in the post-Mao period.

Originally, the government implemented the Household Registration Regulations (*hukou* system) in order to delay the already happening mass migration and restore socio-economic stability.⁵⁸ In the state discourse, the *hukou* system was installed to “maintain social order, protect citizens' rights and benefits, and to serve in the construction of socialism.”⁵⁹ However, in reality, it divided the agricultural and industrial populations and kept peasants at their birthplace. The *hukou* system basically had two major rules. First, a citizen of China has to hold a household registration and cannot hold more than one. And second, although in principle one can transfer his or her registration location, in practice, it is hardly possible to transfer one's *hukou* from one place to another because doing so requires a high level of bureaucratic paperwork as well as tight personal connections (*guanxi*) with the bureaucracy.⁶⁰ That is to say, people born in a rural area are bound to their native place by their political classification.

However, implementation of the *hukou* system had larger political implications. It also divided urban population into two different subjects: urban residents who hold urban

⁵⁵ China Financial And Economic Publishing House, *New China Population* 58 (1988); see Windrow and Guha (2005)

⁵⁶ Solinger 1993: 97

⁵⁷ Meisner 1999: 468-469

⁵⁸ *Ibid* 3

⁵⁹ *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Hukou Dengji Tiaoli*. 1958 [The Household Registration Regulations of the People's Republic of China] § 1 Nongcun Fagui Quanshu cited in Windrow 2005: 3

⁶⁰ Zhang Li 2001: 37-38

hukou and rural migrants to the cities who hold rural *hukou*.⁶¹ Rural *hukou* holders are faced with more state power regulation and control in their lives due to several politically constructed reasons. First, they are perceived as a potential threat to the state project of population control with higher fertility rates than those of urban residents. Second, they are accused by urban residents of being responsible for urban ills such as violating social security and engaging in illegal activities including prostitution and drug trafficking. Such a perception by the state was powerful enough that urban minds of residents adopted it as hegemonic common knowledge.

As a result, urban perceptions of rural migrants reinforced the political binary of urban residents and rural migrants. Although, China has tremendous regional, religious, and ethnic diversity, the state discourse of *suzhi* tends to reduce all these differences into a rigid dichotomy of rural/urban. For example, there are 56 officially recognized ethnic populations in China.⁶² It is said that there are 293 different languages in China that are officially recognized by the party-state.⁶³ Many urban cities have historically been built by migrants and sojourners from all over the country.⁶⁴ In contemporary times, the cultural differences among migrant workers are often understood by urban residents as mere rural backwardness.⁶⁵ The hegemonic view of rural-ness determines the reputation of individuals from rural areas. Moreover, it is not only assumed that they are an

⁶¹ *ibid* 25

⁶² Yao, Yong-Gang et al. 2002. "Genetic Relationship of Chinese Ethnic Populations Revealed by mtDNA Sequence Diversity" *American Journal Of PhysicalAnthropology*. 118:63–76. 63

⁶³ Ethnologue report for China. Accessed December 5th, 2010. http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=cn

⁶⁴ Honig, Emily. 1992. *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850-1980*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 15

⁶⁵ Zheng, Tiantian. 2004 "From Peasant Women to Bar Hostess: Gender and Modernity in Post-Mao Dalian" in *On the Move– Women in Rural-Urban Migration In Contemporary China*. NY: Columbia University Press. 85

undifferentiated flow of labour power, but also that they are significantly inferior to urban residents. As a result, this has created stigma and discrimination against those who hold rural *hukou*.

This is indicative of *suzhi* functioning as a hegemonic discourse. By the term “hegemonic discourse,” I mean something like the shared common knowledge that people often talk about. “Common sense is not rigid and immobile,” according to Gramsci, “but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. Common sense creates the folklore of the future, that is, as a relatively rigid form of popular knowledge at a given place and time.”⁶⁶ That is to say common sense is socially constructed by past events, creating future socio-economic conditions. The urban/rural dichotomy was rendered hegemonic through media. Photographs used in newspapers and stories of migrant workers in magazines tend to use snapshots from migrants’ daily life, creating the “typical” urban perceptions of rural migrant workers.⁶⁷ By ignoring the fact that each individual from rural areas could be different and rather lumping them together into a uniform category known as “rural migrants,” individuals with rural backgrounds are dehumanized and objectified.

In other words, *suzhi* discourse has contributed to the construction of the commonly accepted rural/urban dichotomy, which carried connotations of rural inferiority that dehumanized and objectified rural migrants as a cheap labour force. The concept of *suzhi* presents rural migrants as amorphous subjects, blamed for China’s backwardness and

⁶⁶ Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selection from the prison, Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, (1971) 362, cited in Goldman, Michael. *Imperial nature: The world bank and struggles for social justice in the age of globalization*. 33

⁶⁷ Zhang, Li 2001: P31

potentially a threat to an entitled global position in post-Mao China. In order to solve the problem, the party-state holds that China has to raise each individual's *suzhi*, but most of all it must raise the *suzhi* of rural people. As a consequence the party-state emphasizes the significance of improving rural *suzhi* given the contexts of modernity and Development. This contributed to the normalization of the rural/urban dichotomy.

***Suzhi* Discourse and the Market.**

So far I have examined the One-Child Policy within the discourse of modernity and the *hukou* system within the discourse of a rural/urban dichotomy. There is another significant factor that has contributed to the hegemonization of *suzhi* discourse: the market. The increasingly competitive nature of contemporary Chinese society driven by global market capitalism has become one of the factors driving concerns with *suzhi*.⁶⁸ The simultaneous project of marketization and modernization is seen as dependent on *renkou suzhi* (population quality); therefore, the party-state emphasizes the importance of simultaneous material development and *suzhi* development.⁶⁹ Rural peasants and rural migrants had become the subject of *suzhilization*, and they were to be led to the Market, or to be prepared for the up-coming neo-liberal global Market System. Wang Zhaoyao, party secretary of Fuyang Prefecture in Anhui province, wrote in a newspaper article entitled "Leading Peasants to the Market" in 1992, that a well-established commodity network is essential for Development.⁷⁰ He said:

[P]easantry revolves around the market and market
revolves around prices... A great deal of practice has

⁶⁸ Ibid: 310

⁶⁹ Xu, Feng. 2000. *Women migrant workers in China's economic reform*. International political economy series. Houndmills, Basingstoke : New York: Macmillan ; St. Martin's Press. 34-35

⁷⁰ Yan, Hairong 2003: 499.

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.

He suggests that by encouraging peasants to be involved in the market, the party-state can transform their consciousness. This view was echoed by many newspaper articles through the 1980s and 1990s. It was a well-accepted idea for improving peasant consciousness. Moreover, those new peasants were to migrate to cities, and acquire more *suzhi*, and when they returned home, they were to become a living demonstration of improvement of *suzhi* through labour migration. They would in that way facilitate the next round of labour recruitment in their area.⁷¹

During the transition of *suzhi* discourse from a state discourse to a mass hegemonic discourse the *suzhi* discourse has helped to bring out not only the development of market socialism, but also new critiques of rural women.⁷² According to state leaders such as Jiang Zemin, raising women's *suzhi* is fundamental to the process of raising the *suzhi* of the nation itself. More importantly, the All China's Women's Federation argues that raising women's *suzhi* will lead to gender equality.⁷³ It is also suggested that the *suzhi* discourse targeting women is the result of gender-based exclusion from the now hyper-masculinized sphere of market activity. This exclusion would be a significant disadvantage to women as the market is the core of the state discourse of modernity.⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 506.

⁷² Judd 2002: 19

⁷³ Judd 2002: 21

⁷⁴ Judd 2002: 27, and also see Gaetano for the state discourse of modernity and its direction to the market. Gaetano, Arianne. 2004. 'Filial Daughters, Modern Women: Migrant Domestic Workers in Post-Mao Beijing' in *On The Move – Women in Rural-Urban Migration In Contemporary China*. NY: Columbia University Press. 41

It is significant to note that *suzhi* for women is different than *suzhi* for men. This is because social functions in China are gendered. Women are deemed responsible for giving birth to healthy offspring (nature), as well as educating and disciplining them (nurture), so that the children can contribute to the future society. By having women responsible for natural and nurtured aspects of children, society demands that they develop their *suzhi*. In other words, it was essential to improve women's *suzhi* to bring success to China's economic reform.

The goal of China's reform is to achieve modernity (*xiandaihua*), driven by the fear of being left behind by the more economically advanced West.⁷⁵ Late-socialist China's modernity is oriented to the future (i.e., development and economic growth) and to the urban (i.e., markets and consumption); yet, it overlaps with the *hukou* system in organizing the populace into hierarchical categories of rural and urban, "whereby residing in the countryside and being a peasant imply being left behind temporally in the drive toward progress, and lacking the moral "*suzhi*" required of citizens to advance socialist modernity." In this discourse of modernity, Gaetano argues that it is the desire to be modern, besides the desire to earn more income for her family, that leads rural single women to migrate to cities to search for a job. The city enables female migrant workers to expose themselves to new forms of *knowledge* and "raise their quality (*tigao suzhi*)".⁷⁶

However, rural migrant women in cities suffer double marginalization. They are looked down upon in the city as outsiders (*waidi-ren*) and at the workplace as women. One notable example is the term, *dagong-mei* used among migrants to refer to themselves and among urban locals to refer to rural migrants. *Dagong* basically means migrant work

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 41

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 47

which has derogatory connotations of dirty, brainless, and backward occupations. *Mei* literally means a little sister, *Dagong-mei* means female migrant workers but it carries subtle socio-political meanings. By calling female migrant workers *dagongmei*, urban society derogates the value of their bodies. This is a very important observation as this is exactly the discourse of migrant workers in post-socialist China. Xu discusses how the state uses the language of the traditional as backward to lead rural youth to imagine and believe that their future and modernity lie in the cities. As long as they stay as *others*, they are objectified by urban society. It seems that the process of *othering* has contributed to a negative cast to contemporary knowledge/power about female migrant bodies. The image of rural female bodies contrast *suzhi* with that of urban female bodies just as the *suzhi* of rural people is opposed to that of urban people.

These dichotomies has given rise to the next transitional stage of the *suzhi* discourse, self-development (*ziwo-fazhan*). The state discourse of *suzhi* encourages people to learn to self-govern and maintain harmonious communities, in which people with high incomes and a high level of civility reside. Women are expected to become better mothers for future children. Moreover, the self-development aspect of *suzhi* also promoted commodification. The commodification of femininity has been studied by scholars such as Harriet Evans (2000), Louisa Schein (2001), and Tiantian Zheng (2004). In contemporary China, urbanity is an artefact of popular cultural production and consumption. Schein suggests that “dreamland” is a key image here. For much of the world, the modernity that goods signify is the stage of unfulfilled longing. Especially in China, the higher prestige items—although they are not restricted by state regulation—still remain out of reach to most due to economic limitations. She suggests that a general

culture of consumption—an acute commodity desire linked to social status—has saturated all sectors of Chinese society. This is a structure of feeling that she calls “imagined cosmopolitanism.”⁷⁷ The discourse of *suzhi* is deeply embedded in the discourse of modernity. Since modernity is signified by goods and their consumption, the concept of *suzhi*, I suggest, can be also signified through consumption in both quantity and quality. The quantity of consumption can be transcoded into economic capital, and the quality of consumption can be transcoded into cultural capital. This capital, as I will explain in the following chapter, is *suzhi*.

The making of the cosmopolitan, urban and modern self involves highly performative practices that indicate struggle for relative prestige within Chinese society. Although urban spaces are a realm of commodity fetishism, where consumption rather than production shapes social order,⁷⁸ it is important to keep in mind that the post-socialist setting of China is specific in the way it links with the state. As Caroline Humphrey says, the ethnography on consumption should look at locally particular “value-laden perceptions,” which are “specific to recent historical time.”⁷⁹ Schein suggests that the rural-urban dichotomy supported by the Household Registration System (*hukou*) constructs the “rural” as a homogeneous mass of backward manual labour, as well as the “urban” as something different in lifestyle and consumption patterns.⁸⁰ Here again, the *hukou* system helped form a social hierarchy.

⁷⁷ Schein, Louisa. 2001. “Urbanity, Cosmopolitanism, Consumption” in *China Urban Ethnography of Contemporary China* edited by Nancy N. Chen, Constance D. Clark Durham and London: Duke University Press. 225-241. 226

⁷⁸ Harvey, David. 1989. *The condition of postmodernity : An enquiry into the origins of cultural change*. [Oxford, England; New York, NY, USA]: Blackwell. 422-429

⁷⁹ Schein 2001: 227

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 227

The rural/urban dichotomy is further constructed through popular media such as fashion magazines and advertisements. They use derogatory images of rural female migrants to elevate the value of urban female residents. For example, the image of rural women is described as an example to avoid. Luo Xi wrote, “The fair lady is never a countryside bumpkin, but a refined city woman.”⁸¹ In the popular media, rural women are targets ridiculed for their alleged peasant attire, eating manners and hygiene habits.

Through the figure of the rural female migrant, cosmopolitanism, urbanity and modernity interact in the performance of appearance and behaviour. Like urbanites, rural people perform their modernity by fashioning themselves. Many female migrant workers cut or style their hair within months of arrival in a big city. Some also purchase gadgets with the latest technology. For rural migrants living in cities, consuming is a significant means to partake of a modern and urban identity.⁸² However, this performance to create and maintain one’s identity is also formed among urban people as well. In order to differentiate themselves from rural migrant workers, urban residents perform their urbanity by an even more elaborate and polished style which signifies urban prestige. It is a performative practice, I argue, which defines *suzhi*, illustrating the rural-urban dichotomy. There are image after image of the fashionable urbanite female body enjoying domestic city life, as women show off their jewellery, silks, and sunglasses. Between the 1950s and the late 1970s—the early decades of the communist revolution—the official ideology removed signs of femininity and female eroticism. However, by the

⁸¹ Luo Xi. “Shunv de moyan (The Appearance of a Fair Lady).” In *Niizi Shizie (Women’s World)* 3:42-43 cited in Zheng, Tiantian. 2004. “From Peasant Women to Bar Hostess: Gender and Modernity in Post-Mao Dalian” in *On The Move: Women in Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China*. NY: Columbia University Press. 86

⁸² Gaetano 2004: 70-71

mid-1980s, young urban female bodies, in domestic and professional contexts, wearing their tailored jackets and fashionable dresses, frequently appeared in popular magazines.

In this chapter, I have offered an overview of the transformation of *suzhi* discourse. First, before the 1970s, the word merely meant the quality of material things, which people used as a synonym of *zhiliang*. Then, it carried political connotations to distinguish two kinds of subjects from one another: urban residents and rural residents. The transformation of the state discourse into a hegemonic mass discourse was enabled through two major state institutions, the one-child policy and the *hukou* system. *Suzhi* became normalized among urban residents through mass media, as economic development resulted in a wider income gap between rural and urban areas. Finally, the neoliberal society of contemporary China has even seen the commodification of *suzhi*. The spider web of *suzhi* discourse covers the state, society, education, population, science, gender and neoliberal capitalism. *Suzhi* can be analyzed as a form of transformable value—a coding text to derogate one's body and a tool for state governmentality over rural migrants. This chapter also sets out the ideas which form the basis for the methodology used in Chapter 4. These theoretical aspects of *suzhi* will be explained further in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Theorizing *Suzhi*

This chapter explores theoretical approaches to *suzhi*. I will employ Western theories to analyze contemporary Chinese discourse since it can be seen as a product of Western discourses of modernity and Development. First, I will introduce two theoretical frameworks employed by Ann Anagnost and Yan Hairong. Both scholars are well known in the literature regarding *suzhi* discourse. Anagnost provided a Marxist analysis. She considers *suzhi* as a form of value that channel capital accumulation and exploitation. It involves class struggle between rural migrants engaged in physical labour and middle-class urbanites, who exploit labour from the former and accumulate capital in their children. Yan, on the other hand, analyzes the state's use of *suzhi* from a governmentality point of view. She examines the biggest employment agency in Tianjin's domestic service sectors. This was in fact a hybrid organization of the state and the private sector. Its recruitment efforts emphasized an employee's prospects for improving *suzhi*. I will build on the studies of Anagnost and Yan by analyzing the concept of *suzhi* from a different angle. After that, I will then offer an analysis using Bourdieu's concepts of capital. This new way of looking at *suzhi* is intended to link social theory with the existing understanding of *suzhi* to illustrate how it informs and modifies peoples' behaviour.

***Suzhi* for a Marxism Framework**

Before introducing Anagnost's analysis on *suzhi*, it is important to provide a history of the socio-economic background that has led to the exploitation of rural labour power in the urban setting. As Jacka argues, the contemporary binary between rural and urban can be seen as the result of "internal orientalism" which was part of Chinese intellectuals'

efforts to strive for modernity since the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸³ The question of “what was wrong with China?” emerged after the series of defeats at the hands of foreign imperialism. The key to this question, intellectuals believed, was China’s backwardness, which urgently required eradication through modernization.⁸⁴ This backwardness was mirrored in the Western colonial view of China as the backward “other” differentiated from the modernized “us.” When Chinese intellectuals adopted the colonial view of China as the backward “other” of the West; they deflected this inferiority onto the rural “other.” The binary became one of the modernized urban “us” struggling against backward rural “others.” During the first half of the 20th century, peasants and women in rural areas became the popular subject of modern literature. Mao Zedong himself refused to perpetuate the binary as he believed that it was the peasants who possessed revolutionary power, but the CCP in the 1950s instituted two different forms of categorization and regulation that concretize the division between rural and urban. First, during the land reform campaigns of 1949-1952, all adults were assigned a class status (*jieji chengfen*). The campaign designated permanent urban residents and permanent rural residents of a specific village, and determined that children had to inherit their father’s class status.⁸⁵ The rural/urban division was further deepened in the late 1950s with the introduction of the *hukou* system. Upon the implementation of the *hukou* system, China was more than ever clearly divided into two classes: rural and urban. For example, it became extremely difficult for rural residents to transfer their *hukou* to cities. One needs not only a large amount of money, but also a special connection (*guanxi*) to

⁸³ Jacka and Gaetano 2004: 14

⁸⁴ Eitzgerald, John. 1996. *Awaking China: Politics, Culture, and Class in the Nationalist Revolution*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 108

⁸⁵ Jacka and Gaetano 2004: 14-15

the bureaucracy. The majority of rural migrant workers are not and will not be legal residents of the city after 1958. Without legal permission, their access to public social services such as legal support, education, and medical care is limited. Rural migrants who do not have access to such social services continue to be stigmatized by urban residents in cities.⁸⁶ There have long been cultural, social, and economic struggles between the two groups since the urban educated tend to dominate white-collar jobs, while the rural uneducated tend to be blue-collar labourers. Under Deng's regime, there has been another class emerging in this society, the consumption-oriented middle-class. They have formed their class identity through differentiating themselves from rural migrants. They are proudly "not rural migrants" and are "more sophisticated than rural migrants."⁸⁷

Anagnost focuses on the links between the discursive formation of *suzhi* and the discursive production of the middle-class and middle-classness. She suggests that the discourse of *suzhi* derived from the political discourse of backwardness and development (quality of the masses) to a social discourse implying a "person of quality" defined by practices of consumption and the desire for social mobility.⁸⁸ She suggests that the discourse of *suzhi* was most prominent in the comparison of two populations. The first was the rural migrants who are marked by their absence of *suzhi*. The other group consisted of urban middle-class only-children who have been fetishized as a site of accumulated *suzhi*. She focuses on the labour that accumulates in the child's body. At the same time, the value of the rural migrant body is derogated in the discourse of *suzhi*.

⁸⁶ Zhang 2001: 34-36

⁸⁷ Anagnost 2004: 190

⁸⁸ *Ibid* 190

This value is derogated so the *suzhi* of the middle-class urban residents and middle-class children becomes higher in comparison.⁸⁹

According to Anagnost, *suzhi* needs to be analyzed as the ideological formation that transfers economic value from body to body. In other words, bodies with recognized *suzhi* inside are bodies that have been accumulating *suzhi* in the form of educational value provided by parents. In the process of the accumulation, *suzhi* has to be exploited from rural bodies first. The accumulated *suzhi* is embodied and expressed in a body as a coded text since it is an expression of value.⁹⁰ The concept of value provides the means of transcoding, the social inequality that simultaneously produces political, social, economic, and emotional value. This circuit engineers inequality into a number of socio-economic domains, such as the evaluation of labour, the outcomes of educational reform (*suzhi jiaoyou*), the roots of social disorder, the criteria for being a cosmopolitan citizen through consumer taste, and the assessment of a child's psychological state (*xinli suzhi*). The definition of *suzhi* and its usage in any particular case depends on the socio-politico-economic agenda behind it.

This conceptualization of value is especially effective in tracking *suzhi* as value coding and transcoding that flexibly moves from embodied value to desire.⁹¹ Thus, the extraction and accumulation of performative surplus value make possible that claim of superior *suzhi* among middle-class children and inferior *suzhi* of migrant workers. Furthermore, this circuit of representational value is highly effective in multiple spheres

⁸⁹ *ibid* 191

⁹⁰ *ibid* 192

⁹¹ *Ibid* 198

within a society—the financial *suzhi* of urban residents, physical *suzhi* of rural migrants, and cultural *suzhi* (taste in consumption).⁹²

In post-socialist China, regional identities are significantly integrated within the transnational economy in an “age of flexible accumulation.”⁹³ As Harvey characterizes the current form of capitalism, a new flexibility in terms of labour processes and labour control are made possible by global flows of capital and labour.⁹⁴ By evaluating the *suzhi* of migrant labour power in terms of discipline and docility, migrant workers’ *suzhi* is exploited and accumulated into cities. The migrant labour force is seen as an inexhaustible supply of surplus value that provides a driving force to capitalist accumulation. Labelling migrant bodies as low-quality (*suzhi di*) justifies the extraction of surplus value, and at the same time, it legitimizes new regimes of social differentiation between an urban elite with high-quality (*suzhi gao*) and rural migrants with low quality.⁹⁵ The lack of *suzhi* value in bodies of rural migrants masks the fact that the value produced within those migrant labourers is extracted. The China’s socialist-neoliberal society systematically exploits the *suzhi* of migrant bodies because their labour power is the hidden source of China’s economic “take-off.” At the same time, the exploited bodies of migrants are to be blamed for holding back China’s Development.⁹⁶ Through this process, rural migrant bodies are derogated in relation to the elite bodies possessing high-level *suzhi*, and at the same time, the *suzhi* discourse puts those migrant bodies into local systems of social differentiation.

⁹² *Ibid* 198

⁹³ Anagnost, Ann. 1997. *National past-times : Narrative, representation, and power in modern china. Body, commodity*, text. Durham [NC]: Duke University Press. 76.

⁹⁴ Harvey, David. 1989. *Condition of Postmodernity*, text. Oxford and New York: Blackwell. 147.

⁹⁵ Anagnost, Ann 2004: 193-195.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 193.

Suzhi can also be understood as a way to distinguish political subjects from natural bodies. *Suzhi*, in this view, is not something one would inherit by birth, but is rather something built up on the body. It is accumulated in the body through nurturing, education, and training, and distinguishes it from others that have not gone through such a process.

The relation between *suzhi* discourse and the rural/urban dichotomy can also be analyzed from an economic point of view. The labour power of rural migrants is derogated in such a way that urban residents can take advantage of the skills of rural people by using them in low-paying jobs. At the same time, the *suzhi* of rural migrants is derogated so that the *suzhi* of urban people is seen as higher as a result. While there have been a number of educational and spiritual civilization campaigns in rural areas, the problem of “rural inferiority” has always remained central to these efforts. In other words, within the hegemonic discourse, the level of *suzhi* among rural migrants has been kept low politically so that the level of *suzhi* of urban populations may appear comparatively high.⁹⁷ The uneven economic development under post-Mao modernization has enabled the cities to continue to attract and provide more opportunities, while rural areas have left neglected. As a result, the ideology of rural inferiority and the reality of lower rural income reinforce each other. Moreover, the gap between rural people’s *suzhi* and urban people’s *suzhi* has become wider and wider.

⁹⁷ Anagnost, Ann 2004: 191-193

***Suzhi* as a tool for Governmentality**

This section introduces the other popular analysis in academic literature on *suzhi*: The application of Foucauldian ideas of governmentality. Governmentality is the art of governance. Foucault has defined the term “governmentality” as:

[t]he ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.”⁹⁸

Governmentality thus includes how to examine, intervene, manipulate, and even produce the life of a population through utilizing the power of the state. This power is not necessarily physical power. Rather, Foucault is mainly interested in power rooted in knowledge. This is the essential point of his notion of governmentality. Foucault explained that introducing “economy” into political practice by institutionalizing the land and its inhabitants is the bases for the art of government.⁹⁹ By “economy” he means the socially constructed concept or manner of managing individuals, goods, and wealth within a family. Using this concept of “economy,” the goals of the state are to ensure the greatest quantity of the wealth and the greatest quality of welfare for its population. In order to achieve these goals, the state needs sovereignty and the law—or rather obedience to the law. Using sovereignty and the law as tactics to lead the population to “the end

⁹⁸ Foucault, Michel, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller Ph.D. 1991. *The Foucault Effect : Studies in Governmentality : With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 102.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 92.

which is ‘convenient’ for each of the things to be governed” is at the heart of governmentality.¹⁰⁰

Foucault’s theory is primarily based on Western society, where programmatic and strategic deployments of coercion were shaped by the notion of “freedom.”¹⁰¹ However, in order to define governmentality in the context of China’s market socialism, it is essential to think beyond the liberal “freedoms” of the advanced democracies. Post-Mao China’s socio-economic conditions and people’s lives continued to be regulated by the central government. After the death of Mao, as China opened up to the rest of the world, the state realized the importance of the mobility of a labour market. This has resulted in the explosion of translocal practices.¹⁰² This practice involves more than just population migration. As Oakes and Schein describe, it is “crucially constituted as well by the circulation of capital, ideas and images, goods and styles, services, diseases, etc.”¹⁰³ People migrate with their identity no longer tied to their birthplace, local practices, and local language.

At the same time, post-Mao Chinese society has become more hierarchical than ever before. Although China has always had hierarchical forms of organization geographically, politically, and economically, contemporary China is unique in the degree to which it has produced the world’s highest rates of income inequality.¹⁰⁴ There has been an accumulation of capital in the coastal cities, such as Shanghai, and an internal exploitation of labour power from the rural areas by the cities. This economic

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 95.

¹⁰¹ Sigley, Gary, 491.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 6-7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 13.

system is monitored by the state, even when it depends on the autonomy of the market. This is what Sigley means by socialism-neoliberal governmentality. The tremendous economic shift since the 1980s has resulted in the emergence of a hybrid socialist-neoliberal form of political rationality, in which the state government is authoritarian, yet at the same time it does not control everything. Rather, it has to rely on the autonomy of its preparation as economic subjects.

***Suzhi* within the socialist-neoliberal governmentality**

In the previous chapter, I explained that although the state *suzhi* discourse targets rural areas and women separately, they are often combined to signify low-*suzhi*. Many women in post-socialist China suffer from a double social stigma: gender stigma and rural stigma. This is crucial to the specific discursive formation of female migrant workers in China. Given the rural/urban binary, the meaning of “traditional” as “backward” leads rural youth to imagine that their future and their modernity lie in the cities.

One interesting example of language used by employers of domestic services to describe rural migrants’ socio-economic status is that they are “a blank slate.”¹⁰⁵ This phrase represents migrant domestic workers as pure bodily labour-power associated with a new form of subjectivity. Female migrant workers are “blank” because employers’ agencies and authorities have to fill them with proper education and training. This involves improving migrants’ *suzhi*. It presupposes that migrant workers, especially women, have low or no *suzhi*; this presumption is not constructed by urban employers alone but is co-produced by them with the state.

¹⁰⁵ Yan 2008: 95.

Employment agencies in rural areas use the prospects of *suzhi* improvement to encourage females to become migrant workers. Interestingly, the biggest employment agency in Tianjin is officially attached to the All-China Women's Federation, an organization of women representing and safeguarding the rights and interests of women and promoting equality between men and women. As a hybrid private-public enterprise, the employment agency is expected not only to be economically profitable (*jingji xiaoyi*), but also to achieve a positive social effect (*shehui xiaoyi*). In this view, migrant women are told that they are given chances to escape from poverty and to improve their *suzhi*.¹⁰⁶ Yan Hairong argues that *suzhi* is a new form of value that represents human values in the teleology of development and the necessary structural adjustments to build a market economy. She explains that *suzhi* appears to be most clearly stated in terms of differences, and that this “knowledge” of *suzhi* has acquired hegemonic status in the discourse of development. She says that *suzhi* is “nothing more (or less) than the Development's phantom child” which has allowed the state to produce the difference between developed areas and underdeveloped areas.¹⁰⁷

This view leads to the next level of the transitional stage: self-development (*ziwo-fazhan*). The state discourse of *suzhi* encourages people to learn to self-govern and maintain harmonious communities in which people with high income and high civility reside. It seems to me that this is how the state discourse of *suzhi* has become a hegemonic discourse of the masses. It encourages people to cultivate themselves in order to constitute better labour-power and to raise their children to be better labour-power. When employment agencies introduce rural women to urban jobs and send female

¹⁰⁶ Yan 2008: 112

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid* 116

migrant workers to urban areas, they promote these steps as opportunities with double benefits: financial (better income) and social (better *suzhi*). This manipulation of the “care-of-self” is what Delueze and Guatarri called the “desiring machine.” As one of Yan Yan’s interviewees told her, knowledge of the self and the desire to change the self is enormous in late-socialist China where the market economy is dominant.¹⁰⁸ Kipnis also finds that the increasingly competitive nature of contemporary Chinese society is driven by global market capitalism and is one of the motivating factors of the national concern with *suzhi*.¹⁰⁹ By hegemonizing the discourse of *suzhi*, he suggests, the government encourages people to improve their day-to-day quality of living, while at the same time justifying the exploitation of cheap labour power.

In an era of translocal China, which is different from “transnational” or “global” because it encompasses both mobility and localities,¹¹⁰ one’s identity still reflects his or her birthplace.¹¹¹ Urban people are portrayed as wealthy and civilized. Peasants and rural migrants living in cities are portrayed as significantly poorer, more backward and uncivilized because they are compared to the city-born, urban population.¹¹² According to Fei Xiaotong, a Chinese anthropologist, Chinese society was “earth-bound”.¹¹³ He believed that the land was an essential element of Chinese society. He said “rural people

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid* 198

¹⁰⁹ Kipnis 2006: 310

¹¹⁰ Oakes and Schein 2006: 1.

¹¹¹ Oakes and Schein further explain four points which constitute the notion of translocality. 1) Translocality refers not only to people but also circulation of capital, values, images, goods, styles, diseases and ideologies. 2) It has connotations of connectedness, flows, networks, and deterritorialization. 3) It is accompanied with revitalization of place-making and place differentiation and its process. 4) It creates a new discourse of what is new in China’s reform period.

¹¹² Faure, David and Helen F. Siu, “The Original Translocal Society and Its Modern Fate” in *Translocal China : Linkages, Identities and the Reimagining of Space*. London ; New York: Routledge. 50.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 36.

carry the smell of the earth; they do because they depend on it for their livelihood.” In a translocal society, people migrate with the “new translocal imaginary,” which carries the smell of their land or regional identity. This translocal imaginary, or regional identity, is in fact the product of the state’s regulation of migration.¹¹⁴ Significantly, Fei’s work has gained new respect in the post-Mao period. He originally wrote in the Republican period as a sociologist, and was attacked in the Cultural Revolution. His works were rediscovered during Deng’s era because his ethnographic research on rural peasants was considered to be significant in the socialist-market economy, where the labour-power of rural migrants in cities was vital. This change also coincided with the Party’s repudiation of socialist ideals about the revolutionary potential of peasants.

Translocal *suzhi* discourse is employed in governmentality not only to differentiate migrant bodies from urban ones to maintain the social order, but also to facilitate state modernization. As Lisa Hoffman argues, translocal discourse of the urban area is attributable to the emergence of social patterns of self-improvement and self-enterprise.¹¹⁵ *Suzhi* discourse has contributed to a sense of responsibility among both translocal people and translocal communities striving for their own individualized improvement in the neoliberal global market. The government encouraged some coastal cities to be responsible for improving their urban infrastructure to enhance local identity and to civilize (*Suzhilize*) their people, turning them into “civil” people or *gongmin*. By promoting domestic and globally oriented local identities, which are supposed to energize flows of capital, goods, people, and the translocal as a whole, the state sought to

¹¹⁴ Oaks and Shein 2006: 5

¹¹⁵ Hoffman, Lisa. 2006 “Urban Rationalities of Enterprise” in *Translocal china : Linkages, identities and the reimagining of space*. London ; New York: Routledge. 112.

reconfigure urban spaces and economies.¹¹⁶ This is the shift from a state controlled economy to an economy that is a more individualized site of global capitalism.¹¹⁷

One example of translocal *suzhi* discourse aimed at urbanites in state governmentality discourse is the set of pro-urban policies embodied in cultural initiatives, such as the Spiritual Civilization Campaign.¹¹⁸ In 1995, when the forty-hour workweek and double leisure day (*shuanxiu ri*, or “weekend” in the West) was implemented, the hottest topic in newspaper columns, office conversation, and day-to-day chatting was how people *should* spend their leisure time.¹¹⁹ In February 1996, the Department of Propaganda of the City Commission in Beijing published the “Civilization Contract with Residents.” They officially started the double leisure day campaign, which was at that stage on a nine-month trial basis. Interestingly, the documents also indicated several ideal ways for Beijing residents to spend their days off, such as visiting museums, going to the movies, participating in sports, sightseeing, learning English, taking driving lessons, and learning how to use computers.¹²⁰ This campaign encouraged people to *improve* their *suzhi* in the realms of taste and consumer judgment. This approach symbolizes the post-socialist neoliberal governmentality in China. Regulating conspicuous consumption has become a new favourite theme of governmental reforms, which in principle should affect many details of everyday life for ordinary people. For example, the party-state lowered interest rates twice in 1996 and more than four times in 1998 in order to encourage ordinary

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 115.

¹¹⁷ Economy in this notion is what Foucault described in the lectures cited in *Foucault Effect*. This economy is a discourse produced in authorized form of state language.

¹¹⁸ Cartier, Carolyn. 2006. “Symbolic City/ Region in South China” in *Translocal china : Linkages, identities and the reimagining of space*. London ; New York: Routledge. 141.

¹¹⁹ Wang, Jiang. 2001 “Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital” in *Positions* Vol.9, No. 1, Spring 74-75.

¹²⁰ *Shuangxiuri xingdong jihua, quanmian bao* [An all-out implementation of double leisure day action package], *Beijing Qingnian Bao* [Beijing Youth Daily], 5 February 1996, cited in Wang, Jing 2001: 77.

people to spend instead of save. Encouraging conspicuous consumption in the day-to-day- lives of people was a favourite theme of the party-state in 1995 when the state designated public funds (*gongkuan xiaofei*) to increase people's entertainment expenditure. At the same time, the party-state also implemented a new law allowing local dining businesses to fling their doors open to ordinary people regardless of their income levels. Restaurants were asked to change their menus and prices. The catchphrase for service industries during this time was "we serve all customers whether their wallet is small, medium, or large."¹²¹ The goal of these projects was to increase consumer demand which was in turn expected to soak up inventory and accelerate mass production. However, more importantly, the underlined objective was to advance in "spiritual civilization (*jingshen wenmin*)" in Beijing and improve the city's image. The "Civilization Code for Beijing Residents" was introduced in February 1996. Although linking free time with consumption and leisure has paradoxically contributed to what may be called "mindless consumption" and to profit-driven trends of culture industry, the state policy makers consider there to be no better way to measure and improve population quality, *renkou suzhi*, than to prescribe the leisure activities of their citizens.¹²²

The *suzhi* discourse has also helped construct the ideal of a modern society in contemporary China under President Hu Jintao. Using the notion of *suzhi*, the state is building what Hu calls a "harmonious society (*Hexie Shehui*)."¹²³ Behind the call for a "harmonious society" is the legitimacy of the post-Mao communist regime, which has relied on the simultaneous development of material (*wuzhi*) development and spiritual

¹²¹ Wang, Jing 2001: 75.

¹²² *Ibid.* 77-80.

(*jingshen*) development.¹²³ China's quest for modernization, economic development and a more appropriate place in the world has been accompanied by this "civilization" project, which projects a strong correlation between the *suzhi* of the population and the strengthening of the nation, between the "responsibilization" of the citizenry and the goal of an ordinary and productive market society. That is to say, the meanings of China's new middle-class are now encouraged to take responsibilities for maintaining and improving their *suzhi* for the sake of responsible self-governance (*zizhi*) and for building harmonious communities. This is a remarkable transformation of the *suzhi* discourse from a mere state discourse to becoming a hegemonic discourse shared among ordinary people.

On February 19, 2005, President Hu Jintao made an important speech about the need to build a harmonious society. "The CCP and the central government," Hu said, "have made it an important task to build a harmonious society, which serves the fundamental interests of the people."¹²⁴ In order to achieve a "harmonious society," self-governance of the middle-class is fundamental; however, it is possible only where there is "an economic base and sufficient economic capacity to guarantee consumption and continuous development. [It is] therefore not suitable for poor areas."¹²⁵ There are two implications of this statement. First, *suzhi* is a precondition for the creation of a rational and responsible people, and those who possess high *suzhi* are capable of performing

¹²³ Tomba, Luigi. 2009. Of Quality, Harmony, and Community: Civilization and the Middle Class in Urban China. *Positions* 17 (3): 591. 591-592

¹²⁴ The People's Daily, February 21, 2005. Available online at:

http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200502/20/eng20050220_174036.html

¹²⁵ Tao Xidong, "Jiakuai chengshi hexie shehui jianshe jizhi de chongjian yu zaizao" ("Accelerate the reconstruction of the mechanism for the edification of harmonious communities in the cities"), *Renming Rebao* (*People's Daily*), June 21, 2005. Cited in Luigi Tomba (2009) 604

rationally and responsibly that which is necessary for civilized coexistence in a harmonious society. Second, it implies that residential areas for low-income people are not capable of maintaining a “harmonious society.” The link between the *suzhi* level and the income level is conspicuous in this statement. The People’s Daily article continues to say:

[R]ational [behaviour] requires a civic quality of the citizens, a sufficient level of education and civilization (*wenming suzhi*). Only those with both wisdom and abilities can act rationally and this is why we say that peasants are not rational because they haven’t achieved civic education.

There are two important points for analysis here. The first is that the article claims that rural peasants lack decent enough education and therefore they do not possess decent *suzhi*; thus, they are not suitable to live in certain areas. The second point, which is more important, is that the article justifies the separation of urban residents and rural migrants according to their levels of *suzhi*. This manipulation of peoples’ lives through *suzhi* can be considered a form of China’s current mode of governmentality.

In this chapter, I have introduced some major approaches to *suzhi* by existing scholars. Two main theoretical frames, the Marxist approach of class conflict and the Foucauldian approach of governmentality, have been used to throw light on *suzhi*. In the next chapter, I discuss and analyze how Shanghainese women and rural migrant women understand and describe *suzhi*. I also demonstrate the clear recognition of “common sense” and similarities in regards to *suzhi* in their daily practice and their daily lives.

Chapter 4: Case Study, *Suzhi* in contemporary Shanghai.

In this chapter, I discuss the responses of people I interviewed in Shanghai in 2010.

The development of Shanghai has been the fastest of all the Chinese mega-cities since the early 1990s, averaging 12 percent annually. Shanghai has attracted over US\$120 billion in total foreign direct investment since 1992.¹²⁶ Shanghai's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was US\$312.0 in 1978, and it has developed to US\$7,116.0 in 2006.¹²⁷ This development of the city has been enabled by the intensive labour-power of migrant workers. Although the exact number of rural migrants in Shanghai is hard to ascertain due to both a lack of consensus in the definition of migrants and the absence of an authoritative national survey, the number of migrants in Shanghai in the 1990s was generally reported to be 2.6 million at any point in time. The number of rural migrant workers in Shanghai was rapidly increasing at the turn of millennium.¹²⁸ It is in this current context that I interviewed twenty-seven Shanghainese women and thirty rural migrant women.

All the questions from the interview survey were open-ended. For questions that ask respondents to list five behaviours that represent a high level and a low level of *suzhi*, some respondents listed less than five. For the photo-based survey, respondents seemed to enjoy scoring the photos. Several Shanghainese asked me if the Louis Vuitton purses in the photo were real or fake. I did not answer yes or no, and left the judgement to the

¹²⁶ Chen, Xiangming. 2009. "A Globalizing City On The Rise –Shanghai's Transformation In Comparative Perspective" in *Shanghai Rising –State Power and Local Transformation In A Global Megacity*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) xv.

¹²⁷ Shanghai Statistical Bureau. 1998 and 2007. *Institutional Social Transition, A Report Of Economic Development in Shanghai 2000*. Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Science Press. Cited in Chen 2009: xxviii.

¹²⁸ Wang Feng, Xuejin Zuo, Danching Ruan. 2002 "Rural Migrants in Shanghai: Living under the Shadow of Socialism" in *International Migration Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Summer. 520-545. 524.

respondents. Interestingly, no rural migrant women asked me the question. Also, some respondents asked me how they could score photos of people, such as rural migrant woman. I told them if they think they cannot score a particular photo, they can chose “not applicable” (不適用).

After conducting the survey on fifty-seven respondents, I filtered the data according to their income level: Shanghainese women who make less than 2000 RMB a month and rural migrant women who make over 3000RMB were filtered out. The data I analyzed comes from forty-six respondents, including twenty-three Shanghainese and twenty-three rural migrant women. The age range for the respondents is between from late teens to early forties for both Shanghainese and rural migrants.

There are some questions that I did not include in this thesis such as a question about the role of *suzhi* to differentiate Shanghainese from rural migrants. I exclude this question from analysis as some of the rural migrant respondents felt uncomfortable to discuss it. Some of rural migrants told me that *suzhi* should not differentiate the two groups, instead of answering whether *suzhi* differentiate two groups or not.

I have organized discussion of the results of the interviews into three sections. In the first section, I discuss what *suzhi* means to both Shanghainese women and rural migrant women on two levels. One level is *suzhi* as a generic concept conceptualizing what the respondent believes *suzhi* should be. The other level is practical *suzhi*, in which people (consciously or unconsciously) interpret what *suzhi* is in concrete regards. The second section is dedicated to illustrating the materialization of *suzhi*. I show that Shanghainese women and rural migrant women materialize *suzhi*—that is, perceive *suzhi* in particular objects and practice. In the third section, I explore the materialization of *suzhi* using the

photo-based survey, and document how *suzhi* is actually materialized and tangible for the respondents.

***Suzhi* as a generic concept and a practice**

I begin by arguing that the concept of *suzhi* is widely shared among Chinese. One way to consider it is as a generic concept which is largely based on the state discourse of *suzhi* that I discussed in Chapter 2. It is crucial to keep in mind that what people think *suzhi* should be, that is, the generic concept they have of *suzhi*, will somewhat diverge from reality. I suggest that an individual's knowledge of *suzhi* is a reflection of the generic concept of *suzhi* as understood through the lens of their socio-economic situation. The generic concept of *suzhi* is socially shared because, in my view, it is an accumulation of cultivated education. As respondents mentioned, their academic education affected their understanding of *suzhi* the most.¹²⁹

In order to explore the general idea of what *suzhi* is, I first asked respondents what they thought of *suzhi*. Table 1 describes their self-generated response:

¹²⁹ What people think about *suzhi* displays some similarities; nevertheless, there is a minor but significant gap. It is because the generic knowledge of *suzhi*, which belongs to a society rather than an individual, is filtered through their socio-economic condition. It is so minor that my survey interview data may not be able to show a clear difference, but it is quite important to understand that there are two levels of understanding *suzhi*. One level of *suzhi* belongs to the society in an ideological sense, and the other belongs to practical sense. As I explained in chapter 2, there is no official definition of *suzhi* even though the knowledge of *suzhi* is well shared. However, ideological *suzhi* can be drawn from the literature reviews and survey interview data.

Table 1: Perception of what *suzhi* is between Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

	Shanghainese (N=23)		Rural Migrants (N=23)		Total (N=46)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
What is <i>suzhi</i> .						
Internal Virtue	4	17%	4	17%	8	17%
Self Cultivation	1	4%	6	26%	7	15%
Morality	3	13%	3	13%	6	13%
Good Behaviours	2	8%	3	13%	5	11%
Being Polite	3	13%	1	4%	4	9%
Respecting Other	3	13%	1	4%	4	9%
Civilized Disposition	3	13%	0	0%	3	7%
Result of Education	2	8%	1	4%	3	7%
Having High Culture	2	8%	1	4%	3	7%
Good Speaking Manners	0	0%	3	13%	3	7%
Knowledge of Self	1	4%	0	0%	1	2%
Being Responsible	1	4%	0	0%	1	2%
Etiquette	1	4%	0	0%	1	2%
Having Appropriate Attire	0	0%	1	4%	1	2%
Expression of Your Personality	0	0%	1	4%	1	2%
Taste	0	0%	1	4%	1	2%

Table 1 shows that the perception of “what *suzhi* is” is consistent between Shanghainese and rural migrants. In general, Table 1 shows that *suzhi* is seen by both groups to be an internal virtue and to represent morality. It is perceived in behaviours relating to manners, etiquette, speech, or intelligence. An interesting point here is that several rural migrants perceive *suzhi* in self-cultivation (修養) while only one Shanghainese respondent suggested it is. I suggest that this is because the perception of *suzhi* among Shanghainese is fixed to being Shanghainese. As one Shanghainese respondent mentioned, “Shanghainese are born with *suzhi*.”

What do Shanghainese think about *suzhi*? Most of the women I interviewed described *suzhi* as a concept related to a form of civic virtue such as “morality” (道德) and “being polite” (礼貌). Shanghainese respondents said *suzhi* is a “very important basic people's virtue”, “morality, knowledge of how you deal with situations, and the ability to see the

self from the third eye”, and “having the respect of others.” There were also a few people who literally defined it as “morality.” Also, two people said it is “education” (教育) or an outcome of education.

Answers about what *suzhi* is among rural migrants are less consistent than among Shanghainese, although rural migrant women too agree it is a form of civic virtue in general. Women said it is “cultural and social morality,” “helping others feel comfortable”, “contributing to society”, and having a “good heart and good behaviour.” Interestingly six respondents said it is an outcome of education. Compared to Shanghainese, where only one respondent believed it is a result of education, more rural migrant women believe that it can be nurtured. Even more interestingly, two rural migrant respondents specifically said it manifests itself in taste and appropriate attire.

In sum, the notion of *suzhi* is similar between Shanghainese and rural migrants. This view of *suzhi* is the generic concept. It includes civic virtue, morality, and a well-cultivated disposition. The civic virtues that they refer to are hegemonically encouraged-ethical, moral, and socially appropriate things a model person would do. Also, it is a result of education and self-cultivation. However, I suggest *suzhi* is more than this. In order to explore this generic concept of *suzhi* more, I asked respondents if they thought *suzhi* was the same or different from ten years ago. The purpose of the question is to see whether the concept of *suzhi* was linked to the concept of development or modernity.

Table 2: Perception of differences in the level of *suzhi* between Shanghainese and rural migrants over time

Diff. in <i>suzhi</i> over time	Shanghainese (N=23)		Rural Migrants (N=23)	
	N	%	N	%
It is not same; it is better now.	13	57%	11	48%
It is not the same.	6	26%	10	43%
It is the same.	4	17%	0	0%
No Response.	0	0%	2	9%

As table 2 shows, the majority of respondents agree that *suzhi* today is different from the *suzhi* of ten years ago. Moreover, 57% of Shanghainese women and 48% of rural migrant women believe that it is better now. This result suggests that the development of *suzhi* correlates with the development of society. Shanghai has been the site for state modernization projects; therefore, economic and cultural capital has accumulated in the city. I suggest that this result indicates that the generic concept of *suzhi* and economic, societal, and cultural development are closely related.

In the next two tables, I illustrate the visibility of *suzhi*. I hypothesized that *suzhi* is represented in material objects. In order to investigate this hypothesis, I asked respondents whether they think *suzhi* is visible or not.

Table 3: Opinions on visibility of one's *suzhi* between Shanghainese and rural migrants.

Opinion of visibility of <i>suzhi</i>	Shanghainese (N=23)		Rural Migrants (N=23)	
	N	%	N	%
It is visible.	22	96%	23	100%
No, it is not visible.	1	4%	0	0%

Table 3 strongly indicates that *suzhi* is visible (看得见). 96% of Shanghainese respondents and 100% of rural migrant respondents believe that *suzhi* can be seen. In table 1, respondents said that *suzhi* is a form of civic virtue. The table shows that both

Shanghainese and rural migrants suggest that it is shown in behaviours. Virtuous behaviours are socially recommended behaviours; thus, performative. From both Table 1 and Table 3, it can be said that *suzhi* is the visual performance that one presents in public.

Before I further explore the materialized aspect of *suzhi*, I investigate behavioural aspects of *suzhi* further in detail. The next two tables are about the behavioural aspects of *suzhi*. I asked respondents to list five behaviours that represent low/no *suzhi* and five behaviours that represent high *suzhi*. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate the respondents' self-generated list of behaviours that represent high *suzhi* and low *suzhi*.

Table 4: Behaviours that are seen to represent low/no *suzhi* between Shanghainese and rural migrants

Low/no <i>suzhi</i> behaviours	Shanghainese (N=23)		Rural Migrants (N=23)	
	N	%	N	%
Littering	17	74%	9	39%
Speaking Rudely	13	57%	8	35%
Spitting	12	52%	13	57%
Quarrelling Loudly in Public	7	17%	5	22%
Showing No Respect	5	22%	6	26%
Social Ignorance	5	22%	0	0%
Wearing Inappropriate Attire	4	17%	0	0%
‘Jumping the Queue’	3	13%	1	4%
Smoking in Public	1	4%	4	17%
Stealing	1	4%	0	17%
Being Impolite	0	0%	4	0%
Non Political	0	0%	1	4%
Being Extravagant	0	0%	3	13%

The table shows that behaviours that are seen to represent no or low *suzhi* are behaviours that individuals do in public such as “littering,” “spitting,” and “quarrelling out loud in public.” There are no behaviours such as consumption of drugs and alcohol that are identified as low or no *suzhi*. Given that, it is notable that smoking in public was

identified as low or no *suzhi*. This suggests that public behaviour is an important indicator of *suzhi*. Table 5 shows the five behaviours chosen by respondents that represent high *suzhi*.

Table 5: Behaviours that are seen to represent high *suzhi* between Shanghainese and rural migrants

High <i>suzhi</i> behaviours	Shanghainese (N=23)		Rural Migrants (N=23)	
	N	%	N	%
Environmental Cleanliness	6	26%	0	0%
Respecting social rules	6	26%	2	9%
Being hospitable	5	22%	5	22%
Being polite	5	22%	4	17%
Having appropriate attire	4	17%	0	0%
Speaking with appropriate manner	4	17%	0	0%
Having well-mannered behaviour	3	13%	2	9%
Yielding seats in public transit	3	13%	0	0%
Respecting elders	3	13%	4	17%
Being well educated	2	9%	0	0%
Having feminine demure	1	4%	0	0%
Smiling	0	0%	5	22%
Loving plants	0	0%	2	9%
Making eye contact	0	0%	1	4%
Getting exercise	0	0%	1	4%

This table indicates that public behaviours such as “being hospitable,” “being polite,” and “respecting elders” are listed consistently by both Shanghainese women and rural migrant women. These are socially appropriate behaviours and manners that lead to appropriate social interaction. Again, this can be interpreted as the significance of public behaviors as an indicator of *suzhi*. For example, table 5 also shows differences between the two groups—Shanghainese appreciate environmental manners and rural migrants appreciate smiling.

There are a few important points that I should mention from these two tables. First of all, respondents could think of low/no *suzhi* behaviours more easily than high *suzhi*

behaviours. This might support the observations from scholars such as Yan Hairong that the discourse of *suzhi* is the most apparent when urban residents are criticizing rural migrants.¹³⁰ The *suzhi* discourse appears to be employed in the context of socio-economic discrimination and stigmatization against rural migrants. That is to say, the concept of *suzhi* seems to refer to the constructed inferiority of rural migrants in reference to urban residents. I suggest that that is why the number of behaviours seen to represent low or no *suzhi* are listed more than the number of behaviours seen to represent high *suzhi*. Second, Shanghainese could think of high *suzhi* behaviours more easily than rural migrants.

From Table 1 to 3, one can see that the ideological concept of *suzhi* has something to do with morality, modernity, and something visible that can be read. These opinions are agreed upon by both Shanghainese and rural migrants. However, one can observe that there are differences in the responses in both Tables 4 and 5. This is the difference of the discourse between Shanghainese and rural migrants. For example, 22% of Shanghainese suggested that being ignorant of social rules represents low or no *suzhi* while no rural migrants listed that. Also 17% of Shanghainese respondents suggested that having inappropriate attire indicated low or no *suzhi* whereas no rural migrants suggested this. This suggests that depending on one's socio-economic background, there are differences in the understanding of *suzhi*.

In this section, I described respondents' responses on what *suzhi* is from a generic concept perspective. However, there are differences between what people think *suzhi*

¹³⁰ Yan, 2003: 3

should be and what they actually perceive as high or low *suzhi* behaviours or objects. In the next section, I discuss *suzhi* from the aspect of its materialization.

***Suzhi* is a form of capital**

In the previous section, I showed that respondents think of *suzhi* as visible. In Table 3, 96% of Shanghainese and 100% of rural migrants suggested that *suzhi* is visible. In this section, I look at the materialization of *suzhi* by looking at *suzhi* as what Bourdieu calls capital. Bourdieu suggests that *capital*, which is defined as accumulated labour, can be objectified and embodied.¹³¹ Objectified forms of capital are materially represented in things such as art works, books, and classic music CDs. Embodied forms of capital are corporeal and can be read in body language, etiquette, and speech manners. Each individual, by Bourdieu's account, has a portfolio of capitals. I am interested in three kinds of capital. First, economic capital is simply a capital of monetary value, such as income level and family wealth. Cultural capital, on the other hand, is accumulated knowledge of culture, such as art and music, and appreciation of it. It is one's taste. Third, symbolic capital can be referred to as something that an individual values on the basis of honor, prestige or especially recognition, and often functions as an authoritative embodiment of cultural value. Although Bourdieu suggests that economic capital is the root of other forms of capital, each form of capital is transformable one to another.¹³² For example, economic capital can be transformed into cultural capital. For instance, one woman who has a high income will have opportunities to learn about wines; thus, she will gain a knowledge of wines, which can count towards her cultural capital. Moreover,

¹³¹ Bourdieu, Pierre (2005)

¹³² Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The forms of capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, Greenwood), 241-258. Available online <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm> (March 20th, 2011)

she is able to purchase a Cartier watch and Louis Vuitton purse that symbolize wealth and class, which can count towards her symbolic capital.

Table 4 and 5 illustrate the clear link between *suzhi* and embodied forms of capital. For example, *suzhi* can be observed from appropriate behaviour and speech manners. It shows that nurtured manners and etiquette, such as putting garbage in a garbage bin and respecting social rules are seen to represent high *suzhi*.

Table 6 explores *suzhi* as *capital* in further detail. I asked respondents how they can observe *suzhi*. The question was an open-ended question where respondents could list more than one answer.

Table 6: Opinions on visible aspects of *suzhi* by Shanghainese and rural migrants

Visible aspects of <i>suzhi</i>	Shanghainese (N=23)		Rural Migrants (N=23)	
	N	%	N	%
It is shown in one's behaviour	15	65%	16	70%
It is shown in one's speech.	14	61%	14	61%
It is shown in one's attire.	6	26%	7	30%

Table 6 indicates that fifteen respondents out of twenty-three think it can be heard in one's speech. Considering regional difference is apparent from one's dialect, a judgment of one's *suzhi* can be interpreted as relating to one's birthplace. The majority of respondents also believe that *suzhi* can be observed in one's behaviour. This is also suggested in table 1. Interestingly, one third of respondents believe that it can be observed in one's attire. This is a significant observation because it implies *suzhi* is not only visible, but also understood as material. When I asked respondents to list what *suzhi* is, only 2% of respondents answered that it is one's fashion taste and appropriateness of one's attire. However, when I asked how one's *suzhi* can be observed, 30% of

respondents states that it can be observed in attire. This suggests that the generic concept of *suzhi* is not supposed to be linked to be material object in the ideal; however, in practice, *suzhi* is in fact understood as expressed in material objects.

Next I asked whether *suzhi* is tangible, acquirable, and possibly purchasable. I asked what the source of *suzhi* is. The question was an open-ended question where respondents could list more than one answer.

Table 7: Opinions on the source of *suzhi* by Shanghainese and rural migrants

Opinion on the source of <i>suzhi</i>	Shanghainese (N=23)		Rural Migrants (N=23)	
	N	%	N	%
Education	18	78%	20	87%
Family	16	70%	20	87%
Society	13	57%	13	57%
Culture	10	43%	10	43%
Environment	3	13%	0	0%

As Table 7 shows, of the five major sources, the majority of respondents among both Shanghainese and rural migrants, believe that one root of *suzhi* is education. Also, families are equally significant to cultivate good *suzhi*. This indicates that ideologically *suzhi* is perceived as nurtured and acquirable. However, as I have discussed in Chapter 2, the socio-economic inequality between rural and urban areas rules out equal opportunities for a wealthy family and educational background. That is to say, urban residents who have better family backgrounds are more likely to pursue higher educational careers; hence, they have better chances to acquire better *suzhi*. In theory, *suzhi* is equally available; nevertheless, in reality it is not. Shanghai historically has had better economic and social infrastructures than the interior of China. There is a lot more economic development, educational opportunities, and cultural resources. For example, one

outsider from Guangdong province said Shanghai has higher *suzhi* because the city has money. The rest of China, she continued, does not have the money to improve *suzhi*. The point here is not that Shanghai has higher *suzhi*, but that both groups see *suzhi* as something that can be improved through education and through material context. Because Shanghai has more educational opportunities, there is a dominant discourse which suggests that Shanghainese have higher *suzhi*. *Suzhi* is seen as achieved through self-interested cultivation rather than socio-economic status.¹³³

In the next section, I move from the generic concept of *suzhi*, to the respondents' definition of what *suzhi* "realistically" is. I will look at how respondents viewed photographs of objects and behaviours. Their responses to the images suggest that the idea of *suzhi* as materialized is well developed among both Shanghainese women and rural migrant women.

Materialization of *suzhi*

In this section, I discuss how *suzhi* is seen in material objects by using a photo-based survey that I conducted along with the interview survey. In the survey, I presented fourteen photos of material objects and behaviours. The respondents were asked to rate the pictures using a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 meaning low and 7 meaning high on six criteria: high culture/low culture; expensive/inexpensive; high *suzhi*/low *suzhi*; difficult to obtain/easy to obtain; respectful/not respectful; and city-like/rural-like. The purpose of the photo-based survey is to explore whether or not people saw a link between *suzhi* and material objects.

¹³³ Bourdieu, Pierre 1996. "The Rule of Art"

During the interview surveys, many respondents told me that *suzhi* was visible in behaviour, but not in objects. And yet, my results support the argument that both Shanghai women and rural migrant women see *suzhi* in material objects, and that they do so in significantly similar ways.

Table 8: *Suzhi* score of images of people, objects and behaviours by Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

		Shanghainese (N=23)			Rural Migrants (N=23)		
		Average Score 1= low <i>suzhi</i> , 7= high <i>suzhi</i>	N	%	Average Score 1= low <i>suzhi</i> , 7= high <i>suzhi</i>	N	%
Not Lining Up The number of responses (N=23)		1.3	22	96%	1.3	22	96%
Tobacco The number of responses (N=23)		2.4	22	96%	4.1	14	61%
Using English The number of responses (N=23)		6.1	19	83%	6.3	16	67%
Cartier Watch The number of responses (N=23)		5.4	17	74%	5.7	15	65%
Louis Vuitton The number of responses (N=23)		3.5	16	67%	5.6	14	61%
Female rural migrant The number of responses (N=23)		4.9	16	67%	4.9	14	61%

Factory Workers The number of responses (N=23)		4.0 16 67%	2.6 16 67%
Starbucks The number of responses (N=23)		5.0 15 65%	4.0 15 65%
Food Vendor The number of responses (N=23)		3.9 15 65%	4.1 15 65%
Putting Make-up On The number of responses (N=23)		4.8 15 65%	4.6 17 74%
Computer The number of responses (N=23)		5.6 15 65%	5.5 15 65%
Male Rural Migrant The number of responses (N=23)		3.3 15 65%	3.0 13 57%
Inner Mongolian Tent The number of responses (N=23)		5.1 14 61%	5.5 13 57%
Well Dressed career Women The number of responses (N=23)		4.7 12 52%	2.9 15 65%

Table 8 presents two significant figures. One is the number of respondents who gave a *suzhi* score to material objects. I present the table to show the frequencies in making a link between behaviours and *suzhi*, and objects and *suzhi*. For example, the photo of “not lining up” is seen to represent some level of *suzhi* by both Shanghainese (96%) and rural migrants (96%). This indicates that the behaviours are representing *suzhi*, in this case the lack of it. The photo of “tobacco” also is seen to represent *suzhi*. It can be interpreted that this material object is seen to represent *suzhi* by both Shanghainese (96%) and rural migrants (61%). The other significant figure is the average score. It is the average score from the scale of 1 to 7 where 1 indicates lowest or no *suzhi* and 7 indicates the highest *suzhi*. The average from 1 to 7 shows certain objects are highly rated for *suzhi*. For example, a Cartier watch has an average score of 5.4 out of 7 which is comparatively high for Shanghainese women and of 5.7 for rural migrant women.

Table 8 shows that respondents believe that “not lining up” and “using English” clearly represent *suzhi* levels. They are both embodied forms of *suzhi*, as nurtured manners and skills. The photo of “not lining up” was scored as indicating *suzhi* most often. This indicates both groups suggest this behaviour represent one’s *suzhi* level, specifically the lack of it (average score 1.3 out of 7). Next to the photo of “not line up,” a photo of “tobacco” earned the second most scoring frequency. 96% of Shanghainese and 61% of rural migrants suggested “tobacco” is seen to indicate one’s *suzhi* level. Tobacco is a material object. I interpret this responses as meaning tobacco is a material object which can contain *suzhi*. The next photo is “using English at work.” The scoring frequency for this photo is 83% of Shanghainese and 67% of rural migrants. The average score is also high, at 6.2. Interestingly, the photo of “Cartier watch” and “Louis Vuitton

purses” come next in the scoring frequency. 74% of Shanghainese and 65% of rural migrants suggested that the watch contains *suzhi*, very high, at 5.4 for Shanghainese and at 5.7 for rural migrants. 67% of Shanghainese and 61% of rural migrants indicated that Louis Vuitton can suggest one’s *suzhi* level. These are material objects that symbolize consumer culture. Both Cartier and Louis Vuitton are popular Western brands. They are expensive and symbolize class and wealth. This observation is extremely crucial here because it indicates that material objects are seen to carry *suzhi* within them, and that expensive Western brands contain a high level of *suzhi*. There are no material objects in the photo-based survey that respondents suggested possessed no *suzhi*. All material objects were seen to contain at least some level of *suzhi*. This data strongly suggests that respondents do see *suzhi* in material objects.

Next, I describe average scores for *suzhi* for each of the items (Table 9) in order to compare with the perception of cost for each of the objects (Table 10). As Bourdieu argues, capital is transformable into another form of capital. For example, before I illustrate the transformative ability of *suzhi* between different forms of capital, I would like to share the result of the photo-based survey for the *suzhi* variable sorted from the highest score to the lowest.

Table 9: Average scores of photos for the *suzhi* criteria with the scale from 1 (no/low *suzhi*) to 7 (high *suzhi*)

Suzhi			
Shanghainese		Rural Migrants	
Using English at work	6.1	Using English at work	6.3
Computer	5.6	Cartier Watch	5.7
Cartier Watch	5.4	LV	5.6
Mongolian tent	5.1	Computer	5.5
Starbucks	5.0	Mongolian tent	5.5
Female rural migrant	4.9	Female rural migrant	4.9
Putting on make-up	4.8	Putting on make-up	4.6
Well dressed career woman	4.7	Food vender	4.6
Factory workers	4.0	Tobacco	4.1
Food vender	3.9	Starbucks	4.0
LV	3.5	Male rural migrant	3.0
Male rural migrant	3.3	Well dressed career woman	2.9
Tobacco	2.4	Factory workers	2.6
Not lining up	1.3	Not lining up	1.3

Table 9 shows that the highest *suzhi* criteria score was given to “using English at work.” These are embodied forms of capital. “Computers,” “Cartier watches,” and “Louis Vuitton purses” follow after “using English at work.” These are all tangible objects that can be seen as objectified forms of capital. The lowest average score was for “not lining up.” It can be interpreted as the specific behaviour seen to indicate low or no *suzhi*. Also the average score for “tobacco” is quite low. “Tobacco” is a material object. The next table is from the same photo-based survey, and it is the result for expensive/inexpensive criteria.

Table 10: Average scores of photos for the expensiveness criteria with the scale from 1 (inexpensive) to 7(expensive)

Expensive/Inexpensive			
Shanghaiense		Rural Migrants	
LV	6.6	Cartier Watch	6.2
Cartier Watch	6.2	LV	6.0
Using English at Work	4.3	Using English at Work	5.2
Mongolian Tent	4.2	Well dressed career woman	5.0
Well dressed career woman	3.8	Starbucks	4.8
Computer	3.5	Computer	4.0
Female rural migrant	3.4	Putting on make-up	4.0
Putting on make-up	3.2	Mongolian Tent	3.6
Tobacco	2.9	Female rural migrant	3.6
Starbucks	2.8	Tobacco	3.2
Factory workers	2.4	Food vender	2.4
Food vender	2.2	Male rural migrant	2.8
Male rural migrant	2.2	Factory workers	2.7
Not line up	1.4	Not line up	1.9

Table 10 shows that what respondents consider expensive material objects/behaviours are consistent between Shanghaiense women and rural migrant women. “Louis Vuitton,” “Cartier Watches,” and “using English at work” are all seen to represent wealth. On the other hand, behaviours like “not lining up” and images like “rural migrant woman/man” and “factory workers” are seen to represent inexpensiveness. This table illustrates respondents’ consciousness of the material worth of people, behaviours, and objects. Behaviours or objects that have high expensiveness scores indicate representation of wealth as well as high *suzhi*.

Comparing both Table 9 and Table 10, one can see some similarities. First of all, the photo of “using English at work” gained high scores in both *suzhi* criteria and expensiveness criteria. Also, luxury objects such as “Cartier Watch” and “Louis Vuitton” gained high scores in both *suzhi* criterion and expensiveness criterion. Furthermore, the photo of “not line up” and “tobacco” gained low average scores in both criteria. This

strongly suggests that the *suzhi* criterion is transformable into economic *capital* and vice versa.

Next, I discuss the transformability of *suzhi* as forms of capital by focusing on specific photos that I used in the photo-based survey. The following tables show the results of “Cartier watch,” “computer,” “tobacco,” and “Louis Vuitton.”

Table 11: Average ranking for “Cartier watch” by Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

	Shanghainese	Rural Migrants
High/low culture	5.1	5.6
Expensive/Inexpensive	6.2	6.2
High/low <i>suzhi</i>	5.4	5.7
Low/high availability	5.0	3.2
Respectable/unrespectable	5.3	5.0
City/rural representation	5.6	6.3



Both Shanghainese and rural migrants suggest that this Cartier watch is considered to have not only high *suzhi*, but also is considered to be expensive, highly cultural, difficult to obtain, respectable, and representative of city-ness. For all criteria, “Cartier watch” was ranked high. This photo is highly ranked in expensive/inexpensive criterion that indicates economic capital. Also, the high score for city/rural criterion suggests its economic capital as well. Moreover, the high score on high/low culture criterion suggest its cultural capital.

Table 12: Average ranking for “computer” by Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

	Shanghainese	Rural Migrants
High/low culture	5.5	5.8
Expensive/Inexpensive	3.5	4.0
High/low <i>suzhi</i>	5.6	5.5
Low/high availability	3.3	4.1
Respectable/unrespectable	4.7	5.5
City/rural representation	4.3	5.0



The result of the photo of “a computer” is similar with the photo of a “Cartier watch.”

This object is highly ranked in the expensive/inexpensive criterion, high/low culture, and high/low *suzhi* criteria which suggests that it is perceived to contain high economic capital and cultural capital as well as high *suzhi*.

Table 13: Average ranking for “Louis Vuitton” by Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

	Shanghainese	Rural Migrants
High/low culture	4.2	5.4
Expensive/Inexpensive	6.6	6.0
High/low <i>suzhi</i>	3.5	5.6
Low/high availability	4.9	5.0
Respectable/unrespectable	4.7	5.0
City/rural representation	6.8	5.8



Table 13 suggests that this photo of “Louis Vuitton purses” is also ranked high in various criteria. The average score for the expensive/inexpensive criterion is 6.6 by Shanghainese and 6 by rural migrants. It strongly suggests that the purses are seen to represent high economic capital. Also the average score for high/low culture is considerably high. Louis Vuitton is one of the most recognized and well-known Western brands in Shanghai. During four weeks of stay in Shanghai, I witnessed at least four professional pre-wedding photo-shoots at a park beside Xintiandi, and all the couples

took pictures in front of the Louis Vuitton store. The fact that couples with Western designed wedding dresses take photos in front of such a store suggests that the store or the brand symbolizes modernity and wealth.

These three photos are seen to represent high economic capital, cultural capital, and high *suzhi*. It can be interpreted that high economic capital, high cultural capital, and *suzhi* levels are correlated. That is to say, each criterion is linked to the next. This also applies to an object with low average scores in each criterion. The following table is the same photo-based survey results from a photo of tobacco.

Table 14: Average ranking for “Tobacco” by Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

	Shanghainese	Rural Migrants
High/low culture	2.3	3.9
Expensive/Inexpensive	2.9	3.2
High/low <i>suzhi</i>	2.4	4.1
Low/high availability	2.0	2.0
Respectable/unrespectable	3.0	3.6
City/rural representation	4.6	4.0



In this photo, it indicates that tobacco has relatively low *suzhi* as well as being inexpensive, non-cultural, easy to obtain, and not too respectful. This is the opposite of “Cartier watch,” “computers,” and “Louis Vuitton purses.” Table 13 suggests that criteria that indicate economic status, cultural status, and *suzhi* correlate among low average scores just like high average scores.

What these results demonstrate is the transformability of different forms of capital within these objects. Objects that ranked high in economic capital and cultural capital also indicate high *suzhi*. That is to say, high economic capital, cultural capital, and *suzhi* level correlate, as do low level of capitals and low *suzhi*.

This also indicates a link between the behaviours that represent high *suzhi* and that form embodied form of capital.

Table 15: Average ranking for “Using English at work” by Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

	Shanghainese	Rural Migrants
High/low culture	6.3	6.7
Expensive/Inexpensive	4.3	5.2
High/low <i>suzhi</i>	6.1	6.3
Low/high availability	4.8	5.1
Respectable/unrespectable	5.8	6.6
City/rural representation	6.0	6.4

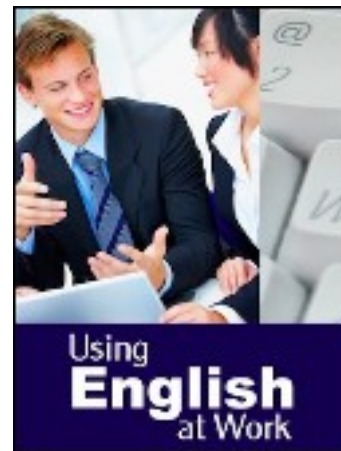


Table 15 indicates that this embodied form of capital, “using English at work,” is ranked high for all the criteria including economic, cultural, and *suzhi*. The next table is the result for low level of economic capital, cultural capital, and *suzhi*.

Table 16: Average ranking for “Not Lining Up” by Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

	Shanghainese	Rural Migrants
High/low culture	1.6	1.2
Expensive/Inexpensive	1.4	1.9
High/low <i>suzhi</i>	1.3	2.0
Low/high availability	2.2	2.0
Respectable/unrespectable	1.6	2.1
City/rural representation	3.8	3.1



As Table 5 shows, “jumping the queue” is considered to be low or no *suzhi* behaviour. This is also shown in the photo-based survey. Table 16 clearly shows a correlation between economic capital, cultural capital, and level of *suzhi*. The next two results are from photos of a rural migrant woman and of a rural migrant man.

Table 17: Average ranking for “Rural migrant Woman” by Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

	Shanghainese	Rural Migrants
High/low culture	3.8	3.9
Expensive/Inexpensive	3.4	3.6
High/low <i>suzhi</i>	4.9	4.9
Low/high availability	2.9	3.6
Respectable/unrespectable	5.2	6.0
City/rural representation	1.8	2.9



Table 18: Average ranking for “Rural Migrant Man” by Shanghainese women and rural migrant women

	Shanghainese	Rural Migrants
High/low culture	2.6	2.4
Expensive/Inexpensive	2.2	2.8
High/low <i>suzhi</i>	3.3	3.0
Low/high availability	2.0	2.9
Respectable/unrespectable	4.0	4.4
City/rural representation	2.2	2.3



As tables 17 and 18 show, both the image of a male migrant worker and a female migrant worker are rated lower in the *suzhi* criterion than behaviours/objects one can find in an urban area such as “using English at work” and “Cartier watch.” This indicates that both Shanghainese and rural migrants view migrant workers as having less cultural value, economical value, and *suzhi* value.

In summary, for all measurements “using English at work” scored extremely high. It is considered to have high *suzhi*, is expensive, and very city-like. “Computers” are also considered to have high *suzhi*. Interesting items are “Cartier watches” and “Louis Vuitton purses.” I suggest that things related to white-collar jobs such as English language skills, computers, purses, and watches tend to score high.

This result from the photo survey reveals how respondents see cultural, economic, and *suzhi* levels in objects and people. Economic reform has produced new socio-economic inequalities between urban and rural populations. Within the system of the labour market, the value of labour operates according to the circular logic of value coding, in which migrant labour and the material practice and embodiment associated with them are devalued as having low-quality (*suzhi-di*).

Commentary

Consumer culture is a significant area for the creation of capital. Bourdieu argues in his *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* that class distinction and hierarchy are maintained through consumption practices. He says:

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social Subjects, classified by their classification, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their positioning the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed.¹³⁴

Bourdieu suggests that economic capital (family background/income level) transformed into cultural capital (taste), and then re-transformed into economic capital, develops social inequality (class differences). The surveys and interviews I conducted show that the anxiety and embarrassment that arises from inappropriate behaviours, material objects, and attire signify and reproduce both the agent's position (Shanghai women and rural migrant women) in an existing social structure and also the legitimacy of the structure itself. This legitimacy and justification is conveyed through the discursive difference of *suzhi*, and is a form of what Bourdieu called symbolic violence, that is the capacity to impose the means for adapting to society by demonstrating

¹³⁴ Bourdieu 1984: 5-6

economic, cultural and social capital in disguised and taken-for-granted forms.¹³⁵ I suggest *suzhi* is a source of the formation of symbolic violence, which justifies the differences between Shanghainese and rural migrant workers.

One of my in-depth interviewees, a 25-year-old Shanghainese clearly declared that Shanghainese' *suzhi* is better than rural migrant workers, and several respondents agreed with that statement as well.¹³⁶ There is a discourse that Shanghainese are historically superior to others in China and have accumulated financial and cultural wealth; thus, their *suzhi* is superior to others. This consciousness seems to justify the socio-economic inequality between Shanghainese and rural migrants, and reproduces inequality as well.

This chapter has shown the materialization of *suzhi* from the aspect of embodied, objectified, and transformed forms of *capital*. From the photo-based survey, I have demonstrated that the respondents view *suzhi* as embedded in tangible objects that one can purchase.

The discourse of *suzhi* that Shanghainese women and rural migrant women both hear is hegemonized through materialization and commodification. *Suzhi* legitimizes the inequality between urban Shanghainese and rural migrant workers. *Suzhi* is a “taken-for-granted” assumption that is enacted in the constitution and maintenance of power relationships. There is a taken-for-granted knowledge of *suzhi*: it is accumulated through the state propaganda campaigns, pedagogical actions of school and family education, and the mass media. It is absorbed, embedded, and reproduced in value judgements described in this chapter.

¹³⁵ Bourdieu, Piere. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*.163-4

¹³⁶ I did not include a question asking whether or not Shanghainese have better *suzhi* as it is politically sensitive question. However, I stress the fact that there is a strong discourse of Shanghainese are having higher *suzhi* than rural migrants.

It is “common knowledge” for both Shanghainese women and rural migrant women that economic capital is unevenly distributed in China, where urban-born residents are privileged and rural-born residents are exploited. The survey shows that common knowledge of *suzhi* is manifested in objects, behaviours, and adornment, and that this common sense knowledge divides people and justifies the division.

The common knowledge of *suzhi* started as a state discourse. However, through its shift from a state discourse to a hegemonic mass discourse, the sense of social division has also shifted to a hegemonic mass discourse. With this normalization of social division, the state pursues its development and modernization of the country. As Yan says, *suzhi* is “nothing more (or less) than development’s phantom child” that allowed the state to produce the social division for the sake of developing the economy.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Yan 2008: 116 and also see Anagnost 2006.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the hegemonic discourse of *suzhi* as both a concept and a set of actual assessments, and has considered how the concept of *suzhi* can be found in materialized objects in contemporary Shanghai.

In Chapter 2, I illustrated the shift of the discursive formation from a state discourse to a hegemonic mass discourse. I have shown that this was a part of the state propaganda to improve human quality in the larger context of the global community. It was the party-state's agenda to "raise" the *suzhi* of the people to catch up with the rest of the world. As urban development proceeded, the normalization of *suzhi* discourse became embedded into society like a spider's web.

In Chapter 3, I introduced the two most well-known theoretical frameworks to analyze *suzhi*, the Marxist view of *suzhi* as a mechanism of class struggle and labour-power exploitation, and the Foucauldian view of *suzhi* as a form of governmentality. I illustrated how the socio-economic rural/urban binary persuades youth in the rural areas to believe that there is a better future in urban areas. A young woman living in rural areas suffers the double stigmatization of being young and of being a woman. A number of employment agencies in the rural areas which are hybrid organizations of the party-state and private enterprise recruit these rural young women to work in cities. These employment agencies persuade them that there are double opportunities for them by working in urban areas for urban residents: improving their income and improving their *suzhi*. However, after moving to the cities, they are stigmatized as "blank slates" that "need" help from urban residents to acquire basic *suzhi*. On the one hand, the state encourages young women from rural areas to improve their *suzhi* in urban areas. On the

other hand, it shapes the hegemonic view of what women should be on a micro-level in their day-to-day lives.

In chapter 4, I described the research results of my field research, which suggest how *suzhi* can be understood as a form of capital; specifically, by investigating how Shanghainese women and rural migrant women in Shanghai articulate their understanding of *suzhi*. Respondents told me that the idea of *suzhi* is closely related to morality and civic virtue. In addition, this study has revealed that they also believe material objects contain *suzhi*. More significantly, the research suggests that there is a strong correlation between monetary value and the level of *suzhi* perceived to be represented within the material objects. I also have shown the subtle differences in the conceptualization of *suzhi* between the two groups. These differences are fundamentally complicated by the socio-economic differences of urban residents and rural migrants. While in some contexts the discourse of *suzhi* is seen as a key to the improvement of the human quality of China in order to become the leading nation of the twenty-first century, I would suggest that this is also justification for the historical inequality and systematic exploitation of the rural by the urban. *Suzhi* even helps to enlarge the socio-economic differences between the two. The concept of *suzhi* in the context of rural/urban binary is so deeply embedded in people's day-to-day lives that it seems almost natural to judge rural migrants as inferior to urban residents.

Contribution of Knowledge

Although this is a project of limited scope, it is an original attempt to seek explicitly what people think about *suzhi* and how the discourse of *suzhi* has been formed in an urban area by using interview surveys and photo-based surveys. By having both

interview surveys and photo-based surveys, I directly and closely examined the hegemonic discourse of *suzhi*. Additionally, this research offers a new approach of analyzing *suzhi* using the theoretical framework of *capital* developed by Bourdieu. Moreover, I have added a new dimension to the study of performative aspects of individual identity in the context of consumption habits.

Limitation of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, the biggest difficulty in my field research was the language barrier between respondents and myself. I do not speak Shanghainese, which is the native dialect in Shanghai. My ability to speak Mandarin is moderate, but not enough to be able to pay attention to the subtle connotations in the language.

A second problem is that, in survey results, respondents tended to write down what they think they are expected to say rather than what they actually think *suzhi* is. The state discourse of improving one's *suzhi* targets rural residents and suggests that anyone can improve it.¹³⁸ During my participant observation, Shanghainese mentioned that *suzhi* is something that they are born with, and does not apply to rural migrants. However, by combining results from the interview-survey, photo-based survey, and participant observation, I was able to show that there is a wider understanding of *suzhi* than that of the state.

A third significant issue is that I ran the risk of enforcing the stereotypical stigmatization towards rural migrant women through my research. Although I did my best to avoid discriminatory questions and images, I may have evoked or reinforced

¹³⁸ Jiang Zemin 1989, cited in Judd (2002). 20

discriminatory sentiments by having interviewees rate images which depict migrants in a negative light. However, by having them discuss their experiences regarding *suzhi* through the use of images that were stereotypical, I created the conditions for respondents to move beyond the stereotypes and evaluate the *suzhi* of material objects, something I would not have been able to do otherwise.

A fourth and final significant issue is that I have to overcome the fact that I am a female student of a Canadian university studying socio-economic inequality between two groups of Chinese women. I was perceived as a Japanese who has been educated in a Western country trying to uncover the dark side of the Chinese socio-economic conditions. In recognition of the sensitive power dynamics between respondents and myself, I realized that I cannot fully understand their experiences. However, I can situate these women within existing literature and begin the process of examining the underlying discursive formation of *suzhi*.

Future Research

I have completed this thesis mainly through the framework of Marxist social division, and have conducted the research using Bourdieu's theory of capital. Bourdieu's theory of capital involves a deeper and more complex theory than I have been able to use here. With a deeper understanding of habitus, economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, symbolic capital, and the concept of doxa (quasi reflexive common belief or popular opinion), future research would be able to enrich discussion of *suzhi* further.

Moreover, through my field research, I could not help noticing the gendered aspects of *suzhi*. During the interview survey and participant observation, I casually asked my respondents if female *suzhi* and male *suzhi* are different. Most of them, including both

Shanghainese and rural migrants, said they are different. Also in bookstores in Shanghai, books about “how-to improve *suzhi*” occupied a single and separate section. However, they were found within the “marriage/relationship” section which mostly targeted females. In this respect, *suzhi* appears to be a significantly gendered discourse. This gendered aspect of *suzhi* has not been studied in depth.

Final Thoughts

When I first started paying attention to the concept of *suzhi*, I did not realize how deeply the concept is embedded in everyday social practices. Its presence is literally like a spider’s web. Its traces can be found in state political policy, economic policy, social policy and even biopolitical policy. The discourse of *suzhi* has a huge impact on the consumption habits of people. Although the discourse widens the differences between the rural areas and the urban areas, it also advocates for the equalization of two groups. The discourse of *suzhi*, creates mixed outcomes ideologically and socially, in an age of neoliberal capitalism.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questionnaire

- Name _____
- Age/gender _____
- Marital Status _____
- Birthplace (Were your family is from?) _____
- How much education do you have? _____
- What do you do? _____
- How much do you make? _____

Suzhi

- Where do you think *suzhi* comes from?
- Who has *suzhi* and who doesn't?
- Can you see *suzhi*?
- How can you tell someone's level of *suzhi* by their appearance, manners, possessions, etc? (accents? Style? Car?)
- What is *suzhi* to you?
- Do you think *suzhi* from 10 years ago and *suzhi* from now is different?
 - Why, how, or why not?
- How can you get/acquire *suzhi*?
- Can you list 5 behaviours that represent low *suzhi*?
- Can you list 5 behaviours that represent high *suzhi*?
- Can you list 5 material things that you associate with low *suzhi*?
- Can you list 5 material things that you associate with high *suzhi*?
- How can you tell migrant's *suzhi* by looking at them?
- What kind of role does *suzhi* play in differences between migrants and Shanghainese?
- What migrants can do to look like Shanghainese?
- Is there anything else you'd like to say? Any question for me?

- 名字 _____
- Age/gender _____
- Marital Status _____
- Birthplace (你是哪里来的?) _____
- How much education do you have? _____
- What do you do? _____
- How much do you make? _____

素质

- 你觉得素质可以哪里来的? (教育, 家人, 社会, 文化)
- 谁有素质, 谁没有素质?
- 素质可以通过观察知道吗?
- 你从看看别人的样子怎么看见他们的素质?
- 对你来说素质是什么?
- 你觉得十年以前的素质是不是现在一样的? 什么样的变化?
- 你怎么取得素质?
- 请你告诉我5个有关没有素质的行为。
- 请你告诉我5个有关高素质的行为。
- 请你告诉我5个有关没有素质的东西。
- 请你告诉我5个有关高素质的东西。
- 你从看看移民的样子怎么样看见他们的素质?
- 素质怎么样区分上海人和移民?
- 移民怎么样取得上海人的样子?
- 你有没有问题或者别的意见?

Appendix 2



No Culture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	High culture	Not Relevant	Don't Know
Inexpensive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Expensive	Not Relevant	Don't Know
No Suzhi	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	High Suzhi	Not Relevant	Don't Know
Easy to have	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Difficult to have	Not Relevant	Don't Know
Rural	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Urban	Not Relevant	Don't Know
Not respectable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Respectable	Not Relevant	Don't Know



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