The warp and weft of life: heritage and working-class nostalgia in a Chinese textile town

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Chapter 4

Habitus and Guanxi as Heritage

When discussing industrial heritage, it is essential to recognize that heritage extends beyond physical objects or locations to include a dynamic cultural process. This process involves the expression and interpretation of cultural values, stories, memories, and significance (Smith 2006). Thus, industrial heritage encompasses not only factory buildings, machinery, and monuments but also aspects of working-class life and communities, such as festivals, oral histories, photographs, songs, and literature (Smith, Shackel, and Campbell 2011).

In addition to these heritage practices that reflect industrial traditions, I also consider less visible yet deeply internal and poetic aspects of life that can be regarded as heritage. Thus, in this chapter, I will explore how guanxi and habitus, as integral ways of life for working class, function as forms of heritage. I aim to demonstrate how guanxi and habitus enable workers to draw on their past experiences to navigate and adapt to contemporary shifts in class status. This analysis could offer a new perspective on linking heritage and class within the context of ongoing social change.

In this chapter, my focus shifts to workers who were laid off from their jobs in the textile town but managed to find new employment elsewhere. I will illustrate how workers' past experiences created new opportunity in new workplaces. This ethnographic chapter delves into the experiences of those who found jobs outside the textile town, detailing their commutes, tasks, and coping strategies in their new environments. Despite leaving the state-owned factory years ago, these workers' resilience and strategies remain deeply rooted in the habitus and guanxi formed during their time there. I will also examine how guanxi and habitus are reified and reinterpreted in various new ways within workers' new workplaces as they adapt to the challenges of transitioning from job security to precarious employment.

Workers' Precarity

When the factories went bankrupt, a large population of laid-off workers emerged, and the textile town could no longer provide workers with feelings of security linked to employment. Permanent jobs at state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which the previous workers called the "iron rice bowl" (tie fan wan) never returned. Instead, driven by a market-determined system of contractual employment, the laid-off

workers, especially the middle-aged ones, experienced significant difficulties in finding new forms of employment. On the one hand, they lacked the physical energy to do the labor-intensive work required to compete with young migrant workers from rural areas; on the other hand, they lacked the high skills and credentials to compete with those who held academic degrees and worked in high-skilled industry (Hurst 2009: 88). The laid-off workers blamed their misfortunes on inequalities linked to society and the regime, and they felt disappointment at having been abandoned by the state. After they lost their "iron rice bowl," they lost their sense of security and dignity, and were then caught up in an insecure and vulnerable life, which I will explain through the concept of "precarity."

Precarity or precariousness, as many scholars have maintained, has been a pervasive situation in the age of neoliberalism and globalization the world over (Kalleberg 2009; Molé 2010; Muehlebach 2013a; Procoli 2004; Standing 2011). For example, Molé (2010) analyzed how the effects and implications of neoliberalism affected labor exclusion and work conflicts in Italy, and examined the meaning of "precariousness" and "mobbing" to understand the imagining of neoliberalism through apprehension and anticipation. He particularly indicated that neoliberalism becomes a rising sense of apprehension and fear for Italian workers, and "the sensory and experiential apprehension of neoliberal change acts as a unique force, which, in turn, shapes practices, knowledge claims, and moral orders" (2010: 40). But the wide use of the term "precarity" has not resulted in a consistent definition of its concept and meanings. When "precarity" refers to forms of work, it involves elements of "vulnerability, injurability, interdependency" (Butler 2009: 23), or a type of job that is "part-time, limited in time, interim, subcontracting on a large scale" (Procoli 2004: 1). Allison (2013) rightly suggested that precarity referred to the loss of security. In her words, "Precarity marks the loss of this — the loss of something that only certain countries, at certain historical periods, and certain workers ever had in the first place" (2013: 5). Although researchers' analyses come from different perspectives and do not give a precise definition, they have offered an approach to understanding precarity in terms of labor relations, class, social reproduction, and social transformation in a variety of social contexts.

China's economic reform has not only increased economic growth but has also led to a shift in employment structure. Both global capitalism and national circumstances have provoked an increase in informal work that is unstable and pays less, and that lacks contracts, social insurance, and labor protections (Kuruvilla, Lee, and Gallagher 2011). Lee (2021) defined "precarity" not as a thing-like phenomenon with fixed attributes but as relational struggles over the recognition, regulation, and reproduction of labor. Lee rightly notes that precarity is a process, and that the content and meaning are not fixed to certain objective, universal indicators but are instead always relational, relative, and culturally and contextually dependent. It is true that when workers face the precarity that comes with a layoff, the challenges of finding new employment can further intensify their feelings of insecurity. Nevertheless, policy support and reciprocal relationships may play a significant role in mitigating precarity for individuals and groups. In addition, the workers' subjectivity struggling with precarity can deepen their understanding of this phenomenon. This involves recognizing that the experience of precarity is not fixed or static, but rather shaped by various factors such as cultural, social, and political circumstances. Thus, the complexity and fluidity of precarity should adopt a contextual and relational

approach to understanding and addressing this phenomenon.

The ethnographic part of this chapter is based on my fieldwork with two textile workers from the old factories who have found employment in new workplaces. Although laid-off workers suffered a precarity that existed in their daily life, I felt touched by their frequent comment, "Life should move on." Thus, in this chapter, my aim is to delve into how workers cope with precarity by drawing upon the habitus and guanxi inherited from their industrial past.

Two Previous Workers Working in the New Workplaces

One of the biggest changes for workers after the factory closed down was the shift in everyday spatial movements and its impact. Before being laid off, their everyday movements were between the social housing and the shop floor. They walked up and down the three-hundred-meter slope linking these two places, and their other activities were based in and around the textile town neighborhood, the factory cluster and the residential compounds. After being laid off from the factory, if they were lucky enough to be reemployed, most of their new workplaces were far away from the textile town. Since then, although they still lived in the factory community, their spatial movements from home to the workplace had changed, which correspondingly affected their life trajectory too.

Chen: Working in a Cell Phone Store

Chen was forty-eight years old. A vivacious and elegant woman, she always gave me the impression that she was much younger than she actually was. She had been a textile worker in the preparation room in the No.3 Factory. After the factory had closed down, she found employment as a staff member in the operating department at a large cell phone mall near the city center.

The store she worked at sold international and domestic brands of cell phones and accessories, and it also offered other services like fixing cell phones. The store had five floors. Chen's office was on the second floor. Her main duty was handling paperwork about merchants' information on this floor and maintaining orders to ensure the shopkeepers complied with regulations. If there were tensions or quarrels occurring among merchants or between merchants and customers, she also needed to coordinate them, placate customers, and solve the problems.

I accompanied Chen to the store by bus one day. She had light makeup on and wore a black dress with a laced collar. We took ten minutes to walk to the bus station on the textile town's main street. Five minutes later, the bus arrived. It was very difficult to move for a little while on the bus, as the crowded bus was full of people heading to work or school. After around forty minutes, we got off one stop ahead of our destination and walked to Chen's workplace. When walking together, I had a chance to talk with her. She was gentle and smiled sweetly when she talked. I asked her why she did not take the subway, as a new direct line to the mall had just opened. She replied that walking for a while was an opportunity to exercise. But after I argued that getting off one stop earlier on the subway would give her more exercise and would be a more efficient use of time, she gave an embarrassed smile and

replied in a lower voice, “But it costs more than taking the bus.” Indeed, this was the main reason to choose the bus over the subway. Taking the bus only costs 0.5 yuan, but taking the subway costs 2.5 yuan. For workers, although they no longer worked in the factory, the habit of commuting without payment was imprinted deeply in their minds. It was impossible to spend a very short time going from home to the workplace as they used to, but it was possible for them to save as much money as they could during the daily commute.

When Chen arrived at the mall, most of the cell phone shops were closed; only a few merchants were preparing to open. The opening time displayed on the mall exterior by the entrance was 10:00 a.m., but staff members had to start work earlier than the merchants. The first thing Chen did when she arrived at the office was to change into her work uniform — a light-blue shirt and dark pants. Unlike the dress she wore beforehand, the uniform looked very formal. She said her colleagues laughed at her because others seldom wore uniforms except for when attending special activities. But she ignored the friendly laugh and explained:

> Wearing a uniform was the first lesson I learned when I worked at the factory, and this habit has lasted nearly thirty years. When we entered the factory, the first thing we did was change into the work uniform. We couldn’t wear dresses or skirts because of safety requirements. So, when I work in this new place, I also ask myself to wear a work uniform.

Her colleague, a man nearly fifty years old, came into the office at this moment. When he sat behind the desk, he began to drink tea and read newspapers. Chen explained that this man had not been busy recently, while her tasks recently consisted of doing paperwork, like collecting information from merchants and asking them to fill out some documents. Chen and his colleague did not talk too much. But it seemed that they got along well with one another. As Chen described, “No matter if one of us gets off work earlier or is even absent for a day, the other one takes care of the office.”

Also, Chen built up good friendships with merchants. When she saw me using an old iPhone model, she asked me why I had not changed it to the newest model. I explained that I had two cell phones, but I preferred to carry this smaller one, as it was easier to hold. She then asked me whether I needed any accessories for the phone. I thought for a while and told her I needed to buy a protective case and recommend one to me. Then she took me to a shop near her office room, but it was hard to find a suitable protective case. After asking sellers at four shops, I finally got what I needed. She knew these sellers very well. She walked into their shops but did not ask them about the products I had first wanted. She talked about other things, like how the business was going these days, which product was better, or how the new phones functioned.

Chen’s work tasks did not just involve sitting at the office and dealing with paperwork. More importantly, she built good relationships with the sellers. She said this was a win–win situation. Her role was to make sure the sellers obeyed the store’s regulations. Hence, if the sellers respected her, they would give her face (mianzi). Then, if some tensions occurred among sellers or between sellers and customers, it was easy to deal with. Similarly, the sellers were also willing to build a good relationship with her as they rented shops in the mall, and Chen was a staff member in charge of the mall regulations.

Thus, both sides had their reasons for maintaining the relationship. But Chen said it was not just for personal profit. She understood that everyone's life was not easy, so she always offered them a hand when they needed help. For instance, when she walked around and found some sellers packaging products for wholesalers, she wanted to help them pack; or if there were no customers in the shops at that moment, she would chat with these sellers, and when the customers arrived, she would assist the sellers with promoting the products.

This reciprocity did not only exist in the mall. Chen extended the reciprocity to a larger space. When Chen sat in the office and collected the paperwork, she would sometimes keep looking at her cell phone and typing in WeChat (a social media application). She showed me that she was answering questions from her friends about the cell phone. Most of her friends were former workers from the same factory. She would reply and tell them which product was better and more suitable. If she was unfamiliar with the questions, she would copy them to the sellers and ask for their advice.

Chen played the role of broker. When her friends asked her about buying a cell phone, she would then turn to her familiar sellers to obtain the phone. Her friends trusted her because she knew which product was cost-effective, and which merchant could be trusted, and she even knew which purchase channels would ensure good quality. Thus, her friends always recommended that others buy phones from her. Meanwhile, the merchants were pleased with Chen and offered her a lower price than exclusive stores. Then, she handed over the phone to the buyers at a slightly higher price than she received them for, and she could thus earn a profit of about 50 to 100 yuan per phone, depending on the phone price. Her friends did not even need to show up; they asked Chen to bring them the phones after work, as most of the buyers were former textile workers living in the same community as Chen. The trading process was based on trust. In Chen's words, "We have known each other for more than thirty years, and although we are no longer working together, the trust is still there." But when I asked her whether she had the same friendship with the sellers, she said surreptitiously, "Everyone is astute. Don't forget they are the people doing business; they are not the same as those of us who come from the large state-owned factory."

After she finished work, we took a bus and went back to the textile town. Before she went home, she prepared to hand over a new phone to her friend who also lived in the No.3 Factory community. We waited in the housing community's yard. Eventually, her friend arrived. This was not the first time her friend had bought a phone from Chen. When they saw each other, Chen invited her to come home with her, but her friend said she had to go back to cook. They had a casual talk, and her friend complained that her daughter was always after the latest electronic gadgets. Chen comforted her and said it was very common for young people. Then Chen gave the phone to her friend and asked her to open it and check it, but her friend refused and said there was no need to do so. She made a joke that if there was something wrong, Chen "could not escape." I calculated that over one month, Chen sold five phones to other friends, and she also provided other services like fixing phones or purchasing accessories.

It is interesting to see that, on the one hand, Chen followed the rules. Every day she wore a uniform and arrived at the office before opening time. But on the other hand, this did not mean that she was

an inflexible person. To the contrary, she knew how to use strategies and convenience to build up guanxi bonds with both sellers and customers, which could be understood as reciprocity. Although her official work tasks did not include selling, her role was like one of a seller in a larger space. This larger space linked her new workplace in the cell phone mall to the living community in the textile town. And in this larger space, she reproduced the social space that turned the former workers into her potential customers. Chen's role in the workplace can be explained by using Herzfeld's (1993) analysis of bureaucratic behavior, which points out that bureaucracy's symbolic basis is based on notions of race and kinship as much as efficiency and rationality. Herzfeld rightly indicates that even though bureaucrats often appear indifferent towards their clients and their symbolic adherence to rules and conventions, bureaucrats are human beings who establish social boundaries to determine whether or not to assist clients. The performance of indifference acts as a way of providing a shield that allows bureaucrats to help clients even when this means breaking the rules. Chen's behavior reflects this phenomenon. She adheres to performance standards and utilizes the protection that her performance provides to favor her friends. Even though she has left the textile factory and now works outside the textile town, she still considers the previous workers as insiders.

Xu: Working in a Supermarket

Xu, who had been a team leader on the preparation shop floor in the No.3 Factory, later found work as a sales assistant in a supermarket. She was in charge of selling everyday home goods such as tableware, decorations, and cleaning products. Her work tasks in the supermarket included recording daily sales figures, arranging the placement of products, and sometimes designing sales promotions. After she was laid off in 2008, she searched for job opportunities and heard from other workers that a supermarket was recruiting people. Luckily, she got this job and has been working there for ten years. At first, she was in charge of setting up the product displays and assisting customers. She gradually became familiar with the products and accomplished the work very well, and then she was promoted to the role of sales assistant in the home goods department.

I visited her at the supermarket when it opened at 8:00 a.m. When I entered the entrance, I saw Xu and five other colleagues standing on two sides of the entrance area and welcoming customers. I was curious about this, as Xu worked on the second floor — why had she come downstairs and was standing here like a waitress? But she had no time to talk with me. When the queue of people then entered the supermarket about five minutes later, she and her colleagues entered the supermarket too. At this time, she walked over to me and explained that welcoming customers in the morning was her work task as well. Because she was not busy at that time on the second floor, the director asked her to go downstairs and show the customers the spirit of the supermarket. I asked her what the spirit was, and she replied, "I don't know, I think it's just to be warm and friendly to customers." But I noticed that the customers did not pay them any attention. They did not even look at their faces, and just rushed to purchase the fresh vegetables and fruits.

I walked with Xu to the non-food area on the second floor. There were fewer customers walking

around this area, as most were downstairs and purchasing fresh vegetables and fruits. People do not need products like tableware and cleaning products every day. Vegetables and fruits, meanwhile, are daily necessities. Although there were fewer customers on the second floor, this did not mean that Xu was relaxed. She began to arrange the daily work tasks. First, she checked yesterday's sales report and made a plan for today's sales. While she was working on this, the director asked her to go downstairs to be an extra cashier, as they lacked several cashiers. I had wondered about this, as she was not a supermarket cashier, but she explained that working in the supermarket was very flexible, and she was often asked to assist other colleagues in other sales areas. Later when she was not busy, I asked her if she felt exhausted because she always had to run up and down with no time to sit, and she replied:

> No, I am full of energy, and I am used to doing that. I am nearly fifty years old. If I do not work hard, it is very easy to fire me and recruit someone younger. When I compare my current job with my previous factory work, this is much better. I have time to talk with you, right? Also, I can walk around to other areas checking the discount items when I am not busy. In the factory, I had no time to go around chatting with other workers because I had to keep an eye on the machines all the time. And now the working conditions are much better. You see, we are working with music in the background now, and I like to arrange the exhibited area when we do sales promotions — this work is creative. And, as a staff member in the supermarket, I am part of the first group of people to know information about discounts and sales; I am very pleased because I like to buy things at good prices.

It was hard to understand what Xu meant when she said she liked to buy discount products — and then I visited her home. She lived in an apartment in the No.3 textile factory community. Her apartment had a similar layout to those of other former workers: two bedrooms and one living room, with a small kitchen and a restroom. What shocked me a lot was how her room space was occupied by lots of consumer goods. I knew Xu always bought something from the supermarket in which she worked, but I could not imagine that she would fill the room up with goods brought at the supermarket. It was not easy to walk from the living room to the bedrooms, so I needed to move around her apartment carefully. Before I asked, Xu explained to me with an embarrassed smile:

> I did not intend to invite you to my home because you can see now, what a mess it is here! My husband and my daughter always complain about it. You see, the items here are the products I bought from my supermarket, of course at good prices — I purchased most of them at under half price.

On the one hand, Xu felt embarrassed to show me her apartment space, and she was also self-critical of how she turned the original small room into a much smaller one in which it was hard to move. On the other hand, I could feel she was proud of possessing so many products acquired since she had started working in the supermarket, especially since she purchased high-quality items at low prices.

She showed me two unopened boxes that looked very new, and the images on the box conveyed that they were ceramic tableware. She indicated that she purchased these two sets of tableware last

year, but had not had an opportunity to open them. I asked her why she did not use them, and she emphasized that she was a frugal woman, and that she would not use the new one until the old one was broken or unusable. Then I noticed that the other boxes were tea sets, but I did not find a teapot on the table in the living room. She admitted that using a tea set was not easy and convenient. "Using the tea set is just for serving guests, but usually no one comes to our home, so we don't need to use it." She continued, "I just drink water, or just put boiled water into my cup to make tea, and so does my husband." Then I was confused, as if they never used a tea set, then why did she purchase such useless things? But her satisfied expression and content tone when she introduced these items to me showed that although she had never used these products, she enjoyed the sense of possession. Even though such products had lost their use value for Xu, they still had symbolic value. Xu filled her space with these products to demonstrate the value of her current work, and they also provided her with a sense of security as an employee whose supermarket work had nice benefits attached to it.

She insisted on unpacking a new tea set and showed me the excellent quality of the tea set. It included one teapot and four teacups. They were blue and white porcelain, and the pattern was very typical for a Chinese tea set. Xu asked me to guess how much it cost. When I gave a general price of around two hundred yuan, she laughed and told me it was only forty-five yuan. "Because I am a staff member, I know the best time to get it at the lowest price." She was very proud of that. Then she showed me other items including a pan, bowl, towel and quilt, all of which were new and occupied a large space in the living room. I felt astonished that she could remember the price of each item, even those purchased several years ago. When I asked her whether the lowest price was just for staff members, she explained:

> Being a staff member doesn't mean that I can get the lowest price. But because I work in the supermarket, I understand the information. I know which product will be discounted. Before opening it up to customers, I can get the information beforehand, so I have the opportunity to select the best one.

From Xu's description, her possession of such goods showed that she was satisfied with being a staff member working in the supermarket. The embarrassment of it being "such a mess" when I arrived in her home had faded away. This job gave her the opportunity to obtain high-quality products at a heavily discounted rate, and it also offered her the opportunity to use reciprocity and build guanxi inside and outside the supermarket. Inside the supermarket, as she was in charge of a small section in the non-food department, while her colleagues worked in other departments, she was able to exchange inside information with these colleagues in different parts of the store. Outside the supermarket, Xu helped her friends or neighbors who lived in the same community to buy goods from the supermarket at heavily discounted rates. One day after work, I accompanied Xu home. She was carrying a new pan to her friend who had previously been a textile worker alongside Xu on the same shop floor team. When they saw each other, Xu's friend was very appreciative, and also thanked Xu for the pajamas that Xu had helped her to buy last time. She said that they were very comfortable. After her friend left, Xu said to me in a very proud voice:

> I never earn profits from helping my friends to buy something from the supermarket. The products they need are daily necessities, not expensive, so I help them just because they have been my friends for many years. It's not a big deal. They ask me for help because they think highly of me.

In fact, the help was mutual and reciprocal. For example, Xu's former colleague Yue asked Xu to provide beef from the supermarket for her toddler granddaughter, as Xu could ensure product quality and hygiene. Luckily, Xu knew which brand of beef was the best, and she even got on well with the supermarket butcher. The butcher selected the better part of the beef and gave it to Xu. Yue was very satisfied with the beef that Xu brought to him. In return, Yue's husband, Han, sometimes helped Xu to pick up her daughter on Friday by driving a car from college to the textile town, and sent her back to the college on Monday, as the college was around thirty kilometers from the textile town. Thanks to Han's pickup, she saved time and trouble on the road. In addition, the supermarket Xu worked in was close to the community where Han's mother lived, so after Han visited his mother, he could also pick up Xu from the supermarket and return her to the factory community by car. Thus, their reciprocity was not direct but was embedded in other ways of giving and receiving.

The concept of reciprocity plays a crucial role in understanding how gift exchange shapes social relationships and cultural practices. Ethnographies from around the world demonstrate the diversity of how different societies use gift exchange to establish and maintain social bonds (J. Davis 1992; Raheja 1988; Strathern 1988). Since the introduction of Mauss's concept of the spirit of the gift "hau" (2016) and Malinowski's principle of reciprocity (1922), the debate surrounding the motivation behind gift-giving has continued for a long time. For example, Sahlins (1972) identified three modes of reciprocity: generalized reciprocity, balanced reciprocity, and negative reciprocity, but J. Davis (1992) criticized Sahlins for reducing all exchanges to forms of reciprocity and Woodburn (1998) criticized Sahlins' use of the term 'generalized reciprocity,' arguing that it should simply be seen as sharing. Weiner (1992) was also critical of the concept of reciprocity. At the core of her theory of exchange lies the notion that gifts are inalienable. She argues that the underlying motivation for reciprocity is not the act of exchange itself, but rather the desire to retain something from the pressures of give-and-take. This "something" refers to a possession that serves as a symbol of an individual or group's social identity and reinforces the distinctions between them and others (1992: 43). Yan's research on gift-giving and exchange practices in China reveals that reciprocity is a more complex phenomenon than a simple exchange of goods or services. For instance, Yan (2003) argues that intergenerational reciprocity in China entails not only material giving but also emotional and moral components. Additionally, the "guanxi" network that underlies reciprocity in the Chinese gift economy is instrumental in reproducing social hierarchy and reinforcing existing power relations (Yan 1996).

While the discussion of reciprocity is complex, the different forms of gift exchange and the way it is carried out are highly dependent on historical conditions and the context of specific religious and cultural practices. In any society, it is critical to understand the meaning behind the act of gift-giving and how the relationship between individuals and the objects exchanged contributes to the formation of social bonds.

In the new workplace, former textile workers can engage in two types of reciprocity. Firstly, they may exchange information or economic benefits with their colleagues within the workplace, which aligns with Sahlins' (1972) concept of "balanced reciprocity." Such exchanges involve a clear expectation of receiving something in return. When these former workers help their friends from the old textile town, however, it is not a simple exchange of goods or services. Instead, it is an exchange of help that is partly related to Weiner's (1992) concept of "inalienable possessions." This type of reciprocity is not a "pure gift" nor an act of "altruism" but rather embodies a certain spirit or emotional attachment that arises from their shared experiences on the shop floor and in the factory community. This relationship between former workers can be viewed as "inalienable" since it is grounded in the long-term comradely friendship formed in the factory community, and it continues to exist in the new social space, even if the workers no longer work together. Later on, I will use the terms *ganqing* and *renqing* within guanxi to further explain the meaning of reciprocity in this context.

In the following analysis, I will show how the changing spatial movement affects previous workers, so that they reproduce the social space in the new workplace.

Changing Spatial Movements

The loosening of the *hukou* policy (a system of household registration) in the 1980s lessened the metaphorical distance between rural and urban areas in China. This is because a large number of rural residents left their hometowns and immigrated to urban areas for better work opportunities. In the 1990s, the closure of state-owned factories resulted in millions of laid-off workers who then encountered difficulties in the labor market (Cai 2002). To some extent, the laid-off workers were similar to migrant workers, as many had left their original home, workplace, or both, and were looking for jobs in other places. The difference is that most laid-off workers were still living in their social housing allocated by the factory, while migrant workers needed to find a new place to live in urban locations. Zhang (2002) compared migrant entrepreneurs and laid-off workers, showing how both groups renegotiated socioeconomic positions in the city and redefined the meaning of urban citizenship in social change. I was inspired by Zhang's description of how the two groups struggled with spatiality, and I found that through spatial movement, laid-off workers were forced to go outside the textile town to recreate a sense of spatial security similar to what they used to maintain in the factory. The state-owned factories had not only provided permanent employment and social facilities but also a sense of spatial security. Here, the "spatial security" in the previous factory community had three factors. First, it referred to a physical space with important socioeconomic needs, like social housing and schools; second, the sense of security included the spatial movement involved in traveling from home to the workplace, which was only roughly a fifteen-minute walk. Third, the social space embodied a sense of mutual trust and long-term friendship.

As I show below, the jobs outside of the textile town required those former textile workers to leave home and take public transport to their current workplaces. But they did not adapt to it at first. For textile workers, their typical commuting distance was a walk of around fifteen minutes, which means

they had more time to stay in one place, no matter whether at home or on the shop floor, and then they could devote more time to their family or work. Nowadays, however, they spent about two hours on the road, and during this period they also had to endure crowded passengers, traffic jams, and the commuting expense. For example, when Chen worked at a cell phone mall in the city center, she did her best to keep the cost of the commute down, although she could only save very little. Also, in the textile town, only a few former workers owned private cars, and most people took public transport to the workplace. If someone had a car and was willing to pick up others, just as Han picked up Xu or her daughter, there could be a debt of gratitude and the other would find an opportunity to demonstrate their appreciation.

Spatial movements change over time. Ten years after being laid off, the former factory workers had adapted to commuting from the textile town to their current workplaces without complaint. While the workers were not accustomed to travel via public transport at the beginning, they learned to adapt to the routine in order to balance work and life. If the journey to work took longer, then the responsibility for taking care of other family members would fall on someone who arrived home earlier. And during these routine movements, many former workers would use the time to keep healthy, for instance, by walking some of the route.

Despite the difference in commute between working at current workplaces and on the former shop floors, the commute also enabled them to create a sense of spatial security in the new workplace. On the shop floors, many textile workers who did not like working in an office sat behind a desk and computer most of the time; beforehand, they had been walking around the textile machinery all the time. The total distance they had moved per day might have been as much as ten kilometers. The habit of walking a lot on the shop floor made them get used to standing and walking for a long time in other workplaces, especially in the services sector, just as Xu ran up and down in the supermarket and other former textile factory workers stood up all the time in the shopping mall. Thus, they did not complain about the task because their previous everyday movements on the shop floors helped them adapt to movement in their new workplaces.

Moreover, changes in their everyday, work-related movements offered them a more flexible space and the opportunity to promote their subjectivity in order to extend the social space. For example, because Xu's kind of work was not restricted to one area of the supermarket, but rather required her to be more flexible to help other staff members when needed, Xu made use of this larger social network and exchanged information about available discounts with a larger group. Like Xu, in Chen's case, she took more time to walk around the stores in the mobile phone mall. Through talking with other sellers, she obtained useful information about cell phones, and even developed her own business.

In sum, leaving the factory and working in new workplaces were challenges but also opportunities for workers. They had to struggle with the difficulties caused by the spatial movements and by adapting to the changing atmosphere. The process that spans being laid off to finding employment in new workplaces is a dynamic one. It includes a shift from reluctance to adaption. During this process, both "habitus" and "guanxi" exhibit some level of adaptability while maintaining a sense of continuity with their historical practices. In the following sections, I will examine how the concepts of guanxi

and habitus can present flexibility in certain aspects while upholding a sense of continuity with their traditional practices, ultimately contributing to the reproduction of the social space.

Changing Guanxi: From "Ganqing" to "Renqing"

It is interesting to observe how the workers used the term guanxi. While they used this same term to describe their social relations with others, the meanings and implications of the guanxi formed in the factory varied from that in the new workplaces. In order to analyze the various meanings of guanxi, let me pose three questions here: 1) Over the years, how have the guanxi from the factory changed in relation to the workers' current social exchanges? 2) How do workers themselves recognize the differences between guanxi from the factory community and guanxi from their current workplace? 3) How can I interpret the contradictions that emerge when guanxi from the factory and guanxi from the current workplace mingle in practice?

Guanxi in the Factory

When working in the factory, textile workers addressed their colleagues as sisters or brothers. This involved a rich sense of affection, or in Mandarin *ganqing*, within their relations, and such emotional ties have existed in working and living communities over several decades. Specifically, the guanxi that formed in the factory were rooted in a comradeship that formed the specific cultural tie linking socialist workers in the state-owned factory. This comradeship was based on the collective identity of socialist workers striving together as part of the socialist construction efforts, and it turned such comradeship into an affection that existed among family members — like "siblings" — in how textile workers addressed each other.

Metaphors of siblings exist in many cultural traditions. For instance, Thai people refer to themselves as "phinawng kan," which translates to "older and younger siblings to each other." This metaphor is often used to express political relations that transcend hierarchical differences, and it represents an extension of the kinship idiom to a communal existence (Herzfeld 2016b: 45). By drawing on the metaphor of siblings, people in a group could emphasize a sense of community and mutual obligation, which can serve as a powerful basis for social cohesion and political cooperation. In the textile factory, female workers often form a sense of sisterhood among themselves, even predating the emergence of socialist factories. For example, in Shanghai mills at the beginning of the 20th century, female workers established a network of sisterhood to foster mutual support both within and outside of the mill. This network formalized a protective force that helped the workers struggle against harassment and oppression (Honig 1992). The way female workers help each other by viewing themselves as sisters creates a powerful bond of solidarity that transcends traditional kinship and regional barriers. This sisterhood not only serves as a means of mutual aid, but also as a powerful symbol of adaptation and resistance.

Thus, once a worker regarded that another worker as a family member, then the relationship would

include trust, dependence, and mutual help as was possible. On the shop floor, for example, when a worker finished her tasks, she would be willing to lend her sisters a hand; or, when a worker needed to go to the toilet or needed some water, others would help her to take care of the textile machinery to ensure operations continued without stopping. Such mutual help was not limited to the shop floor. In their living community, neighbors had similar emotional ties. The structure of work-unit housing in the 1980s and 1990s required most residents to share a cooking and toilet space. Their daily schedules were almost the same if they worked in the same factory. Thus, when they arrived home, they always cooked together and shared food while their children played in the yard. While children did grow up in nuclear families, the neighbors were similar to extended family members because they took care of one another. Thus, the relationship with the factory community embodied trust, reliance, and mutual help in everyday life. Workers played crucial roles not only in one another's important life events, such as weddings or funerals, but more often in simple, plain, even imperceptible interactions. Guanxi here implied how this emotional relationship was unconsciously embodied in practice, rather than "building guanxi" or "finding guanxi" purposefully. This is how guanxi were cultivated in the factory community. Even though the former workers were later employed outside of the textile town and rarely met one another, they believed that their guanxi had not faded, for as Chen said, their relationship had "experienced the test of more than thirty years."

Therefore, guanxi among "sisters" and "brothers" in the factory was based on long-term living and working together with a sentimental attachment. The meaning of guanxi here is more like *ganqing*, which could be translated as feelings of affection. This differs from what Yan (1996) described as *renqing* in a Chinese village. *Renqing* is an emotional attachment entangled with moral obligations, which plays the overlapping roles of morality and sentiment in motivating social exchange. The emotional attachment among workers, however, integrated the affection of their being colleagues, comrades, neighbors, and close friends. Workers addressed each other as "sisters" or "brothers," just as in Lin's (2001) conception of the pseudo-family tie, which refers to an intimate friendship, like pseudo-kin in such contexts. For example, some children even called their parents' best friends "gan ba" (pseudo-father) or "gan ma" (pseudo-mother), which combined the "high acquaintance, high intimacy and high trust" (Bian 2019: 22) of emotional ties between two workers' families.

Nevertheless, it would be impossible to argue that everyone in the factory embraced the work situation to the same degree. As Walder (1986) argued, the instrumental guanxi ties on the shop floor were manifest in the relationship between supervisors and subordinated workers. Indeed, I have also described the hierarchy and inequality on the various shop floors in Chapter 3. But after workers had left the factory and worked outside the textile town, when they compared their relationships with colleagues, they preferred to ignore the hierarchy and inequality in the factory, and placed a greater emphasis on their lifelong friendship. This is because creating a positive siblings-like atmosphere of relationships in a factory environment could have a powerful impact on workers, even those who may not have strong personal connections with each other. Such an environment was underpinned by a formal morality that fostered collective harmony and cohesion, which workers felt nostalgic for even after they have left the factory community. In the next section, I will examine the concept of guanxi

and how it has changed over time, highlighting how workers can adapt to changing circumstances while still maintaining continuity with traditional practices.

Guanxi in the Reform Period

The security of life in the factory community was disrupted as the factory's profit deteriorated in the late 1990s. The wages that workers obtained remained the same, and it was hard for them to catch up with inflation. The reform of the SOEs led to social inequality inside and outside of the factory. Workers ascribed the factory's decline to the corruption of factory leaders and the wider political regimes. Increasing protests occurred in the late 1990s throughout the country, especially in the northern part where most of the historically state-owned factories were located (Lee 2007).

Although workers were angry at the layoffs, they realized that it was necessary to find ways to reduce the associated feelings of loss. In the textile factory, workers could find guanxi with someone who had power; this was a strategy they could use to their own benefit. Such guanxi was manifest in two aspects. First, amid the layoffs, workers endeavored to seek out better compensation. But getting more compensation was difficult. According to the formula used to calculate it, the amount one worker could obtain depended on the number of years they had worked at the factory. This was very transparent, as workers knew how long each of them had been working there exactly. But when it came to retirement arrangements, there were two other options: early retirement and ill-health retirement. As with the number of years worked, workers' real age was transparent, so it was difficult to modify. The situation regarding ill-health retirement, however, was more flexible. According to the No.3 Factory's policy, only 0.4 percent of workers were allowed to obtain ill-health retirement. Some workers took advantage of this policy to find guanxi to get approving for ill-health retirement. Some workers thus pursued guanxi in two directions: they sought a certificate of sickness from doctors and approval from the factory leaders.

Second, guanxi played the most important role in their reemployment in the labor market. Although the local government provided various training classes, these were ultimately ineffectual. Workers relied most of all on their friends' or relatives' recommendations and their reemployment largely depended on this. Workers followed recruitment information carefully. When they heard of someone who had found a job, they would ask those who had guanxi to recommend jobs for them. When one worker was reemployed, they may help their friends find work there too. Most of the interlocutors with whom I talked obtained jobs like this. Xu's experience is a prime example of how networks of friends and acquaintances can help people find new job opportunities. After being laid off from her factory job, Xu turned to her network of friends who were working as shop assistants. And one friend told her the supermarket the friend worked at was hiring because the supermarket would open a new subbranch and require people who were hard work and resilience. So, her friend recommended Xu to the manager. And then Xu conducted a simple interview and was eventually hired. After Xu was employed, she then recommended the job to her other factory friends, and they, in turn, recommended the job to others. This network of referrals helped many laid-off workers find new jobs outside of the textile

town. Indeed, because of vacancy limitations in the job market, better jobs relied on good guanxi ties. Others who did not have guanxi could only find jobs as cleaners or doorkeepers for example. From that period onwards, the complexity of guanxi tore apart the relatively equal situation among workers, and those workers who had more guanxi could obtain relatively stable jobs while others only worked as casual workers. Their life paths then began to move in different directions.

Guanxi in the New Workplaces

In the 1990s, the Chinese government embarked on a series of economic reforms aimed at modernizing the state-owned enterprise (SOE) system. As part of this effort, the textile industry underwent a radical transformation, shifting from traditional management practices to a more capitalist mode of production. Specifically, the official documents outlining the implementation measures for this reform included a range of measures aimed at improving efficiency, such as encouraging mergers, standardizing bankruptcy procedures, and reducing staff. Nevertheless, the SOE reform had a significant impact on the labor market, leading to a rise in precarious forms of employment and increased job insecurity for many workers. After the layoffs and later reemployment, workers experienced a precarity grounded in uncertainty, insecurity, and vulnerability. When reemployed, they had to struggle with all these difficulties to adapt to the new work.

When starting a new job, workers often strategically use their agency and negotiate to interact with their colleagues and managers. Specifically, they needed to cultivate new guanxi in new workplaces, which entailed changing patterns they had learned in their tough days during the reform of the state-owned factories and resultant layoffs. Thus, they tried to maintain good relationships with managers, colleagues, and customers. In practice, they had to prove themselves to be hardworking employees who followed the rules and took the regulations very seriously. They also knew they had to maintain a low profile and rarely make mistakes. When a manager assigned them work, it was hard to hear any complaint in public. Rather, they were earnest and steadfast in following instructions. When other colleagues talked to them, they were good audiences and provided advice to younger colleagues. By presenting themselves in this light, they earned the trust of employers, colleagues, and customers.

These actions can be explained by Goffman's theory of self-presentation (1959), which suggests that individuals construct and present different versions of themselves in social situations and interactions. Workers may present themselves differently to current colleagues on the "front" stage versus former factory friends on the "backstage" stage. Nevertheless, their self-presentation is not always stable, the workers' subjectivity and poetic intelligence align with Michael Herzfeld's (2016) concept of "social poetics," providing the creative ways in which individuals negotiate and adapt to their social situation in social performance. According to Herzfeld, "Social poetics is... the play through which people try to turn transient advantage, a quick grasp of some official discursive or symbolic form, into a permanent condition of social advancement" (2016: 31). Workers often use the practice of guanxi, or social connections, to navigate their relationships both within their current workplace and with former factory friends. For example, they admitted that good working manners and attitudes were inherited

from their experience in the factory. But they also stated that they needed to be careful because their current work was often not a permanent position. Instead, it was on a casual contract, and if they made mistakes or did not get along well with others, they would be dismissed easily. While these relationships may differ in nature, they are also interconnected and adapt effectively to various social contexts. I will elaborate further on how the practice of guanxi serves as a form of social poetics for workers.

Building guanxi was the process of developing a mutually beneficial social network that emphasized ways of giving, returning, and reciprocating. The ethnography of the two textile workers discussed in this chapter showed that there were more social exchanges and situations of reciprocity when they worked in the new workplaces compared with the factory beforehand. Since they had been working in these new workplaces for several years, they had built guanxi ties. Besides their using guanxi to maintain a good relationship with managers and other colleagues, they knew how to find guanxi or build guanxi through reciprocity. Chen and Xu, as discussed in the ethnography, extended their guanxi ties in business: Chen cooperated with cell phone merchants and took on a broker role to sell phones; in return, she offered these merchants smooth cooperation in her everyday management of them. Xu, meanwhile, purchased good quality items at a discount and shared this information with her colleagues and friends both inside and outside the supermarket. It shows that why guanxi is not exactly the same as patron-client ties. Patron-client ties are characterized by a vertical power dynamic, where one party holds a higher status or authority over the other. Although asymmetrical, this relationship is still mutually beneficial, as seen in the example of the Sarakatsani in Greece who developed patron-client relationships with lawyers, presidents, shopkeepers, and cheese-merchants. These relationships were established to exchange resources and favors, and both could gain prestige from these relationships (Campbell 1964). In contrast, guanxi relationships are more reciprocal and horizontal. They allow people to maintain a form of egalitarianism within a society that tends to be hierarchical. Thus, while patron-client ties can be useful in certain contexts, guanxi relationships offer greater flexibility and complexity and are better suited for building long-term and mutually beneficial connections.

Intermingling with Guanxi from the Factory and From the Current Workplace

The guanxi ties were not confined to the current workplaces. Among the workers, two kinds of guanxi ties intermingled in the process of social reproduction — guanxi from the current workplace and guanxi from the factory. This was the process of turning *ganqing* (affection) into *renqing* (favor). *Renqing* is always accompanied by reciprocal social exchange, but here it was still based on the previous affectionate attachment to the factory community. When workers were reemployed, many female workers found work in the marketing and sales industry. They were able to benefit from economic information circulating in their new workplaces, which helped them pursue favors and engage in social interactions. Working in such an industry required them to build interpersonal relationships. This meant that they not only had to get on well with their new colleagues and managers, but they also had

to use existing resources to link their previous guanxi networks with their new guanxi ties.

Mauss (2016) noted the disjuncture between the ideology and practical implications of reciprocity. In pre-modern Europe, for instance, lords and tenants engaged in reciprocal performances that thinly veiled the entrenched inequality in their relations. As Holmes (1989) discussed "onoranze," the gifts given by peasants to their lords in exchange for protection, in an idiom that barely concealed the harsh reality of inequality. Similarly, the concepts of *ganqing* and *renqing* cannot be dichotomized as the mere performance of reciprocity. The transition from *ganqing* to *renqing* is a vague and dynamic process without a clear boundary. Moreover, this reciprocal relationship may involve both complex guanxi ties simultaneously. The intertwining of *ganqing* and *renqing* illustrates how guanxi adapt to new social contexts and maintain reciprocity in a sustainable way. From the ethnography, we can understand how the former factory workers used the older guanxi from the factory instrumentally to gain reciprocal favors. For instance, Chen acted as a broker selling phones to her friends and neighbors from the factory community; and Xu helped Yue to get discounts and better-quality items from the supermarket. In return, Yue's husband, Han, sometimes drove cars to pick up Xu or her daughter.

Cultural Intimacy and Guanxi

While how the workers linked guanxi from their new workplace with that from the previous factory community seemed like "sociality with a purpose" (Brković 2017: 8), how they addressed the guanxi formed in the factory community was very much distinct from their approach to guanxi in their new workplaces. They emphasized the distinctive qualities of the factory guanxi. Indeed, I always heard them say, "Our guanxi has a solid foundation," or "We trust each other because our guanxi is not like what is on the outside." In this situation, they categorized their guanxi into separate spaces of inside and outside guanxi. For them, inside guanxi entailed intimacy, trust, pureness, and long-term affective interaction within the same community. Outside guanxi, however, entailed hypocrisy, untrustworthiness, and utilitarian relationships. But while separated, the dichotomy would sometimes become blurred. In practice, guanxi on the outside and inside always interacted and intermingled with each other, and it seems that both kinds pursued reciprocity on purpose. So, why did they still address this difference between them?

Here I borrow Herzfeld's theory of "cultural intimacy" to explain this. He defined cultural intimacy as "the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality" (1997: 3). The common sociality for workers is their collective experience and memory of working in the factory and living in the same community, which provided them with an identity that not only came from the same physical space but that was also formed from the "moral space." Steinmüller (2013) discussed the moral frameworks of family, which are linked to different spaces, both material and conceptual. Although these workers have been working outside of the textile town, they still maintain the illusion of guanxi in the "moral space." Thus, when they used guanxi strategically to explain different relationships among colleagues, they simplified the complexity of guanxi: they denied

the consistency of guanxi as being either inside or outside, and they kept emphasizing the purity of guanxi in order to conceal the purpose present in utilitarian reciprocity.

The variety and complexity of guanxi in Chinese society increases social stratification, and it is suggestive of a growing inequality of work opportunity as well as of income. After ten years of working in other workplaces and dealing with various difficulties, the former workers had learned how important guanxi was, and they had built new guanxi to extend their social space. Then they realized that all of society has become inundated with a crisis of confidence. People do not trust one another, and they always assert that other people's purpose is only driven by self-benefit. In this new environment, the unsophisticated relationship present in the past was considered rare and commendable. There was nostalgia, but this did not mean that they wanted to return to the past. Rather, they used such a sense of nostalgia tactfully in the current situation to varnish the pure aspect of guanxi with a mutual trust and innocent affection grounded in the moral space of the former factory. Nevertheless, guanxi in the factory community had already changed and were no longer similar to those of the past.

Habitus in the New Workplaces

Although the layoffs ended the workers' previous secure life in the state-owned factories and placed them in precarious conditions, there was no disconnection between the past and the present. Rather, to some extent, the past continued in the present. In Chen's story, she arrived in the office early, saved on commuting costs, and insisted on wearing a uniform to work. When I compared the details of the past experience in the factory and the current work in the new workplaces, I constantly encountered some similarities among the workers. The term "habitus" (Bourdieu 1977, 1984; Mauss 1979) provides an effective way of explaining how the body, mind, and emotions are trained simultaneously. I use this concept to explain how workers' habitus was inculcated in the factory, and how this habitus was manifest in their everyday life when they left the factory and worked in the new workplaces.

The difference between habit and habitus is that, according to Bourdieu (1977) and Mauss (1979), a habit is a mechanical concept based on repetitive behaviors, whereas a habitus is a flexible disposition that includes practical knowledge and understanding, strategies, and purpose (Crossley 2013). Mauss stated that a habitus could be understood as the "techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason," while a habit is "in the ordinary way, merely the soul and its repetitive faculties." But a habitus is not always the same, as they do "not vary just with individuals and their imitations; they vary between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges" (Mauss 1979: 101). Bourdieu further situated habitus in social space in order to analyze the social distribution of taste, and he used the concept of habitus to discuss how to reproduce a social structure consisting of "structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1977: 72).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus has gained popularity as one of his most widely cited ideas and has been applied to a range of lived experiences (Teman and Ivry 2021). His perspective offers a comprehensive overhaul of the traditional dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism (Wac-

quant 2016). Despite its widespread adoption, "one does not see the habitus but rather the effects of a habitus in the practices and beliefs to which it gives rise" (Maton 2008: 62). Much empirical research has used adjectival additions to generate the effect of habitus in lived experiences. For example, "circumferential habitus" was used by Teman and Ivry (2021) to explain the routines, attitudes, and dispositions of pregnant women, while "emotional habitus" was used by Gould (2009) to explain how the queer community produced and reproduced through emotional practices. Verdery (1991) has written about how Bourdieu's model needs to be modified for a socialist environment as Bourdieu's analyses are based on a capitalist society, but Wacquant (2016) stressed that Bourdieu's concept of habitus is dynamic, multiscalar, and adaptive in practice, never a replica of a single social structure. Therefore, to use the concept of habitus effectively, we need to go back to the social context and "field" to observe how agents navigate and act within a given social space (Bourdieu 1989).

Ethnographic research offers a dynamic perspective on how habitus is embodied in everyday life. Wacquant's (2006) study on boxing investigates how boxers are trained to utilize their bodies in specific ways, which become deeply ingrained in their posture. Harrison, Collins, and Bahor (2022) utilize Bourdieu's framework and qualitative research to analyze the effects of flexploitation on Roma workers, highlighting how their habitus and capitals provide a unique perspective on precarious employment. In my fieldwork with textile workers, I observed how workers' habitus manifested in their daily lives and evolved with changes in their workplaces to evaluate how the factory-inculcated habitus was manifested in workers' everyday life, and whether their habitus changed as their workplaces did. Bourdieu's original concept of habitus is overly static and deterministic, reducing individuals' agency and capacity to adaptive. Thus, in this section, I will show the textile workers' ability to adapt and accept changing circumstances stood out as a key feature of what Harrison *et al.* refer to as "social capital on the move" and how they react intuitively to the social environment (Reed-Danahay 2005: 5), revealing that habitus becomes more useful when one realizes that it can change through time.

In the following, I will analyze three aspects of habitus inculcated in the factory: punctuality, working hard, and a sense of responsibility. Although the workers' habitus has continued to manifest itself in their new workplaces, I also reflect on reifications of and changes to their habitus.

Punctuality

How do people create and express time? And how are representations of temporality culturally expressed? Ethnographies of sociocultural time are useful here. In Nuer society, for example, people follow two types of time: ecological time, which is physical and pertains to the environment; and structural time, which refers to kinship and other social structures (Evans-Pritchard 1951). How does industrialization, then, affect workers' everyday life? Thompson (1967) examined how a shift in sense of time affected labor discipline and the inward perception of time among working people. He argued that in the preindustrial era, work related to natural change and followed "natural" work rhythms. Industrial society's task-orientation, however, "becomes greatly more complex at the point where labor is employed" (Thompson 1967: 61).

On the various shop floors of the textile town, such time restrictions also affected workers' everyday work and life. The time restrictions required workers to follow a schedule, and shift work entailed workers conducting a smooth handover. Time was a deliberate tool used to limit freedom in the workplace. At lunchtime, for example, workers needed to plan how to use the forty-five minutes to go to the cafeteria, and they considered which food choices could save them time, while some female workers also used their lunchtime to go home, for childcare, or to feed their babies. Some workers complained that the group leaders would turn on the machines earlier to urge them back to work as soon as possible. All of these requirements had trained workers to be punctual.

This punctuality continued in the new workplaces. Workers believed that punctuality was a basic quality of being an employee. This meant that they would not only arrive at their workplace on time, but that they would also arrive earlier than their other colleagues. They were never late for any appointments because they reserved enough time to avoid being late. Punctuality became part of their habitus and demonstrated their obedience in following rules too.

Working Hard and a Sense of Responsibility

Why do workers work so hard? Do they simply work to earn a piece-rate salary? Burawoy (1982) provides a rich and significant ethnographic description of how workers consented to work during the labor process. He revealed that workers treated activities on the shop floor as games, which meant that workers did not only earn money that acted as an incentive, but they also reproduced social relations that shaped the organization of work.

"Consent" in the socialist factory had more meanings attached to it. On the textile factory's shop floor, besides being driven by the piece-rate system, another important factor that prompted workers to work harder was a sense of honor, and this transformed into a sense of responsibility. On the shop floor, competition was often present at every level — between individuals, groups and shop floors during the labor process, which I have discussed in Chapter 3. The result of such competition was that the winner did not only earn honors but also became a symbol and model worker. The publicity such workers received from the factory's radio broadcast, newspaper, and banner helped to enhance this sense of honor. It compelled everyone to learn from the winner and to endeavor to become eligible socialist workers.

This "game" was not the only reason pushing workers to work harder. Another important factor was the relationship between individuals and the state in socialist China. Every week, workers participated in political study activities organized by the factory, which were completed in groups on the shop floors. The purpose of political learning was to enhance the consciousness of working-class collectivism that linked closely the fate of individuals, families and the state. The logic was that individuals' honors did not only belong to this one person but to the collective, and then to the state. Thus, if you tried your hardest, this meant that you could not only earn honor for yourself but could also contribute to the factory and the socialist construction of China. Equally, if you failed to complete work tasks, others would look down on you and make you feel ashamed.

The importance of individuals' work was thus associated with the collective and the state on a larger scale. A sense of responsibility linked to long-term working therefore formed. Though jobs in the state-owned factory were permanent and workers were rarely expelled, the workers feared getting behind in the labor process. Thus, working hard and having a sense of responsibility that was cultivated and that formed during the labor process on the various shop floors became part of the workers' habitus.

After switching to the new workplaces, this habitus grounded in being hardworking and responsible continued, and it could help the workers adapt to the new surroundings. As many textile workers said proudly, "Wherever we work, we workers from the textile town can bear hardship. In the new workplace, we can earn the trust of managers, because we try our best to do the job." Their working attitudes were deeply influenced by this sense of responsibility, wherein they did their best to work hard in order to be competent at the job, just as they had done in the factory, even though the work task was different from in the past. Because of this habitus, they were able to tolerate obstacles and find strategies to deal with difficulties in the new workplaces.

Changes of Habitus

For Bourdieu, the concepts of capital, field, and habitus help us understand how social inequality is reproduced (1977; 2011). When the textile workers left the shop floor to work in new workplaces, like supermarkets, shopping malls, or other service industries, the field changed. I have summarized what kind of habitus formed in the factory and continued in their new workplaces, but ethnographically speaking, I could then also search for some changes in the habitus after the field had changed.

First, I described how workers continued to emphasize punctuality in the new workplaces. But what came next? When they arrived in their new workplace on time or earlier than others, this did not mean they devoted themselves to work as quickly as possible. Rather, they talked with others, surfed the internet, and drank a cup of tea until the managers came to check on them, or other issues arose and they had to start work. In this situation, the meaning of punctuality is not similar to their following the rules and operating the machinery as soon as they arrived on the shop floor.

Second, in the new workplace, certain previous workers still followed the rules and wore uniforms, as Chen said this behavior conveyed a working attitude. But they also learned how to beautify their appearance: for instance, Chen dressed up and wore makeup and an elegant black dress. The old pictures depicted the textile workers as almost the same, all in white hats and blue uniforms. Chen's dressing up shows that some parts of her habitus had changed in her new workplace. For Chen, as she now worked with human beings rather than machinery, her new job demanded that she make a good impression on customers, colleagues, and managers.

Also, the noise of the textile machinery on the shop floor required workers to speak loudly. Otherwise, it was hard for them to hear one another clearly. But in the services industry, they had to change their way of talking and speak softly and tenderly to customers. This is what they learned in their training, and it became their habitus in their new workplaces.

Conclusion

The working-class way of life can be regarded as a form of heritage. Their lived experiences provide valuable insights into how past experiences shape the present and how these ways of life continue to influence contemporary practices. In this chapter, guanxi and habitus have been examined as examples of such kind of heritage that originate from industrial culture and tradition, evolving in response to social change.

The factory layoffs and shift to working outside the textile town did not entail a cut between the inside and outside. Instead, it linked the past and present by reproducing social space. In this chapter, I have presented detailed narratives of two former textile workers now employed in new workplaces, and I have illustrated how workers struggled with precarity. I compared their current work with their former factory work, and I showed how their strategies intertwined with the guanxi and habitus that formed from their previous experience, albeit reflected through various forms of reification in their new workplaces. I uncovered three findings:

First, I demonstrated the relationship between changing spatial movements and subjectivity. In contrast to the workers' former factory life, their current workplaces were far away from home. Thus, they had to overcome difficulties linked to the commute, which included choosing a form of public transport, saving on costs, and saving some time to walk a little and exercise on the way. But the change in routine urged them to find opportunities to reproduce the social space, which gave rise to the second finding: the meaning of guanxi should be considered in relation to the changing situation when they work outside of the textile town.

Next, I have focused on how the meanings and practices of guanxi have changed, which I suggest is marked not only by a shift from *ganqing* (affection) to *renqing* (favor), but also intertwined with each other, which means the reciprocal relationship may involve both complex guanxi ties simultaneously. The intertwining of *ganqing* and *renqing* illustrates how guanxi adapt to new social contexts and maintain reciprocity in a sustainable way. Therefore, guanxi relationships are more reciprocal and horizontal. They allow people to maintain a form of egalitarianism within a society that tends to be hierarchical. The way the workers addressed their colleagues as "sisters" and "brothers" demonstrates the comradeship of collective identity involved in having been socialist workers collaborating in the socialist construction effort. Here, guanxi is used to describe how the emotional relationship is unconsciously reproduced in practices based on trust, reliance, and mutual help in workers' everyday life in the factory community. In contrast to the guanxi formed in the factory, the guanxi formed in the new workplace entail the workers' developing a mutual social network that emphasizes giving, returning, and reciprocating. From the ethnography, we can see how they intermingle with two kinds of guanxi ties — guanxi from the new workplace and guanxi from the factory — linking together in the process of social reproduction. In practice, the two kinds of guanxi interact and link together to enable reciprocity and deliberate benefit. But the workers still asserted that their factory guanxi were purer, simpler, and full of trust, and so different from the guanxi outside the textile town. The strategic use of the term guanxi and the denial of a consistency to guanxi demonstrated a contradiction

to guanxi that played out in the workers' moral space.

Another argument is that although the workers' habitus was inculcated in the factory, it was still manifest in everyday life after they had left the shop floor and found employment in the new workplaces. I stated that punctuality, hard work and responsibility were the three aspects of habitus that formed from the factory experience. These aspects of habitus became an advantage in helping workers adapt to new workplaces. And because of this habitus, many workers have done very well and have earned compliments and promotions in their workplaces. Recognizing that habitus is not a fixed entity and can change over time provides a valuable perspective on how individuals can develop adaptive and flexible capacities. The habitus is not stable all the time; it has changed because of the changing field. Such a changing habitus draws on adaption, resilience, and negotiation in order to find a sense of security in life, but the sense of security that formed in the factory never came back.