Face and Favor: The Chinese Power Game

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Western research on interpersonal behavior patterns and rules of exchange needs to move beyond the assumption of isolated individuals socialized to make rational decisions on the basis of self-interest. A review of recent research shows that Chinese society and other similar societies follow rules that deviate from those of the West. In such societies, norms of reciprocity (*bao*) are intense, but these norms are heavily shaped by the hierarchically structured network of social relations (*guanxi*) in which people are embedded, by the public nature of obligations, and by the long time period over which obligations are incurred through a self-conscious manipulation of face and related symbols. These special cultural symbols, as well as the historical monopoly of valuable resources by powerful leaders, help explain the origin of these patterns. There are several forces leading to change but also some sources of continuity, which help maintain these patterns regardless of political and economic context.

It has long been recognized that one of the most significant features of Chinese culture is its emphasis on a harmonious society and the appropriate arrangement of interpersonal relationships (Abbott 1970). Many social scientists have noted that in the Chinese language there are some indigenous concepts that are frequently used to define the appropriateness of interpersonal arrangements. They have attempted to expound the meaning and importance of such indigenous concepts as *renqing* (King

1980), *mianzi* (Ho 1974; Hu 1944; King and Myers 1977), *guanxi* (Chiao 1982; Jacobs 1979), and *bao*[2] (Yang 1957; Wen 1982), and their works have contributed to a much deeper understanding of Chinese social behavior. However, most previous works concentrated on elaborating the social implications of one or two of these concepts; none of them tried to integrate all four of these concepts.

This article aims at developing a conceptual framework, on the basis of social exchange theory, for fathoming the dynamic relationships among these concepts. I believe that the framework depicts not only a prototype of social behavior in a Chinese society but also a general model for illustrating the process of social interactions in most cultures, especially that in a collectivist culture. Many justice theorists have proposed that there are three justice norms that are frequently used for social exchange or for distributing resources within groups. These are the equity, equality, and need rules (Deutsch 1975; Greenberg and Cohen 1982; Leventhal 1976a).

The equity rule encourages individuals to allocate resources in proportion to their contributions. It is primarily activated in economically oriented situations where "economic productivity" is a primary goal (Deutsch 1975, p. 143), where the "receivers' primary responsibility is to perform effectively" (Leventhal 1976b, p. 216), or when individuals are in a "unit" relationship with one another, that is, they perceive each other as role occupants rather than as individuals (Lerner 1975, 1977).

The equality norm dictates that profits or losses be distributed equally among members regardless of their objective contributions. It tends to predominate under conditions of cooperative social harmony, where "fostering or maintenance of enjoyable social relations" is emphasized (Deutsch 1975, p. 146), whenever "maintenance of harmony and solidarity among receivers is important" (Leventhal 1976a, p. 218), or when a person perceives another as an individual rather than as an incumbent of a social position (Lerner 1975, 1977).

The need norm of justice dictates that dividends, profits, or other benefits should be distributed to satisfy recipients' legitimate needs, regardless of their relative contributions. It will predominate in situations where people are mutually interested in "fostering personal welfare and development" (Deutsch 1975), when individuals have a very close relationship (Greenberg and Cohen 1982; Lerner 1975, 1977; Leventhal

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[2] The transliteration system used in this article for such Chinese terms as *renqing* (favor), *quanxi* (relation), *mianzi* (face), and *bao* (repay) is that of the *pin-yin* system, which follows the Peking pronunciation of standard Northern Chinese. In the Wade-Giles system, which may be more familiar to most English-speaking readers, the above four terms would be transliterated as *jen-chi'ing, kuan-hsi, mian-tze,* and *pao,* respectively.

1976*a*), or when an individual has an "identity relation" and empathic involvement with other people (Lerner 1975, 1977).

While agreeing that these rules of behavior are near universals, I argue that they fall short of capturing the full richness of the behavioral quandaries faced by participants in some cultures. Owing to unique structural conditions and a special set of cultural categories that give participants additional means of thinking about their interpersonal relations, the ways in which individuals approach social relations differ slightly from place to place, and these differences fade but slowly, even in the face of rapid industrialization, urbanization, education, and communication.

An example is the Chinese category of *renqing,* which is the focus of this article. A variant of the universal equality rule, *renqing* is much more highly elaborated and more tightly bound up with ideas of reciprocity (*bao*) than it is in many other cultures. It emphasizes the value of maintaining personal harmony and social order among persons situated in hierarchically structured relationships. Otherwise stated, the principle of *renqing* implies not only a normative standard for regulating social exchange but also a social mechanism that an individual can use to strive for desirable resources within a stable and structured social fabric.

Similar patterns of behavior can be found in other collectivist cultures. For example, the concept of *on* in Japanese culture also implies a similar reciprocal exchange: once a benefactor generates an *on* relationship by giving a benefit to another, the receiver is obligated to repay *on* in order to restore balance (Benedict 1946; Lebra 1969, 1976).

To illustrate the social mechanism of *renqing* and *mianzi* and their function in Chinese society, this article will first discuss the meanings of such concepts as *renqing, guanxi,* and *mianzi* in the Chinese language system and explicate the relationships among them. Empirical research on the psychological or sociopsychological processes of the Chinese people will be reviewed to provide evidence for supporting the main arguments of this model. Finally, the article will discuss the social circumstances that reinforce one's commitment to the mechanism of *renqing* and *mianzi.*

Though surprisingly resistant to change in some locales of east Asia, these categories are surely being modified. As a result of urbanization and westernization, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese communities throughout the world are changing from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* societies (Tönnies 1940). The mechanical solidarity of the social structure is becoming more and more organic (Durkheim 1933). This kind of social evolution will certainly bring changes in the personality structure as well as in the social behavior of Chinese people living in these societies. The current model will take these changes in Chinese behavioral patterns into consideration.

I. THE SOCIAL MECHANISM OF CHINESE POWER GAMES

Before I analyze the Chinese power game of *renqing* and *mianzi,* it is necessary to define clearly the term "power" as it is used here. "Power" means the sociomoral suasion, or peer-group pressure, that one may use to change the attitude, motivation, or behavior of another to conform to one's will during the process of social interaction. Some social psychologists assert that the process of using power to influence other people is basically a social exchange process (Cook and Emerson 1978; Baldwin 1978).

The individual's reason for employing such power to influence other people lies in a desire to obtain one or more social resources controlled by them. Likewise, the reason why the other consents to succumb to the individual's influences is that the allocator foresees that this strategy will in turn bring a certain reward or help in evading some kind of punishment.

Figure 1 illustrates the interaction between the petitioner's behavior and the psychological processes of the resource allocator. It is a conceptual framework depicting the social mechanism by which a Chinese may use *renqing* and *mianzi* to influence people. Because *renqing, mianzi,* and *guanxi* are all indigenous concepts in Chinese culture, their meanings in the terminology of Western psychology are explained at the bottom of the figure.

The framework reduces the social behavior to a dyadic interaction. In fact, the model can be extended to interpret the social interactions among three or more persons. It is merely for the sake of convenience that the conceptual framework considers only two parties of interaction, the petitioner and the allocator.

In an actual situation of dyadic interaction, either party may hold the power of allocating some kind(s) of social resources that may satisfy the need(s) of the other; meanwhile, either one of the dyad may expect the other party to distribute the resource under his or her control in a way favorable to the allocator. Therefore, in the process of interaction, either party in the dyad may interchangeably play the role of petitioner at one time and that of resource allocator at another. The following discussion will give a more minute elaboration of each stage in the interactional process shown in figure 1.

II. JUDGING THE *GUANXI:* THE ALLOCATOR'S FIRST STEP IN THE POWER GAME

It is a general principle in social psychology that there are several rules of exchange that might be perceived as just in some circumstances—for example, the rules of equity, equality, and need (Deutsch 1975; Sampson
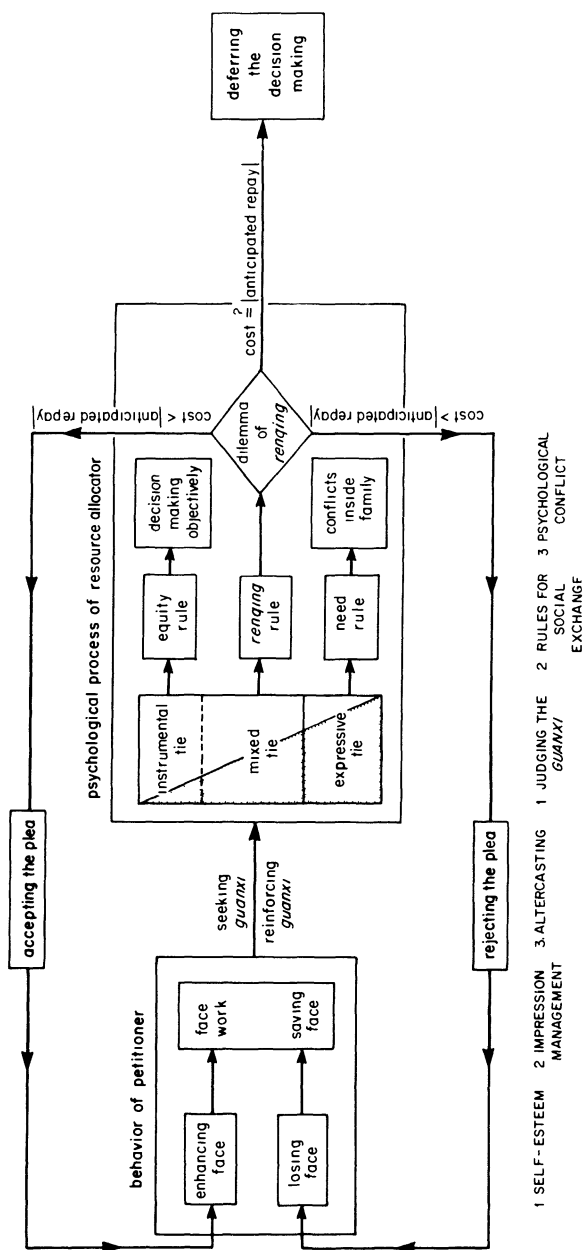
FIG. 1.—A theoretical model of face and favor in Chinese society

1975; Leventhal 1976*a,* 1976*b,* 1980)—and that an individual will employ different rules of social exchange to interact with people of different types of relationships or different degrees of intimacy (Lerner 1975, 1977; Greenberg and Cohen 1982). In the context of Chinese culture, these principles are much more emphasized than elsewhere.

Traditional Chinese cherish hierarchical status in social relations. They tend to adopt multiple standards of behavior for interacting with different persons around them (Fei 1948; Hsu 1953; Nakamura 1964). When the resource allocator is asked to mete out a social resource to benefit the petitioner, the potential allocator will first carefully consider: "What is the *guanxi* [relationship] between us? How strong is our *guanxi?*"

In figure 1, within the box denoting the psychological processes of the resource allocator, the shaded rectangle represents various personal ties. It is first divided into two parts by a diagonal. The shaded part stands for the affective component of interpersonal relationships, while the unshaded part represents the instrumental component. The rectangle is subdivided further into three parts by a dashed line and a solid line.

These two lines represent the degrees of permeability between the psychological boundaries that a Chinese uses to classify three sorts of interpersonal relationships: the expressive tie, the instrumental tie, and the mixed tie. The dashed line means that it is easier for a person of instrumental tie to become one of mixed tie. The solid line denotes that it is quite difficult for an individual to change from the relationship of mixed tie to that of expressive tie or vice versa. The proportion of shading indicates that all three kinds of interpersonal ties are composed of varying degrees of the expressive component and the instrumental component. The nature of these interpersonal ties and their related rules of social conduct in Chinese society are explained below.

A. The Expressive Tie

The expressive tie is generally a relatively permanent and stable social relationship. It can render an individual's feelings of affection, warmth, safety, and attachment. This kind of tie occurs mostly among members of such primary groups as family, close friends, and other congenial groups. Aside from the satisfaction of affective feelings, one can, of course, utilize this tie as an instrument to procure some desired material resource, but its expressive component always claims precedence over its instrumental component.

In traditional Chinese society, the family is deemed the most important primary group to an individual. A typical Chinese family usually encompasses the multiple functions of economy, religion, education, and recre-

ation, so that it can meet most of an individual's needs (Hsu 1967; Lang 1946; Levy 1955).

To integrate all members into a financial unit has long been an important ideal of the traditional Chinese family, and the financial unit usually has three characteristics: (1) every member is supposed to turn over all income (except the woman's private savings) to the family treasury; (2) the family treasury is responsible for every member's daily expenditures; and (3) the surplus is shared by all members in the family (Shiga 1978). In other words, before the members divide their inheritance, the rule governing social exchange and resource distribution is the need rule. According to this rule, every member should do his best for the family, and the family will in turn supply him the resources necessary for living.

When children are still young, parents have not only the obligation to nurture them but also the responsibility to discipline them. The children are trained to inhibit any form of physical aggression and to help each other in order to promote the harmony and integrity of the group (Scofield and Sun 1960; Wolf 1964; Wolf 1970). When parents become too old to work, their children must assume a reciprocal responsibility of supporting them.

Although the processes of social exchange and resource distribution within a family are governed by the need rule, it must be noted that this does not imply that interpersonal conflict seldom occurs in Chinese families. In fact, previous research has shown that the major source of interpersonal disturbance for most Chinese is intrafamily interpersonal conflict (e.g., Chin 1948; Hwang 1978).

In the theoretical framework of figure 1, the situation leading to intrafamily interpersonal conflict is labeled the dilemma of *qinqing:* a dilemma occurring between blood relations. Because this dilemma is intrafamilial, which is not the major focus of this paper, it will not be discussed further here.

B. The Instrumental Tie

In the rectangle of figure 1, the instrumental tie stands in opposition to the expressive tie. With a view to attaining his material goals, an individual must establish instrumental ties with other people outside his family in his daily life. When an individual attempts to establish an expressive tie with other people, the tie is the goal in itself. But when one attempts to establish an instrumental tie, the relationship serves only as a means or an instrument to attain other goals. Thus, this relationship is basically unstable and temporary. This latter relationship exists, for example, between salesmen and customers, bus drivers and passengers, nurses and outpatients in a hospital, and so forth. Both parties consider this kind of social

interaction solely as a means to achieve their own purposes. They do not even need to know each other's name, and, in this relationship, the expressive ingredient, if any, is very slight.

As in other cultures, the rule of thumb for a Chinese in interacting with a person in an instrumental relationship is the equity rule, which is embodied in a Chinese shop advertisement: "We are equally honest with children and the aged." An individual adopts a universal principle, instead of a personal one, to treat all other people in this tie equally.

When dealing with people in an instrumental relationship, one always reflects on this in terms of social exchange theory: "How much reward can I obtain from the opposite side?" "How much must I pay in order to obtain the goal?" "Is my final benefit comparable to that of the other side's after the cost is subtracted from the reward?" (Blau 1967; Homans 1961; Emerson 1976).

When interacting in terms of the equity rule, the expressive component is minimal. This being true, an individual can make more objectively favorable decisions. If, initially, the consequences seem unprofitable, one may bargain, refusing the first proposal, or even completely break off the relationship of social exchange without any regret if the other party refuses to accept reasonable counteroffers (Adams 1965).

There is empirical evidence that suggests that Chinese individuals tend to be particular about trifles and to behave rationally when interacting with strangers. Bond and Leung (1983) conducted a cross-cultural experiment that asked 96 female subjects, 48 Chinese from Hong Kong and 48 Americans, to work on an additive task with a stranger (in fact, a researcher) whom they had never met. Each subject copied characters from her own script and from a foreign script in her less-preferred hand, discovering at the end that she had produced twice or half the characters produced by her supposed partner. She was then required to divide a cash payment between herself and her partner. Results showed that the Chinese subjects used a more equitable strategy of relating inputs to outcome than did the Americans.

It was assumed that, in a collectivist society such as China, one's need for social affiliations is fully satisfied within already established groups. One may actively promote social relationships only within these groups, but one's paramount concern in relations with strangers is fairness, which leads to a preference for an equitable, rather than an egalitarian, distribution of the outcome in the latter case.

The same line of reasoning can help explain the typical Chinese hesitation in aiding a stranger. In a cross-cultural field research project, the experimenter stopped subjects, asking each to mail a letter for a stranger in Taipei, Taiwan, and also for one in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The results indicated that there appeared to be a tendency for Chinese to be

less helpful toward strangers than were Americans (Huang and Harris 1974). It seems that Chinese are bound by the social obligation to help others who need help in the social group to which they belong but are not necessarily helpful toward strangers.

When the social exchange relationship with a stranger is perceived as unfair by Chinese, an overt interpersonal quarrel between the two parties is very likely to occur, especially when the quarrel is justified by defending the interests of one's own group.

An intensive review of the literature on aggressive behavior in Chinese society indicated that Chinese tend to discourage and inhibit aggressive outbursts in order to maintain interpersonal harmony within their group. However, their collective acts of aggression toward a stigmatized outgroup might be drastic and even exaggerated for the sake of group serving (Bond and Wang 1982).

C. The Mixed Tie

In Chinese society, a mixed tie is a relationship in which an individual seeks to influence other people by means of *renqing* and *mianzi*. Both sides of a mixed tie know each other and keep a certain expressive component in their relationship, but it is never so strong that all participants in this tie could express their authentic behavior as freely as can the members in the expressive tie. This kind of relationship, which has been termed a particularistic tie, occurs chiefly among relatives, neighbors, classmates, colleagues, teachers and students, people sharing a natal area, and so forth (Fried 1969; Jacobs 1979).

Both sides in this tie have something in common with one or more persons. Those who know one another constitute an interpersonal network, or reticulum, which has different degrees of complexity. From the viewpoint of an onlooker, an individual may be simultaneously involved in several different groups and thus in many networks woven by particularistic ties. But, for each participant, the view is that one is at the center of a unique network composed of one's particular social ties (Mitchell 1969; Kapferer 1969). Other persons in this network also have their own reticulum of social relations; hence, the overlapping and intersecting of these reticula result in an extremely complicated network of social relations.

Such interpersonal networks have a far-reaching influence on Chinese social behavior. Since the participants in a given reticulum are very likely to be familiar with one another, the duration of the mixed tie is its other characteristic. Interpersonal relationships in the mixed tie are seldom based on a consanguineous background, so that it does not necessarily

exist forever, as does the expressive tie. But the mixed tie can last as long as both parties see each other frequently.

Furthermore, the mixed tie is quite different from the instrumental tie. In the latter, interpersonal relationships are characterized by universality and impersonality. Neither side may expect to meet the other again after its purposes are achieved, even though there probably is a chance of future contacts. But the mixed tie has a particularistic and personal essence. Both sides not only expect that they will continue this connection, they also anticipate that some other people in their respective networks may know what is going on between them and may evaluate their interaction in accordance with their social standards. Because the personal network has these characteristics, each resource allocator has to take the rule of *renqing* into account whenever he is asked to distribute a resource in a beneficial way to any other individual sharing the same personal network. In such a case, the resource allocator (RA) may be caught in the so-called dilemma of *renqing*. If RA insists on the equity rule and refuses to give the petitioner (P) some special help, then RA is doomed to harm their relationship and may even mar his own *renyuan* (interpersonal attractiveness). Accordingly, under many circumstances, RA cannot help following the rule of *renqing* and giving P special consideration, especially when P is a person of power.

Thus, in Chinese society, many people like to make the best of the special qualities of the mixed tie by cutting a figure of power in order to impress others. This, they hope, will place them in a favorable position for any future allocation of some others' resources. The following discussion further explains the rule of *renqing,* the dilemma of *renqing,* and the ways in which a Chinese seeks to influence people by the *renqing* rule.

III. *RENQING* AND THE RULE OF *RENQING*

Generally speaking, the word *"renqing"* has three different meanings in Chinese culture. First, *renqing* indicates the emotional responses of an individual confronting the various situations of daily life. *Li-Chi* (Book of Ritual) says: "What is so-called *renqing?* It consists of happiness, anger, sadness, fear, love, hate, and desire; all of them are acquired at birth." In psychological terminology, a person who is versed in *renqing* is well equipped with empathy. If an individual can understand other people's emotional responses to various circumstances of life—feeling happy or sad when and as others do, or even catering to their tastes and evading or avoiding whatever they resent—then we may say that such a person knows *renqing*. If, however, one is not sympathetic to other people's feelings or ready to help them when they are in great need, then such

indifference to people's emotional responses will certainly foster a reputation of not knowing *renqing*.

Second, *renqing* means a resource that an individual can present to another person as a gift in the course of social exchange. In Chinese society, when one has either happy occasions or difficulties, all one's acquaintances are supposed to offer a gift or render some substantial assistance. In such cases, it is said that they send their *renqing*. Henceforth, the recipient will owe a *renqing* to the donors. By this, we see that *renqing* means a certain kind of resource that can be used as a medium of social exchange.

In their resource theory of social exchange, Foa and Foa (1976) employ the two dimensions of "concreteness" and "particularism" as coordinates for describing the properties of the resources that are frequently exchanged in social interaction. If we adopt their coordinate system to describe the property of *renqing,* then *renqing* occupies the same location as the resource "love" does (see fig. 2). In figure 2, we can see that, among other resources, *renqing* has the highest position on the dimension of particularism. This means that an individual will be likely to exchange *renqing* only with particular partners in his interpersonal network.

Note, also, that the concreteness of *renqing* is located near the center of that dimension. This means that, as a resource for social exchange, *renqing* may contain not only such substantive materials as money, goods, or services but may also include some abstract component of affection. This is the reason why *renqing* is so difficult to calculate and why one is never able to pay off debts of *renqing* to others.

Third, *renqing* connotes a set of social norms by which one has to abide in order to get along well with other people in Chinese society. This norm of *renqing* includes two basic kinds of social behavior: (*a*) Ordinarily, one should keep in contact with the acquaintances in one's social network, exchanging gifts, greetings, or visitations with them from time to time, and (*b*) when a member of one's reticulum gets into trouble or faces a difficult situation, one should sympathize, offer help, and "do a *renqing*" for that person.

The principle of forgiveness (*shudao*) propounded by the Confucianists is embodied in the maxim "Do not do unto others that which you would not wish done unto you" and by its converse: "Do unto others as you wish done unto yourself." The behavior of the recipient, however, is regulated by another social norm, which is proverbially expressed: "If you have received a drop of beneficence from other people, you should return to them a fountain of beneficence." Such displays of the social norm are termed the rule of *renqing* in this article.

One implication of the *renqing* rule is that, for the sake of maintaining interpersonal harmony within a group, when two or more of the same
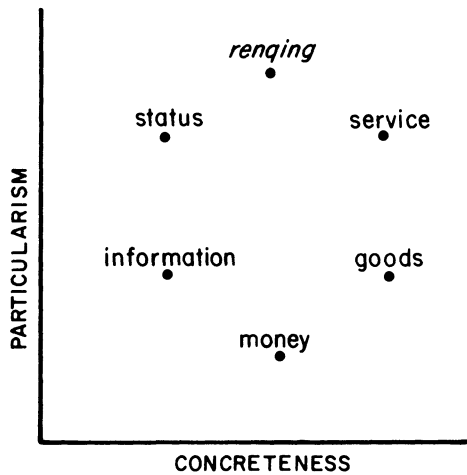
FIG. 2.—The properties of *renqing* as a kind of resource for social exchange

social network work together, the RA tends to distribute the outcome of work to all co-workers in accordance with the equality rule, no matter how much actual input each one of them objectively contributed toward the completion. This occurs because people in a given interpersonal network may anticipate that they will continue to interact with others in the future and because distributing resources within a group according to the equality rule is an important method for preventing interpersonal conflict (Deutsch 1975; Leventhal 1976*a*; Shapiro 1975).

Several research experiments provide evidence to support the hypothesis. For example, Bond, Leung, and Wan found that Chinese subjects tended to adopt a more egalitarian strategy when dividing resources among group members whose joint efforts had combined to produce a given benefit. They were in fact able to evaluate each member's contribution to the completion of a group task, but, when asked to distribute rewards according to their inputs, they preferred to moderate the strict equity solution so that members contributing less were given relatively more and those contributing more, relatively less (Bond, Leung, and Wan 1982; Leung and Bond 1982).

Another experiment on distributive behavior, by Chu and Yang (1976), showed that a Chinese student in Taiwan had a strong tendency to create a socially acceptable impression of himself in the eyes of his partner as well as in those of the experimenter, even at the expense of his immediate personal gain in a social exchange situation. When the subject performed less well than his partner, he preferred to allocate the total reward earned by his team in terms of their relative performance. But, when he performed better than his partner, he preferred to divide the total sum

equally. It seems that maintaining group harmony and integrity is much more important to a Chinese than is insisting on distributive equity.

IV. THE NORM OF RECIPROCITY AND THE RULE OF *RENQING*

Gouldner (1960) has argued that the norm of reciprocity is a universal one. It has been accepted as a basic moral rule of social cohesion in most cultures (Lévi-Strauss 1965; Malinowski 1926). Social relationships among human beings cannot be effectively established without the norm of reciprocity. In Chinese culture, the rule of *renqing,* as well as the need rule and equity rule, is a derivative of the norm of reciprocity (Yang 1957). The chief differences among these three rules lie in their applications to different domains of interpersonal ties, in their different ways of repaying, and in the varying time periods permitted between giving and repaying.

In instrumental-tie relationships, neither side in the social exchange expects that it will undertake any exchange of affection in the future, so that both sides can estimate the relative value of resources under their respective control according to more objective standards and so exchange their resources in a fair manner. In the course of social exchange, when a participant gives a certain value of resource to the opposite side, the latter is supposed to repay its cost immediately. If there is any hint of procrastination, both sides should negotiate and agree in advance on the exact date of reciprocation.

In a typical Chinese family, which is an association of expressive ties, a social exchange based on the need rule also follows the norm of reciprocity. In the proverb "Foster your children to prevent misery in old age and hoard grain to prevent dearth," we can see that typical parents expect their children to repay parental care.

In fact, much empirical research on Chinese family life, in different parts of China and at different times, indicates that, as a rule, males of the younger generation take turns supporting and caring for their aging or senile parents (Lang 1946; Li 1967; Wang 1967). Of course, in this type of reciprocal relationship, the amount and kinds of resources used in exchange are unlimited and the date of reciprocation is quite uncertain.

When rearing children, parents always try their best to meet the apparent needs and expressed demands of their children and rarely take specific note of the resource values expended. When the children sense the need to reciprocate, at some unspecified date, they follow the rule of "do as much as you can; take as much as you need," and one can hardly assign a definite value to the resource exchanges of find a way to measure their comparative values. As far as the date of reciprocity is concerned, it is variable and quite uncertain, depending as it does on the actual situation of the parents and the children.

The social exchange of resources in the mixed tie, according to the *renqing* rule, also coincides with the norm of reciprocity, but the way and nature of reciprocity are quite different from those found in the equity rule and the need rule. In Chinese society, the rule of "a favor for a favor, an attack for an attack" is chiefly applied in mixed-tie relationships (Wen 1982). Such relationships are not as unavoidable as those in the expressive tie, but people in the mixed tie are not ready to part from each other if they fail to agree on a rule of equity.

In order to maintain the affective component in the mixed tie, the participants have to remember the principle that "etiquette requires reciprocity" and follow the rule that "if one gives you a peach, you should requite his favor with a plum." Whenever a participant in this tie is struck by poverty, disease, or some other difficulty that demands timely help from the other tie member, who has a desired resource at his disposal, the latter, taking into consideration the possible reciprocation that the former may give in the future, will help the distressed one to a certain degree.

In this case, the recipient thenceforth owes *renqing* to the benefactor and should be ready to pay back the debt of gratitude once circumstances permit. Thus, the component of affection in their relationship serves the instrumental function of striving for needed resources. If, on the contrary, the potential RA unwisely neglects the rule of *renqing* and turns down P's demand, then both sides will unavoidably be mired in an embarrassing situation; their *guanxi* will be gravely marred, and they may even become enemies.

To sum up, what motivates the Chinese to do *renqing* for another is their anticipation of repayment. Although Confucian ethics emphasizes the idea that one should help other people without any expectation of reciprocation, that concept basically remains "the ideal of Sages" (King 1980). To ordinary people, Chinese ethics gives a positive value to the obligation of reciprocation and lays heavy stress on the practice of such maxims as "Do not forget what other people have done for you" and "Do not forget the beneficence done to you, even if it is small." Supported by such rules, the benefactor can rightly look forward to a return, a reciprocal action not to be neglected by the receiver, in the future, when he, himself, is in great need. It is largely owing to this anticipation of reciprocity that the RA is willing to do P a *renqing*.

V. THE DILEMMA OF *RENQING*

If RA decides to do a *renqing* for P, it must be done immediately. Although RA can anticipate some reciprocation later, the date remains unknown to both parties at the time. Because of this uncertainty, RA is

said to be in the dilemma of *renqing*. Generally speaking, the dilemma of *renqing* is either mitigated or worsened by the interaction, within the mixed-tie complexities, of the following three factors:

1. *The cost to RA.*—When RA accepts P's appeal, a portion of the resource must be given immediately. If RA is the owner of this resource, he will suffer a loss by consenting to help P. The more P demands, the greater the loss RA will suffer. In many cases, RA has merely the right of allotment instead of full ownership. If RA violates the equity rule to benefit P, RA will probably suffer protests from people whose interests are damaged by his unfair allotment—and RA may even incur lawful punishment. Facing pleas from P, RA has to think over in advance just what may be lost by risking violation of the equity rule.

2. *The anticipation of P's reciprocation.*—In a culture that cherishes the value of repaying favors, RA can reasonably anticipate some reciprocation when he contemplates assistance to another. But, with no objective standard of measurement available, RA is incapable of either knowing the date or foreseeing the manner of reciprocation. RA can estimate approximately what P might repay only by knowing something about the reputation and power of P.

The possibility of reciprocation would be high and the requital would be abundant if P occupies a significant social position, has large resources, and is well-known for being generous in repaying favors. But, if P has an obscure social status, controls only meager resources, or is widely and often reported to be stingy, then P's reciprocation may well be quite limited.

3. *Social evaluations from other people in the same interpersonal network.*—In a relation-oriented society such as China, an individual's *guanxi* are an important consideration for all concerned. When RA contemplates whether or not to do P a *renqing,* RA very likely will also pay heed to other persons related to P and try to estimate the degree to which they can directly or indirectly influence RA.

If P associates closely with important people who have direct influence on RA, then RA must carefully consider the fact that these people are loyal to P and also worry about the possibility that they may be obliged, out of loyalty to P, to refuse something of value to RA. Such considerations may well reinforce P's demand on RA.

Needless to say, if P's association with important people is strong enough to persuade one or more of them to request the favor directly from RA on behalf of P, RA will certainly be subjected to a much higher pressure of *renqing* and will be much more likely to grant the request. On the contrary, if P is only a person of humble origin and is devoid of "good *guanxi,*" RA can easily justify a refusal.

To sum up, in facing the dilemma of *renqing,* RA must carefully weigh

the expected gain and loss and thereby estimate the net cost of helping P. In reaching a favorable decision, RA will have seen that the cost to be paid is rather limited, that P is a powerful person or has a good network of *guanxi,* and that, ultimately, the anticipated value of the expected requital is far greater than the current-demand cost. Conversely, in reaching an unfavorable decision, RA will have seen that P lacks valid *guanxi* and cannot afford—or produce through others—a suitable reciprocation.

This may help to explain the fact that persons who lack power or good *guanxi* usually complain that, when they face adversity, there is a change in warmth or coolness in the attitudes of their associates following on their success or failure and that the *renqing* is as thin as a piece of paper.

Yet, there is a third possibility. Because *renqing* cannot be calculated easily and objectively and because in many cases P's potential reciprocation cannot be reasonably predicted, RA simply reaches no clear decision. In such a situation, RA may adopt the strategy of deferring the whole matter and give no definite answer to P.

After not receiving an answer for a long time, and knowing that deferment is a subtle form of rejection in Chinese culture, P had better seek other solutions. If P is so unsophisticated as to confront RA directly, the latter may apologize and offer a lot of excuses to emphasize that there is much desire, but no suitable means available, to help.

In some cases, P might be annoyed by RA's "playing dumb" and the situation might become an embarrassing impasse. But, in most cases, P has to consider and accept the cultural value of maintaining interpersonal harmony. Following this, P has to maintain perfect composure before RA and allow this interaction to terminate without a concrete result or decision.

The Chinese national character of social orientation, which has been defined as a complex behavior syndrome consisting of social conformity, unoffensive strategy, and submission to social expectations and authority (Hsu 1953; Yang 1981), can be viewed as an individual's responses to the dilemmas created by a broad category of explicit or implicit social demands.

Cross-cultural research, using psychological tests of the paper-and-pencil type, has shown that, in comparison with their American counterparts, Chinese subjects tend to be less autonomous (Fenz and Arkoff 1962; Hwang 1967; Singh, Huang, and Thompson 1962), less aggressive (Fenz and Arkoff 1962), less socially extroverted (Sue and Kirk 1972), more submissive (Fenz and Arkoff 1962), more conforming (Huang 1974; Sue and Kirk 1972; Tarwarter 1966), more subservient to authority (Huang 1974; Meade and Whittaker 1967; Singh et al. 1962), and more susceptible to the influence of powerful others (Lao 1977). All

these results consistently reflect the general Chinese predisposition to social orientation, in contrast to the general individualistic orientation of Americans.

The sharp contrast between these two national groups should be revealed in their responses to situations in which they are subjected to social demands from group pressure or power figures. For instance, in experimental situations that implied a demand for conformity to group pressure, it was found that more Chinese were either conformers or anticonformers, while more Americans were independent of the model's response (Chu 1979; Meade and Barnard 1973). Moreover, the Chinese tended to be more sensitive to the status or competence of the model (Chu 1979).

Another experiment indicated that, when Chinese subjects were asked to perform group tasks under an authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-faire leadership atmosphere, they showed a higher degree of cohesiveness of judgment under authoritarian leadership (Meade 1970).

Hiniker (1969) provided a more dramatic case. He tested 50 refugees who had escaped from mainland China in the late 1960s, conducted an experiment of forced compliance, and then measured all obvious modes of dissonance reduction. He found that, though the conditions for forced compliance had proved successful in creating cognitive dissonance, his subjects showed no attempt to reduce their dissonance.

This empirical evidence suggests that, instead of behaving in accordance with an objective standard, the socially oriented Chinese individual tends to behave either in accordance with, or in contradiction to, the social demands, depending on the perceived power structure of the external situation.

VI. FACE WORK: IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Since P's power and social status, as perceived by others, can guarantee some RA help, it becomes crucial for a Chinese to maintain *mianzi* (face) and do "face work" in front of others within the same social network. The so-called *mianzi* denotes an individual's social position or prestige, gained by successfully performing one or more specific social roles that are well recognized by others (Hu 1944). The concept "face work" actually means projection of self-image and impression management. The goal is to shape and instill in the minds of others a particular favorable image (Schlenker 1980; Schneider 1969, 1981; Tedeschi and Riess 1981).

Analogizing social behavior in everyday life to that of theater, Goffman's dramaturgical theory classifies social behavior into two broad categories: front-stage behavior and backstage behavior (Goffman 1955, 1959, 1967). Viewed from this theoretical framework, face work is basically a sort of front-stage behavior that is deliberately performed in front

of other people within the mixed tie. To complete the analogy, backstage behavior is one's authentic behavior, which can only be revealed to those of the same expressive tie.

What kind of image one intends to project and instill depends mainly on one's self-concept, one's role, one's reference group, and one's conjecture about what is highly valued, admired, and respected by the significant others sharing the social network (Alexander and Knight 1971; Alexander and Rudd 1981). Thus, an individual's *mianzi* is a function of perceived social position and prestige within one's social network. It might be derived from a socially ascribed status such as sex, physical appearance, family background, and so forth. It might also be derived from achieved status, which loosely can be divided into two categories: (*a*) status obtained via the personal qualities of knowledge, strength, ability, and so forth and (*b*) status obtained via the social or nonpersonal factors of wealth, authority, social connections, and so forth (Ho 1974).

It must be noted that, in Chinese society, an individual's social connections are important factors that are frequently taken into consideration by others in judging overall social status (Jacobs 1979). A society dominated by the *renqing* rule must be a relation-oriented society.

When it comes to estimating how much social power an individual wields or controls, we cannot rely solely on the yardstick of personal qualities or visible resources. We also must consider the social network to which that individual belongs. The larger (or smaller) one's social network is—and the more (or less) powerful the people connected with it are—the more (or less) impressive will be that individual's power image as perceived by others.

Just as actors create their front-stage performances with sets and props, there are many Chinese who intensively arrange their settings for interacting with others and deliberately style their appearance and manners to flaunt the symbols of power that signal wealth, knowledge, social status, beauty, and so forth. There are, too, those whose front-stage behavior directs our attention to, quite literally, sets and props: they exhibit their social connections by hanging in the living room paintings and Chinese calligraphy signed by famous artists; they wear an ornament, clearly given by some important person; they openly display any items that manifest close association with such people.

Within a social network, having *mianzi* enhances not only relative position but also many kinds of privileges that further improve the quality of life. This being so, saving *mianzi* rather than losing it becomes a primary objective in Chinese society.

A recent survey utilizing the introspective reports of Chinese subjects showed that, when one is subjectively suffering loss of *mianzi,* one's self-esteem is injured, resulting in emotional uneasiness. Thus, in addition to

maintaining *mianzi,* one must utilize every sort of face work to "earn face" (Chu 1983).

Knowing that *mianzi* is vital to others, if an individual cannot do something substantial to enhance *mianzi* for another within the social network, he is at least supposed to do something superficially to "render him *mianzi*" (Chiao 1981). Some common strategies of saving face for another include: avoiding criticizing anyone, especially superiors, in public; using circumlocution and equivocation in any criticism of another's performance; according greater social rewards to those skilled at preserving face for others. All these are frequently used by Chinese in managing a modern social organization (Silin 1976). Such behavior not only was seen among the older generation but was also manifested by Chinese college students in a carefully designed experimental situation (Bond and Lee 1981).

When P seeks help from a mixed-tie RA, and if, for whatever reason, RA does not give P *mianzi* (by refusing to help), P may suffer the uneasiness of losing *mianzi* and feel a serious loss of self-esteem. In the long run, this will certainly cause mutual disaffection. To prevent this disintegration, RA should do P a *renqing* in accordance with an old proverb: "Neither side will feel embarrassed to meet, if there is a string of *renqing* left."

If the request is granted, P will, of course, feel enhanced in social status and elevated in self-esteem. With face now honored and glorified, P has to appreciate and reciprocate the favor done by RA. In this way, it can be said that "all of them have their own *mianzi*" (Hu 1944).

Again, in a third possibility, RA may adopt the strategy of deferment, giving no definite answer to P. Sometimes the strategy of deferment may cause more serious problems, but in other cases it may be viewed as a good way to reject the demand under the guise of not hurting P's *mianzi* by outright refusal.

In sum, then, we may assert that doing face work is an important way of showing off one's power. Face work is also a method of manipulating the allocator's choices of allocating resources to one's benefit. Thus, doing face work is a power game frequently played by the Chinese people.

VII. SEEKING *GUANXI*

Figure 1 shows that the Chinese use different rules of social exchange to deal with people of different relationships. If a would-be P wishes to persuade a stranger to become an RA to the ultimate benefit of P, then P should first design some means to involve the potential RA in P's own social network, thereafter interacting with RA in the approved manner of the mixed tie.

The behavior of "establishing *guanxi*" or "seeking relations" in Chinese society basically involves "altercasting," the establishment of relationships with other people. Hence, interpersonal fatalism has been quite prevalent among Chinese, who frequently use the concept of *yuan* (natural affinity) for interpreting the establishment and quality of interpersonal relationship (K. S. Yang 1982). In this process, both sides in an ephemeral relationship may regard their meeting as a predestined occurrence that will lead to happy results and thus try to assimilate each other into their own social networks. If that mechanism is unavailable, P can play other tricks to attract the favor of the RA who has a valued resource at hand. P may use a third person, one familiar to both sides, to gain a proper introduction (Chiao 1982; Walder 1983). Once a given relationship is established, both sides can associate themselves with each other according to the preconditions of the *renqing* rule.

In view of the obligations of third parties to take revenge on someone who has not helped their associate, the Chinese have learned to "have a look at the Buddha's face before turning the monk's plea down." Once one agrees to the introduction, one usually has no alternative but to assume the RA role when petitioned, helping P in order to maintain other interpersonal relationships.

The introduction is merely the first step in constructing a mixed tie. If the potential P considers it to be worthwhile to improve the relationship with the potential RA, P can cement the relationship by presenting a gift to or holding a feast for RA (C. F. Yang 1982). These are the two most frequently used tactics for enhancing relationships.

According to the rule of *renqing,* if the potential RA accepts P's gift or feast, RA now has a reciprocal obligation. The quantity of *renqing* that is owed is proportional to the cost of the gift or the feast. If the potential RA accepts a very precious gift, it will be extremely difficult to refuse P's request in the future. By such means, P seeks a greater influence over RA to obtain some value controlled by him.

VIII. THE EVASION OF *RENQING*

In consideration of the foregoing, it becomes apparent that *renqing* is a nonobjective blend of cost and quality and relationship in which any one or two elements may be interpreted, by some people at certain times, as being more valuable than the other element(s). Hence, a *renqing* can never be calculated objectively, and, hence, an individual can never pay off all the debt of *renqing,* even when some reciprocal action has been taken. Therefore, most will agree that, whereas a cash debt is easily repaid, it is almost impossible to repay the debt of *renqing.* Thus, some will do their utmost to evade the entanglement of *renqing.*

This is especially true of wealthy and powerful people, with an abundance of political and material resources and a plethora of acquaintances. They are likely to fear that some new entanglement might be harmful to their own interest. There are several ways for them to evade the entanglement of *renqing*. The following methods can be regarded as cultural devices that have been developed to avoid unwanted entanglements of *renqing:*

a) In the rectangle, within the box indicating the psychological processes of the RA in figure 1, the expressive and the mixed ties are separated by a solid line, indicating that there is low permeability and interchangeability of the psychological boundary that separates these two groups of people. The mixed and the instrumental ties, however, are divided by a dashed line. This line, in practice, can be moved upward or downward depending on individual differences between specific protagonists. In other words, it can be expected that Chinese will vary in their attitudes toward *renqing*.

Those people who interact through a larger area of the mixed tie always lay much stress on the value of *renqing,* and they are apt to treat other people, even though slightly related to them, by the rule of *renqing*. On the contrary, those who interact within only a small area of the mixed tie just as surely belittle the value of *renqing* and tend to treat their friends by the rule of equity, regardless of the intimacy of their relationship. The attitude assumed in regard to the concept of *renqing* can be deemed a part of one's personality, having been formed and internalized during the long-term process of socialization during and after childhood.

Chinese communities all over the world have developed subcultures that can be differentiated by their conceptions of the rule of *renqing* versus equity. Members of these communities are likely to express their particular attitude in dealing with other people. A person who grows up in a relation-oriented subculture is comparatively more respectful of the *renqing* rule. In any decision, an interpersonal relationship will be granted more consideration than the extrinsic matter itself. Those who are socialized in a subculture emphasizing the value of equity, however, tend to ignore the concept of *renqing,* preferring to adhere to the universal rule of equity rather than considering the interpersonal tie when handling their affairs.

That these hypotheses are plausible is suggested by more than one research paper on traditional versus modern Chinese attitude formation and transformation. It is generally agreed that an important component of the traditional Chinese attitude is the close connection to the national character of social orientation whereas the modern attitude implies a more individual orientation (Hwang and Yang 1972; Yang 1981).

A series of empirical studies has shown that various experiences—of

life in urban areas (Yang 1976; Yang and Wen 1976; Yang 1981), of formal education (Podmore and Chaney 1974), of modern exposure to mass media (Dawson and Ng 1972)—are associated with modern Chinese attitudes. Also, there was a further positive correlation with a need for autonomy (Hchu 1971; Hchu and Yang 1972), self-oriented achievement motivation (Yang and Liang 1973), and extrapunitive reaction to frustration (Yang 1974).

Further support is demonstrated by a negative correlation with social interest (Hchu 1971; Yang and Hchu 1974), social desirability (Hwang and Yang 1972), need for deference and abasement (Hchu and Yang 1972), authoritarianism (Yang 1976; Yang and Hchu 1974), collectivistic value orientation (Yang and Chang 1977), and intropunitive reaction to frustration (Yang 1974).

There are also the more revealing findings of experimental studies designed to investigate the effects of attitude modernization on Chinese reactions to social situations. One study required each female subject to do a word-recognition task in front of a tachistoscope, with a progressive prolongation of exposure time, before a male experimenter. It was found that subjects with higher modern-attitude scores needed a shorter time to recognize correctly the sex-related words displayed one at a time, implying a weaker tendency to suppress the responses that were assumed to be socially embarrassing (Hwang and Yang 1972).

A second experiment required the subject to perform a simple, tedious, and repetitious task—picking up chess pieces one by one, putting them into a box, and pouring them out—for 20 minutes. The subject was then requested to evaluate the experiment as a whole. Results showed that the more modernized student gave lower ratings to the experimental procedure as a test of motor skill, to the scientific significance of the report based on the results obtained in the experiment, and to the degree of willingness to come back to serve as a subject in another experiment of a similar nature (Hwang and Yang 1972).

In yet another study, Chinese college students with higher scores in modern attitudes showed a weaker tendency to seek others' opinions before they made decisions about such important personal matters as participation in extracurricular activities, selection of courses, choice of marriage mate, and expression of opinions in public (Hwang and Yang 1972).

All these studies suggest that internalizing the modern attitude of individualism results in acting on one's own terms, with less concern for the social evaluations of others—and, henceforth, in probable exemption from the dilemma of *renqing* and *mianzi*.

b) Another way to evade the entanglement of *renqing* is to set up and enforce clear-cut rules of social interaction, which are presumed to be

equitable, with a group that is composed of members having various kinds of interpersonal ties. An example of this is the adoption of modern management rules in Chinese business organizations.

Let us note first, however, that it is still true (in 1985) that the most typical business organization found in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and southeast Asia is the family business, in which the owner can manage the firm quite arbitrarily (Hwang 1983; Redding 1983; Silin 1976). As the primary decision maker, the owner generally mistrusts people outside the family and thus tends to assign family or extended-family members to key positions within the organization.

Because job descriptions and organizational charts are virtually unknown in these firms, the rights, authority, and responsibilities of employees are often left unspecified and therefore ambiguous. Employee performance is evaluated on a subjective basis rather than by any objective standard, and everyone is expected to follow the owner's instructions with little or no questioning.

In contrast to the family business, there are now many Chinese business organizations that have adopted Western management procedures, including clear-cut rules for both management and employee functions and the enforcement thereof; delegation of both responsibility and authority; development of long-term and formal planning; job descriptions that specify each employee's responsibility for a given domain of work; evaluation of performance in accordance with standards evolved from the foregoing; and, finally, stipulated rewards or punishments derived from that evaluation.

Compared with this type of organization, the family-business owner theoretically should have much wider latitude to interact arbitrarily with employees in accordance with the *renqing* rule. Empirical research I have done (1983) has proved this to be true. I systematically considered clarity of regulations, reasonableness of regulations, fairness of incentive systems, interpersonal harmony, interpersonal communication, group identity, openness of atmosphere, delegation of authority, sense of responsibility, and aggressiveness in initiating tasks. Taking these as indicators, I compared organizational characteristics in three types of enterprises in Taiwan: foreign-invested private enterprise, family enterprise, and local private enterprise with formal rules of management.

The results showed that the organizational characteristics of foreign-invested enterprises and those of local private enterprises with formal rules of management display no significant differences; both are more functionally objective than family businesses. In other words, adopting clear-cut rules of management usually enables managers to interact with subordinates in accordance with the equity rule, and the organizational

climate may thus be perceived as more open and fair than that of family businesses in which the *renqing* rule prevails.

c) For an individual strongly conditioned by the rule of *renqing* who wishes to evade its entanglements, one way to do so is to leave the interpersonal network of the mixed tie. One may go to an unfamiliar community, establish instrumental ties with people there, and interact with them in accordance with the equity rule. For instance, when a merchant leaves his native place to earn a living in a distant town or a civil servant is dispatched to serve in another province, it is expected that he may get rid of the troubles of *renqing*. The merchant who is doing business in a strange community may drive hard bargains with customers in order to maximize profits. By the same token, the traditional strategy of placing a civil servant in a strange location may enable that official to carry out orders unfettered by personal considerations and thus to execute the government's policy more thoroughly. Of course, a cruel official may oppress and extort goods from people and a corrupt official may take advantage of the situation to secure personal profit.

d) Psychological compartmentalization is yet a fourth way frequently employed by Chinese people to evade the entanglement of *renqing*. In this case, the application of the *renqing* rule is restricted to particular domains of life. In dealing with events in one domain of life, they may insist on the adoption of the equity rule; in dealing with those in another domain, they may undertake social interaction according to the rule of *renqing*.

Some, when they employ this means, abide strictly by the following principles: to insist on the equity rule if they have only the right to distribute the resource in question and to follow the *renqing* rule if they actually have ownership of the resource. For example, a civil servant may resort to the authority of law and emphasize the distinction between private and public affairs while on government duty; but in personal business affairs he may favor the rule of *renqing,* still considering the maintenance of harmonious interpersonal relationships to be important. In this way, one can partially free oneself from the dilemma of *renqing.*

IX. CONCLUSION

The discussion above suggests that we must pay attention to both cultural universals and culturally specific patterns of social interaction. As others have noted, there is a universal continuum of socially expected behavior, ranging from an extreme emphasis on universalistic equity to an emphasis on the special needs of significant others. On this continuum, the industrial West tends to emphasize isolated individuals socialized to make rational decisions on the basis of self-interest in most exchange situations. This cultural emphasis underlies much of the very elaborate Western

social science research on equity rules (e.g., Greenberg and Cohen 1982; Messick and Cook 1983; Walster, Walster, and Berscheid 1978).

My work on Chinese society—and the work of others on similar societies, such as Japan—suggests that some of the patterns found in modern Western social science research will not work in all settings. In these other settings, the rules of social interaction differ on a number of dimensions. First, norms of *bao* are, if anything, more intense. At first glance, this might suggest that these other societies place even more emphasis on norms of equity than does the West. Second, the crucial difference is that these norms of reciprocity are much more socially situated than they are in the Western context. This reciprocity is not one of universalistic exchange between autonomous actors but one of socially situated obligations. In the Chinese context, this involves an enriched notion of equality, termed *renqing*. In the playing out of *renqing,* obligations of reciprocity are heavily shaped by the hierarchically structured network of *guanxi* in which one is involved, by the long time period over which these relations are expected to last, and by the public nature of the obligations incurred in continuing exchanges. Finally, these obligations are always being negotiated through face work (i.e., enhancing, losing, and saving face) and the kinds of accepted and rejected pleas that enhance and weaken social relations. There is a self-conscious element to this negotiation that seems stronger than that in the West.

What are the sources of these differences, and why have they persisted in such a wide variety of Chinese social contexts? Surely, part of the answer is cultural. Through historical accident coupled with manipulation by political and cultural elites, in ways that we cannot now unravel, the Chinese have developed an elaborate vocabulary for thinking about interpersonal obligations and how they can be won or lost. My essay has only begun to illustrate the richness and subtle twists of that vocabulary.

The other part of the answer is structural. Historically and, to an extent, even in modern contexts, many Chinese have lived in encapsulated communities that are hierarchically organized, with major economic and other resources controlled by a few power figures who could arbitrarily allocate resources. In these settings, it has been imperative to be sensitive to one's social position and to the kinds of resources that one could elicit and be forced to give up through obligations incurred over long periods of time.

Variants of this structure persist today, with many important social resources continuing to flow through densely structured social hierarchies. In the non-Communist Republic of China on Taiwan, the continuing top-down flow of resources and decision making encourages particularistic ties of *guanxi*. An illustration of the phenomenon is the way in which votes are mobilized in rural elections (Jacobs 1979).

Until recently there has been even more of a top-down flow of resources in the Communist People's Republic on the mainland of China. One result, argue Butterfield (1982) and Walder (1983), is the widespread use of strategies of "going through the back door" and "pulling" and "working" connections (*la guanxi* and *gao guanxi,* respectively) to solicit favors from organizational authorities controlling scarce resources. Thus, the same vocabulary and behavior are used to respond to similar structural situations, wherever they appear.

Will these practices fade in Chinese social settings, just as they have faded in the West? Perhaps. Many forces would seem to be working in this direction. First, with increasing education and mass communications exposure, both heavily influenced by the West, people have begun to adopt more Western, individualistic standards as an intuitive guide and a source of motivation in daily life. Second, with an increasing intrusion of the market, which provides resources freer of top-down control, people relate more to strangers on simpler instrumental/equity grounds. Third, with the spread of universalistic norms adopted to increase the efficiency of large organizations, particularly those forced to make a profit in the private sector, people may again relate more to others on instrumental/equity grounds rather than on the basis of previous social interactions, face and *renqing*.

This pattern of change is uneven, however, with much variation from place to place and many pockets that are resistant to change. The vocabulary and thought patterns remain even when other aspects have shifted. We would do well, then, not to use simple universalistic rules of personal interaction but to include more of the context of interpersonal obligations and how they are played out in daily life.

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