

“GONG DE” TAIWAN IN MEXICO: CULTURAL ENCOUNTER IN AN ASIAN
OPERATED MAQUILADORA

A Dissertation

by

HAO-YU CHO

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Chair of Committee,	Norbert Dannhaeuser
Committee Members,	Cynthia Werner
	Travis Du Bry
	Nancy Plankey-Videla
Head of Department,	Cynthia Werner

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ABSTRACT

Seeking cheap and submissive labor is a trend for transnational enterprises in the globalization era. As a robust economic body, Taiwan-based multinational enterprises follow the pattern and rearrange its business globally. When the transnational enterprises relocate in another country, only a few managerial personnel will transfer to the new locale. For employees in the host country, these foreigners' decisions and organizational strategies decide their working condition and well-being. It is hard to deny that foreigners in these locales hold strategic positions in the host country. However, scholarly discussions of global factory tend to focus on the interaction between the global capital and the local culture. The studies mainly focus on how global capital shapes or manipulates the local culture to satisfy their purposes. Only a few briefly discuss the effects of managers' background.

This dissertation tries to fulfill the hole in the literature and discuss how work ethic and cultural values that are carried by foreign managerial personnel affect the daily operation of a maquiladora on the US-Mexico border city—Tijuana. The maquiladora I studied is owned and operated by a Taiwanese manager with several Chinese engineers. I examine their interaction with other Mexican employees and explore the reasons behind their behaviors and decision-making processes. Taiwanese manager follows the work ethic that he developed from previous working experience in Asia and directs the operation in Mexico accordingly. However, even in a power-unevenly-distributed environment such as a maquiladora, the Taiwanese manager still needs to negotiate with

local employees. By delineating how the cultural that brought by the representatives of the multinational enterprise affect the operation and work arrangement, I try to emphasize that the importance of cultural values carried by these representatives should be treated more seriously in the studies of global production.

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GLOSSARY

People's Name and Titles

Jackie Chan	General Manager (GM)
Escobar	VP
Ying Shan	Special Assistant of GM
Lopez	Head of the Internet Technology (IT) Department
Pablo	Head of the Human Resource (HR) Department
Carlos	Head of the Electrical engineering (EE) Department
Vino	Head of the Industrial Engineering (IE) Department
Venustiano	Head of the Quality Control (QC) Department
Shoudai	Head of the Logistic Department
Roberto	New Head of the Human Resource (HR) Department
Jose	Research Department (RD) Manager
Gustavo	Production Manager
Rodriguez	Experienced Repair Technician
Enrique	Line Leader
Monlina	QC Inspector
Luna	Line Worker
Mateo	Repair Technician

Bella	RD Engineer
Luisa	Line worker
Lucy	Line Leader
Fang	Chinese QC manager (A support team member)
Gin Quan	Chinese Support Team Member
Chiung Mang	Chinese Support Team Member

Companies' Abbreviation

OT	Outstanding Technology
CMSC	Clever Monitor& Screen Company

Other Glossary

BIP	Border Industrialization Program
Gong De	功德 merit
Fu De	福德 blessing
Guanxi	關係 relation

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Soon after the United States government ended the Bracero Program¹, the Mexican government implemented the Border Industrialization Program (BIP) since it expected the returning Bracero workers might become an unemployed labor force in border cities. At first, BIP was meant by the Mexican government to solve the unemployment problem and then it became one of the most important ways to boost its domestic market. Based on the fact that the Mexico-U.S. border area has its unique geo-economic advantages, BIP attracts foreign enterprises to relocate production bases (maquiladoras) during the trend toward global production. From then on, maquiladoras became the mainstream mode of production in Mexico to create revenue rapidly and to industrialize. Mexico is one of the most successful countries to benefit from programs like BIP.

Since it is already more than a half of a century after the BIP implementation, the global economy has experienced several cycles that affect all nations. During this half of a century, transnational enterprises have been like nomadic tribes, pursuing cheap, docile labor and other advantages around the globe to improve their abilities to compete in the increasingly competitive global market. In this context, although the Border Industrialization Program remains significant for Mexico's revenue, the

¹ Bracero Program was initiated on August fourth, 1942 and terminated in 1964. The purpose of Bracero Program was to fill the labor shortage in agriculture industry. It provided many Mexican workers jobs and work visa to work in the US.

participants are changing. Except for enterprises from the United States, transnational enterprises from Japan, Korea, Europe and recently from Taiwan and China have joined the list during the past fifty years. The newest players who have enter the game are those enterprises which are based in either Taiwan or China. Transnational enterprises from these countries affect how residents and workers experience capitalism in their life. On the one hand, regardless of the background of these multinational enterprises, while they pursue profits from BIP, they also contribute to Mexico's economic development. On the other, each enterprise from a different cultural background might affect the local community and people differently.

Soon after BIP implementation, researchers from different disciplines have studied maquiladoras and accumulated a large amount of literature to understand this export-oriented mode of production and its impacts toward Mexican society. Some researchers take the macro perspective to discuss the effect of industrialization on Mexico's economy and its border cities (Collins, 2009; Feenstra and Hanson, 1997; Fullerton 2001; Kopinak, 1997; Thomas, and Schauer, 2001). Others examine the impact on the workers and residents (Cravey, 1998; Lee, 1998; Wilson, 2002). Feminists focus on the feminized labor force that is hired by maquiladoras. They explore the impact of the local culture and society of women taking wage work, and how the wage work affects women's status, social and cultural positions in their community (Bandy and Mendez, 2003; Fernández-Kelly, 1983; Fussell, 2000; Sklair, 2012; Wright, 1997). Moreover, some researchers focus on the labor process, labor control and how workers respond and resist to this control (Munoz, 2016; Ong, 2010; Plankey-Videla, 2012;

Salzinger, 2003; Tiano, 1994). Researchers are aware that cultural values are important when discussing the labor process and labor control inside maquiladoras and the shop floor. However, when talking about cultural values, most researchers concentrate on the interaction between global capital and local cultures, while cultural values and working ethic which are carried by agents of global capital are rarely studied. In this dissertation, I argue that cultural values and working ethic that was brought by the agents of global enterprises should be given a proper place to enhance our understanding of the labor process inside maquiladoras.

The reason I want to emphasize cultural values of the agents of transnational enterprises is that a production base like a maquiladora is a place that power is unevenly distributed among different cultural groups. In a place like this, the cultural background of foreigners is at least as important as that of host society's since most foreigners in a maquiladora occupy managerial positions, and decide the daily operation in the shop floor. As Acker argues, workplaces are not neutral but gendered (Acker, 1990). That is to say, all workplaces have some arrangements related to gender. Maquiladoras are not only gendered workplaces but also cultured ones since each transnational enterprise owns and operates its maquiladoras differently. In the business forms, particular production arrangements, economic rationale, and cultural values, one can observe these cultural variations. Each of these factors should be weighted equally while we try to understand the labor process inside a maquiladora. When we try to understand the difference between maquiladoras, cultural factors should be the one that required more attention to evaluate because the long term overlooked.

To maximize profits and to increase competitiveness is the primary reason for most transnational enterprises to relocate production bases to foreign locations.

However, each enterprise adopts different strategies and methods to serve the same purpose. To understand the reasons behind these different arrangements and decisions, cultural factors should not be absent from consideration, especially those carried by the foreign agents because these foreign agents tend to be the key personnel who determine the daily operation of maquiladoras.

1. Maquiladora—A Cultured Workplace

When a transnational enterprise relocates production around the world, the company usually will adapt the original organization to the new production site. The typical scenario is that except the human resources manager, the most important positions will be occupied by agents from headquarters. These agents from headquarter are not only in charge of communication and supervise the production for headquarter, but they are also responsible for making most decisions for the factories they are managing. Therefore, the cultural values they bring penetrate into local workers' everyday life at least from two aspects. One is the organizational structure; cultural values usually embedded in the most organizational structures might serve for specific goals or purposes that are guided by these cultural values. Second, the work ethic that is introduced by the representative of transnational enterprise might affect the daily

operation of maquiladoras. In other words, when a transnational enterprise relocates production to another country, it automatically brings the cultural values and work ethic it follows to the new locale. Since each transnational enterprise has its cultural background (McKay, 2006) and follows different working ethics to guide its own operation, overlooking such cultural factors inside a maquiladora might limit our understanding of labor process and labor control.

By definition, maquiladora is a place that people with different cultural backgrounds interact with each other on a daily basis. In this environment, it is hard to overlook how cultural encounter will create effects on both groups of people and how different cultural values affect social relation inside a maquiladora. While workers work in a maquiladora, they also experience a foreign culture at the same time. For maquiladora workers, global capitalists never are homogenized “los jefes (bosses);” each maquiladora is a different cultured place. In other words, they experience the capitalistic mode of production in and through a cultured place. Once we recognize that maquiladora is a cultured workplace, it is realized that all workers are immersed in a workplace that is structured and deeply affected by foreign cultural values. How does this cultural workplace affect our understanding of maquiladoras’ operation is the first question I want to address in this dissertation.

The next question is how the cultural values originally shape the workplace that does not belong to the indigenous cultural group. To be clear, the cultural values that I refer to in here are not those deeply rooted in a cultural group as a tradition or long history such as Confucianism for Han people or the Protestant ethic for those who

created capitalism (Weber, 2013). The cultural values I focus on in this dissertation refer to those work-related tendencies or habits that managers developed and created through their previous working experiences. Representatives from transnational enterprises who manage maquiladora in Mexico most likely are those people who already have a long working experience and climbed to the high positions in their homelands. It is likely that these representatives will try to copy their previous success to conduct similar tasks in a foreign country. Moreover, since most of them tend to have the power to make important decisions for the maquiladora that they manage, it is highly likely they will follow previous experience to conduct their tasks in foreign countries.

To be clear, I do not want to define cultural values or working ethic as something that is deeply rooted in the specific cultural background. It is also not a thing with essence. The cultural values and working ethic that is referred in this dissertation are instead to be defined as working experience or work ethic which developed from a group of people in a unique work culture. This particular circumstance might include the trajectory of economic development, legal regulation in a country, institutional structures and other related features. In fact, the cultural values that are discussed here are the outcomes of a long-term competition in a locale. Companies that compete in and survive in similar environment tend to develop similar strategies and work ethic. Even after they expand the scale and become substantial transnational enterprises, these values and work ethic still could be seen in their managerial practices and orientation.

My fieldwork that shows, the Taiwanese general manager or his assistant from China are neither familiar with any concept that are presented in the maquiladora

studies, nor understand the so-called Mexican culture correctly. Consequently, their daily interactions with local people heavily rely on their original habits which created from their previous working experience both in Taiwan and China. The ideal work regulation, how a factory should operate are mainly based on their understanding learned from their previous working experience.

2. “Gong De²” Taiwan in Mexico

Scholarly works in topics such as globalization, capitalism, export-oriented manufactories, or the working condition in the Global South are already aware that while scholars use the term culture, it refers mostly to the behavior that is part of cultural activities indigenous of a local community. Researchers are fully aware that culture, significantly affects the way that people respond to the external change and their economic activities. While most scholarly studies follow this path to discuss culture-related issues, the cultural factors from the external side, from the foreign investor and manager in the case I discuss in this dissertation, of that a personnel associated with introduce enterprise have been neglected for a long while.

This is also true for maquiladora studies. For some unknown reasons; most researchers have not paid much attention to introduced cultural factors from the foreign capitals' side. The interesting thing is most researchers admit that introduced cultural

² See Chapter III.

factors are important and possibly create significant impact in many aspects, but they have not seriously analyzed them.

Once the cultural values and work ethic of employers of the maquiladora are focus on, one will be able to see how their cultural logic can affect the daily operation and local workers' experience of work in a maquiladora. Therefore, I argue that if we add the cultural features from employer's side into the picture, we will get a more clear understanding of the entire scene.

In this dissertation, I will use a Taiwanese operated maquiladora as an example to illustrate how the Taiwanese work ethic which developed from 1970s-80s affected the managerial strategies and Mexican workers' experience of work in Tijuana, Mexico. Taiwanese people experienced an economic boom starting in the early 1970s during which they encountered the capitalistic mode of production through the putting-out production system and a unique wage-calculated method. Taiwanese people developed the "Pure Labor" work ethic (which was so named by sociologist G.S. Shieh) through daily work. Even until now, some features of the "Pure Labor" work ethic still can be recognized in recent discourse that appeared in Taiwan and this has been called "Gong De Taiwan". In this dissertation, I will first describe how this "Pure Labor" work ethic emerged from a particular context which existed in Taiwan, and how this "Pure Labor" work ethic affected the way that the Taiwanese general manager and Chinese managers of this maquiladora I studied, Clever Monitor & Screen Company (CMSC), operated.

I argue that when the Taiwanese general manager manages CMSC, the experience he uses to make decisions and the managerial philosophy that he adopts to manage the

maquiladora I studied can be traced back to his previous work experience in Taiwan and China. As he is the boss of Mexican employees who work for CMSC, the general manager's idea of work and management deeply affect the way that Mexican employees experience this foreign enterprise.

3. Modern Nomadic Folks

Another issue addressed in this dissertation is the temp work. Temporary workers are hired by temp agencies but work in maquiladoras. After the Mexican government reformed its labor law in 2014, it granted more flexibility to employers to hire and fire employees with less compensation. Many temp agencies appeared after the parliament passed the Labor Reform Act in 2014. These companies significantly changed the local labor market for maquiladoras in Tijuana. In the past, maquiladoras needed to hire a sufficient number of employees to match the productivity requirement during the busy season. But after the busy season ended, most workers would have not enough work. From an employer's point of view, these idle workers were an extra expenditure. Before 2014, there were more restrictions on firing employees. Therefore, most maquiladoras tended to use other strategies to "adjust" their labor force without extra costs such as to make workers need to take a long rest after tiresome and intensive work for a period of times. Now, under the new labor law, maquiladoras managers no longer need to worry about this problem since they can avoid firing any of their original employees by hiring temporary workers during the busy season. Because temp agencies actually employ the

temporary workers, maquiladoras are only the host for them to work at, while temp agencies responsible for all temporary workers' salary, benefits, and other work-related compensation. In this context, maquiladoras no longer require to compensate any workers they send away once they no longer need their services after the busy season. The new phenomenon of adopting temporary workers to adjust labor demand in maquiladoras has not been in previous conducted under a different labor regime. Hence, this study provides insight into how this new labor policy is impacting maquiladoras and their workers.

The fast-growing outsourcing industry has significantly changes the local labor market through the employment relationship for both employer and employee, a matter this dissertation will address. On the one hand, the temp agencies relieve the effort for most human resource managers and staff to be exposed to hire the hot summer or cold winter while walking the streets to hire workers to work. Now, these traditional HR tasks are conducted by temp agencies. Meanwhile, for workers, in the past, they needed to knock on the door by door to find a position in a maquiladora. Now, all they need to do is go to temp agencies and ask for jobs. In other words, the existence of temp agencies makes the hiring process more convenient for both employers and employees.

Furthermore, temporary workers also provide a new method for maquiladora managers to conduct labor control policies easily. In the past, maquiladora managers needed to maintain shop floor order and keep their employees under control. Some maquiladoras used several different strategies, such as adopting patriarchal ideology and rhetoric to manipulate the employment relationship and the interaction between male

line leaders or managers and female workers (Plankey-Videla, 2012; Tiano, 1994). Other maquiladoras used sexual harassment or other gendered strategies to discipline and control their employees (Salzinger, 2003; Sklair, 2012). These labor control strategies have been used to control maquiladora workers for a long period of time. Even today, it is not difficult to see similar strategies applied in maquiladoras. However, maquiladora managers find it is easier to control workers and keep the shop floor in order by hiring temporary workers to conduct the same tasks as other maquiladora's employees. Because now maquiladora managers can send away the unwanted workers to another maquiladora without any compensation or extra cost, temporary workers become a means for maquiladora managers to control the shop floor more efficiently.

Temp agencies and temporary workers change both local labor market and maquiladoras' labor control strategies. In this study, I will indicate that hiring temporary workers to fill the most production spots during busy seasons has its cultural elements behind this managerial decision. The reason for CMSC to hire many temporary workers is based on the Taiwanese style of management that emphasizes “Pure Labor” which can be satisfied by hiring temporary workers.

4. Chapter Overview

In chapter II, I discuss the general methodological questions of this dissertation. For example, how did I enter the field site? As many researchers mentioned in their studies, it is not easy to enter a workplace and conduct fieldwork along-side with

workers. Researchers need to get approval from gatekeepers to allow them to conduct survey inside factories. In chapter II, I will briefly discuss why I was accepted to conduct my fieldwork in Clever Monitor & Screen Company (CMSC), the company I studied in Tijuana. I suggest that the shared nationality between the general manager of CMSC and me might be the key for me to enter the fieldwork site. In this chapter, I first introduced the gatekeeper of this study, and then, I briefly described a day in CMSC to provide a scene of daily routine inside this Taiwanese maquiladora in Tijuana. I provide details of my entrance to the fieldwork site, how I started my fieldwork and a day inside CMSC. I give as much detail as possible in order to build an image of how an Asian researcher takes part in an Asian maquiladora in Tijuana. Since I look physically similar to the high ranking managers inside CMSC, but my daily schedule was actually with workers. This arrangement makes my actual identity was for a period of time not clear to the Taiwanese, Chinese and Mexican managers, as well as to Mexican workers. Moreover, Outstanding technology, the mother corporation of CMSC, is originated from Taiwan but now the biggest stockholder is Chinese enterprise. This makes the citizenship (Taiwanese vs. Chinese) an important factor for the corporation to make its business plans and directly affect the composition of foreign representatives of headquarter in CMSC. Therefore, in the second half of Chapter II, I will discuss how nationality becomes a concern for a researcher from Taiwan conducting a study in a factory that is operated by a Taiwanese and Chinese joined enterprise.

Then here, I consider how the political and historical relationship between Taiwan and China affects the operation of a maquiladora in Mexico. This is important since it

will address how the general manager of CMSC used this ambiguous relationship to manipulate his contacts with agents of both governments and benefited from them. Finally at the end of this chapter, I will turn to the explicit methodologies that I used during the fieldwork time and the descriptive information about this study. Participant observation, open-ended, semi-structured interviews were the main methods used during the nine months of my stayed in CMSC. I interviewed 79 people including the Taiwanese general manager, Chinese support team members and manager, all Mexican managers, some engineers, CMSC's workers and temporary workers.

In chapter III, I discuss how the cultural factors that managers carry with them to Mexico affects the operation of CMSC. The cultural factors I refer in here are involved work-related features such as work ethic and behaviors. From the booming economic era of 1970s, Taiwanese people experienced capitalistic mode of production through factories and related contract/ sub-contracted work system which also be known as putting-out system. When factories could not catch up the quantity of production, they would sub-contract some portions of production quantity to subcontractors to match the need. Subcontractors received works and their "salary" from these factories. Subcontractors' "salaries" were calculated by piece work. Subcontractors were not official employees of their contractors; they arranged their productivity and labor by their own wills; therefore, these subcontractors tended to consider themselves as "bosses". But meanwhile, these "bosses" are the primary labor force to finish the amount of work they receive from contractors (Shieh, 1992).

Under such arrangement, Taiwanese people develop a unique work ethic which sociologist G.S. Shieh names it as ““Pure Labor”.” This refers to a blurred boundary between labor and labor force, and both labor and labor force can be purchased or exchange via money. More importantly, “Pure Labor” also contains the idea that “Do more, get more; do none, get zero.” Following this idea, Taiwanese people pay less attention to reasonable working hours. Even though the putting-out system no longer popular and does not applies to most workers nowadays in Taiwan, but the work ethics which developed from that era remain important. The speech given by the premier of Executive Yuan of Taiwan in 2017 which has been called as “Gong De Taiwan” can be seen as a new version of work ethic that is similar to “Pure Labor.”

After I elaborated the Taiwanese work ethic, I would illustrate how the general manager’s philosophy corresponds with this work ethic and how his management style shows his cultural root in the second part of chapter III.

In chapter IV, I will discuss how Mexican workers experience this regime that is guided by the Taiwanese work ethic. Before the Taiwanese corporation purchased all the facilities and established CMSC, another Japanese transnational enterprise operated the same maquiladora. Many senior workers and managers have worked for both companies in the same factory. Considering the high turnover rate and the recent popularity of temporary workers in Tijuana, even those workers who newly start their career in CMSC have had some experience in working for other maquiladoras. Based on their testimonies, I will discuss the way they experience the capitalistic mode of production and globalization and show that it is not a homogenous experience. It turns out that this

variation is based upon the cultural difference of employers. This chapter uses data collected from interviews of workers and tries to reconstruct their experience of working for a Taiwanese/Chinese enterprise. Despite both Mexican workers and managers tend to conduct similar tasks before and after the Taiwanese enterprise purchased the maquiladora of the Japanese company in 2009, and the space arrangement of production area remained the same, both workers and managers have this highly instrumentalized feeling because the decreased work autonomy, lacked of respect, and longer working hour when they started working for Taiwanese enterprise.

Also in chapter IV, I will discuss the impact that created by the temp agencies and temporary workers. After the Mexican government passed the labor reform act in 2014, outsourcing industry starts booming in Tijuana. Now, temp agencies become the primary brokers to send workers into maquiladoras. The appearance of temp agencies changes the local labor market and the hiring procedure. For both workers and maquiladora managers, temp agencies save both sides times to find each other. Moreover, because there is almost no cost to send a “problematic” or “unwanted” temporary worker to another factory, this revolving door significantly saves maquiladoras times and energy to deal with workers they don’t like. On the contrary, for workers, being an temporary worker almost equally to mean they have no ability to act collectively and have no rights to change the working condition they don’t like but endure it. In this regard, the booming outsourcing business further undermines the-already-weak collective bargaining power that maquiladora workers have.

In this context, I suggest that the theoretical meaning of the booming outsourcing business lies in the place among its impact toward the management and labor-control strategies. Outsourcing works constructs a regime that makes the labor-control process, even more, individualize and more invisible. Plus, the outsourcing work itself already decreases the social connection between workers due to the unstable, short-term, project-oriented work relationship. This provides a faster and more convenient way for maquiladora managers to control the labor force in their shop floors. Although temporary workers and the outsourcing industry are a relatively new phenomenon for the maquiladora studies, it is necessary to point out that not every maquiladora has adopted the same strategy and weights temporary workers in the same way. I suggest that the cultural values such as “Pure Labor” work ethic, in this case, plays an essential role to determine what percentages of labor demand will be filled by temporary workers.

Now, let me knock on the door of CMSC and start my fieldwork journey.

CHAPTER II
STEP THROUGH THE GATE
“THE AMBIGUOUS ENTRANCE”

Difficulties gaining entrance to a workplace is common for anthropologists and sociologists who conduct their fieldwork and research in such areas. A factory is a capitalist shrine, and not everyone is permitted entrance. To gain access, researchers must obtain approval from the gatekeeper. After writing long, sincere letters introducing themselves, describing their research intention and purposes, and highlighting the potential benefits to the company, those seeking to study what happens inside a factory’s gate usually find themselves involved in a series of evaluations and background checks. During these evaluations, a researcher’s background (such as their nationality, political identity, education, and other personal features) can be seen as advantages or disadvantages, and thus serve as the grounds for granting or denying access. For anthropologists, fieldwork is full of uncertainty. If lucky, they eventually gain access.

This chapter discloses how my social background impacted this study. I first describe the process by which I gained access to CMSC. Then, I briefly introduce basic information about my fieldwork site: The Clever Monitor and Screen Company (CMSC). Next, I discuss why nationality matters in this research. It is nationality that allowed me the privilege of entering the factory and on several occasions changing my job therein. With each position, I enjoyed new opportunities to approach people. I also

discuss how the Mexican employees interacted with me according to my position and nationality, and the assumptions these generated. After providing basic information about my fieldwork site, I describe the methods I employed while conducting my fieldwork.

1. The Gatekeeper and the Entrance

1.1. The Gatekeeper

Since I am interested in the issue of cultural encounters in social spaces in which power is unevenly distributed, a factory was an ideal place for me to conduct my research. I began to look for a fieldwork site in 2015. In the beginning, I contacted Oficina Económica y Cultural de Taipei en México (OECTM), which is the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Mexico. From them, I hoped to obtain basic information such as where Taiwanese owned and operated factories were located in Mexico, and what kinds of businesses they were. Most importantly, I hoped to access contact information for such factories, since the OECTM is an embassy-like institution that the Taiwanese government operates in Mexico. As such, I expected them to have the information that I needed. I wrote to them, hopeful that they would provide me with some useful information.

A couple of days later, an agent from OECTM told me:

“Due to security reasons, most Taiwanese companies refuse to provide their basic contact information to anyone. Even though we do have a list, we are not authorized to provide you with any information, even a list of company names. However, you could contact the business association. We have two names and their contact information. They are leaders of local business associations. You may want to contact them first. Good luck, and we wish you all the best.”

So, I received two names and email addresses from the OECTM. It turned out that the two companies were located in border cities. One was in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and another was in Tijuana, Baja California. Since these were the only sources I had, I contacted them immediately. Luckily, they both replied to my email in a very short period of time, and indicated that they would like to know more about me and my project. Most importantly, they promised me that they would help me as much as they could. I then wrote an additional email with more detail about my research project and myself. I received one reply and at the time of writing, I'm still waiting for the other.

Jackie Chan, a pseudonym for the gatekeeper and Taiwanese general manager referenced in this research, was the individual with whom I came in contact. He was the leader of a Taiwanese business association and general manager of CMSC, my future fieldwork site in Tijuana, Mexico. I explained to him my research project and intention to work in a Taiwanese owned and operated factory for my dissertation fieldwork. At first, I did not expect that he would permit me to conduct my research at his plant.

However, I did provide him with a short summary of my proposal in Mandarin, as well as an English version of the complete proposal. I hoped he would introduce me to some Taiwanese business owners or managers. Surprisingly, he simply replied: "Sure, we can talk about what you want to do after you arrive in Tijuana." He then forwarded my emails to the Human Resources (HR) manager of his company, without a word of comment or concern about my proposal.

He was very kind and patient, answering all of my questions about a work visa, living costs, and other important topics. He also generously provided me with a room in the company-owned dormitory for housing, which helped me to save a significant amount of my limited research funding. The company dormitories were rented to guest engineers from China. This provided me with the opportunity to closely observe the Chinese engineers who came from China to Tijuana to support either a special project or just assist with daily production. At the time I learned I could stay in the company dormitory, I was not yet aware that I would live with other Chinese engineers. I was still not sure that the gatekeeper, Jackie Chan, fully realized what I was doing in Tijuana, but I believed I had obtained an entrance ticket from him. Thus, I booked a flight and began my journey in May of 2016.

1.2. The Entrance

I arrived at San Diego International Airport around noon. For a doctoral candidate who had spent the previous six years in Texas, the weather in San Diego in

May still held the chill of winter. In our email exchange, the HR manager told me that he would send the company driver to pick me up at the airport. However, no one was waiting outside for me holding a whiteboard with "Mr. Cho" on it. I was quite nervous at that time, since if I failed to meet the company driver, I had no idea how to find the proper location of the factory. As I was nervously calling the HR manager, an old man with a big smile came towards me. "Good afternoon. You are Mr. Cho, right? Please follow me." I got into his minivan and headed to the factory where I was destined to spend the next nine months. The trip from San Diego International Airport to Tijuana was shorter than I imagined, though I should not have been surprised. Originally, the entire Border Industrialization Program was designed to be close to the US – Mexico border in order to attract US-based enterprises to invest in Mexico, while still being in close proximity to the US market.

Before I departed from Texas, I confirmed several times with the Mexican embassy that there were no specific requirements for a visa for research. All I needed to do was check with the customs people at the border to apply for an FM visa, and then I could stay in Mexico for 180 days. Just like other Mexicans I met, the customs officer was very friendly and spoke in slow but clear Spanish to help me understand the procedure to obtain my visa. After he stamped the FM visa and gave it to me, I left the customs office with 180 days of permission to conduct my research in Mexico. At that point, I knew my fieldwork had officially begun. We got back into the car and headed to the factory. Again, different from my expectations, it only took three minutes to arrive at our destination, the Clever Monitor and Screen Company (CMSC).

The factory is literally located on the border. In fact, the factory shares a wall with the border. Outside the wall is a road heading to the border checkpoint. Every day, hundreds of eighteen-wheelers come across the US – Mexico border through this checkpoint. For the maquiladora, this is the road heading to the North American market, the road to profit. The company driver dropped me off at the front door and made a phone call to the HR manager, Pablo Martinez. He was in his mid-60s, and about to retire. He gave me a strong and friendly handshake, and then introduced me to the special assistant to the general manager, a Chinese engineer named Yin Shan. Yin Shan was a Chinese engineer in his mid-30s. When I arrived at CMSC, he had already worked in Tijuana for more than six years. According to other workers I interviewed, he was “the right hand of the boss [la mano derecha del jefe] to Jackie Chan.” When he talked to me, he was friendly, polite, and extremely humble. However, I later I learned that he had another face when interacting with the Mexican employees. He offered to show me the work environment and introduced me to his colleagues.

It was not until I stepped into the factory that I realized this was a TV assembly maquiladora. As mentioned above, I received only two names of business association leaders from OECTM, and Jackie Chan gave me no detailed information about his factory. There were four lines in the production area. The month of May is not part of the busy season for the television assembly industry. Thus, only one line was running at that time, and the entire production had no more than 130 workers. The atmosphere was quiet and relaxed. When Yin Shan introduced me to the line leaders and production managers, the line had been stopped for some unknown reason. People were chatting

with one another and waiting for the line to restart. Nervously, both in Spanish and English I tried to explain to Yin Shan and the Mexican managers and workers I met that I was an anthropology PhD student from Texas A&M University, and I planned to conduct my research at the factory. After several tries, I realized that they did not really understand what anthropology was or what fieldwork entailed. They decided to introduce me to other line workers, based on their understanding of my intention. "This is Hey-You. He is an intern from Taiwan (this is how they understood me). He will stay with us for a couple of months." At that time, people's faces showed only curiosity. I did not know that most Asian employees in the factory rarely came to the production line, let alone worked there. At that time, I felt nervous but excited to meet the workers. I had no idea what was waiting for me.

The second day, the HR department gave me a factory uniform vest with a white shoulder line on it. At the time, I did not know what that color meant³. They also granted me the access to the company computer and gave me a desk in the HR office. I put on the vest and walked to the production line. The production manager placed me beside a female worker. Her name was Bonida, and she became one of the most important informants in this research. Bonida showed me the first task I performed on the assembly line: attaching information stickers to the back of each television set, and then scanning the barcode on each sticker. Finally, my job was to connect a wire to the motherboard. All of these steps needed to be completed in 22 seconds. Bonida asked me

³ CMSC's uniform vest has different colors on the shoulder, which are used to represent different departments. For example, assembly line workers and managers wear blue, quality control personnel wear red, and only general managers, HR managers, and HR staff wear white.

to watch her perform the task for thirty minutes. Then she let me do half the moves. It was at that moment that I knew my fieldwork as an assembly operator had officially begun.

2. The Site

The maquiladora in which I conducted my fieldwork, CMSC, mainly produces television and computer monitors. Its mother company is one of the largest television and monitor assembly enterprises, called Outstanding Technology⁴ (OT). According to the information provided on the OT website, the corporation has 37 production plants around the world. Its major manufacturing factory is located in Xiamen, China, and employs more than 4,000 workers. CMSC is one of the smallest sub-companies of the corporation. Although it is small in scale, its geographical location makes it an important site. OT was established in Taiwan in the 1960s. The Chinese government opened its market in 1987, and it was at this time that the Taiwanese corporation gradually shifted its production to China. Now, it is a China Fortune 500 transnational enterprise. Currently, its biggest investor and shareholder is a Chinese state-owned assets supervision and administration commission, which holds 37.1% of OT stock. Thus, the corporation is mainly based and invested in China, but is operated by Taiwanese managers. OT still has its headquarters in Taipei, Taiwan, but its largest factory is in China.

⁴ Outstanding Technology will be abbreviated as OT in later text.

CMSC is fully owned by OT. It is composed of the following departments: production, electrical engineering, industrial engineering, research, quality control, computer engineering, logistics, purchasing, finance, and human resources. These departments have corresponding counterparts in the mother company. Each department of CMSC has its own head manager, but occasionally a manager might be in charge of two or more departments. Although at the time of my fieldwork the highest manager at CMSC was Jackie Chan, all department heads followed orders from both Jackie Chan and the corresponding department head at headquarters. In other words, medium-level managers considered themselves as having two bosses, one that was Jackie Chan, and the other the department head at headquarters. At times, this arrangement caused confusion and the managers to feel frustrated, especially when they received conflicting orders from CMSC and China⁵.

⁵ For the Mexican managers, this arrangement made them feel untrusted by headquarters; every step of their daily operations had to be reported not only to the general manager of CMSC, but also to the corresponding department heads at headquarters in China. This meant that they needed to write endless reports. Furthermore, some specific departments had to wait for headquarters to make decisions for them. Since there is a 13-hour time difference, this arrangement often forced production to be postponed. They needed to wait for the decision makers to wake up and go to work in China.

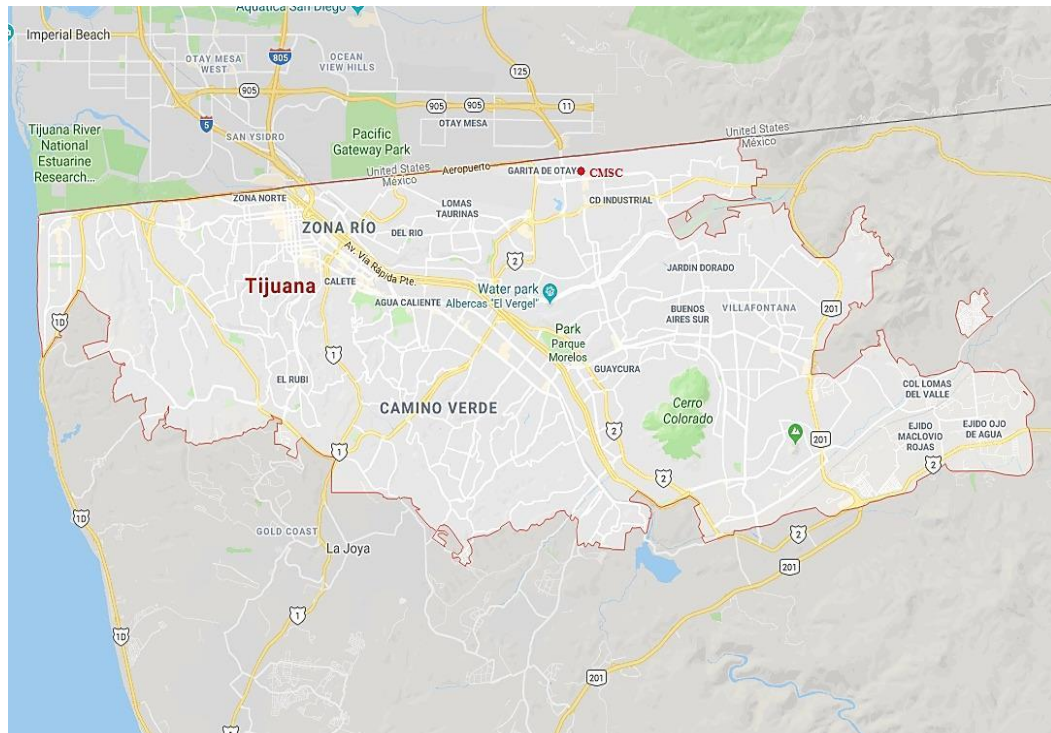


Figure 1 Tijuana Map (by Google Map)

The building occupied by CMSC was a sharp contrast from its previous condition, when it housed a Japanese corporation. The building was located in the Otay district and literally attached to the border (see Figure 1). OT purchased the facility from a Japanese enterprise in 2009. Some of the Mexican employees had also worked for the Japanese company. According to them, one day the Japanese manager got everyone together in the morning and declared that the factory had been sold to a Chinese company. The next day, human resource agents and a general manager from the Chinese corporation came and re-negotiated contracts with all of the employees who were willing to stay. Most were rehired by OT and became employees of CMSC on that day. They returned to their work as usual, but with a lower salary; also, all of their accumulated

seniority had vanished. Only a few remained when I started my fieldwork, including a Japanese manager.

The internal space was separated into two parts by a narrow hallway (see Figure 2). The hallway began at the cafeteria and headed to the workers' restrooms. When facing the cafeteria, the right side of the gallery was production and warehouse space, the human resources department, and a tiny health center with a full-time nurse. The left side housed the main office, finance department, one conference room, and a small office for the general manager, his special assistant, and secretary. Daily events occurred primarily in the main office and production area. Since the office was designed by the previous Japanese enterprise, the main office space was a large and open room with a smaller enclosed section. The small section was reserved for the general manager, his secretary, and special assistant. Only the finance department and human resources had their own offices. All other departments and department managers were in the same large office space. The main office was occupied by personnel involved in quality control, research, logistics, purchasing, production, electrical engineering, and industrial and computer engineering. Because the main office was designed as an open space, everyone who worked in the office could see and be seen by all the others.

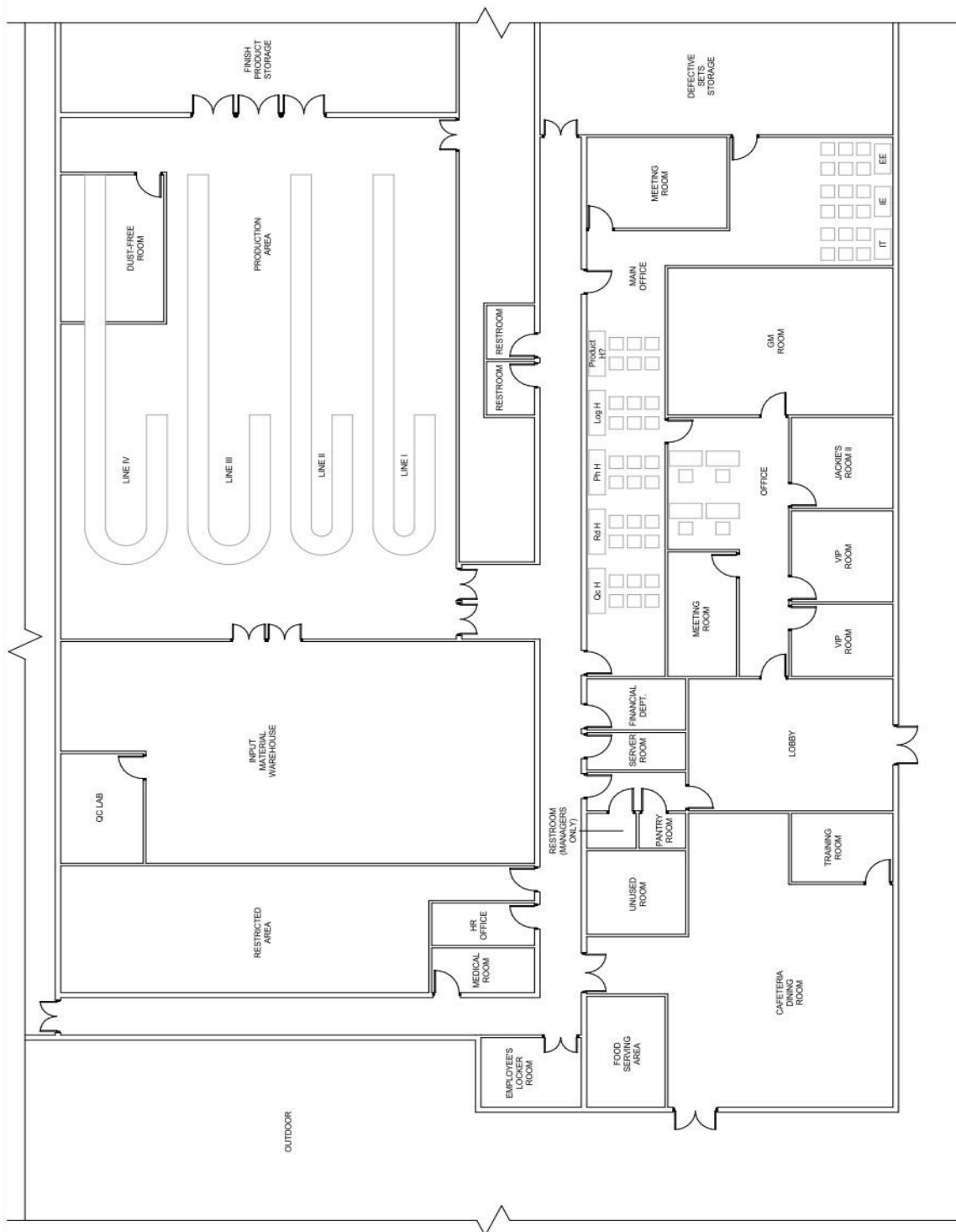


Figure 2 CMSC Floor Plan

There were five assembly lines inside the production area on the other side of the hallway. Each included three zones: assembly, quality control, and packing. The number of workers on a line varied between 60 and 130, depending on the season and model under production. There were two warehouses close to the production lines, one for materials and the other for finished goods. The materials warehouse was located on the assembly side of the shop floor, and the finished goods warehouse was located on the packing side. A security guard stood in front of the finished goods warehouse to keep irrelevant personnel out. There was open access to the entire production area, except for the finished goods warehouse (to prevent pilfering) (see Figure 3). In contrast, the main office, financial department, and human resource office all had magnetic card access control systems. Only authorized personnel were able to access their specific offices. Unauthorized personnel who wanted access needed to knock and wait for the door to be opened. Most managers and engineers were authorized to enter the main office, except for the financial department. However, only the general manager, department heads, GM's special assistant and secretary, and members of the Chinese support team were allowed to enter the small office area.

Only the highest-ranking department heads and the general manager's secretary were Mexicans with access to the small office area. However, all members of the Chinese support team, and even myself, "a Taiwanese intern," could access the small office area with their magnetic card. The accessibility of specific spaces inside the factory underscores how power was unevenly distributed among the workers. It also suggests an invisible system of segregation and established hierarchy among ethnic

groups. This segregation was even clearer in the routes used to enter the building. After entering the gate, line workers needed to walk a long way, around to the side door; they entered through the cafeteria. Conversely, managers entered the building through the front door. There was also a restroom located in an area used only by managers and engineers.

Taiwanese and Chinese managers only visited the production area when needed. On an ordinary day, they remained in their offices and communicated directly with OT. Junior engineers on the Chinese support team visited the shop floor or warehouse several times a day, but usually didn't spend much time there. In this setting, the shop floor and warehouse areas were full of Mexican workers. Most CMSC workers, even though they understood they were working for a Chinese factory, rarely had a chance to interact with any Chinese or Taiwanese people, even though they were in the same building. (This was true for all Chinese and Taiwanese workers except myself, a weird anthropology apprentice.)



Figure 3 The Security Guard in Front of the Product Warehouse.

3. A Day at CMSC

I remembered the first month when I worked as an assembly worker in CMSC, usually around three o'clock in the afternoon; I would start to feel tired. My knees and ankles felt sore, my feet were on fire, and my lower back was extremely stiff. I never experienced anything like this before I conducted my fieldwork in CMSC. I have developed severe plantar fasciitis one month after I worked as an assembly worker. I expected CMSC workers might experience similar fatigue and body pain after a typical

day at CMSC. The workday at CMSC officially began at 7:00 am, but that was not universal to all employees and managers. Line workers, Mexican managers and engineers, and Chinese managers and engineers all had different work schedules. In the following section, I will briefly describe these various work schedules. These differences not only created different timelines for people to follow, but also resulted in the invisible segregation of Mexican and Chinese employees in the same factory.

The line workers' official workday began at 7:00 am, but most workers' days began two or more hours earlier, since many lived far from the factory. They also likely needed to bring their children to school and prepare food for other family members. Since workers who came to work late were fined, most arrived well before 7:00 am. There was a locker room near the cafeteria, and each CMSC worker had a small locker. The workers usually stored their company vest in that locker. Before 7:00 am they put on their vests and walked into the production area. The CMSC day began with a bell ringing. Workers were given a 15 minute breakfast break starting at 9:00 am and staggered depending on how many lines were running that day. A contracted vendor came to the cafeteria to sell burritos and juice. Both the CMSC employees and temporary workers paid for their own breakfast. Since the cafeteria was not big enough to host all workers at once, groups of workers took their breaks together, line by line. At the end of each break, a warning bell would ring. When a line of workers went back to work, workers from another line would take their break. The rotation went on until every line had its breakfast break.

Starting at noon, workers were given a 30 minute lunch break. Theoretically, this was the longest break in the day for workers, but in practice that was not always the case. Since the cafeteria only had two small serving tables, it could only serve two workers at a time. Therefore, the line was very long, and sometimes it would take 20 to 25 minutes to get a lunch plate. Workers who were at the end of the line might only have five minutes to finish their lunch. Because of this, many workers preferred to bring their own lunches to the factory, even though the company paid for the lunch that was served in the cafeteria. After the lunch break, workers went back to the assembly line and continued their repetitive work until 3:00 pm, when there was short 10 minute break. A bell would ring, and all the workers would take their breaks at the same time. Since there were limited numbers of restrooms and water fountains, many workers did not have enough time to use them. Moreover, there was no specific rest area or sufficient number of chairs or benches for workers to sit.

Normally, if managers needed workers to work overtime, line leaders inquired with workers individually, before the lunch break. According to Mexican labor law, companies need consent from individual workers to work overtime. Thus, line leaders would approach each worker and ask if they could work overtime. If the answer was yes, the line leader would provide a consent form and the worker would sign it. During the lunch break, line leaders would send these consent forms to the human resources office. After 5:00 pm, workers who stayed for overtime were given a short break to use the restroom. They would then go back to work until 7:00 pm. When the 7:00 pm bell rang,

workers left the building in the dark, just as they had walked in before sunrise. For them, exposure to sunlight was a weekend luxury.

For most production workers, each workday was similar and repetitive. However, for Mexican managers and engineers, work was full of challenge and uncertainty. On an ordinary day, all Mexican managers and engineers came to the factory at the same time as the line workers. Both managers and engineers enjoyed more flexibility and autonomy in their work (as compared to line workers), but since their jobs were related to production, they needed to follow the same work schedule as the line workers. If the production line had to work overtime that day, at least one of the Mexican engineers or managers from each department needed to stay until the end of the production day to make sure the assembly line flowed flawlessly. When any abnormal situations occurred, they had to stay until the problem was solved. Theoretically, the job title and tasks for Mexican engineers and managers were similar to those of their Chinese colleagues, but the work requirements were different.

A third group in the factory was the Chinese support team members. This group included Chinese engineers and a Chinese manager who had come to Tijuana to replace a Japanese manager who had retired during my time at the factory. Their work schedule was quite different from that of the Mexican workers. Each morning, Yin Shan, the general manager's special assistant, drove a company-owned minivan to work with the support team members. They arrived in it at 8:00 am. Even though their work time started one hour later than the production line, they spent more time together at the factory. Due to the time zone difference between Tijuana and Xiamen, China, most

Chinese support team members and managers began to get busy after 3:00 pm, since that was when departments in China began their work. Even though the Chinese personnel were physically in Tijuana, their work schedule was much closer to that of Xiamen. Therefore, the Chinese support team usually stayed in the factory till 8:00 pm, or even later. Since the Chinese engineers and managers followed a very different work schedule, Mexican engineers and managers' workday experiences were closer to those of the assembly workers than their Chinese counterparts.

Inside the CMSC factory, Chinese employees usually enjoyed more autonomy and flexibility than did their Mexican counterparts, since they supported specific projects or provided special skills and knowledge to solve problems occurring during production. If everything progressed smoothly, they did not have much work to do. In this sense, even if their time spent in the factory was frequently much longer than that of their Mexican counterparts, their days were more relaxed than those of the Mexican managers and engineers. For example, except for the lunch hour which was always at 1:30 pm, Chinese engineers could decide when they wanted to take breaks. In contrast, Mexican engineers needed to follow the work schedule of the factory. Superficially, members of the Chinese support team followed the CMSC work schedule, since they came to work at 8:00 am per the request of the general manager. However, most of the time they followed the orders of their department heads in China. Despite the support team members' role in Tijuana being that of helpers, the aid they provided to Mexican engineers and workers was limited.

As David Harvey argued, because of the advanced transportation and communication technology, the globalization era is constructed as a “time and space compression” environment (Harvey, 1989). Modern transportation and communication technology allow transnational corporations to invest in production lines across the globe. However, no matter how advanced the technology is, no corporation can overcome time zone differences. That is to say, if the headquarters of a transnational corporation wants to oversee production on a daily basis, it is unavoidable that the corporation sends agents to production sites to oversee the ongoing operation. In CMSC’s case, this situation created at least two work schedules, one followed by the Chinese and another by Mexican employees. The different work paths and rhythms between the two ethnic groups created a sense of segregation that I constantly heard discussed by Mexican managers, engineers, and workers. This sense of segregation reinforced the differences between the Mexican and Chinese employees at CMSC. I will return to this topic in later chapters. Now, let us discuss the password I received to enter the field site.

4. The Ambiguous Password: Citizenship

No matter what kind of fieldwork an anthropologist engages in, how to enter the fieldwork site is a matter of great importance. It is always difficult for researchers to find associates and resources in a new fieldwork environment. For maquiladora researchers,

the situation is especially acute, since maquiladoras are subject to close surveillance and control by designated personnel. As many maquiladora researchers have described (Choi and Kenney, 1997; Salzinger, 2003; Plankey-Videla, 2012), persuading maquiladora managers to grant them permission to enter a factory and work alongside others is not impossible, but it is definitely not easy. Some have only been allowed to interview managers, while others were permitted to interview workers but never had the chance to work and to observe subjects throughout the day. The worst situation a maquiladora researcher might encounter is that he or she is prohibited by the manager from entering the factory. In such cases, they can only interview workers outside the factory and never have the chance to learn what really happens inside the gate.

While gaining entry can be extremely difficult, it is not entirely impossible. For example, Plankey-Videla believed that the reason her field manager granted her permission to conduct fieldwork in a maquiladora was due to the fact that the director of human resources attended to the same university as she did (Plankey-Videla, 2010, p. 16). She also mentioned that her child went to the same school as the manager's children, and similar medical needs helped to create a sense of commonality between her and the manager. These features might have been key to her gaining access to the factory. Most researchers studying maquiladoras owned and operated by Asian corporations do not have the opportunity to conduct fieldwork and interviews inside factories (Choi and Kenney, 1997). Since they cannot collect first-hand information from the shop floor, they instead collect stories and rumors from workers once they step outside the factory. In this regard, I was especially lucky to engage in my research in

CMSC, and work with the line workers for nine months. This peculiar luck stemmed from Jackie Chan and I sharing the same citizenship. However, both of us being Taiwanese were just the surface reason for Jackie Chan allowing me to stay at CMSC. The true cause was related to the ambiguous identity represented by the term “Taiwanese.”

Before explaining why this ambiguous identity was the key to my being allowed to conduct fieldwork at CMSC, it is necessary to fully define and explain what it means to be Taiwanese. The term connotes multiple identities that are the product of 20th-century history. It is not uncommon for Taiwanese people to refer to very different identities when using the term Taiwanese. The major ethnic group in Taiwan is the Han people, who came to Taiwan from China at different times over hundreds of years. Han Taiwanese share a similar language, writing system, and other cultural features with the Chinese. The most recent influx of immigrants from China to Taiwan was after the Kuomintang (KMT) was defeated by the Communist Party in 1949. At that time, approximately two million people immigrated to Taiwan, together with the KMT government. Until recently, these immigrants called themselves “mainlanders,” in order to distinguish themselves from other Taiwanese Han⁶.

With aid from the United States, the KMT government continued its regime in Taiwan until the end of the 20th century. The KMT government educated both mainlanders and Taiwanese that their identity should be “Chinese.” Starting in its early

⁶ Not all immigrants who came with the KMT government to Taiwan were Han. Some were indigenous people from China but categorized as mainlanders once they followed the KMT government and resettled in Taiwan.

years, the KMT government banned Taiwanese Han from using their mother tongue⁷ or Japanese, which the Taiwanese people learned from a previous Japanese regime. The KMT government forced them to speak only Mandarin. Moreover, the government eliminated the Japanese sections of local newspapers, replacing it with Mandarin. Combining these language policies with certain educational guidelines, the KMT government sought to wipe out the original Taiwanese identity and replace it with one that was Chinese. In 2000, the KMT party lost the election to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The DPP government readjusted the education policy. Also, civil society argued for the need to rebuild the Taiwanese identity. For example, the DPP government adjusted the school curriculum to emphasize the history and geography of Taiwan, and reduced contents related to China.

In 2008, KMT returned to power. Soon after, the KMT government signed the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) with the Chinese communist government. CSSTA was a trade agreement designed to open the service industries such as finance and communications to enterprises from Taiwan and China. According to an agreement, once it was passed and implemented, Chinese personnel and capital could enter Taiwan with fewer barriers. The majority of the citizens of Taiwan believed this would undermine the local economy and culture so valued by Taiwanese society. A significant social movement known as the “Sunflower Movement” occurred in March of 2014. This social movement pushed the Taiwanese identity to its historical peak.

⁷ Most Taiwanese (Han) people originally came from the Fujian province. They spoke Taiwanese, a dialect similar to the Minnan dialect, as their mother language.

The Taiwanese identity has become consistently more prominent since the 1990s, and the voice of independence has gotten louder, including mainlanders. Still, today about 40% of Taiwanese and mainlanders consider themselves to be “both Taiwanese and Chinese⁸” (see Figure 4). This double identity provides a grey area that can be taken advantage of by people on both sides of the Taiwanese strait. As a result of this history, the word “Chinese” in Taiwan now refers both to those who are culturally Chinese, such as Taiwanese Han and mainlanders, and people who are citizens of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Since its inception, the communist government of the PRC has claimed that the Republic of China ceased to exist after 1949. Therefore, only one China now exists in the world, the PRC. Meanwhile, the KMT government has continually claimed that it is the only legitimate regime to rule both mainland China and Taiwan, and the government and its people represent the authentic “China.” Since both the Taiwanese and mainland governments do not admit that the other is legitimate and both claim that they are the only “China” in the international community, these two “Chinas” remain in conflict.

Despite the fact that both governments do not recognize each other as legitimate, there are some shared administrative activities, such as cross-strait mail service and allowing KMT veterans to visit their hometowns and relatives who remain in China. In

⁸ It is necessary to emphasize here that the word “Chinese” in Taiwan is not reserved for cultural identity, similar to how Aihwa Ong referred to the Han ethnicity in the context of several Asian countries. For Ong, being Chinese and a citizen of China are different, and refer to different groups of people. Chinese refers to people who consider themselves blood tied with China, but does not guarantee their loyalty to the Chinese nation (Ong, 1999, p. 61). A citizen of China is someone who holds citizenship in China. Although Ong didn’t clearly define the version of Chinese to which she referred, according to the context of the book, it is the People’s Republic of China

1992, a meeting was held in Hong Kong by semi-official representatives of both the Taiwanese and PRC governments. The outcome of this meeting is called the "1992 Consensus." According to this consensus, both regimes are considered to belong to one China, but each can interpret this China differently. The 1992 Consensus creates a grey area that allows the PRC government to tolerate Taiwanese Chinese.

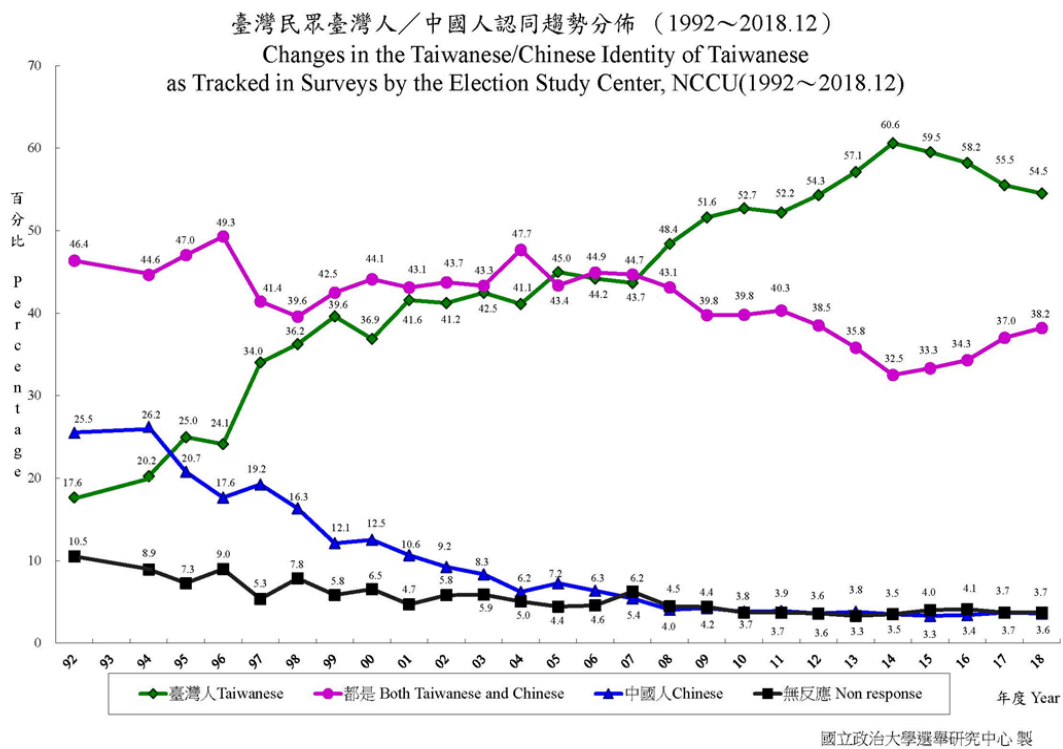


Figure 4 Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese Identity of Taiwanese⁹.

⁹ Sources: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.
<https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/app/news.php?Sn=166#>

On the one hand, this dual identity allows Chinese propaganda to claim that “blood is thicker than water,” and assign China to serve as a big brother in a symbolic extended family responsible for all Han people’s wellbeing. If Taiwanese businesses act like younger siblings and obey the “family rules,” they are able to share in the benefits of the recent economic growth in China. Meanwhile, since the Taiwanese economy expanded before China’s and now is mature, featuring advanced technology and business experience, China benefits by attracting Taiwanese enterprises to invest in the Chinese market, allowing the Chinese economy to enjoy a latecomer advantage¹⁰ (Lieberman and Montgomery, 1990). On the other hand, this dual identity also creates a unique position for Taiwanese business personnel, allowing them to take advantage of both sides of the Taiwan Strait. By claiming to be Chinese, Taiwanese businesses are able to establish a social network in China and manage their relationships with a minimum of difficulty and political harassment. By claiming to be Taiwanese, they enjoy the image of a successful business with a reputation in Taiwan, even though they do business in China.

¹⁰ Latecomer advantage is an economic theory which argues that developing countries enjoy a certain kind of benefit and advantage. The development of a modern economy relies on long-term, continuous, and consistent technological innovation and industrial upgrading. Both developed and developing countries face similar situations but from different positions. Developed countries are pioneers of technological innovation. They need to invest significant capital into research, and at the same time face the risk of failure. Conversely, developing countries can adapt existing technology and knowledge by purchasing/importing/stealing from developed countries. This creates a shortcut for developing countries to achieve economic development, allowing them to do so in a shorter period of time. This is the latecomer advantage.

This dual identity provides Taiwanese people with access to the Chinese market and the opportunity to establish “guanxi¹¹” through their shared Chinese identity. However, this does not mean that there is always rapport between Taiwanese business people and their counterparts in China, including the Chinese government. This is similar for Taiwanese people living in China. Chinese businesses are required to hire Chinese employees. They must ask these Chinese employees to share the responsibility of operating in China, but they cannot fully trust Chinese people. There are many similar stories on both sides of the Taiwanese Chinese investors circle. For example, I once interviewed a tea vendor for research related to my master’s degree. A decade before I met him, he was a Taiwanese Chinese investor. He told me:

I was part of the first trend of Taiwanese Chinese who invested in China. During that time, even the Chinese government had not opened their market yet. As a tea maker, I went there to operate both a tea farm and tea factory. I also taught local employees the secret skill of making tea with a special flavor. At the very beginning, people welcomed and treated me like an honored guest. I kept really good relationships with local political figures and leaders. Once, I thought my business was well settled in China. However, one day when I walked to my factory, the door was locked and public security came to arrest me and accuse me

¹¹ "Guanxi" is a word that describes a relationship or connection between two people in China. In his book *The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village*, Yunxiang Yan described how villagers constantly exchange gifts. Ostensibly, gift exchange is a reciprocal activity, but Yan argued that in Chinese society, gift exchange involves a utilitarian logic. Exchanging gifts establishes a connection and relationship between gift-giver and gift-taker; "guanxi" is created and maintained through constant gift exchange. According to Yan, Chinese people use "guanxi" as a safety net, or to satisfy self-interest.

of non-existent crimes. I was barely able to run back to Taiwan without anything I brought with me to China.

This tea vendor was not the only a victim of the “gold rush” that encouraged Taiwanese Chinese to invest in China. Similar stories are not uncommon (China Marketing Business Monthly, 1992). In general, gunxi exists between Taiwanese Chinese and local Chinese, but that does not mean that the two groups trust each other on all occasions.

Jackie Chan, the general manager of CMSC, expressed similar notions. When OT opened CMSC in Tijuana, they faced a group of employees who spoke a completely different language and had a wholly different culture. In my fieldwork, the Taiwanese general manager and Chinese support team were close allies. When I interviewed them, however, there was a sense of mistrust of their Mexican colleagues. It was this mistrust that actually allowed me to enter this field site. The Taiwanese manager needed someone with whom they could communicate, who could also communicate with the Mexican employees. My Taiwanese citizenship provided me with the chance to conduct fieldwork at CMSC. Later, I realized that this citizenship was crucial in allowing the general manager to access resources from Taiwan and China, as well. More and more Chinese corporations are searching for cheaper laborers and other advantages offered by overseas operation. Therefore, the number of Chinese owned and operated maquiladoras in Tijuana is rapidly increasing. Consequently, the Chinese embassy in Tijuana has gradually become an increasingly important player in Tijuana’s political and economic

arenas. Since CMSC was registered as a Chinese maquiladora in the local lists and had a significant business relationship with its headquarters in China, Jackie Chan maintained a very good relationship with the Chinese embassy.

The first thing I had been told by the company driver on our trip from the San Diego Airport to CMSC was never to call Jackie Chan Chinese, or he would be very angry. I kept this advice in mind, but later observed that Jackie Chan tended to call himself Chinese when in front of other Chinese support team members. This practice is similar to what other Taiwanese business people do in China. This suggests that Jackie Chan embodied two identities at the same time. These dual identities provided some advantages and a level of flexibility in his business strategy. As soon as I introduced myself as a Taiwanese student studying in the United States, Jackie Chan gave me a warm welcome. Almost every time I contacted him from the US, he expressed that he wanted me to come to Tijuana as soon as possible. Later, after I spent more time with him, I realized that the reason for this initially warm welcome was my citizenship. It created a “we group” feeling between the general manager and myself, a fellow Taiwanese.

I entered the fieldwork site with a face and physical features that were clearly Asian. Moreover, after I began to get to know each individual inside CMSC, I realized that I was only one of two Taiwanese in the factory. Sharing the same nationality with the general manager made the human resources department treat me nicely, providing me with a dormitory and thus solving my housing problem in Tijuana. However, because

I walked onto the shop floor with an Asian face, my future Mexican colleagues greeted me initially with suspicion.

5. An Asian Researcher on a Mexican Production Line

I started my fieldwork on the production assembly line as an assembly worker, but I did not stay in that position for long. During those nine months, both the general and production managers thought I was an intern from the United States who had come to their factory to fulfill a school requirement. This belief persisted, no matter how hard and how many times I tried to explain what an anthropological apprentice actually did in the field. Consequently, they arranged for me to transfer from department to department. All of these different positions affected my relationships with the other workers, especially when the factory hired a significant number of temporary workers with a high rate of turnover. Thus, I needed to form a rapport with new workers every couple of weeks. I began my fieldwork as an assembly worker, where I worked side-by-side with Mexican employees (as Figure 5 shows). We followed the same schedule, worked or stopped at the same time, rested in the same area, and felt the same pain and fatigue after work.



Figure 5 Line Workers and the Author by the End of the Year.

Participating in the first line of workers made it easier to approach Mexican employees, because of the experience I shared with them. In the beginning, I was not aware that my physical appearance and ethnicity mattered on the shop floor. This only became clear after I saw the Mexican workers interact with Yin Shan, Jackie Chan's special assistant, days after I had worked with them. The attitude and respect they showed towards Yin Shan were very different from what they showed me. Some workers did not hide their fear and discontent in the presence of Chinese engineers and managers. In fact, in the very beginning, some line workers considered me a spy sent directly by Jackie Chan. However, after they observed me for a period of time and

considered me a functioning assembly worker like themselves, did they begin to share information and recipes for Mexican food. Once they started sharing their stories with me, I came to realize that a rapport had been established. Once they accepted me as a part of their everyday lives, I was able to ask them questions about their work, family situation, and life experiences.

The department in which I remained for the longest time (about six months) was the repair department. On each production line, there was a table outside the assembly line. All malfunctioning television sets were sent to this table. Repair workers needed not only to fix the televisions sent to the repair station, but also help the line workers solve any issues they couldn't handle. Therefore, repair workers enjoyed more mobility than did workers from other departments. Even the salary for a repair worker was slightly higher than that of other workers. Once Mexican workers accepted me as a colleague and not a "chino," they did not show obvious differences in the way they interacted with me as compared to other Mexican workers (except when speaking Spanish to me at a slower speed). Since the turnover rate was very high during my stay, the Mexican workers tended to be friendly and patient with foreigners. The fact that I was foreign did not cause significant difficulties with my fieldwork. However, when I was assigned by Jackie Chan to be an industrial engineer, thus leaving the line for a couple of weeks and returning to production with a stopwatch in my hand, new temporary workers who did not know me interacted with me as they did with other Chinese engineers or managers. In the last couple of weeks of my fieldwork, I spent less time on the production line and more time in the office; thus, most temporary workers

did not know me. One day, when I walked into the cafeteria and tried to join a group of temporary workers, they welcomed my company but called me “el jefe” (i.e., the boss).

From this experience, I realized that a boundary between ethnic groups existed inside the maquiladora. Even though most workers might not have fully understood what kind of foreign enterprise they worked for, they did realize that the factory was owned and operated by foreigners. Most foreigners they met on the shop floor were either engineers or managers. Therefore, when they met Asians inside the factory, they assumed they held a higher position than they themselves occupied. Even when the production manager introduced me as an intern, it was only after I spent time with the line workers and gained their trust that I could dismantle the stereotype. Yet once I left the production line and worked as an industrial engineer and new temporary workers joined the line, this stereotype returned and would have been reconfirmed if I had done nothing to change it.

6. Methods

I used several methods to collect information during my fieldwork. While conducting my fieldwork, I was allowed to access the factory’s database. Therefore, I could review historical data, including annual production goals and achievement rates,

balance sheets for the factory, CMSC employees' personal information cards, production process standard operation procedures (SOPs), and other non-sensitive data such as attendance rates and the salary information for each department. I usually reviewed this information on those afternoons when my fatigue and body pain were at their worst after I spent some days on the assembly line and started to be given some other tasks from the general manager or other Mexican managers. Except for open access information about the company such as annual balance sheets (which one can download from the company website), all other data, such as employees' personal information, I did not collect or copy, per my promise to the HR manager. Besides the data I reviewed in the factory, I followed the doctrines of anthropological fieldwork and conducted participant observation-based research. As mentioned in the previous section, I was understood to be and introduced by the managers as a Taiwanese intern. Thus, I worked closely with both CMSC employees and temporary workers. I felt the same muscle ache and joint soreness they did, and I experienced the same frustration and discontent from managers yelling at the workers. We worked side-by-side, with the only difference being that the workers made a wage and I worked for free. Several months after I completed my field research at CMSC, the general manager expressed his intention to hire me as an official employee. Considering that receiving pay from the research subject can cause unpredictable ethical issues, I thanked him for his kindness but declined the offer.

When I stayed on the production line, I followed the same schedule as the other workers. Most of the interviews I conducted with my fellow workers were held in the factory's cafeteria, in public. Each interview was no longer than thirty minutes. In these

interviews, I used open-ended questions to ask about their work experience with different employers and other important events they remembered that related to my study topics. After I gained their consent to interview them, I usually began by asking about their general work experience, such as how long they had worked for CMSC, whether they had ever worked for other maquiladoras before CMSC, etc. Sometimes I began the interview by asking the interviewee to describe their typical daily schedule. I also held three focus group interviews. Most people who joined the focus groups were line workers in the assembly area. There was one focus group to which I invited three line leaders and asked them to share their experiences working for the previous Japanese company. I also asked them to compare that company to CMSC in aspects such as management style, work organization, and their personal feelings. One focus group was held for repair workers and other technicians. This group interview focused on their work contract and related issues. We compared the types of contracts each of them had signed with CMSC and rumors they'd heard of other work contracts for their colleagues and at other maquiladoras. This was part of my effort to learn how CMSC gained flexibility in their human capital by manipulating employment contracts.

Although the questions I asked each interviewee were different and depended on the topics we discussed, below are some sample questions that I consistently asked:

1. How many years have you worked at the maquiladora?
¿Cuántos años ha trabajado en la maquiladora?
2. How many maquiladoras have you worked at?

¿En cuántas maquiladoras ha trabajado antes?

3. Have you ever worked in another Taiwanese owned and operated maquiladora such as Mytek, Lamingo, Foxconn, etc.?

¿Usted ha trabajado en otras maquiladoras taiwaneses como Mytek, Lamingo, o Foxconn?

4. Have you ever worked in a maquiladora owned by individuals from another country?

¿Ha trabajado para maquiladoras que pertenecen a otros países?

5. Can you recall your most impressive, annoying, or otherwise meaningful experience with a Taiwanese boss or manager?

¿Usted se acuerda de una experiencia muy impresionante o difícil con los jefes y gerentes taiwaneses?

6. Have you ever argued or heard a colleague argue with a manager? If so, what were they arguing about and when did this happen? What did you think about it?

¿Usted ha discutido con los gerentes o ha escuchado compañeros discutiendo con gerentes? ¿Si ha pasado, de qué era la discusión y qué pasó? ¿Qué opina usted al respecto?

7. Do you think there are any cultural differences between you and your Taiwanese managers? Can you give me some examples?

¿Usted piensa que hay diferencias culturales entre los gerentes taiwaneses y usted? ¿Me podría dar algunos ejemplos?

8. Please compare the managerial style of your manager with managers of other cultures.

Por favor, compara el estilo de administración de su gerente con los gerentes de otras culturas.

9. When you want to show dissatisfaction, what methods do you use and why?

Cuando usted desea mostrar su descontento, ¿cuáles son los métodos que utilizaría y por qué?

To obtain the managers' perspective, I interviewed all 13 of the supervisors who worked at the factory. Compared to the workers, the managers tended to have more flexible schedules; therefore, some interviews were as long as 60 or 90 minutes. There were 28 interviews recorded digitally, after obtaining consent from the interviewees. Other interviews were recorded via handwritten notes, per the request of the interviewees. During these interviews, I gained their consent first by describing the protocol required by our university. As with the line workers, I emphasized that all information would be kept secret and not shared with anyone in the factory. Most interviews were held in CMSC's cafeteria. This was an open area for workers, engineers, and managers to eat lunch and take breaks. There were 10 tables in the cafeteria; each sat approximately eight people. Outside the cafeteria, there was a smoking area. Some interviews were conducted in that area, if my interviewee wanted to have a cigarette while being interviewed. All interviews were done at CMSC. Since I did not conduct interviews outside the plant, it is hard to tell if there is any difference if I interviewed

workers outside their workplace, but it looked like workers complaint their work conditions or poorly paid to me during the interviews without hesitation. I expect the difference that caused by places to conduct interviews might not be very significant if there is any. During each interview, in the very beginning, I gained consent from interviewees orally. I did not use written consent because I did not want to leave any record to show who has agreed to participate in my study to prevent unexpected problems to undermine my interviewees' normal lives. I recorded the interviews with interviewees' permission and wrote notes during the interviews. Generally speaking, as long as I was not too tired because of the assembly work, I transcribed the notes to a more systemic way as field notes.

I adopted semi-structured or open-ended methods when conducting all interviews. Most of the Mexican workers generously shared their personal information and stories with me. I only encountered difficulties when I asked Chinese engineers to share their opinions. In addition to the formal interviews, some useful information was collected during occasional chats that occurred during daily work time. When I felt the information obtained might be useful in my future writing, I asked the speaker to allow me to use it in my dissertation. In total, I conducted 79 interviews during my fieldwork. Within these 69 Mexicans interviewees, 13 of them were managers (*gerente*), all of the managers were men. There were 11 engineers or office staff (*empleados*), 3 of them were women. 45 interviewees belonged to the category of worker (*trabajadores*), 21 among these 45 interviewees were female workers and 24 were male workers (see Table 1). The number of interviewees, their ethnicities, and genders were as follows:

Ethnicity	Male	Female
Taiwanese	2	1
Mexican	30	39
Japanese	1	0
Chinese	5	1

Table 1 Interviewees Divided by Ethnicity and Gender.

Aside from two Taiwanese (one male and one female) and one Mexican woman who did not work at CMSC, the interviewees were all CMSC laborers or managers. Regarding age variations, the Taiwanese general manager of CMSC, Jackie Chan, was in his late 50s. Jackie Chan held an MBA from a Taiwanese university. Most of the Mexican managers were in their late 40s or early 50s. All had at least a bachelor's degree. The ages of the Mexican engineers and workers ranged from 16 to the 60s. Workers' educational backgrounds differed; some were college students who came to CMSC during their summer vacations to pay for school. Others were already grandparents. The ages of the Chinese support team were concentrated between 25 and 40. All had finished college in China. The only Japanese individual I interviewed was 65. He held a master degree from USC and lived in San Diego. He retired during my time at CMSC.

Although I had studied Spanish for three years before I began my field research at CMSC, I felt that my Spanish was insufficient. However, the nature of this fieldwork

site did not allow me to hire a translator. I spoke English or Spanish with all of the Mexican interviewees. Luckily, most of the Mexican managers and engineers were fluent in English, and we had few language problems when we communicated with one another. When I interviewed a worker, I always asked another worker who was a former undocumented laborer in the United States to help me with translation. They might not have had perfect English, but I confirmed my questions with them in several different ways to make sure the interviewee understood my intention. Therefore, while a language barrier did exist between my Mexican interviewees and myself, it was not impossible to overcome. But, it is undeniable that my Spanish ability sometimes prevented me from understanding some conversations or keywords during the interviews fully.

The information that I collected from the CMSC interviews was composed primarily of ethnographic data. I also obtained data from mass media (e.g., the newspaper), social media (i.e., Facebook), and PTT (the largest BBS forum in Taiwan). These were used to understand social opinions regarding the Labor Reform Act proposed by the Taiwanese government in 2016. These data are mainly discussed in Chapter III, where I describe the work ethic common in Taiwan. In order to protect all interviewees, all the names, including all companies' and interviewees' names that appear in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

With regards to field notes, after an interview I usually wrote down my observations and thoughts after I returned to the dormitory at the end of the day. However, at times it was impossible to do so because of the late hour. Sometimes, I was too tired to stay awake after nine hours of standing and working on the production line.

If that happened, I usually finished writing my field notes the next day. At times, I spent entire Saturday afternoons completing my writing. All field notes and diary entries were first written by hand, and then transcribed into typewritten form and stored on my laptop. I usually brought my notebook with me rather than leave it on my desk, and my computer was always secured by a password no one else knew.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, my purpose was to provide essential background knowledge and all necessary information regarding this study and my fieldwork site. In describing how I conducted my fieldwork at CMSC, I highlighted how my personal features affected this research. I first introduced my fieldwork site and explained why I was allowed to study this Taiwanese owned and operated maquiladora. The gatekeeper of this study, Jackie Chan, CMSC's general manager, was the individual who granted me permission to work. Before I arrived in Tijuana, I believed he did not fully understand the intention and purpose of this study but permitted me to conduct my fieldwork anyway. Once I arrived, I realized that citizenship might be key to my being allowed to serve as a wandering anthropology apprentice at CMSC for nine months. However, it was not merely because I am Taiwanese that this study was possible; there were other subtle but crucial elements behind Jackie Chan's consideration, including his relationships with his

Chinese and Mexican employees. I believe these factors related to citizenship and nationality were why he permitted me to study and work at CMSC.

After I described how I came to work at CMSC, I tried to delineate my initial impressions of the production line and how the workers understood Asians being a part of their ordinary lives. Because I began my study as an assembly line worker, later moved to quality control, and eventually serving as an industrial engineer, each position change or "promotion" affected my relationships with local workers, especially temporary employees who only stayed a short time at CMSC. As I described this process, I presented my positions at the fieldwork site and described how these roles affected my study. In the final section of this chapter, I discussed the methods I used and how they were employed to collect data from my fieldwork site.

In sum, this chapter presented all researcher-related subjects pertinent to this study. In so doing, I believe this chapter provides fundamental knowledge regarding the data I use to support my argument in the following chapters. In the next chapter, I will discuss how Taiwanese people tend to share a common work ethic that developed from the economic boom that occurred in Taiwan between the 1970s and 1990s, and how they continue to adopt this work ethic in workplaces with different cultural backgrounds.

CHAPTER III

“GONG DE” TAIWAN IN MEXICO

In this chapter, I review the literature on maquiladoras and focus on a discussion of the primary cultural issues. Although previous scholars have provided us with an insightful framework and fruitful understanding of maquiladoras and their workers, there are a few analyses of the foreign cultural values of representatives of international corporations. Thus, I focused on cultural issues that surfaced during my stay at CMSC. My experiences there made me realized that Jackie Chan followed his previous work experience and training in Taiwan when designing his managerial style and business strategies. Notions he followed could be traced to the “Pure Labor” work ethic, so named by G.S. Shieh, an important Taiwanese sociologist. This “Pure Labor” work ethic refers to features of the Taiwanese attitude towards work and employment that allows Taiwanese enterprises to survive and compete in the global market.

In Section 2, I provide a brief history of how this “Pure Labor” work ethic developed during a specific era in Taiwan, and how it remains an effective means of understanding the business and managerial styles of Taiwanese enterprises. In Section 3, I describe how Jackie Chan managed CMSC by following the guide of this “Pure Labor” work ethic. By describing his managerial philosophy, questions he asked me to help him resolve, and policies associated with the work environment and workers’ wellbeing, we can see how the “Pure Labor” work ethic affected how Jackie Chan managed CMSC, a

maquiladora that hired hundreds of Mexicans in Tijuana. Now, let me begin this literature review by providing some background knowledge necessary for this research.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Early Research on the Anthropology of Work

Factory overtime has served as an essential topic in the development of social theory. Many important social theories that allow us to understand modern society have been developed within the context of the factory. For example, a research team from the Harvard School of Business Administration and funded by the National Academy of Sciences conducted now-famous research on Western Electric's Hawthorne Works (Jordan, 2013, p. 10). Their study, begun in 1924, had the primary goal of examining the relationship between physical conditions (such as the brightness of a factory) and productivity. However, they found that it was difficult to come to a conclusion in this regard, because so many variables can affect productivity. From 1927 to 1932, Elton Mayo, a psychiatrist, and W. Lloyd Warner, an anthropologist, also examined the relationship between environmental conditions and productivity. They concluded that the environment was not a crucial variable related to productivity level, but human relationships were. Whether the light was bright or dim, the rest time long or short, even the total number of working hours were not significant variables increasing or decreasing productivity (Mayo, 1933). Instead, the presence of someone concerned

about the conditions in the workplace and willing to change them affected workers' productivity more than did actual adjustments to the physical environment. This was one of the first explorations of industrial anthropology (i.e., the Anthropology of Work). The results of Mayo's study have helped employers increase production efficiency.

Kerr and Fisher later criticized Mayo for being unaware of the conflict of interest embedded in the factory (Kerr and Fisher, 1958). Mayo assumed that the factory, as a workplace, was a locus of harmony and spontaneous consent to industrial life (Burawoy, 1979, pp. 231-233). For Kerr and Fisher, the workplace was instead an arena in which different economically rational individuals competed. Based on this assumption, Burawoy, an American sociologist, further explored the workplace. He conducted his fieldwork in a steel factory located in Chicago. His work was recorded in his book entitled *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism* (Burawoy, 1982). Therein, he described how workers in the workplace have interests that differ from those of their employer. The more surplus that workers produce, the less profit they share. Burawoy argued that workers should not try to increase productivity because that was not in their interest. However, in reality his study showed that workers were willing to cooperate with managers to increase production.

Among workers, there is often an ongoing “making out game” (Burawoy, 1979b). This making out game¹² provides workers with an accumulated bonus. Workers also define their relationships with other workers through this game. The employment relationship, conflicts among workers and between workers and their managers, and even workers' everyday lives are all woven into this making out game, which is defined by the values recognized by everyone in the workplace (Burawoy, 1979b, p. 84).

Workers' involvement in the game helps to increase their productivity and their achievement of higher production goals for their employers. Burawoy argued that the reason why workers engaged in the game, an activity that might contradict their class interest, is that both game and job offer something more than simple economic work culture. By engaging in the game, workers establish friendships and a collective sense of one another. Each worker achieves social position through the game (Burawoy, 1979b).

The game is meaningful for workers; it is a way for workers to earn bonuses. Furthermore, workers also define themselves and their relationships with other workers through the game. By working side by side with workers, Burawoy found that they frequently discussed the game, even during their break times. He concluded that the “making out” game helped workers define their social relationships, both inside and

¹²Burawoy described the "making out game" as a crucial mechanism where workers consent to cooperate with managers and achieve a required production quantity. Workers at Allied, Burawoy's fieldwork site, received a base wage, but they could earn up to 140% of that wage as a bonus if they finished additional quantities of work. Experienced workers were able to produce such quantities easily, if the other workers were willing to cooperate with them. Meanwhile, managers tried to change quotas to maximize profit, according to workers' levels of speed and productivity. For their own good, workers needed to achieve a particular quantity and receive their 140% bonus, but at the same time keep their speed and productivity level. In this regard, workers created several strategies to gain the bonus but avoid managers changing the standard by which their productivity was measured. This entire process was described as the "making out game" by Burawoy.

outside the workplace (Burawoy, 1979). Burawoy's study has become a model for most industrial anthropologists. His theoretical perspective influenced researchers studying the factory setting, including maquiladora researchers, since Burawoy and his predecessors conducted their fieldwork in the United States. Culture was not a prominent feature in his research because employer and employee shared similar cultural features, at least in a broad sense. Cultural factors were less of an issue in the early development of industrial anthropology, at least until transnational business became a phenomenon in the 1990s (Hamada, 1991; Tabata, 2000; Wang, 2002).

Examining joint ventures between the US and Japanese enterprises operating in Japan in 1991, such as Nippon United, Hamada demonstrated that cultural differences affected the way that both parties, Japanese and American personnel alike, interpreted the information they received from the other party. As she stated: "In cross-cultural decision making, cultural strategies are needed to understand the basic objectives, management philosophy, value orientation, and communication codes that guide the other side's behavior" (Hamada, 1991). In other words, when partners from both sides interact with one another, they depend on their cultural norms to guide them and interpret the other party's reactions. This is often when misunderstandings occur. Hamada described such misunderstandings in various contexts such as in business meetings regarding plant construction design, production and sales strategies, and even personnel assignments. Sometimes misunderstanding emerged because each side would take something for granted and then assume that others would do the same. When their expectations were not met, frustration appeared on both sides. Hamada argued that both

sides showed signs of ethnocentrism and a certain degree of cultural insensitivity. Understanding others' cultures is difficult. Thus, the issue must be approached openly and respectfully (Hamada, 1991).

Hamada's ethnography focused on the interaction between managers and management styles from both countries involved in Nippon United, a joint venture in which its partners shared equal power to decide the managerial strategy. In this setting, power was relatively equally distributed. Therefore, the goals and interests were the same for both the Japanese and American firms. Conflicts could be negotiated and solved on a win-win basis. In other situations, however, when power is not equally distributed among the cultural groups within a firm, interaction between the two makes for more complex differences in the goals and interests of each cultural group. Maquiladoras are an example of this.

1.2. Maquiladora Studies

Previous research on maquiladoras has shown that cultural factors are an important variable in the interaction between employer and employee (Choi and Kenney, 1997; Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Paik and Sohn, 1998; Salzinger, 2003). For example, in the 1980s, Fernandez-Kelly discussed how an ideology of patriarchy impacted maquiladora workers' incomes, since at that time most were women (Fernandez-Kelly, 1983). Mexican society traditionally regards women's salaries as supplementary household income. Male members are the breadwinners, and women's income is considered as the secondary

financial source. As Fernandez-Kelly showed, this traditional division of labor between genders was one of the primary reasons that maquiladora employers were able to pay their female employees lower salaries compared to their male counterparts. Cultural assumptions influenced not only female workers' income levels, but also the managerial strategies employed. Scholarly research on maquiladoras has assumed that maquiladora managers hold stereotypes of Mexican women as submissive, easy to control, docile, and highly productive (Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Salzinger, 2003; Sklair, 2010; Plankey-Videla, 2012). These stereotypes affect managers, motivating them to search for specific types of employees and then hiring and managing them accordingly.

Salzinger emphasized how critically a shared assumption about gender affected the image of the ideal worker that managers maintained. She also argued that we should not overlook the impact of what workers learn and how they are treated inside the workplace. Therefore, she reminded readers that cultural factors not only refer to elements outside the firm. Instead, discipline, training, and other interactions that take place inside the factory are part of the culture that affects workers. When companies from different countries bring their cultural norms to Mexico, the consequences of cultural interactions with the local population varies according to external and internal cultural forces (Choi and Kenney, 2017; Kamiyama, 1993; Kamiyama, 1994; Park and Sohn, 1998). This interaction is a dynamic process that occurs in the workplace on a daily basis.

Stephens and Charles approached culture issues in a different way. They pointed out that NAFTA¹³ reduced obstacles to international trade between the United States and Mexico, but the cultural boundaries between the two nations remained. Conflicts between business alliances on both sides of the border are almost unavoidable (Stephens and Charles, 1995). They discussed how cultural differences alone caused certain aspects to vary, such as the concept of time, work ethic, and other subtle behavioral differences, resulting in conflicts between US managers and Mexican workers. For example, Mexican workers value personal interactions between managers and themselves, something American managers usually fail to recognize (Stephens and Charles, 1995). The social distance between workers and managers is different in the United States and Mexico. When American managers operate a maquiladora in Mexico, they interact with local workers according to their original cultural norms and expect the workers to react accordingly. However, workers may react unexpectedly because they are guided by different cultural norms than those shared by American managers, and the result is conflict.

It is reasonable to assume that conflict also occurs inside Asian-operated maquiladoras. Research related to labor relationships in such companies is limited. Little information exists that delineates the general picture of the social relationships inside Asian-operated maquiladoras. Some previous researchers have also expressed dissatisfaction and called for studies to correct this gap (Stephens and Charles, 1995).

¹³ NAFTA: The North America Free Trade Agreement. The agreement came into force on January 1, 1994, but was recently replaced by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement on September 30, 2018.

For example, Choi and Kenney stated that at the time they conducted their research in 1992 (Choi and Kenney, 1997), there was not enough literature to support a general statement about the relationship between managers and workers inside Asian maquiladoras. That is still true today. Based on the limited sources from both workers and managers of Korean-owned maquiladoras at that time, Choi and Kenny argued that the impression that “Korean firms are not desirable investors” is incorrect. Korean investors provide employees more training programs and longer training times, and transfer more skills to local firms and workers compared to their Japanese counterparts (Choi and Kenney, 1997, pp. 19-20). However, they admitted that they did not have enough data to discuss the interactions among employees and employers inside Korean-run maquiladoras.

Paik and Sohn (1998) took a different approach to discussing the cultural interactions among Asian owners and local workers. They compared the similarities and differences between Korean Confucianism and the Mexican culture in South Korean-operated maquiladoras. Both cultures emphasize collective solidarity, but there are certain differences. These differences create significant cultural conflict between Korean owners and their Mexican employees. For example, Paik and Sohn indicated that both cultures emphasize group harmony, but the content varies. For Korean people, group harmony is based on group honor (Paik and Sohn, 1998). Conversely, Mexican people also give group harmony a crucial role in their culture, but Mexican people tend to focus more on their personal contribution (Paik and Sohn, 1998). Paik and Sohn indicated that

even though both cultures emphasized the same concept, the ways in which they practice it in everyday life were different.

In sum, researchers studying Asian maquiladoras have expressed awareness that cultural conflicts between Asian managers and Mexican workers are a critical operational issue. Most have called attention to this topic, but instead of approaching it directly by examining the interaction between managers and workers inside Asian maquiladoras, they have concentrated on cultural ideas such as the patriarchy, collective/individual value, and abstract notions such as Confucianism, instead of how cultural differences are in play on the ground (Choi and Kenney, 1997; Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Paik and Sohn, 1998; Salzinger, 2003; Trevisani, 2018).

How to approach cultural differences in a maquiladora's everyday operation is a critical issue because cultural factors not only appear when people from different cultural backgrounds interact. One potential perspective to approaching this topic is the concept of the manager's ideal worker. Sociologist Joan Acker proposed this concept in her studies conducted in the United States. She critiqued certain feminists who regarded the organization as a gender-neutral concept. Acker argued that the organization is not gender neutral. Gender is a fundamental element of any organization (Acker, 1990). She analyzed gender-embedded organization according to two aspects – jobs and hierarchies – arguing that a job is an abstract assignment. It can only be real when the abstract assignment is addressed by a real worker who is gender-defined. That is to say, when managers search for potential employees, they examine or imagine if applicants match the job requirements. At that point, gender-related features – and sometimes gender

stereotypes – are included in managers’ decisions regarding which candidates are the best fit for a position.

To fit the model of the ideal worker from the perspective of the managers, workers must be full-time employees. Thus, only men can satisfy this ideal image since women have traditionally been assigned domestic work and childbearing tasks. From the perspective of managers, women cannot devote themselves entirely to a job because they are always multitasking. According to Acker, when there is a promotion opportunity or it is time for an annual evaluation, managers use the model of the ideal worker to evaluate their employees’ performance. Both managers and employees assume that the evaluation criteria are fair to all employees, though this is not the case because the ideal worker model is based on the image of a male worker. The hierarchy of the organization builds upon this image and women are automatically placed in a lower position in the hierarchy because their gender does not fit the ideal type.

Acker provided a powerful tool for analyzing gender issues in working organizations, and many maquiladora researchers have adapted it. For example, Salzinger showed that there is a general gender idea of “maquiladora-grade worker” (Salzinger, 2003) in the headquarters of global enterprises. This “maquiladora-grade worker” refers to female, young, and docile employees. Salzinger argued that this particular group of workers had been feminized. Maquiladora-grade workers are of a specific type that managers try to recruit when global enterprises relocate their production bases from developed countries to developing/underdeveloped ones such Mexico. Maquiladora managers specifically search for workers who fit the image of

what she calls “feminine productivity.” By feminizing the labor force, maquiladora managers construct a gendered work environment and control their labor force accordingly. Salzinger recognized that this adoption of the concept of the ideal worker effectively gendered maquiladoras’ hiring strategy. I believe that cultural factors are another aspect that can be explored through a similar framework.

McKay approached the topics of management and labor control differently, discussing the organization of and labor control in four factories owned and operated by foreign enterprises in the Philippines. These enterprises were from Korea, Japan, the United States, and Europe. McKay used these four cases to correct stereotypes associated with the high-tech industry. Most previous studies have assumed that because the high-tech industry requires more stability in production than do labor-intensive industries, high-tech companies provide more benefits and create positive incentives to attract workers to stay in the same position for longer periods of time (McKay, 2006a). These companies' intention, in turn, creates more so-called "good jobs," meaning that the jobs are more secure and provide more work-related benefits to workers (Kalleberg, 2011). Compared to labor-intensive industries such as the apparel, garment, and electronics industries, jobs in the high-tech sector are better in many ways.

McKay, however, argued that this assumption of dual industries is mistaken. He described how his four foreign-invested enterprises applied different managerial regimes in their factories, terming them the “despotic,” “purchasing,” “human resource work,” and “collectively negotiated” regimes. Each had particular features related to labor control. McKay wanted to highlight that although all four enterprises were in the high-

tech industry, the managerial strategies varied; simply being in the high-tech industry was not a guarantee of a good job. Three of the four companies, all but the collectively negotiated regime, were anti-union and adopted strategies to prevent workers from gaining collective bargaining power. They started their labor-control process with the recruiting of particular workers. Storage Ltd., for example, intentionally searched for women workers from rural areas with less education and lower incomes. Before hiring someone, Storage Ltd. requested all interviewees complete a survey, and if the company determined that the applicant sympathized with unionism, the interviewee was rejected. By hiring their preferred type of worker, they could offer lower salaries and still expect their employees to feel like their lives had been improved by working for the company. Therefore, they would be content with their working conditions. In this regard, Storage Ltd. could build up a cheap but stable labor force (McKay, 2004, 2006a).

McKay implied that the reason why each company adopted different managerial regimes was related to their mother companies' experiences in their original countries. For example, Discrete Manufacturing, the factory that adopted a collectively negotiated regime and allowed a union to operate on the shop floor, was a factory operated by a European enterprise. McKay suggested that this might be because the mother company was from a country with a well-developed tradition of unionism; thus, Discrete Manufacturing was more tolerant of union activity. McKay, therefore, touched on the issue of how cultural factors can affect overseas operations of transnational enterprises. However, he stopped there and instead emphasized how the role of the government of the host country, in this case the Philippines, should not be ignored. Evidence has shown

that local governments cooperate with foreign enterprises by providing infrastructure and assisting them with recruiting the workers the companies need. The state government may even provide troops to help foreign investors control their workers in the case of a strike (McKay, 2006a, 2006b). In other words, McKay admitted that elements of the transnational enterprise's culture, such as their preferences regarding unions, might affect aspects of local management. However, this was not his primary concern and he did not explain in detail how cultural factors affect the daily operation and managerial decisions of these companies. Instead, he preferred to explain the various managerial strategies and labor-control regimes as outcomes of cooperation between foreign enterprises and the state government, rather than cultural factors represented by management as obtained from their mother countries.

While it was not the focus of Salzinger or McKay's work, the differences between managers and international enterprises from multiple backgrounds suggest that cultural factors do matter. In this context, the work ethic that Taiwanese managers bring to Mexico may be a critical cultural factor affecting the daily operation of the maquiladora addressed in this study: CMSC.

2. Taiwanese Work Ethic

In this section, I first explore the work ethic and cultural values popularly shared by the Taiwanese, especially after the economic boom of the 1970s. When the capitalist mode of production and market economy became primary, the work ethic called "Pure

Labor” by Taiwanese sociologist G.S. Shieh (1997; 2003) was shaped, due to the resulting changes in living style and workplace experiences. This is what Bourdieu called habitus. Once people create a habitus, they tend to respond similarly to particular situations (Bourdieu, 1990; 2017). In subsection 2.1, I discuss the Taiwanese work ethic that people developed over time to manage their businesses and other enterprises. Since the 1970s, Taiwanese society has experienced significant changes in terms of politics and the economy, such as the termination of martial law in 1987 and the gradual shifting of the economic paradigm from a planned economy to one that is more neo-liberalistic (Syong and Chen, 2001). The dominant industries in Taiwan changed from labor-intensive manufacturing to high-tech, capital-intensive companies (Chen, 2003). However, wages remained unchanged (see Figure 6). During the same period, employers’ notion of the ideal work ethic also did not change. In subsection 2.2, I discuss an ongoing debate in Taiwan. After decades of development, the concept of “Gong De Taiwan” proposed by the president of the Executive Yuan continues the same spirit and work ethic as “Pure Labor”.

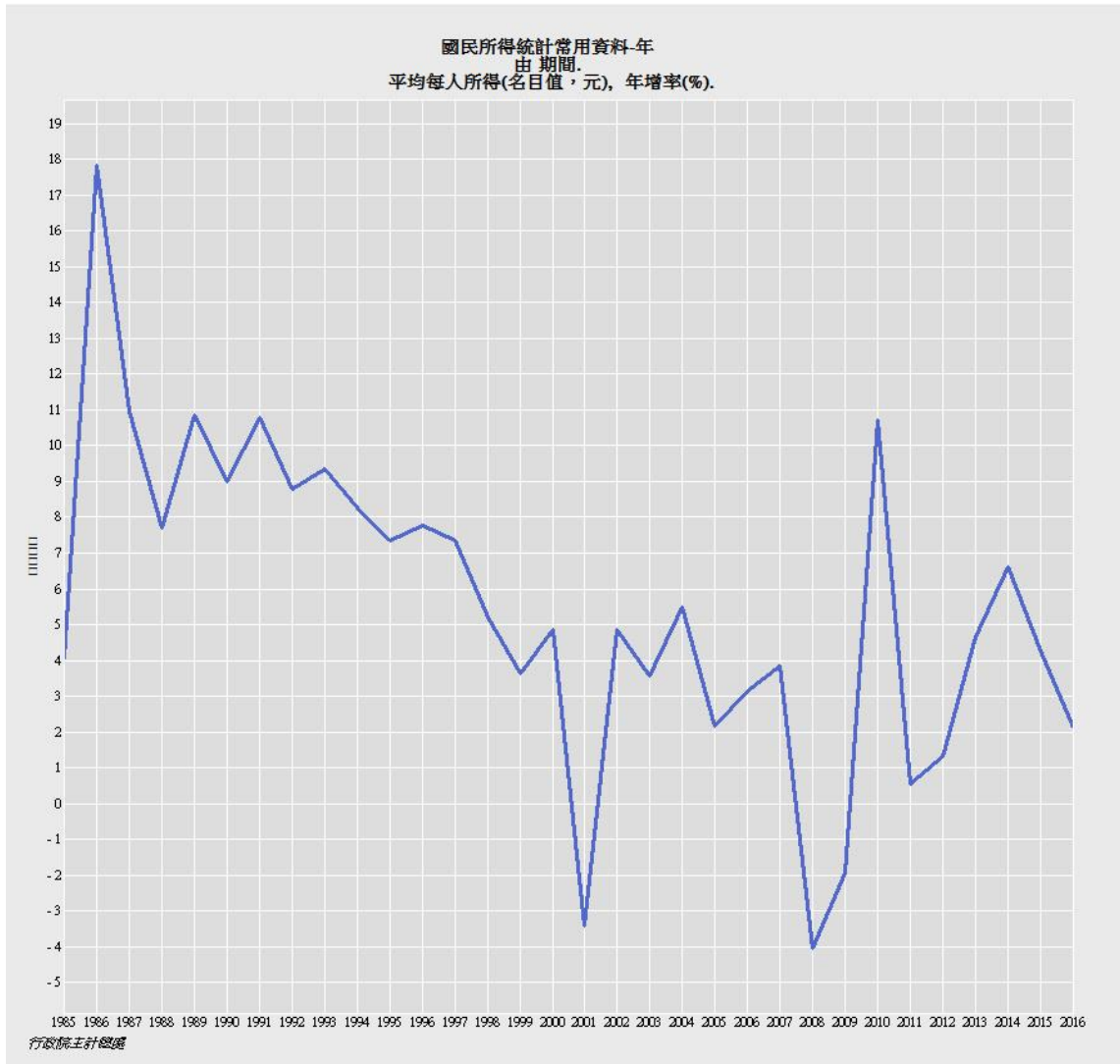


Figure 6 Average Wage Growth Rate from 1985 to 2016¹⁴

In subsection 2.3, I discuss how this work ethic developed in Taiwan and has become an important factor for researchers, as well as how Taiwanese managers in Latin

¹⁴ Sources: Made the figure from the website of Directorate General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan, R.O.C.
http://statdb.dgbas.gov.tw/pxweb/igraph/MakeGraph.asp?gr_type=0&gr_width=900&gr_height=850&gr_fontsize=12&menu=y&PLanguage=9&pxfile=NA8101A1A2019627493377_1p2.px&wonload=900&hnlod=850&rotate=&gr_legend=false

America operate subsidiary companies. The cultural values carried by the agents of transnational enterprises should be as important as the local cultural factors in studies of subsidiary factories like maquiladoras.

2.1 The “Pure Labor” Work Ethic

Taiwan’s economic growth after the 1970s marked the first time that Taiwan experienced modern capitalism. To achieve this economic growth, the government of Taiwan adopted an export-oriented strategy as the main economic guideline. The government designated several areas as export-oriented industrial zones in or near to major cities (Kung, 1994; Hsiung, 1996; Cheng and Hsiung, 1993; Chang, 1996). With the economy booming, thousands of small and medium-sized enterprises sprang up in Taiwan. These companies tended to have only a few employees working in small factories. Generally speaking, during the busy season, these enterprises could not achieve their production goals with their own labor forces and facilities. Therefore, they began to rely on multiple subcontractors to help them meet their production requirements. These subcontractors were even smaller in scale (Pan and Chang, 2001).

Most of these subcontractors were not factory owners; they were housewives. In order to develop the rural economy, the government promoted a “factories in the living

room”¹⁵ policy that encouraged housewives and other labor in rural areas to help local manufacturers by working for them at home. As a patriarchal society, male family members were employed in the formal economy. Elders and women were in charge of child care and other household work. Thus, housewives worked at home as subcontractors. The “factories in the living room” policy drew the rural population into the capitalist mode of production and allowed small and medium-sized enterprises to produce commodities in an extremely flexible manner and with minimum cost. These enterprises usually partnered with multiple subcontractors. After they received orders, they delivered raw material to the subcontractors. The subcontractors were then given a due date and short instructions or production guidelines. The agents showed up on the due date and picked up the finished goods. Since the subcontractors usually worked at home, their work process was not directly controlled and monitored by the enterprise. Therefore, all labor output was calculated on a piecework basis.

The output calculation had several features that allowed smaller enterprises to maximize flexibility. For example, according to G.S. Shieh (1997), most piecework in Taiwan at that time was calculated after the order was finished. Ideally, agents would communicate the per-piece rate to subcontractors beforehand, but in reality, subcontractors did not learn the rate before they received a paycheck. This was in spite of the fact that when factory contractors distributed orders to several cooperating subcontractors, they calculated the approximate salaries they would pay. The standard

¹⁵ This “factories in the living room” policy was similar to those putting-out production systems popular in Europe after the Industrial Revolution and at other times.

that the contractors followed was the average wage for manufacturing workers in their respective factories. Thus, contractors were able to keep their production expenditures to a minimum, but still respond to market demands in a timely manner.

Unlike in other countries, the income that Taiwanese subcontractors received was not calculated at a per-piece rate. They received payment similar to a monthly salary. However, unlike formal employees at factories, these subcontractors only received money and no other work-related benefits. Both contractors and subcontractors calculated payment in a similar way, which resulted in the subcontractors' income levels to be close to those of the factory workers. Although subcontractors sometimes complained that what they received did not correspond to the labor they put in, they understood and agreed with this arrangement because if they changed places with the contractors, they would do the same (Shieh, 1997). In this sense, consent existed between the contractors and subcontractors, and this consent became an important element of the "Pure Labor" work ethic. Shieh argued that Taiwan experienced the modern capitalistic mode of production through this putting-out production and salary system. From here, Taiwan developed their unique understanding of labor and capitalism.

This subcontracting system also allowed small and medium-sized enterprises in Taiwan the ability to compete in the global market, due to their flexibility and speed. This flexibility continues today. According to statistical data provided by the Taiwanese government, more than 95% of enterprises are of a small or medium size, employing more than nine million employees (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2017). Even though

the subcontracting system is now less popular than it was in the 1970s, the work ethic that developed still deeply affects most Taiwanese, including both employees and employers. Shieh argued that since the piecework wage system and contractor/subcontractor relationship were both popular in Taiwan during the 1970s, most workers experienced similar work and payment systems, from which the “Pure Labor” work ethic developed. In short, the ethic can be summarized as: “no work, no pay; you work, you get paid.” Both employers and employees tended to consider their employment relationship as something that could be understood and calculated only through money. Once the employment relationship is terminated, employers are free to use money to close the contract without any other additional costs, a process regulated by labor law in Taiwan. Even though the subcontract production system is less popular than it was in the 1970s, small and medium-sized enterprises still consider its speed and flexibility as reasons for them to continue to employ the process and compete in the global market.

Shieh also identified another reason the majority of Taiwanese workers accepted the concept of “Pure Labor”. Although the Taiwanese government did have labor laws such as the Labor Standard Act and Occupational Safety and Health Act, in practice, the government enforced these laws unevenly. Taiwanese workers did not have a sufficient social safety net or other methods of protection if they faced an accident or illegal dismissal. As a result, Taiwanese workers developed several strategies for protecting themselves. The most important method was to start a new business. A common path for workers seeking to start a new business in the 1970s was to work in a factory at the

beginning of their career. Once they learned specific skills in that industry, they would leave their original position and run their own factories. Starting a new business and becoming the boss allowed workers to leave the employment relationship, or at least change their position from employee to employer. In fact, many current employers and contractors were once employees and subcontractors. Consequently, most workers tend to consider the employment relationship and labor-related issues from the employer's position, and thus the concept of "Pure Labor" became widely adopted in the 1970s.

This is still true today, even though the economy has experienced a number of changes, especially with the growth of service and capital-intensive high-tech sectors. The subcontracting mode of production is rarely seen today. Despite these changes, the Taiwanese economy still relies heavily on long work hours and the low cost of human capital typical of the "Pure Labor" cultural notion. In fact, small and medium-sized enterprises are still the main employers in Taiwan's domestic market. Even though they no longer adapt the subcontracting system to achieve a flexible production schedule and respond to market demand in a timely manner, flexibility and speed remain the most important features allowing small and medium-sized enterprises to stay in business and compete with larger transnational corporations.

In sum, during the economic boom, the Taiwanese people developed the "Pure Labor" work ethic. This work ethic helped small and medium-sized enterprises in Taiwan gain flexibility and kept expenditures related to human capital at a minimum. It also affected the Taiwanese concept of work, which made the Taiwanese consider labor relations from the employer's point of view, and tolerate some aspects of exploitation.

Even after the mode of production changed and labor-intensive industries shifted to more capital-intensive and service-type industries, the strategies they adapted to compete in the market remained the same. There is no evidence to indicate that Taiwanese workers have benefitted from industrial upgrades, since the average work hours in a year still reach 2,100, and the average income has stayed at the same level it was in the 1990s¹⁶. Therefore, the work ethic remains observable, but with different rhetoric and decoration. The most recent version is “Gong De Taiwan¹⁷.”

2.2 “Gong De” Taiwan

At the time of writing, the Premiere of the Executive Yuan announced the Reform Act of the labor law, which took effect in September of 2017. Intending to “give small and middle scale enterprises more flexibility in order to enhance their competitiveness,” the Premiere declared the goals of the reform as follows: “to expand

¹⁶ According to statistical data from the Directorate General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, Executive Yuan of Taiwan, the average monthly salary in 1995 was 39,505 NTD (approximately \$1,317 USD). In 2016, the average monthly salary was 46,605 NTD (approximately \$1,553.50 USD). Considering the inflation of consumer prices over that period of time, the average salary barely remained on the same level.

¹⁷ Gong De is the English translation of 功德, two Mandarin characters that refer to a concept in Buddhism similar to merit. In many Buddhist forums or blogs in Taiwan, “gong de” is a term that is usually compared to “fu de (福德).” Both “gong de” and “fu de” refer to doing something good to other people on a superficial and behavioral level. For example, devoting money to building a temple or feeding monks or nuns can be “gong de” or “fu de.” The major difference between the two is that while doing “gong de,” individuals shouldn’t think about being paid back or benefitting from their behavior. The motivation should be totally unselfish and they should ask for no return. Conversely, “fu de” refers to charity or other behavior that can benefit others, which is expected to result in benefits for the giver during her/his life, they cannot gain merit in the afterlife. All the “fu de” they accumulate is reserved for this life. It cannot be transferred to the afterlife. To sum up, doing “gong de” or making merit is a concept that originated in Buddhism that encourages people to devote themselves to helping others. More importantly, all charity should not offer any sense of reward.

the total amount of overtime from 46 hours to 54 hours per month; the quantity of overtime can be shifted to another month, but the maximum overtime in three months should be no more than 138 hours.” Other goals included “to abolish [the rule that in every] seven days [workers] should have one rest day ... and replace it [with] two rest days in fourteen days;” “the rest time between each shift should be no less than eight hours [instead of 11 hours];” and “to reduce ... overtime payment.” This reform acts resulted in much discussion in Taiwanese society. Labor researchers did not favor the Reform Act because they believed it might harm the workers’ health and wellbeing.



Figure 7 Gong De Yuan Flyer (Author unknown)¹⁸

When the Premiere of the Executive Yuan gave a speech to care workers, he proposed the concept of “Merit Taiwan,” saying “long-term care work is tough and tedious and the salary is only slightly more than 30,000 NTD [approximately \$1,000 USD]. It is difficult to take good care of the elders, and the working conditions and environment might be rough and hard for you to endure. If you think this pay is not

¹⁸ This is a flyer that appeared during the debate of the Labor Reform Act. The flyer is designed and distributed by a group of protestors called "TWoverwork," the author was unknown.

Sources:

<https://www.facebook.com/TWoverwork/photos/a.156779881605083/156780391605032/?type=3&theater>

enough, please consider yourself as doing gong de [merit-based service].”¹⁹ He later defined his concept of Gong De Taiwan: “Taiwan is a merit society; you are doing charity, and you should be proud of yourself.” In Mandarin, “Gong De Taiwan” is pronounced gong de Taiwan. The meaning of “gong de” is similar to “making merit,” a concept in Buddhism. The Premiere adopted the concept of merit directly from Buddhism; it is related to Buddhist soteriology, and is about giving away personal belongings, both physical and spiritual, for a greater good. Making merit refers to individual behaviors devoted to people. Motivated by a totally unselfish willingness, an individual contributes to something that can help others, relieving them from their suffering or entering their emptiness (Adamek, 2005).

It is easy to see why when the Premiere used the term to encourage people working in the long-term care industry, devoting themselves to elders without asking for anything in return. However, the speech angered much of the public. Critics described him as a cold-blooded person who should be responsible for raising the minimum wage, but instead proposed charitable giving without receiving anything in return. Some protestors and pro-labor-right groups designed some flyers (see Figure 7) to sarcasm the Premiere Lai. Yet while the Premiere’s speech irritated the overworked and underpaid laborers in Taiwan, it is a reflection of the work ethic of “Pure Labor”. The Reform Act actually had the support of around half the population. Many business owners supported

¹⁹ To be clear, the Premiere did not argue that care workers deserved low pay, long work hours, and emotional burden. In fact, he declared that the government would definitely do something to enhance long-term care workers’ average salaries. Meanwhile, he asked care workers to consider themselves as doing charity and making merit.

him. Some openly welcomed the changes the Premiere proposed. Others asked for even longer working hours and more flexibility in the work schedule.

Soon after his announcement of the Reform Act, the Premiere emphasized that reform was necessary because under current labor law regulations, small and medium-sized enterprises would not be able to survive. The act gained the support of business owners, no matter the size of the company. For example, Shen Hsiung Hsu, president of the Chinese National Federation Industries, recognized the Premiere's proposal and predicted that this reform act would help enterprises gain the flexibility to arrange work schedules according to production demands (Li, 2017/10/31). Bo Feng Lin, the president of the Chinese National Association of Industries and Commerce, said the existing "evil" labor law should be reformed as soon as possible because most workers needed more money to support their families (Huang, 2017/12/05; Liberty Times, 2017/12/05). Under the current conditions, the government took away opportunities from workers who were willing to work overtime and gain more money. The Labor Reform Act would provide opportunities to workers to work more overtime. Thus, he stated that the government "finally" got on the right track to helping Taiwanese enterprises.

Besides business owners, many ordinary employees also supported the act or kept silent about the reform. Supporters tended to believe that the act would provide small and medium-sized enterprises with the flexibility and speed needed for them to compete in the global market. They also believed that the act provided advantages to workers, people who needed to sell their labor to make a living. Given this public support, the Premiere decided to speed up the process and tried to pass the act before the

Lunar New Year of 2018, despite the fact that around half the population was opposed to it (Yeh, 2018/01/17; Hsu, 2018/01/23). When parliament began the legislation process, unions and protestors demonstrated outside. However, the number of protestors was small, and parliament passed the Reform Act as expected on January 10, 2018. Soon after parliament finalized the legislation, the Premiere gave another speech to thank his “colleagues” who had worked so hard to pass the labor reform act, in accordance with the “people’s wish.” Now, “laborers can earn more, and the enterprises can gain ... flexibility.” When the Premiere proposed Gong De (Merit) Taiwan, it was an indication of how the highest government officer perceived human labor. He encouraged workers to consider themselves to be making merit if “they put more effort into their work than the return [the salary].” He used this concept to describe the current working conditions such as low pay and long working hours. He tried to comfort workers who were poorly paid and frequently overworked with this rhetoric of merit. Because the core concept of making merit demanded that individuals be unselfish with regards to the benefit they provided to others, these individuals were effectively told not to pursue any return for their effort.

This was not only the opinion of the Premiere. Local newspapers and other mass media from the time indicated that it was not uncommon for business people, corporation owners, and managers to share similar opinions. Some workers even shared this view, resulting in their denial that class conflict existed between managers and workers. A Taiwanese engineer working in a machine tool factory gave me her opinion of the employment relationship:

“Business owners compete with other owners for good business, and workers should do the same. They should compete with other workers for good jobs. The former sells service products and goods; the later sells one’s labor power. How could this lead to the conclusion of the opposition between workers and capitalists or ... conflict between these two groups? It is hard for me to understand. Workers feel they are suffering and believe this is all capitalists’ fault, so they want to take advantage of the capitalists, and then ... world peace will come. People who think in this way must have no startup experience or don’t change their occupations ... enough.”

This Taiwanese engineer was fully aware that employers and employees do not share the same interests, but she didn’t understand why these different interests would result in class conflict. From her perspective, the employer and employee should be in harmony because one group provides job opportunities and the other needs them to make a living. She believed that workers should help themselves if they were unsatisfied with their current working conditions. Workers should change jobs until they found one that satisfied them. During our interview, she showed a clear position, arguing that when it came to the economic and labor markets, the best government was the one that regulated the least. Also, she assumed that in the labor market, workers were totally free to choose their occupations and needed to be responsible for their own choices, regardless of their abilities or access to information. Regarding the government’s role in labor-related

issues, this Taiwanese engineer believed that workers were free and the only thing that a government should do is remove regulations to provide flexibility. Because workers were free in the labor market, they could change their jobs if they didn't like them. Therefore, the government should reduce regulations on labor and business to the minimum level, and that is why she supported the Labor Reform Act.

Another example is a public comment I saw on a very popular forum in Taiwan, PTT²⁰, in January 2018. The original conversation began with someone who was against the Labor Reform Act. The original poster argued that according to union law, the minimum number of workers required to form a union was 30. However, most small and medium-scale enterprises in Taiwan have less than 30 employees. Therefore, the unionization rate in Taiwan is approximately 7% of the labor force. Only a few workers are actually protected by unions. Even though the Labor Standards Act requires companies without unions to host a meeting between employer and employees once every three months, there is no punishment or fine for those companies that violate this law. Furthermore, such meetings, when held, are not effective in protecting workers' rights. It is not uncommon to hear companies assign their "preferred" employees to be representatives at such meetings. In such circumstances, the poster argued, the Labor Reform Act would further undermine and weaken workers' already-weak ability to

²⁰ PTT is the largest terminal-based bulletin board system (BBS) forum in Taiwan. It was established in 1995 and now has over 1.5 million registered users and over 100,000 users online at any time. There are more than 20,000 boards that discuss different topics and over 20,000 articles and 500,000 comments are posted every day.

protect themselves because the act allowed these meetings to decide most issues, such as flexible work schedules and rest hours between shifts.

This post attracted several supporters of the reform, motivating them to post their comments arguing that workers do have weapons to fight against unlawful employers and protect their rights. One supporter did not agree with the initial poster's argument. She provided personal experience, describing her resignation from a previous job. Her employment contract required her to work for at least one year; if she resigned inside the first year, there was an approximate \$17,000 USD fine. After half a year, she decided to resign but did not want to pay the fine; she explained that the working conditions were horrible. She began to collect information about the company's unlawful practices and told the manager that she had the information on hand. Because she collected these data, she eventually resigned without any fine. Her description of her personal story is as follows:

“Telling this story is not to say that I’m good, but I try to indicate that in my limited working experience, do workers have weapons to fight against employers? I believe actually they do, and these weapons are not limited [to the] Labor Standards Act. Workers should use these weapons to protect themselves, and this is their responsibility ... not waiting for the labor inspectors to check the labor conditions. If you met a terrible boss and you [didn’t] want to quit, obviously that means you agree with the working conditions.”

From her comment, it is not difficult to see that she did not believe that the law should be enforced to protect workers; workers should be aware that they cannot rely on the government to protect their rights. They need to use whatever they can to protect their own rights. The thoughts behind this comment correspond to the research of Shieh, who argued that the government does not protect labor, so workers facing bad employers must find solutions to labor-related issues on their own.

Thus, when comparing workers to those in other countries such as South Korea, Taiwanese employees lack a relative sense of class consciousness. Both employers and employees tend to operate from a capitalist point of view. As Shieh has argued, the government's attitude may be responsible for the current situation; when it comes to labor-related issues, since workers lack protection and sufficient aid from the government; their only hope is to improve their condition by starting a business and becoming the boss. This structural feature may be responsible for the concept of "Pure Labor", and the similar notion of Gong De Taiwan that is widely accepted by the Taiwanese.

Take the world-famous and largest electronic device assembly manufacturer, Foxconn, as an example. Terry Gou, the CEO, has a typical perspective illustrating the work ethic of "Pure Labor" and Gong De Taiwan that underscores the typical Taiwanese style of management. "How yellow is your urine?" is one of the questions Gou regularly asks his employees in order to evaluate if they are working hard enough. This question also illustrates his dissatisfaction with his employees' performance. The assumption is

that if Gou believes an employee is working hard, he will not have time to drink water; he will forget his own physical needs. Therefore, his urine will be yellow. Since the CEO of Foxconn has such strict means of measuring his employees' performance, it is no surprise how Foxconn manages its production bases in China.

From January to August, 2010, there were 17 workers who committed suicide in China. These suicides attracted the attention of the Western media and local scholars. A research team interviewed former Foxconn workers, including those who attempted suicide but failed to die. According to their testimony, Foxconn engages in military-style labor control across its multiple sites in China. Workers are not allowed to talk to one another during working hours. Restroom breaks must be approved by line leaders or supervisors. Because line workers' salaries are barely enough to rent a room outside the industrial park, most workers live in low-quality dormitories provided by Foxconn. This means that their lives after work are also monitored by their employer. In fact, most workers indicated that they had no such thing as after-work lives, since most of their holidays were spent on the production line after their managers requested they work overtime.

Foxconn is the largest electronics assembly enterprise in the world. Its biggest client is Apple. Almost all of Apple's products are produced by Foxconn, whose production schedules are synchronized with Apple's product release dates. Before such a date, most Foxconn workers experience high pressure and long working hours to meet Apple's requirements for quality and quantity. As a result, workers experience fatigue and other negative psychological symptoms related to their work. Besides the strict

discipline, order on the shop floor, and long working hours, Foxconn hires many student workers to fill their labor demands during the busy season and assure flexibility in their production. Under the heading of internships, Foxconn cooperates with local governments and vocational schools, requesting these institutions send their students to work at Foxconn. Thus, Foxconn receives thousands of cheap workers who are not protected by Chinese labor laws. Foxconn can easily send them back to school without paying them compensation when they are no longer needed (Chan and Ngai, 2010; Pun, Chan and Selden, 2015; Pun, Shen, Guo, Lu, Chan, and Selden, 2015; Pun, Lu, Guo, Chan, 2011). Some student workers have indicated that they had no choice but to follow orders to work at Foxconn. They conducted the same tasks as formal employees but received less pay. In this context, “hiring” student workers are a strategy Foxconn uses to reduce its production expenditures and achieve flexibility.

As the largest and most famous Taiwanese enterprise, Foxconn’s management exhibits a strong Taiwanese work ethic that conforms to the notion of “Pure Labor” and Gong De Taiwan. While Foxconn attempts to elicit as much productivity as possible from its workers, it also seeks to keep worker-related expenditures to a minimum. This is a perfect illustration of the current Taiwanese work ethic. When I selected potential fieldwork sites, Foxconn was my first choice because the corporation has a maquiladora in Ciudad Juarez, and I could find current and previous Taiwanese employees in Houston’s Taiwanese community. Once, I met a previous Foxconn employee at a friend’s birthday party. My friend knew that I was eager to interview Foxconn employees so she introduced me. We had a friendly conversation at the beginning, but

after I explained that labor-related topics were my primary research interest, he became nervous and ended our conversation. After the party, I wanted to interview him to learn more about labor relations at Foxconn, but he never answered my calls or replied to any of my messages.

In this section, I described the “Pure Labor” work ethic developed in Taiwan in the 1970s. The widely popular putting-out system and its unique payment method shaped workers’ experience of their work lives. The putting-out system allowed small and medium-sized enterprises to meet the quantity they needed to produce in a timely fashion. This system also helped enterprises control their production expenditures, keeping them at a minimum level and thus maximizing profits. The use of subcontractors disguised monthly salaries as a piecework system and accustomed Taiwanese people to the idea that employers would only pay for what they gained, and were not responsible for labor reproduction or employees’ wellbeing. Both Taiwanese employers and employees widely accepted this “Pure Labor” concept, which allowed Taiwanese enterprises to achieve flexibility and minimize production-related costs. “Pure Labor” continues to be observable in the managerial style employed in Taiwanese enterprises. Foxconn is one of the most prominent cases. As the world’s largest electronics assembly corporation, Foxconn creates profit by minimizing its expenditures on human capital while extracting maximum productivity from its workers. Though I have never entered a Foxconn-operated maquiladora, I found similar features at CMSC. In the following section, I will describe how this work ethic is shared by CMSC’s

general manager, Jackie Chan, and how it shapes his decision making and management style.

3. The Art of Management

In this section, I use the fieldwork data collected during my stay at CMSC to provide evidence that the cultural values introduced in maquiladoras by representatives from transnational companies play an important role in management. As discussed above, during my fieldwork, I mainly stayed at one maquiladora, CMSC, which was operated by a Taiwanese general manager, Jackie Chan. Most cases described in this section were collected from interviews with him and other managers (of various nationalities), and participant observations made on the shop floor. Besides my first-hand experiences and interview data collected from CMSC personnel, I also met employees of another Taiwanese-operated maquiladora. Despite the fact that I did not visit that maquiladora personally, according to their descriptions, these two maquiladoras shared common features that I believe are the result of similar Taiwanese cultural values.

This section contains two parts, one describing a discussion between Jackie Chan and myself about why CMSC is able to survive in the global television market when the previous Japanese corporation did not, and one in which I discuss labor-related issues such as how Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy affected the operation of CMSC. Three stories are described that delineate how the culturally defined work ethic and

values that Jackie Chan developed during his previous work experience in Taiwan and China affected the way he dealt with labor-related issues inside CMSC.

3.1. “Those Things that the Japanese Never Dare to Do”: Money Comes from Dangers

It was not too long after I came to Tijuana and began my fieldwork at CMSC that I learned that another Japanese corporation had originally constructed and occupied the site. Based on this history, I was eager to understand why the Japanese corporation did not continue its operation, while the Chinese endeavor was able to do so, even though it was located in the same place and assembled the same kinds of products. One day, when we had lunch together, I asked Jackie Chan this question. We began a conversation:

Hao-Yu (H): Since both the Japanese corporation and your company make televisions and monitors, why did your company want to purchase this factory when the previous corporation was considered unprofitable?”

Jackie Chan (J): Take a guess.

H: Hmmmm ... I have no idea. Is it because your company adopted different strategies to operate here? I am totally an outsider of international business and marketing, so I really have no clue.

J: Well, let’s put it this way. What do you think of the Japanese?

H: Japanese?

J: Yes. What do you think of them?

H: I will say that the Japanese people are polite, diligent, hardworking, and serious.

J: Yeah, the Taiwanese are hard working too. You're close. And?

H: What do you mean I'm close?

J: Ok. As you said, the Japanese people are serious, and they always follow the rules, right?

H: I think so.

J: That is the point.

H: What do you mean? Can you be more specific?

J: Ok. Like you said, the Japanese people are serious and they always follow the rules. Therefore, when they operate businesses here or anywhere else around the world, they obey the local laws. We Chinese²¹, we don't do that.

H: Wait, wait, wait. What do you mean you don't do that? You mean, some operations here are illegal?

J: I'm not saying that we do things illegally here, but there's always ... grey zone in the law, and we are good at it.

H: Can you give me an example?

J: Have you ever heard of NAFTA?

²¹ Taiwanese business people who have worked in China for a long time tend to call themselves Chinese. In fact, due to the complicated relationship and historical entanglement between the regimes across the Taiwan strait, many Taiwanese people retain the Chinese identity because they were taught in school that they were Chinese. Until now, identity was the most debated issue in the political arena. For Jackie Chan, Mexican managers were reminded not to call him Chinese, or he would be annoyed. In our conversation, though, he constantly called himself both Taiwanese and Chinese. Identity, for him, was interchangeable and replaceable. There was no conflict with being Taiwanese and Chinese at the same time.

H: Yes, the North America Free Trade Agreement. I know it.

J: So inside NAFTA, there are many regulations. For example, the percentage of imported parts for assembling televisions is strictly regulated by NAFTA. I forget what the exact percentage is. Let's say it is 75% percent of raw materials must be imported from the United States to Mexico. And what percentage of assembly must be finished inside the United States? For the Japanese, they usually strictly follow the regulations. That percentage is that percentage. There is no arrangement for this. But for our Chinese business people, it's all about if you have guts or not. Obviously, it is way cheaper to produce the raw materials we need in China rather than in the United States, so we use some strategies to obey the regulation on the one hand but still import as many raw materials from China as possible on the other hand.

H: How do you do that?

J: Like I said, we need to import raw materials from the United States, right? So, we import those goods from China and ship them to California. We have a registered company there in order to import the necessary goods. After the customs clearance, the goods are exported from the US to Tijuana. Now these raw materials are not from China, but from the United States. Moreover, NAFTA offers a tax discount for both imported raw materials from the United States to Mexico and finished products from Mexico to the United States. Thus, we still follow the rules and everything is legal, but this arrangement helps us to save a tremendous amount of money to produce in the United States. We need to pay the overseas

shipping fee, but it is worth it and way cheaper than producing those things in the United States. Besides, the facility is the same. You know we have very efficient and huge factories in China, right? We can finish most of the process there, and then ship the partially completed products here to finish the final process. But Japanese people will never do that. If NAFTA says they need to import raw materials from the United States, they will build a factory somewhere in the United States to produce those materials. Japanese people are more cautious, and they will follow local commercial, trade, and labor laws. Therefore, they usually have much higher production costs than we have. This is why we can create profit but the previous Japanese corporation couldn't. You mentioned that you are interested in culture. This is a cultural difference between the Japanese and Chinese.

From his description, the cultural difference lays in the willingness to obey local laws, or at least the level at which laws should be obeyed. He explained why CMSC was able to create profit by finding loopholes in the law. During our conversation, he did not show any sign that such behavior was not inappropriate, nor was he uncomfortable telling an outsider about it. In other words, even though we might already understand that each corporation has its own culture, regardless of what that culture is, it plays an important role in influencing managerial strategies and the ability to compete in the global market. Furthermore, for Jackie Chan, finding legal loopholes in laws is one example of the Taiwanese enterprise he worked for creating advantages for itself in the market.

Jackie Chan provided a vivid image of how Taiwanese enterprises gain flexibility for their businesses. This flexibility not only refers to a flexible production schedule and labor arrangement, but also their willingness to take advantage of legal loopholes. That is to say, while Jackie Chan managed CMSC, a maquiladora in Tijuana, Mexico, his business strategies revealed that the ability to be flexible in any possible aspect was a core concern of his decision making process. According to Jackie, his family in Taiwan owned a small size factory from the time that the putting-out system was popular in Taiwan, and therefore, he was deeply immersed in the Taiwanese work environment from his early age. In this context, pursuing flexibility in production and human capital expenditures showed how Jackie Chan was influenced by the “Pure Labor” work ethic that he developed from previous work experience in Taiwan.

3.2 *“Why Don’t They Work Overtime?”*

Before I began my fieldwork at CMSC, I had never had a chance to take a close look at a factory. I did have a relative who owned a very small factory that made electronic products for contractors back in the 1980s, but I was too young to understand how it was operated. CMSC was my first experience with the actual work life on the assembly line. The first couple of days after I arrived at CMSC, I did not have a chance to meet the general manager, Jackie Chan. He was in Taiwan for a family emergency. I began my work on the assembly line several days before he returned to Tijuana. After he

was back at work, I arranged for the first interview at the earliest convenient time. In fact, this was his lunch break and not leisure time.

In the first interview, I offered a simple summary of the issues that I wanted to discuss with him. There were four topics I hoped I could touch upon at that time, though we never really finished with all four topics. First, I hoped to learn more about his personal history. Before I arrived, we had only exchanged a couple of emails and two phone calls. I barely knew him, his background, and the reason why he chose his career and eventually ended up in Tijuana. Second, I tried to make sense of my recent experience as an assembly line worker. My body hurt almost every afternoon after two o'clock, and I could tell that most of the workers felt the same way. Therefore, I was curious about whether this pressure of production had any specific purpose or philosophy behind it.

As the third topic, I wanted to see what criteria Jackie Chan used to evaluate his workers. In her book *Gender in Production: Making Workers in Mexico's Global Factories*, Salzinger provided several case studies of maquiladoras, indicating that each manager had their own image of the ideal worker. These different images may come from personal preference, cultural and educational backgrounds, and more importantly, their ideas about typical Mexican workers (Salzinger, 2003). Therefore, I wanted to ask Jackie Chan what criteria he used to choose workers. Moreover, despite the fact that I was beginning my study, I literally knew almost nothing about the factory. However, I was eager to understand his experiences managing a maquiladora in Mexico and the history of this maquiladora. These comprised the fourth set of questions. Therefore, our

first interview was focused on these topics. There we began a conversation that eventually went far beyond my expectations.

In the first interview with Jackie Chan, I began by briefly introducing myself. Then, we started our conversation about the ideal worker. I expected to hear something profound, or a simple image described that was formulated after delicate calculation and meditation. Instead, Jackie Chan gave me a cliché in Mandarin, as follows:

“All Chinese²² bosses are the same. Everyone wants their horses to run fast, but no one wants to feed their horses. Of course, you know this is impossible, but how to make horses eat the least but run the fastest? That is the art of management.”

The original version in Mandarin is “You want horses that run fast, but you don’t want them to eat.” This phrase is a metaphor showing it is impossible to get a good outcome without any effort. The closest English proverb is: “If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys.” Regardless of its original meaning, Jackie Chan used it to describe how one should manage a factory properly. After he told me this, I thought it was cliché and did not treat the comment seriously. However, as the interview continued, I began to realize that he was serious about what he called the “art of management.” It wasn’t until I spent time on the shop floor that I realized how this philosophy was applied in daily practice.

²² The word “Chinese” has different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. The KMT government taught the Taiwanese people that first they are Chinese and then they are Taiwanese. However, here, Chinese refers to citizens of the Republic of China. In other contexts, Chinese can also refer to citizens of the People’s Republic of China, or to people who culturally define themselves as Chinese. The word “Chinese” as used by Jackie Chan refers to bosses in the two Chinas.

After I spent several months on the assembly line, I began to know more people both on the line and in the office. I started to make sense of how Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy motivated the daily operation of CMSC. During the break time, workers barely had a chance to sit on a bench but only could sit on the ground or stood against the wall to rest (as Figure 8 shows). For example, almost all of the facilities for workers were old and poorly maintained. The number of restrooms was insufficient for all of the workers on one line to use them during break time, especially for women workers. Most spent their ten-minute afternoon break waiting in a long line for the restroom. The situation was similar in the food court. The factory's food court and cafeteria could hold 100 people at a time. Since the cafeteria was not large enough, workers needed to take shifts to rest and have lunch. The insufficient facilities required that workers wait in long lines, sometimes two-thirds of their allotted rest time. There were two vending machines that sold cookies and sodas. Because many of the workers brought their breakfast and lunch to work, the factory had six microwaves for them to reheat their food. This, also, was not enough for the number of workers who wanted to use them. Many Mexican senior managers who used to work for the Japanese company told me that they had several times suggested to Jackie Chan, the general manager, that he improve the facilities, but the answer was always no.

The factory's meal plan is another example. At the beginning of my stay, employees had to pay for their food, including breakfast and lunch. Approximately three months later, the company began to pay for employees' lunches. The human resources manager told me that the policy change was due to the fact that recently they had had

some difficulty in hiring people. Therefore, they decided to increase the benefits they offered. One month later, once the factory had a stable labor force for the busy season, management changed the policy again. The company paid half the price of the meal, and employees paid the rest. This policy lasted until the day I left the factory and returned to Texas.



Figure 8 A CMSC Worker During a Break.

There were many temporary workers in the factory during the busy season, and they traveled from one maquiladora to another. When I shared lunch and gossip with them, they told me about the food courts and meal plans at other factories. Most workers were not satisfied with the meal plan and food served at CMSC, as compared to other maquiladoras at which they had worked. One temporary worker told me that a famous Korean electronics factory located in the same area usually had two main dishes offered

and several different sides. At CMSC, however, there was only one main dish and two sides; there was no choice. Furthermore, the menu remained the same for months, unlike at other companies that provided different menus almost every month.

The previous Japanese company also treated their employees better, according to a Mexican senior manager at CMSC. The factory paid for the meal plan in full. Also, unlike CMSC, the Japanese company hired a chef and staff to operate the cafeteria. The same senior managers told me that the Japanese manager always encouraged the chef to improve the quality of the food. Therefore, the chef enthusiastically found fine foods and other sources to prepare in the food court. At CMSC, the staff who served the food were contract workers. The factory did not hire a chef. In fact, at breakfast, the factory asked a street vendor to sell burritos and juice in the food court. They came into the factory with a cooler full of burritos. Though different types of burritos were offered, the overall menu never changed. During lunch time, staff from the contracted food service company would bring the food to the service desks. Generally speaking, since they usually knew the number of workers in the factory the day before they arrived, the quantity of food was sufficient. However, I once conducted an oral survey of random workers,²³ both CMSC employees and temporary workers. They considered the food served in the food court to be “mal” (not good), or “maso menos” (so so). None considered the food good.

²³ Because I could not tell if the Mexican cuisine was good or bad when I was at CMSC, during the lunch break, I asked almost every worker I met how they felt about the food at CMSC. Since I constantly worked with different workers and shared a table with them during the lunch break, I had the chance to conduct an oral survey and collect their opinions about the food.

The harsh and tiresome work schedule, insufficient facilities for workers, and meal plan were three aspects of CMSC's daily operation that revealed Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy. The factory provided for the workers' basic needs but put minimum effort into improving the work environment and quality of the facilities, as compared to other maquiladoras in the Tijuana area. This illustrates how deeply Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy penetrated into every aspect of daily operation. By providing minimum facilities and necessities to workers but attempting to extract the most productivity from them, we can see how the Taiwanese "Pure Labor" work ethic affected the production arrangement at CMSC.

Besides expressing this managerial philosophy, during my stay, Jackie Chan constantly asked me to do him favors. At that time, the factory often experienced high turnover and absentee rates in the Mexican personnel. Jackie Chan asked me to determine the reason for this. He also asked me to help answer the question: "Why won't the workers work overtime?" I remember one day after the morning meeting of managers, he walked to my desk and asked me this question again. "Hao-Yu, could you help me to find out the reason why they don't want to work overtime? It is so weird ... they earn so little but still refuse to work overtime. Please help me to find the answer, OK?"

To me, the high absentee and turnover rates were obvious and easy to explain. CMSC paid its employees the second lowest weekly salary of 100 maquiladoras that took part in a survey, according to a Mexican senior manager. It did not provide transportation, and the meal plan was notorious in the Tijuana area. All of these features

affected workers' willingness to be at work and their happiness while there. In this sense, it was not too difficult to answer the question about high absenteeism and turnover, and many Mexican managers had already told Jackie Chan the answer and solution, but he took no action to solve it. His second question caught my attention because it was different from my impressions; therefore, after he asked me, I went to the human resources office and checked with the HR staff, confirming the actual situation regarding overtime. I had the opposite impression regarding this matter. I frequently saw line leaders asking people to work overtime and collecting the signed consent forms. Line leaders usually began around noon, inquiring with workers if they wanted to work overtime. Line leaders would approach each worker and ask: "Tiempo extra? Tiempo extra;" several minutes later, they would collect the consent forms from the workers who had agreed to work overtime.

The HR staff confirmed my impression. Most workers were willing to participate in overtime work. Even though they were only willing to participate in the first hour of overtime, most days the factory was able to find enough hands to operate at least one assembly line. Later, I told Jackie Chan about the information I found in the HR office, and that I was not sure what kind of answer he wanted from me. Workers did participate in overtime. He told me why he asked me that question. After he did so, I realized that he had the impression that Mexican workers did not like to work overtime because he compared Mexican workers to the Chinese and Taiwanese workers he used to manage. According to his personal experience, before he came to Mexico and managed this maquiladora, he used to work in both China and Taiwan. He told me that from his

previous experience, he believed that Chinese workers were more docile and easier to discipline than Mexicans. Chinese workers were willing to follow the rules and orders, no matter what kind of attitude the managers had. Jackie Chan said, “They are always ready and willing to work overtime.”

Then I asked him what the ideal worker was like. He didn’t reply directly, but when he asked me to answer his question about overtime, his idea of the ideal worker emerged from his comparison between Chinese and Mexican employees. He compared workers from both countries but used Chinese workers as the standard to judge and measure the Mexican workers he managed. Also, when Jackie Chan explained why he asked this overtime question, he told me that he thought all of the workers did not earn enough, so they should reasonably like to work more to gain more income. At least, that was the case in China, so he did not understand why Mexican workers were reluctant to work overtime.

According to Mexican managers at CMSC who had visited the factory that Outstanding Technology operated in China, the discipline and order there was harsh and rigorous. Vino, one of the senior managers who had also worked for the Japanese enterprise for twelve years, had spent another seven years with CMSC at the time of his interview. He had traveled to Japan for his previous work, and China to receive advanced training and learn about the operation of the two factories. He described his first impression when he visited the factory in China:

“You know, Hao-Yu, after they renegotiated the employment contract with us, they sent us to the headquarters and factory in China. I spent months there. You know what? They let us visit their production base, and the first thing I learned there was that workers were not allowed to talk for the entire day. Even if their stations did not have raw materials to assemble, all those workers could do was stand up and wait. The management there was like the military. It might be more effective but this military style management could not work here.”

In another case, Enrique, a line leader for CMSC, began his career working for the Japanese, before CMSC purchased all of the facilities. His experience was similar to what Vino described. When I asked him about his personal experience and career trajectory working for the Japanese and Chinese, he described his training in China:

Hao-Yu (H): How long have you worked for this company?

Enrique (E): I worked for this company from the very beginning, till now. It has already been nine years.

H: So what did you do before this job?

E: The same one. I worked for the Japanese here in the same factory; now, it is already 16 years that I worked here.

H: Wow, that was such a long time. So could you tell me if you think there are any differences between Japanese and Chinese bosses?

E: They are very different. Did you know, I have gone to both Japan and China?

H: Of course I didn't know. So, tell me. How was it?

E: I went to both countries for training. I spent two months in Japan, and I forget ... about three weeks in China.

H: So you did you receive similar training in these two countries?

E: Not really. When I went to Japan, we took many classes and practiced in the Japanese factory for several weeks. In the Chinese factory – oh my god, they really have a huge factory – there are so many workers there. Thousands of workers there, and they have many automatic machines that we don't have here. When we were in China, we also took some courses, but we did not practice in the factory. We just visited the factory and took a tour. The factory there was so huge and so different.

H: What do you mean by so different?

E: Workers there could not talk. They just sat there and worked all day long. I did not like that kind of environment. Their bosses and line leaders were yelling all the time. The air was so intense and nervous. I was glad that I did not need to work there.

I was not able to ask Enrique to compare the factories of the different corporations at which he had worked. He only discussed the Chinese one but mentioned that the atmosphere was more intense in the Chinese factory than at CMSC. The comments from Enrique and Vino supported Jackie Chan's description of Chinese workers and management in Chinese factories. It also confirmed how Jackie Chan's previous work

experience shaped his notion of the ideal worker and affected the way he interpreted the situation he encountered at CMSC in Tijuana.

Vino and Enrique described how workers at the Chinese factory faced more rigorous discipline and order on the shop floor than did employees at CMSC. Each morning, the line leader or production manager got every worker together and gave a short speech and delivered the daily production goal. Because the short meeting occurred before the regular work hours, workers needed to arrive at work before their start times. During work time, workers were not allowed to talk to one another. Even talking to production assistants or logistics people was prohibited. If a worker ran out of the production material they needed, the only thing they could do was raise their hand and wait for the production assistant or line leader. A similar situation occurred when workers encountered production problems. They could not call for help but instead had to stand up and wait. On the shop floor at CMSC, the atmosphere tended to be more relaxed. Workers could talk to each other at any time. In fact, CMSC actually prohibited workers from talking to each other on the assembly line, but that rule was ignored. Both line leaders and production managers tacitly consented to workers chatting with one another during work, so long as the talking did not affect productivity. Despite that, there were still conflicts and quarrels between line leaders and workers, but only occasionally. During my time on the assembly line, I felt that the atmosphere was not intense or overly serious.

Furthermore, Chinese engineers who came to Tijuana to provide temporary support also told me that in their factories in China, line leaders there enjoyed more

authority. According to their testimony, line leaders were usually in charge of a team, and each team would form a production unit. Line leaders could order their team members to work overtime without their consent. Chinese line leaders had many strategies for “encouraging” workers to participate. From the Chinese engineers’ description, most line leaders were experts at applying peer pressure. They could manipulate team members to encourage other workers to work overtime, or sometimes they simply yelled at those who did not want to work overtime to force them. In such circumstances, it was not surprising to learn that Jackie Chan wanted me to determine why Mexican workers were reluctant to work overtime. Chinese workers really did not have a choice regarding whether or not to work overtime, but Mexican workers did because labor laws protected workers’ right to decide for themselves.

Despite the fact that Jackie Chan considered military-style management to be the ideal way of managing CMSC, this never actually occurred. There was a gap between his ideal and the reality, and the gap was caused by Mexican workers’ straightforward reaction to harsh management techniques. Both Mexican managers and line leaders believed that making workers happy while working was crucial to achieving the necessary quantity of production. These factors were responsible for the gap between Jackie Chan’s ideas and the reality that occurred on the shop floor.

Another event also underscored how Jackie Chan understood his workers and how he tried to implement his managerial philosophy to improve productivity. I was working as a repairman, confident with the skill that I learned from other experienced workers. I thought I might stay in this position until the end of my fieldwork. The general manager

walked into the production area and talked to the production manager. After he was done, he called me to approach him. I left the work to a temporary repairman and followed him to sit on a bench. When I asked what I could do for him, he gestured to me to sit down and watch the line flow. The line flowed smoothly that day, and we kept watching. Half a minute later, he told me the reason he wanted to talk to me. He wanted me to watch the line flow was because he wanted to “promote” me to be an industrial engineer.

That was the first time I heard the term “industrial engineer.” I had no clue what the meaning was, not to mention what kind of work an industrial engineer might perform. I told him I did not know what an industrial engineer did, so he explained it to me. According to Jackie Chan, industrial engineers help the factory balance the line, which means that each production station should spend almost an equal amount of time as the others performing the task assigned to them. If the line is not balanced, then no matter how experienced a worker is, the line will not run smoothly. Therefore, making sure the line flows smoothly is the most important task for any industrial engineer.

To achieve that goal, an industrial engineer should not only constantly stay on the line and count the time for each stop, but also one needs to observe the spatial arrangement of each station. Moreover, the body movements of workers should be an aspect that an industrial engineer should study.

From then on, I was assigned to be an industrial engineer (IE) and learned from Jackie Chan how to do the job properly. From our conversations, I began to learn his purpose in assigning me to work in this department. He wanted me to help the IE

manager improve productivity because the IE department lacked workers. I learned there are multiple ways of improving productivity. For example, each assembly station needed space and a table upon which to place the raw material. The arrangement of these spaces and tables was critical to line flow. If the workers felt it was inconvenient to reach for the materials they needed, that would slow down production. Therefore, the IE needed to arrange spaces and tables appropriately. Another possibility for increasing productivity is the total number of stations. The logistics route of the packing department is another element crucial to improving productivity, increasing or decreasing stops to find the best and most efficient production line. If the packing area cannot accommodate the goods waiting to be packed or the completed products cannot be sent to the warehouse on time, the entire line slows down.

For Jackie Chan, the most important task of an industrial engineer was extracting more productivity from the workers. Industrial engineers performed their jobs by changing workers' body movements or the assembly procedure. They needed to be experts; knowing the special tricks of each assembly station and helping workers find the most comfortable and fastest ways of performing their tasks. For Jackie Chan, improving productivity meant improving the workers and not the working conditions. His Taylorism-based philosophy was that work efficiency was gained by the proper discipline of workers' body movements. Changing the setting of the work station and adjusting workers' body movements were the most efficient and cheapest ways of enhancing productivity without increasing cost. This Taylorism-like notion of body control reflected both Jackie Chan's personal managerial philosophy and the cultural

values that he shared with other Taiwanese managers. He wanted to extract maximum productivity from workers without improving their working condition or making them happier and thus willing to work harder.

Jackie Chan applied his philosophy throughout his factory. Though the workers may not have been aware of this, I could see their reactions to his managerial style. When I asked workers how they felt about working at CMSC, they told me they were not happy. They complained about the low salary, dirty and insufficient restrooms, expensive lunches, broken vending machines, and the manager's attitude. Based on their opinions, I asked the Mexican managers their thoughts on the circumstances, and most told me that they fully acknowledged how bad it was but could do nothing about it.

One Mexican manager told me that after the factory changed from Japanese ownership to being run by Outstanding Technology; he suggested that the general manager increase workers' salaries in order to keep experienced employees at the factory. However, the general manager did not listen to him. Later, he suggested that the factory could use funds from the recycling to improve the food court and other facilities, money that accumulated from selling the paper boxes that contained the raw material shipped from China to Tijuana. This would make the workers more comfortable and happier. The general manager turned down his proposal without any explanation. He described his experience as follows:

Generally speaking, when I proposed any human-related improvements to the general manager, I felt he was not interested in them. I suggested several [things]

to him, but he declined all of them, and eventually he stopped asking me to join the morning meeting.

More than one Mexican manager shared similar stories with me, and in fact, the workers did feel unhappy about their working conditions and environment. Their testimony indicated that there existed a consistent policy applied by Jackie Chan that reflected the Taiwanese notion of “Pure Labor”. He silently turned down human-related improvement proposals, showing that he did not consider improving working conditions or providing more work-related benefits as ways of giving workers an incentive to work harder. This corresponds to the “Pure Labor” work ethic in that with the putting-out system in which both contractors and subcontractors agreed that the payment a subcontractor received was based only on their labor outcome. Other work-related benefits such as paid vacations, sick leave, maternity leave, and pensions were not offered. This “Pure Labor” notion of work-related benefits is why Jackie Chan was reluctant to improve working conditions and increase work benefits even if it were to result in enhancing the productivity of workers. He would rather use his Taylorism-based method instead.

The last thing that I want to describe in this section is an event that occurred on the last day of my fieldwork. I believe all anthropologists and anthropology apprentices share a common concern for reciprocity with their informants, and I am no exception. In my case, reciprocity is complicated because at CMSC, workers and managers did not share a common interest. Therefore, finding a proper way to return favors was difficult

for me during my time in Tijuana. I finally found a solution and decided to share it with Jackie Chan and Ying Shan, his special assistant. On the last day before I departed from Tijuana to return to Texas, I arranged a short meeting with them. Because I already learned that it would be useless to suggest to them that they improve productivity and enhance workers' happiness by increasing salaries, I decided to suggest something different that they might consider more "affordable" and helpful.

When I was working as an ordinary worker with Mexican colleagues, I realized that Coca Cola was unique to their diet as Figure 9 shown in the right; Mexican people consumed the most Coca Cola company beverage products in the world. Generally speaking, Mexican people love to have a bottle of Coke with their meals. It was the same for the Mexican workers at CMSC. During lunchtime, most workers were willing to pay twelve pesos extra to buy a bottle of Coke.

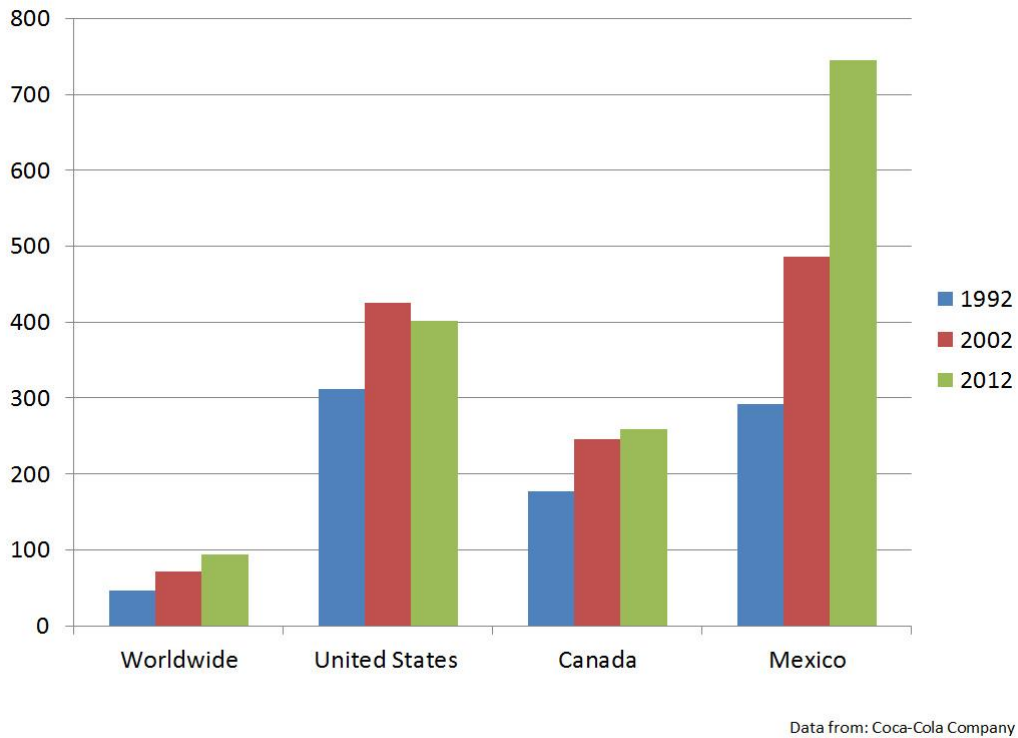


Figure 9 Coca Cola Per Capita Consumption²⁴

Considering that the workers’ incomes were so low, 60 pesos per week for Coca Cola would be a burden for some. In contrast, to have a Coca Cola fountain serving free Coke to workers might make them feel happier while working at CMSC. Moreover, since workers share information with potential employees, a Coca Cola fountain would be an attractive feature for the company, improving its reputation in Tijuana’s labor market. The fountain and drinks would not cost the company much, even if they allowed the workers to drink the beverage for free. In this sense, I believed that the purchase of a Coca Cola fountain machine to serve free Coke to CMSC’s workers would be an

²⁴ Original data from: <https://www.coca-colacompany.com/cs/tccc-yir2012/pdf/2012-per-capita-consumption.pdf>

affordable solution, improving the working conditions for workers and thus decreasing the turnover and absentee rates by making them feel happier. At least they would feel like the company had improved the food but not diet. Therefore, I tried to persuade Jackie Chan that purchasing a Coca Cola fountain would be a very wise investment. After I proposed this idea, both Jackie Chan and Ying Shan told me they would consider it. However, at the time of writing, according to informants who still work at CMSC, the fountain is still absent from the food court.

The events described above delineate how a Taiwanese general manager operated a maquiladora in Mexico. Jackie Chan, the general manager of CMSC, brought his work ethic and cultural values to Tijuana and operated the firm accordingly.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I first described how cultural factors, especially those of representatives of international corporations, have long been neglected in maquiladora research. Most scholars have focused on how capitalism and international corporations interact with local cultures, such as in Ong's (2010) discussion of how Malaysian workers responded to modern industrialization and global capitalism through the local culture (Ong, 2010), or Tiano's (1994) study of how local patriarchal ideology was used

in maquiladoras to discipline young female workers in Mexico. Other scholars have taken different paths in their study of maquiladoras, but the cultural elements of global corporations went unexamined.

In this context, I attempted to incorporate the cultural elements that representatives of international enterprises brought to their production sites in other countries and examine how these cultural elements affect maquiladora management. To do so, I described the work ethic developed during the Taiwanese economic boom. Taiwanese sociologist G.S. Shieh called this work ethic “Pure Labor”, a notion originating in the putting-out system and its unique piecework rate of payment to subcontractors that created an environment that allowed Taiwanese enterprises flexibility in their production and labor-related expenditures. This ability to be flexible remains critical to Taiwanese enterprises, especially those small and medium in size, if they are to compete in and survive the current competition in the global market. For Taiwanese workers, this “Pure Labor” work ethic affects the way they conceptualize the employment relationship and labor.

The “Pure Labor” work ethic developed at a time when the state did not enforce labor laws and most Taiwanese felt that workers were on their own in terms of protecting themselves against employers. This motivated the Taiwanese people to start their own businesses and become employers or managers. This trend made the “Pure Labor” work ethic more popular and commonly shared among the Taiwanese. As a cultural value, the “Pure Labor” concept became deeply embedded in the business and management decision making process. I used CMSC and its general manager, Jackie

Chan, to demonstrate how this work ethic affected Taiwanese enterprises operated and managed in other countries

Jackie Chan, as a Taiwanese man born to a family that to this day operates a tiny factory in a peripheral part of Taipei City, was the general manager of CMSC from the first day Outstanding Technology purchased the facilities from a famous Japanese corporation. He grew up in an era that saw Taiwan experience an economic boom and was deeply affected by the “Pure Labor” work ethic. In the section of this research entitled "The Art of Management," I described his managerial philosophy and how he applied it to CMSC’s daily operations. By providing the second-lowest salaries out of 100 maquiladoras operated in the Tijuana area and minimum work-related benefits, as well as using temporary workers to fill most of the production line shifts during the busy season, CMSC was able to control its labor costs. By requesting that employees regularly work overtime, CMSC was able to extract the most productivity from its workers as possible. This production arrangement reflected the "You work and you get paid, no work, no pay" logic common among the Taiwanese, an important part of the “Pure Labor” work ethic.

Other elements that illustrated Jackie's Chan’s management style and related beliefs included his question about why his workers were unwilling to work overtime and his ideas regarding what industrial engineers should do. Moreover, using temporary workers allowed CMSC to be flexible when responding to market needs in different seasons. This labor arrangement was similar to the putting-out system, always keeping workers such that they are easy to call to work during the busy season but also easy to

dismiss when the busy season is over. In this context, we can see how the “Pure Labor” work ethic, a work ethic that originated in Taiwan, now deeply affects the daily operation of maquiladoras in Mexico and US border cities. Jackie Chan believed that adopting strategies like these marked the difference between CMSC and the factory’s previous Japanese owners and allowed CMSC to survive the severe competition in the television and monitor industry.

How did the Mexican employees experience and respond to a production arrangement guided by the “Pure Labor” work ethic? And how did they understand and interpret their work experience at CMSC, as compared to other maquiladoras? The answers to these questions will provide a different perspective from which to observe how the cultural aspects of representatives of international enterprises affect local workers' work and lives. I will address these questions in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

WE ARE LIKE PARTS OF A MACHINE



Figure 10 A Glance of CMSC

1. Exotic Experiences Inside the Firm

Previous maquiladora studies have described one issue that remains unchanged by other factors: foreign enterprises come and go, but the Mexican people remain. After the Mexican government launched the Border Industrialization Program in 1965, the Mexican people began providing a stable and inexpensive labor force, fulfilling the demands of foreign enterprises relocating their production houses to border cities. In the last half-century, both Mexico and the United States have experienced a number of economic fluctuations. Border cities have also undergone waves of development and economic regression. The same factory might shift ownership several times. Yet regardless of economic shifts and changes in ownership, a significant portion of the Mexican population continues to find jobs in maquiladoras. How these workers experience employers of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds is a key interest for researchers seeking to understand the daily lives of those inside maquiladoras.

For example, CMSC's workers experience different cultures in their everyday lives on the shop floor. As mentioned in the previous chapter, CMSC used to be owned and operated by a Japanese corporation. That Japanese corporation had, over the course of its ownership, managed the factory for a longer period of time than had the current Taiwanese owner, CMSC, at the time of writing. Some of the Mexican line workers and managers had worked for the Japanese corporation for more than a decade before they became CMSC employees. Other CMSC employees had never worked for the Japanese employer, but before coming to CMSC, they worked for other maquiladoras owned and

operated by other transnational corporations. Moreover, because the turnover rate is high and maquiladoras have recently increased their use of temporary workers, employees regularly migrate from one maquiladora to another. Each corporation has a different managerial system and cultural background.

In this chapter, I discuss Mexican employees' experiences with foreign ownership and employers during their daily work lives. Generally speaking, inside a maquiladora, Mexican employees, including managers and engineers but not line workers, often occupy mid- to high-level managerial positions. People in these positions might experience foreign ownership differently from Mexican line workers. In CMSC's case, managers and mid-level local engineers had more opportunities to interact and cooperate with the Taiwanese general manager and Chinese engineers. Line workers rarely had the chance to meet the Chinese engineers, not to mention the Taiwanese general manager.

Lacking opportunities to personally interact with foreigners at the factory did not prevent line workers from experiencing cultural differences in relation to their employers. The managerial style and strategies for labor control deeply penetrated workers' daily lives. As discussed in Chapter III, every day Jackie Chan's work ethic and cultural values deeply affected his decision-making and managerial policies for the shop floor. Line workers' experiences with foreign ownership naturally came from the orders they received on the shop floor, disciplinary actions they encountered, benefits they received from the factory, and policies regarding labor control. Mexican managers, line leaders, and assembly workers all felt themselves to be disposable parts of a larger machine. In

this chapter, I describe what it meant for my subjects to work at a Taiwanese owned and operated maquiladora and explain why the Mexican employees felt undervalued.

Reasons include feeling like outsiders in their workplace, wage reductions after the change in ownership, and feelings of alienation caused by long hours and workloads. I will elaborate further in the sections that follow.

In Section 1, I discuss how Mexican managers and engineers experienced the Taiwanese style of management. For these individuals, lacking work autonomy and not being fully authorized to make decisions according to their professional knowledge were common experiences while working at CMSC. Some of these experiences were outcomes of the “Pure Labor” work ethic that the general manager, Jackie Chan, relied upon to manage CMSC. Unlike the Mexican managers and engineers who had more opportunities to interact with the Taiwanese general manager and other Chinese colleagues, most line workers had few chances to meet their Asians counterparts. This is not to say that their jobs were not affected by the Taiwanese style of management, but compared to the Mexican managers and engineers, most line workers experienced cultural differences indirectly. In Section 2, I describe how CMSC employees experienced the Taiwanese style of management.

In addition, for Mexican managers, engineers, and employees, another group of workers regularly appears on the shop floor. They are temporary workers who come from different temp agencies and work for CMSC for a short time. The number of workers that CMSC hires can only operate one production line for one shift. But during the busy seasons, usually from June to November or early December, CMSC typically

operates at full capacity with two shifts. Under such circumstance, it requires approximate 1000 workers for two shifts, and 900 of them are temporary workers.

In section 3, I will discuss how these temporary workers become means for CMSC to conduct its labor control strategies. The booming outsourcing service in Tijuana provides maquiladoras a way to control their workers more efficiently when compared to maquiladoras located elsewhere (Cravey, 1998; McKay, 2006; Salzinger, 2003; Tiano, 1994). Furthermore, using a significant number of temporary workers is conforms to the “Pure Labor” work ethic which Jackie follows as his managerial philosophy.

1.1. “They Said We Are a Team”—Feeling like an Outsider in Their Own Factory

The facility that CMSC operates originally belonged to a Japanese corporation. On the day the Japanese transferred ownership to the current Taiwanese enterprise, most office staff and managers signed new work contracts with their new employer. One Mexican senior manager whose last name is Lopez told me that he was shocked ownership changed in 2009.

I remember that it was an ordinary day. Our general manager came in with a serious face. He told us that [the Japanese corporation] just sold the

factory to another big enterprise. The representatives would come tomorrow, and we could decide if we wanted to work in this place and continue with them.

According to this senior manager, there was no notice given to the employees before the Japanese employer sold the factory. Most of the Mexican employees, regardless of their position, felt uncertain upon hearing the news. The next day, the Taiwanese/Chinese enterprise sent a group of agents to the factory. They interviewed all of the employees and decided to hire most of them. Some were promoted to better positions, while others left the company permanently. The same senior manager said to me:

The good thing is, the Japanese general manager helped us keep our seniority,²⁵ and therefore we still have our seniority with this Chinese enterprise. But when I signed a new work contract with them, I realized that while I still do the same thing in the same position, my salary was cut to two-thirds of my original contract.

Most Mexican workers and managers experienced similar situations that day. They performed the same tasks, but their income dramatically dropped after they changed employers. That was the first impression they had of the new

²⁵ Despite this employees recollection, only a few high-ranking managers kept their seniority after being rehired by CMSC.

Taiwanese/Chinese enterprise. Most Mexican employees, despite their discontent with this arrangement, had no choice but to accept it because they still needed to have a stable job to support their families. When the Taiwanese/Chinese enterprise purchased the factory in 2009, a financial crisis had just passed, and the economies of both the United States and Mexico continued to suffer. Rodriguez²⁶, a senior technician, told me that from 2009 to 2011, it was very difficult to find a steady job in Tijuana. Once someone found a job, regardless of salary or benefits, they tended to remain in the position. Not only did most workers and managers accept new work contracts and become employees of CMSC, but for the first couple of years after 2009, the turnover rate was low. Almost all of the Mexican employees who restarted their careers with CMSC told me that they experienced a series of cultural shocks that day. For example, Lopez's first job was as a computer engineer for the previous Japanese maquiladora, and at the time of writing he is head manager of his department. He told me that one thing that made him uncomfortable was the attitude of the new general manager, Jackie Chan, and his special assistant, Yin Shan. Lopez described his interactions with them:

I am not sure if that was because the Chinese work that way or they were just used to it. I remember the first couple of years; they were always in a hurry and were yelling at everybody. You could hear the yelling in the pathway, in the office, in the meeting room, it was everywhere. I told Jackie Chan several times that Mexican people, especially men, can't be treated like that because we

²⁶ All the Mexican last names that using in this dissertation are pseudonym.

have machismo. We don't want to be insulted. I told him if I made a mistake in my tasks, you could directly point out the mistake. It is OK. You don't need to be polite, and you can be straight, but you don't yell at me.

Pablo, the first human resources manager I met during my time at CMSC, told me a similar story during our interview. I asked him to describe to me the most unforgettable memory he had of his job. Before CMSC, he used to work for several maquiladoras operated by people from different countries such as Japan, the United States, and Taiwan.

I believe that the Chinese, excuse me, the Taiwanese, are very tough because you yell a lot. Yeah, now my boss in Taiwan, my big boss ... wow ... he is very tough. Since the first day, he asked me a question and when I didn't answer, he started yelling at me. It's was 'wow, what is this?' Yeah, but that's the way you do things. The Japanese are also very tough, but towards Japanese people. When they talk to us, another world. They can be very tough to the Japanese people. They can be [unintelligible] but with us, 'come on, you have to do it. Come on, help me.' And if you are failing, of course, you will receive a condemnation. You look for it.

Here, Pablo explained that both Japanese and Taiwanese managers could be tough when requiring Mexican managers to carry out orders, but the attitude when

deploying orders and interacting with Mexican employees was very different between managers from the two countries. According to Pablo, when interacting with other Japanese, Japanese managers tended to be more rigorous and stricter, but when communicating with Mexican employees, Japanese managers tended to be friendly and polite. Conversely, Taiwanese managers tended to use a harsh tone when interacting with Mexicans. When they were unsatisfied with the production progress, they tended to show their anger directly. Yelling was a common practice that happened frequently in the first couple of years after 2009. Like Pablo, most Mexican managers did not like this behavior. When I interviewed managers about their feelings regarding working for CMSC, most Mexican managers and workers alike mentioned that the Taiwanese and Chinese managers were angry and yelled all the time. “El gerente está enojado de Nuevo! [The manager is angry again!]” This is a phrase I frequently heard on the shop floor.

Some misunderstanding may have existed between the Mexican employees and their overseas managers. Both the Taiwanese general manager and Chinese support team only spoke to each other in Mandarin; they were not fluent in either Spanish or English. Most Mexican employees were not able to distinguish the emotions embedded within conversations. Coincidentally, the Mandarin most Chinese support team members used is delivered in a harsh in tone. Sometime, then, when they spoke loudly, the Mexican employees thought they were yelling. Even given this cultural difference, Chinese and Taiwanese managers and crew indeed tended to yell and use other aggressive emotional expressions with the Mexican employees during work hours, which the latter considered

to be unreasonably angry and undeserved. This undermined the relationship between the Mexican employees and their Asian managers.

In contrast to their interaction with Taiwanese and Chinese managers, I observed that when Mexican workers talked to their Mexican managers and coworkers, they tended to be relaxed in tone, and always made jokes with one another. During the nine months of my fieldwork, I only encountered one quarrel between an assembly line worker and line leader. A senior assembly worker had a jacket tied around her waist, but her line leader wanted her to put the jacket away for safety reasons. At first the worker refused, and then wanted to put the jacket behind her station on a shelf with a computer. The line leader prohibited her from doing that, so the conflict grew. The quarrel did not last for long, though, and after a short time, they stared at each other for about thirty seconds. Then, both returned to work like nothing had happened. Beyond this incident, I never saw Mexican workers fight with one another on the shop floor. High and mid-level Mexican managers talked to their younger colleagues and fellow workers in a polite way. Although the ages of the line workers varied, when older Mexican managers walked onto the shop floor, they tended to interact with workers as a friendly father might. Some senior line leaders adopted similar strategies to make the young female workers more cooperative. When senior managers and line leaders interacted with men, they tended to act according to their age.

As an anthropology apprentice born and raised in an Asian country, it was not uncommon to see people with authority or power express their anger directly to their junior colleagues and employees. I asked some of the Mexican managers why they

rarely expressed negative emotions or anger towards people. Their answers were all highly similar. When they interacted with their colleagues and other workers on the shop floor, they were guided by shared principles. These principles were established through age and gender. For example, as Jose and I discussed about the machismo issue, he told me when they interacted with Mexican men, they tended to be polite because the machismo culture makes Mexican men less tolerant to insult. Therefore, when talking to Mexican men, it is always better to have a friendly attitude. Even jokes should be made in a careful way. Once Mexican men feel insulted, they tend to fight back. I asked a new engineer how he interpreted machismo and how to interact with the Mexican people. Our conversation is outlined below.

Hao-Yu (H): Could you tell me how to interact properly with the Mexican people? I have heard that machismo is something very important to some Mexican men. How do you define that?

Jose (J): It is like ... how to say it? It is like a man should act like a man. This goes back to history. Are you familiar with our history?

H: Sort of. I know a little.

J: You know we had a revolution?

H: Yes, of course.

J: So at that time, if a man had been insulted by others, they would have had a fight. It could be a fist fight, sometimes they used knives or guns. It could be

very bloody. It is like, you need to defend your own reputation and make people respect your name.

H: OK, I understand, but like in everyday life I hear people make fun of each other. Some of these jokes might be annoying, right? Like there was one time, you know my Spanish is not good enough to make joke, but I forgot this for some reason. One day we were making fun of Escobar. You know him? He is a line leader. Because he is quite small, there was a worker who wanted me to call him “el bicho verde [the green bug],” I did not know the meaning of those words on that time, but I still said it. After I said that, Escobar gave me a weird face, you know? Like he was a bit angry, but like ...

J: You’re fine, because you are foreign. You don’t know this. Escobar won’t do anything to you. No worry. Haha. But if ... another Mexican man says the same thing that you said to him? I’m not so sure what would happen next. You know, usually, we [Mexican men] are like, if you make fun of us, the first time we are ok. We won’t say anything. We will consider it just a joke. But if you keep saying things, then eventually we will be unhappy about it and will fight back because we will consider this an insult. So, we will definitely fight back. That is machismo.

I will not explore the concept of machismo any further, since there is a significant body of literature on the topic (Arciniega et al., 2008; Lugo, 1990; Mirandé, 2018; Najera, 2008; Segrest and Darla, 2003; Peña, 1991; Peña, 2006; Villegas and

Carlos, 2010). Jose's words indicate that when the Mexican employees interacted with one another, they followed certain rules and acted accordingly. Sometimes the local employees showed more tolerance to foreigners because at times the foreigners were unfamiliar with these rules. However, this is not to say that the uncomfortable feelings would disappear. Even if Mexican men showed more tolerance towards foreigners, if the situation occurred frequently, it was highly possible that they would feel insulted. Therefore, when Mexican managers interacted with workers and other Mexican staff, they acted according to their shared cultural norms. Conversely, when Mexican workers encountered their Taiwanese or Chinese managers or colleagues and saw them yelling, they considered these actions inappropriate.

Another possible reason for this tension is a linguistic one. Mandarin may sound like yelling to someone unfamiliar with the language. Therefore, there is a chance that the Mexican workers misunderstood normal talking as yelling when they encountered their Chinese managers and colleagues. For example, Bella was a Mexican employee who worked for the logistics department. She was responsible for constructing a database of raw materials. Since the number of each item to be assembled needed to correspond to one at headquarters, she worked closely with Chiung Mang, a Chinese support team member who arrived in Tijuana three days before myself. Bella had worked at CMSC for years and was very knowledgeable about the materials database, but she could not read any Mandarin. Therefore, she needed to confirm all of the materials numbers with Chiung Mang. Bella was good at her job, but Chiun Mang was unfamiliar with the materials database. He was in charge of a different task before he

came to Tijuana. He frequently showed his frustration, especially if he could not complete some element of his work. When he expressed this frustration, he spoke Mandarin. I never saw Chiung Mang explain what was happening or how he was feeling to Bella, even though they were co-workers. As a result, Bella constantly felt confused by Chiung Mang's emotions because she could not understand Mandarin. Often when Chiung Mang would mutter, Bella would ask me if he was angry. However, most times Chiung Mang was frustrated but not angry. Yet while there were both attitudinal and linguistic explanations for why the Mexican employees constantly felt that their Taiwanese or Chinese managers or engineers were argumentative and insulting, the result is that the Mexican employees felt that they were not being treated respectfully, or even as human beings. The Mexican employees felt strongly that they were disposable to their foreign managers. Wage deductions, long work hours, and both cultural and linguistic unfamiliarity made the Mexican employees feel disconnected from their foreign bosses.

Yet despite these difficulties, most Mexican managers and engineers were quite fair in judging their experiences and interactions with their Taiwanese and Chinese counterparts. For example, when they told me about their bad experiences, they usually would add that the Taiwanese and Chinese managers "had learned and things were getting better now." I saw Jackie Chan show his temperament many times in meetings, but according to some senior Mexican managers, he was already behaving more acceptably and had improved from days past. The senior Mexican managers believed that both the Chinese and Taiwanese staff at CMSC would learn how to interact properly

with the Mexican people, and eventually the situation would improve. Nevertheless, the Mexican workers felt that they were instruments for the sake of the owner's profits. For instance, take the following case.

I was transferred to the IE department. I saw Ying Shan walk into the Electrical Engineering (EE) department, which was located near where I was. He wanted to talk to the head EE manager, Carlos. Ying Shan spoke with Carlos in a polite way and always had a smile on his face. When he talked, he always started with “ayudame, por favor [Help me, please].” I witnessed this scene. Later, when I told another Mexican manager, Vino, about what I saw that day, he admitted that it had taken a couple of years for the Taiwanese and Chinese staff to learn how to interact with the Mexican employees in a polite manner. Suddenly, though, he commented as follows:

Now Ying Shan always asks for help with a smiling face. He was very bossy in the past. But you know that even if they [Ying Shan and Jackie Chan] always say that we are a team, honestly I do not feel that way. To be a team, all of the team members should support each other, right? But they do not act like that. Most times, they stay in their small chamber. Only when they need some documents or reports do they come to the big office and ask people to help them, without a doubt. It is alright for me. I mean, we are colleagues and they are coming from headquarters, and supposedly we should help without a doubt. But I think this should be a reciprocal relationship, right? I mean, every time when they come to ask for something, we need to postpone the work on hand to help

them finish what they need. But when we need something and go to them, they never respond to our requests. They say we are a team, but most Mexican people do not feel the same way. We are more like a part of a machine than a team.

For Vino, being part of a team required that certain conditions be satisfied.

People cannot automatically form a true team simply by repeating slogans. For Vino, the first principle is that the relationship should be reciprocal. Vino believed that when the local staff needed support from headquarters or their representatives in Tijuana, their requests should at least be heard and answered in some way. Instead, quite often their requests were neglected or directly denied. According to Vino, they did receive some support from headquarters, but the support was not helpful due to the language barrier. For example, representatives and support team members could not fully comprehend what kind of help was needed.

One of my personal experiences at CMSC also illustrates the problem the Mexican employees described. CMSC's parent corporation is Outstanding Technology (OT). As one of the largest television original equipment manufacturers (OEMs)²⁷, OT has more than a dozen factories around the world. Because the corporation already operates globally, it is reasonable to assume that some important documents related to production, quality control, and management policies have been translated into the

²⁷ OEM stands for original equipment manufacturers. This is a type of business model which companies do not have their own brands, and they produce products for other famous brands.

languages used at the operation sites. However, for reasons unknown this is not the case. On most ordinary days, if I was not on the line working and chatting with workers, I sat in the office and helped departments translate the documents they needed. The types of documents ranged from safety checklists and reports to quality control requirements for ISO 9001, standard operating procedures for specific television models, and repair guides. All of the documents were sent from headquarters in simplified Mandarin, without any or only a minimum of English translation. None of these documents had been translated into Spanish.

Though most of the Mexican managers spoke fluent English, they did not understand spoken or written Mandarin. A senior manager told me that in their first year, CMSC did host Mandarin classes once a week, but the classes did not last a single year; everyone was too busy to attend. Therefore, when Mexican employees requested help from headquarters, they received documents written in Mandarin. Obviously, these were not helpful. Some Mexican managers told me that they tried to translate documents using Google's translator, but the outcomes were usually disappointing and often incomprehensible. Sometimes, Mexican managers would ask the Chinese support team to help them translate documents, but the outcomes there were also disappointing, since the Chinese support team spoke only limited English. Even worse, when headquarters would respond, both Jackie Chan and the department heads in China expected the Mexican employees to follow the orders, even though without proper translation that was nearly impossible. Thus, the communication gap between headquarters and the local Mexican site was significant. Yet, the language barrier was neglected by CMSC. The

previous Japanese corporation employed a professional translator, who helped the general manager translate his orders to the Mexican employees, as well as any documents written in Japanese. According to a senior Mexican employee, the translator was important, helping the operation run smoothly. However, the translator retired the same day most of the employees signed new work contracts with CMSC. After that, no individual was assigned translation tasks. I asked a Taiwanese friend who worked at another maquiladora in Tijuana, who confirmed that he, too, had never heard of a Taiwanese-operated maquiladora hiring a professional translator.

Refusing to hire a professional translator matched Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy. As long as he believed that the communication between him and his Mexican managers was sufficient, hiring a translator would be an unnecessary cost for CMSC. A significant feature of the “Pure Labor” work ethic is doing whatever could be done to cut production-related costs, while simultaneously extracting the maximum output. In this context, precise communication was not a priority in daily operation; the volume of production output was. During my stay, I was invited to join some of the managers' meetings. Normally, English and Mandarin were spoken. Jackie Chan talked to the Mexican employees in English but used Mandarin with the Chinese. Sometimes, the Mexican managers were able to understand what Jackie Chan requested, but often after the meeting was over, they would ask me what he had said. Moreover, when management held international meetings with personnel at headquarters, Mandarin was the main language used to discuss issues in Mexico. None of the Mexican managers could understand Mandarin; therefore, when they were asked to join these meetings, the

only thing they could do was sit passively in the meeting room. I was invited to several technical meetings by Jackie Chan so I could translate for the Mexican managers.

However, I could not join other meetings such as the high-ranking managers' regular meetings. The Mexican managers told me that they felt it was meaningless for them to join these meetings, because they could understand nothing of what was being said.

Some felt unseen and disrespected, like they were invisible.

The Taiwanese general manager and some of his Asian crew believed that they had sufficient language ability to communicate with their Mexican employees. I asked Jackie Chan this question. He told me that from his experience and years in Tijuana, he believed that his Mexican employees were able to follow his orders regardless of the language barrier. Therefore, there was no need to hire a professional translator. Besides, the company did not have the money to hire one. He also told me why the Mexican managers were required to attend meetings where they did not understand the language being spoken. This was because sometimes headquarters needed information that he could not provide. Then, he could ask the managers to provide it immediately. Therefore, it was necessary for them to sit there, just in case he needed their help. Most Mexican managers and engineers struggled to find efficient ways of communicating with their foreign colleagues. Since CMSC's corporate structure tended to restrict local engineers and managers, denying them the autonomy to make decisions on their own, Mexican employees needed to rely on the Chinese support team and engineers in China to solve problems in Tijuana. Under such circumstances, fluent and efficient communication was key to making daily production run smoothly. Unfortunately, most Mexican managers

and engineers experienced considerable difficulties in this area because of the language barrier.

Besides the language barrier, Mexican employees described other obstacles to accomplishing their daily tasks. Sometimes, these obstacles were derived from the different business habits practiced by the two countries. For example, in the West it is not uncommon for each company to have its own credit card, in case something needs to be purchased for business use. Necessary purchasing can thus be completed efficiently, through the use of this corporate credit card. This is a common practice in both the United States and Mexico among numerous companies and other institutions. However, this is not the case in either Taiwan or China. Despite the financial regulations in these countries being significantly different from one another, one common feature is that credit cards are not popular, either for individuals or companies. For business transactions in Taiwan, companies prefer to use checks or cash instead of credit cards. The situation is similar in China; most business transactions occur through banks or third-party payments.²⁸ Accordingly, Jackie Chan never allowed the financial department of CMSC to have a company-owned credit card. Although the factory could still purchase goods and services through checks or cash, this cost extra time and money. Moreover, it is becoming more and more common to purchase services online. Usually, websites do not accept personal checks, or at best, the company would have a long wait until the check-based transaction could be completed.

²⁸ Chinese people have other ways to pay their bills beyond cash and checks. Many companies provide third-party payments, allowing users to pay for goods and services through their mobile phones.

One night, after CMSC had won a special production project from a world-famous Japanese corporation, the quality control department encountered a severe issue. Even the most experienced engineer had no idea how to solve it. They called the quality control department in China for emergency assistance. In order to allow the Chinese engineers to test the televisions overseas, CMSC needed to purchase an online VPN service,²⁹ bypassing the Chinese internet firewall and bridging the connection between China and Tijuana. Since the issue was critical and all of the production plans were necessarily delayed, the head of the quality control department, Venustiano, wanted to purchase the service and solve the issue as soon as possible. However, the factory did not have its own credit card. Therefore, they could not purchase the online service directly. Eventually, Venustiano asked a colleague who had a relative living in the United States (and thus a credit card from a US bank) to complete the transaction for him.

Here, I would like to discuss Venustiano's career experiences as a means of illustrating the difficulties that Mexican employees face when working for different multinational enterprises. Like other Mexican senior managers at CMSC, Venustiano began his career with the previous Japanese owners of the factory. The day he signed his work contract with CMSC, he was promoted to head of the quality control department.

²⁹ VPN is an abbreviation for Virtual Private Network. It is a tunnel between a personal device and the internet. Some VPN services allow users to change their location and IP address to disguise their original location. Because the Chinese government has created an internet firewall to block connections between Chinese domains and other areas, Chinese internet users are prevented from directly connecting to domains outside the firewall. In this case, the Chinese engineers could not directly connect to CMSC's server because of the firewall. They needed to use a VPN service to disguise their IP address and pretend they were not connecting from China.

He has remained in that position until the time of writing. Since he had spent more than a decade with the Japanese corporation, he had received basic quality control training and knowledge. Once the Taiwanese corporation purchased the factory, they brought in an entirely different managerial style. He was on the front lines of this change because CMSC's ideas about quality control were quite different from the previous Japanese company.

Japanese products are famous for their high quality, stability, and trustworthiness. To gain such a reputation requires tremendous effort in quality control throughout the entire production process. According to Venustiano, quality control should not begin after the assembly line completes the product. It should begin with the raw materials. Ideally, when each container arrives at the factory, quality control engineers check the materials inside before agreeing to sign the acceptance form. "This is a regular check for the Japanese. All materials should be checked before we allow them to come in. Otherwise, unqualified materials will be sent back to the place from where it came." Venustiano went on to say, "However, the thing is quite different here."

At the Japanese company, we used to have enough time to check all the materials that came in from overseas. But now, the practice is different. Since everything is in a hurry, we don't have time to check all the incoming components. Now we can only do random sampling. Because we no longer have a warehouse as before that contains all the incoming items, [materials are] put on the production line one or two days after they arrive. In this situation, we

don't have that much time to check everything in the containers. For the Japanese, quality is a priority. It's very important. For Chinese or Taiwanese, I think it is volume. The production volume is more important, and not so much the quality. They can allow some quality issues, but Japanese people are very different. They don't allow any quality issues.

The Taiwanese corporation created profit by being the original equipment manufacturer for other companies. This business model requires factories to rapidly respond to customers' demands, providing the service they need. Production requires flexibility and must be fast enough to satisfy the customer's request. Accordingly, CMSC did not reserve as much space as the previous Japanese corporation did, because it was unnecessary. Incoming materials did not stay in the warehouse for more than two weeks. This flexible and fast production strategy created more pressure for the quality control department because they had less time to inspect incoming materials.

After the Taiwanese corporation took over the factory, they kept most of the employees in their original positions. Venustiano and his colleagues, however, discovered that their situation had changed. Under the Japanese management, they tried to follow consistent rules when inspecting materials and finished goods. Once the company changed hands, the rules got worse. For Venustiano, this situation changed his work dramatically. In the past, it was very clear how he was to decide if the finished product could be shipped out to the market or not. Once the change occurred and quality grew neglected, sometimes he needed to make decisions under time pressure or other

factors, shipping out goods that might contain quality issues. Therefore, for him, the risk to both CMSC and his personal career increased compared to when he worked for the Japanese company. Besides the higher potential risk, Venustiano also found that to work at CMSC, flexibility and production had to be prioritized over quality. He told me that since quality control was not the priority, when the factory needed to ship out a final product, the final quality inspection was often cut short. Insufficient time to perform regular inspections but still being responsible for the quality of the finished product greatly increased Venustiano's work-related stress, especially when he stamped documents certifying that the finished products met quality standards.

The difficulties that Venustiano encountered are related to the "Pure Labor" work ethic that Jackie Chan implemented in daily operation. For example, "Pure Labor" developed from an environment in which both workers and employers were focused on quantity. As discussed in Chapter III, although the system was not actually Purely based on piecework, quantity was an essential factor in evaluating workers' productivity and thus determining their salary. In such circumstances, subcontractors held volume to be the primary goal; quality was not a critical factor in this type of production arrangement. This feature of the "Pure Labor" work ethic created many dilemmas for Venustiano because high-ranking Taiwanese and Chinese managers both at CMSC and headquarters in China valued quantity over quality.

Another issue also seriously influenced Venustiano's daily operation. The Taiwanese owners had a policy of annually reducing their budget for human capital. I interviewed Fang and Venustiano during a lunch break. Fang, a temporary support team

member who came to CMSC to assist with a special project, was in charge of integrating all of the quality control departments in all of the production sites around the world.

According to her, the corporation annually laid off a considerable percentage of employees in her department in China, and had done so regularly for the past several years. Venustiano also mentioned that reduction in personnel was a serious problem for his quality control team. Losing people on this team meant that the quality control department lacked sufficient inspectors to check both the raw materials and finished goods. Sometimes experienced workers also left the factory of their own accord. When that happened, Venustiano needed to spend time training replacements. However, due to the fact that their department was short-handed for conducting regular inspections, it was difficult for senior inspectors to spend time training new employees; this created a vicious cycle for the quality control department.

The insufficient time to conduct inspections and cutting of personnel were two main factors creating a significant impact on Venustiano's work. Besides the interviews I conducted with Venustiano and Fang, I also helped Fang to understand operations on the shop floor, serving as her translator, and attended a short meeting of the Chinese support team. From these experiences, I concluded that Fang, the engineer in charge of company-wide quality control, held a viewpoint similar to that of Venustiano. On an individual level, there may be little difference between people in charge of the same task, regardless their nationalities or cultural backgrounds. However, collectively, the Taiwanese corporation prioritized speed and volume of production, and put quality second. Cultural values such as work ethic were also relevant to the company's human

resources policy. I asked Pablo, the manager of human resources, about the company's policy of reducing personnel in quality control. Pablo confirmed that headquarters did have this policy, but the percentage and number of employees to be cut was adjustable. This policy of downsizing was a part of reducing "unnecessary" expenditures and maximizing profit logic, which corresponded to the cultural values discussed above. In this case, the labor force that supplied the quality control department was considered an "unnecessary" expenditure.

When the Taiwanese corporation purchased the factory and operated it as CMSC, most of the original employees experienced a serious change in their work environment. The first thing most senior managers discovered was that the interaction between people from different cultural groups dramatically changed. Japanese managers were described as rigorous like their Taiwanese and Chinese counterparts, but Japanese managers tended to be more polite and treated their Mexican colleagues like real working partners. Most Mexican managers enjoyed greater autonomy when doing their jobs. Shoudai, the only Japanese manager who used to work for the previous corporation and chose to stay at CMSC, described his long-term observations on the day of his retirement. For Shoudai, cultural difference was not only evident in daily interactions or managerial style, but also in the structure of the organization. At CMSC, each department head reported to both the general manager and corresponding department head at headquarters. This structural design restricted the autonomy of each department to conduct their own policies and complete their tasks. In fact, most managers tended to think they had no autonomy, since all of the final decisions were made either by Jackie Chan or someone at headquarters.

Since Shoudai began his career with the previous Japanese company, he had worked with several Japanese general managers in the past. He told me that when comparing the two companies, the most prominent differences were organizational structure and the role of the general manager.

According to Shoudai, the organizational structure influenced the role of the general manager. From the beginning, CMSC's organizational structure was designed such that headquarters could directly control most of the decision-making process. Besides routine reports, these restrictions also affected the budget and procedures for spending money. Shoudai described operation of the previous Japanese company as relatively simple in terms of both organizational structure and daily operation. This was possible because the Japanese corporation was huge in scale and had many production units around the world. The general manager of each production unit had full authority to operate in their own way. The mother corporation only checked the annual production outcomes and coordinated global production volume. Otherwise, all schedules and policies inside a production unit were determined by the general manager. In Tijuana, the Japanese general manager was in charge of managing the entire operation of the maquiladora, without intervention from headquarters.

Theoretically, the Taiwanese corporation allowed their general manager to do the same thing. Each year, CMSC provided a budget for headquarters to approve. After the budget was approved, CMSC could operate by its own direction. In reality, though, each expense needed to be approved not only by Jackie Chan, but also by headquarters in China. That meant that the role of the general manager at CMSC was ambiguous.

According to Shoudai, when it came to money and expenditures, Jackie Chan was not fully authorized to make decisions. However, when there was problem, Jackie Chan was considered responsible. In such a structure, when a crisis occurred, the Japanese and Taiwanese general managers behaved differently. For Japanese managers, the first step was to call an emergency meeting of all managers to describe the situation and collectively find a solution. Although the general manager would eventually want to find the person responsible for the error and possibly punish them, generally this was not a priority for crisis management. The priority was to solve the problem, and not punish the person who caused it. Moreover, when an individual was clearly not suitable for a specific position and performed their tasks badly, in the Japanese company, the individual might be moved to another position more suitable to their ability. Firing an employee was the last option for the Japanese general manager, according to Shoudai.

By contrast, when a crisis occurred at CMSC, the first order of business was to determine who was responsible for the error. After the general manager identified them, there would be an “anger releasing” session. Once that session was over, the case was closed for the general manager whether or not the problem had been solved. Any mistake could potentially cost an individual their job at CMSC; the criteria for firing an employee were unclear for most Mexican employees. In contrast to the Japanese company, I was unable to obtain any statistical data from CMSC during the nine months of my field study. The turnover rate was not only high on the shop floor, but also for office staff, engineers, and managers. I witnessed two of seven department heads be fired

by Jackie Chan; for normal engineers and lower-level managers, the turnover rate was even higher.

Any of the Mexican employees at CMSC could find themselves leaving the company soon after a short meeting with either the general manager or HR staff. This situation created an unstable atmosphere in the main office. Some mid- and low-level managers and engineers told me that because their jobs were not secure, they had begun looking for work elsewhere the day they were hired. If they could find a better position, they would quit CMSC without hesitation. When hiring new engineers and managers, CMSC often exploited a loophole in the labor laws to avoid offering seniority and other benefits that should be a part of the work contract. This practice created substantial uncertainty among managers and engineers who quickly had second thoughts about working for CMSC once they found out their work contracts were not what they expected.

In sum, most managers, engineers, and office staff felt that changing from the Japanese to the Taiwanese company meant that they could expect harsher interactions with members of the other cultural group. They also faced greater insecurity about their future careers. Moreover, despite most senior managers being long-time professionals in the television industry, they lost the autonomy to make decisions regarding how best to do their jobs. Lacking this decision-making ability made them feel alienated. Also, cutting personnel from each department meant that the employees remaining at CMSC shared heavier workloads. All of these factors made the Mexican employees, including

managers and office staff, feel as if they were disposable in their Taiwanese and Chinese managers' eyes.

In this section, I discussed Mexican managers' initial impressions of the Taiwanese managerial style. I also compared the Taiwanese and Japanese styles of management. From the Mexican managers' stories, it is clear that although the work content remained the same after the maquiladora was purchased by OT from the Japanese corporation, the Mexican managers experienced a very different managerial style under Jackie Chan's leadership. His management style was affected by the "Pure Labor" work ethic and required production quantities, as well as pressure to reduce cost. The "Pure Labor" work ethic also affected communication among the Taiwanese, Chinese, and Mexican colleagues. As a result, the Mexican managers shared a feeling of being left out by their Taiwanese superiors, and a lack of autonomy when doing their work for CMSC. Some of the senior managers who had begun their careers in this maquiladora even felt that they had become outsiders in their own workplace.

Since the Mexican managers had more opportunities to interact with their Asian colleagues and superiors, they had more direct experiences with and feelings about this exotic work ethic. The "Pure Labor" work ethic affected the line workers as well, but in different ways. The line workers had fewer opportunities to directly interact with high-ranking Taiwanese and Chinese managers. Therefore, their experience with the "Pure Labor" work ethic centered on the production arrangement and other work-related conditions. These are discussed in the following section.

1.2. *“Here, We Work More Like Parts of a Machine.”*

Generally speaking, due to the fact that the Taiwanese general manager and his Chinese support team had limited English abilities and none spoke any Spanish, there was a language barrier that prevented them from interacting with most of the Mexican employees. Most of the individuals working on the production line or in the warehouse or logistics departments rarely met their Asian bosses. In fact, most of the line workers did not fully understand for whom they actually worked. One of my personal experiences illustrates this.

In the first month after my arrival, I spent most of my time on the assembly line with other CMSC employees. During this time, I became acquainted with most of the individuals working near my station. One day, a line quality control inspector, Molina, and her colleagues stared at me for a while and then discussed something amongst themselves. They then looked at me again. This was repeated several times before they talked to me, during a period when the line had been stopped. Molina snuck over to me and asked me many surprising questions, beginning with:

Molina (M): Are you a son of the boss [Jackie Chan]?

Hao-Yu (H): No, of course I'm not. Do I look like him?

M: How about Ying Shan? He is Jackie Chan's son, right?

H: No, he is not.

M: Then, that little Chinese. What is his name?

H: Do you mean Gin Quan?

M: Yes.

H: No, he is not. None of them are Jackie Chan's son or daughter. Why do you ask?

M: I thought you were all relatives, and Jackie Chan was your father or an elder in your family.

At the time she asked me these questions, she had already worked at CMSC for eight months. Considering the high turnover rate, eight months was not a short time for a line inspector. However, from our conversation, it became clear that she knew very little about her employer. She thought that she was working for a family company, where all of the Chinese managers were relatives who came from China. In fact, she was not alone in this thinking. In my experience, most line workers had only a minimum understanding of their employer. In their daily lives, most of the managers with which they interacted were Mexicans. In this regard, CMSC was similar to other maquiladoras in the area. Most Mexican employees, especially line workers, inspectors, and logistics deliverers, knew they were working for foreigners. However, they rarely had a chance to interact with these foreign bosses. All of their activities were supervised by Mexican managers or staff.

However, this is not to say that life at CMSC was not affected by the "Pure Labor" work ethic. One of the most prominent features illustrating this is related to work

contracts. The Labor Reform Act, passed in 2014, offered more flexibility to transnational enterprises willing to manage maquiladoras, especially in terms of hiring and firing workers. The Act allowed employers to use a number of different contract forms when hiring employees. Critics of this law believe that it unreasonably favors employers and undermines employees, though it does continue to provide some minimum protection. For example, when hiring a new employee, an employer can offer them a three-month contract for training or definite employment. If necessary, this temporary contract can be extended to six months. However, once the contract exceeds 180 days, if the employer does not notify the trainee that they are not eligible for the position, the employment contract automatically becomes indefinite. This new regulation provides more flexibility to employers seeking to offer opportunities for workers because they have time to decide if the individual should become a permanent employee. Compared to the previous labor laws, this new regulation allows employers to dismiss workers without cost in the first three months of their employment. Even after three months, employers are able to fire employees with less additional compensation.

Mexican labor law provides employers with flexibility but significantly undermines job security for employees. Federal labor law still protects employees with an indefinite employment contract after three months of temporary employment, but in places like CMSC, employers seek even more flexibility and ways of avoiding extra expenditures, practices that could be considered illegal. For instance, Gustavo, a new manager in the production department who had worked for several international brands such as Sharp and Samsung, joined CMSC during the busy season of 2016. Jackie Chan

asked him to solve the high defect rate in the production process and improve the efficiency of the repair department. Since I was a repair worker at that time, I spent a lot of time working with him. He was very experienced in many aspects, and thus became one of the most important informants I met during my fieldwork.

Unfortunately, he did not stay in CMSC for long. One day, I was eating my breakfast with Jose, another new research and design manager. He intentionally lowered his voice and told me that Gustavo resigned that morning because he was not satisfied with his employment contract or Jackie Chan's attitude. I asked Jose what really happened that morning. To my surprise, I learned something that the human resources department would never tell me. According to Jose, Gustavo left CMSC because that was the day he could renew his employment contract. Gustavo expected to sign an indefinite contract because in the past three months, he had significantly improved CMSC's repair efficiency and decreased their defect rate. Even if the outcome might not seem outstanding to his Taiwanese boss, the result was a decent one. Thus, he expected an official employment contract from CMSC. However, when he stepped into the HR manager's office, the manager asked him to resign. Then they would give him another temporary contract that would become effective the following day. Gustavo was angry and decided to quit, but without publicly revealing his anger.

After I learned this, I asked about the employment status of other Mexican engineers and managers. It turned out that it was standard for most mid- and low-level managers and engineers to have several periodic employment contracts before they were given an indefinite one. Although they knew this practice was illegal, two reasons

prevented them from protesting. First, most employees realized that they could file complaints with the labor department or sue the company. However, such complaints and lawsuits required at least six months of waiting, and during this period they could not find another job because they needed to retain an employment relationship with the company. Employees who filed a complaint or lawsuit might be denied income for at least a half year. Not everyone could afford such a wait, since employees needed to support themselves and their families.

Second, even if an individual was willing to file a complaint or lawsuit and wait for half a year or more for the results, the problem didn't end, even if they won. Having filed a complaint or lawsuit undermined one's future career, making it difficult to find another job in the Tijuana area. Two HR managers I met at CMSC denied that there was a blacklist at CMSC or elsewhere. However, Pablo, the HR manager, mentioned that in Tijuana there was an annual human resource managers' conference. Most HR managers attended the conference and exchanged information about employees during the meeting. Besides the conference, the HR staff also told me that since in the Tijuana area only a few universities offered human resource-related degrees, almost all current human resources managers employed by maquiladoras knew each other from their time at university. Such a network made background checks on potential employees easier, and Pablo did not hide the fact that when he did such a background check, he would "look at the worker's resume and make a phone call to the worker's previous employer to see if anything had gone wrong with this guy." Despite the fact that Pablo never admitted to

keeping a blacklist, it would not be difficult to prevent troublemakers from finding subsequent work.

The employment relationships that existed among Mexican skilled workers, engineers, managers, and laborers could be further divided between “official” CMSC employees and temporary workers. The total number of CMSC employees was approximately 170. This number, however, would only staff approximately 1.5 production lines. Yet CMSC had four production lines, meaning that the official number of CMSC employees could not meet production needs during the busy season. Since Jackie Chan was reluctant to hire more workers, CMSC relied heavily on temporary workers to operate the lines. During the busy season, CMSC hired more than 800 temporary workers to meet their labor demand. A significant number of temporary workers on the shop floor was a managerial strategy guided by the “Pure Labor” work ethic, and will be discussed separately in following section.

CMSC workers rarely interacted with their foreign managers. Most interacted directly with Mexican managers and engineers. When foreigners did appear, it was for one of two reasons. First, they might be visitors coming to see the production lines. Second, production progress was delayed and foreign managers were sent to correct the delay. In the first situation, there was no opportunity for the Mexican workers to interact with foreign guests. Usually, the workers were aware that there might be visitors that day because they would be asked to concentrate on their tasks and show greater discipline than on ordinary days. However, they rarely knew who the visitors were or why they were visiting the factory. Generally speaking, information transmission

excluded most line workers. All of the information line workers received was either from a Mexican manager's official announcement or rumors from Mexican engineers with desks in the main office. In the second situation, when a serious problem had occurred or production was slow, Chinese engineers and managers would come to the shop floor to correct the situation. During this process, the Mexican workers could expect yelling or at best, emotionless faces. This was why most Mexican workers developed the impression that Asian managers were always angry.

For Mexican workers, it was rare to see an Asian manager walk into the production area. When they did, it was not uncommon for the Asian manager to wear a "poker face" or be openly angry about the production progress. Therefore, Mexican workers developed means to avoid or resist direct encounters with Asian managers and engineers. When encountering angry managers, these workers used the "weapons of the weak"³⁰ (Scott, 2008) to manipulate the situation. For example, Mateo was a young technician who also worked as a repairman on the shop floor. We spent a couple of months working at the same station. Before I came to CMSC, I had no knowledge of electronics. In the very beginning of my "repairman" career, Mateo was the one who taught me and demonstrated all of the skills I needed to fix the various televisions and monitors. Even later, after I had acquired the necessary skills, we spent time working together at the same station because the turnover rate was high. This was the busy season

³⁰ The weapons of the weak is a theory proposed by James Scott. Scott argued that for people who lived in the bottom of a society, the cause and consequence to openly resist the authority might be too vast and unaffordable. In this context, people showed their discontent through some subtle ways such as slow down the work requested by the authority, stealing, or incorporated.

and just after CMSC had received an important order from a famous Japanese brand; Jackie Chan wanted his best operators and repair technicians to work on that assembly line. Therefore, Mateo and I worked there to make sure the repair quality was above average.

One day, possibly because the raw materials had not received a proper inspection, a faulty part caused more than 100 televisions to have issues that could only be resolved by replacing the part. However, because there were no extra replacements in the warehouse, all of the defective sets were placed on wheel carts at the repair stations. On ordinary days, production managers would tolerate this practice because there was no place to store faulty sets. This, however, was not an ordinary day. Representatives of the famous Japanese brand were visiting CMSC that afternoon. Thus, Jackie Chan was nervous and sent Ying Shan to inspect the production line and make sure that everything was the way it should be. When Ying Shan came to the repair station, he found the defective sets. Since he did not know that the sets required a new part, he ordered Mateo to fix them immediately. At first, Mateo tried to explain why the sets were stored there temporarily, but Ying Shan ignored him. In response, Mateo ignored the order and focused on other work. A few minutes later, Ying Shan came back to the repair station and saw that the sets were still there. He used a sharp tone to tell Mateo to fix the televisions immediately. Mateo was confused and unhappy about Ying Shan's unreasonable request.

The next time Ying Shan approached; he was obviously angry and raised his voice to repeat the same order. This time, Mateo decided to respond, but in his own way.

Because Jackie Chan wanted to leave the Japanese guests with a good impression, that day only one line was operating. All of CMSC's workers were on that line, waiting for the guests to come. All other production lines were empty and no one was checking those areas. Mateo decided to push the carts with the defective TVs to the other lines to keep them from being seen by the Japanese guests and Ying Shan. This decision had ripple effects later on. Each line produced a different model, and the televisions waiting to be fixed usually stayed on the same line until they were repaired. After Mateo moved these sets to another line, other repair technicians were confused, likely overlooking them for quite a while. For the factory, these sets would remain in their inventory, but they were difficult to physically find. However, that was not Mateo's concern at that moment. In this case, Mateo chose not to encounter Ying Shan openly, and instead made the defective TVs "disappear."

In relating this story, I want to point out that in ordinary operation, Mexican workers had their own tactics for managing their relationships with foreign managers. They were not totally submissive or without will. Despite each shop floor area being assigned for a specific purpose, workers could utilize these spaces in their own ways. In reality, the Mexican workers may not have recognized how the "Pure Labor" work ethic caused their job dissatisfaction because it penetrated their work schedule, production goals, flexibility, and all other aspects of their daily lives at CMSC. Mateo's story illustrates how the Mexican workers experienced obstacles created by language and cultural barriers. His case also indicates that when the Mexican workers encountered

unreasonable requests, they developed a series of methods to resist those requests and escape critical consequences.

As a manager, Vino encountered a number of workers who damaged production machines, pushed the stop button to force the assembly line to stop, or intentionally slowed down production to show their discontent with their jobs. However, Vino also indicated that as long as these events were not discovered by Jackie Chan or the other Chinese managers or engineers, they (i.e., Mexican managers) would keep silent, at least if no severe damage occurred. Besides these tactics, workers also showed their discontent by resigning or being serially absent from work. However, I did not hear any Mexican managers, line leaders, or senior workers discuss a strike or walk-out. Therefore, I speculate that most resistance was subtle and on an individual level.

One critical reason that workers were unsatisfied with their jobs at CMSC was their wages. Most Mexican workers complained that their salaries were insufficient to cover the cost of living in Tijuana. For years, maquiladoras have been notorious for paying employees minimum wage or below. CMSC followed this tradition. According to a survey of 100 maquiladoras in the Tijuana area, CMSC's salaries were the second lowest. I learned of this survey from a Mexican manager. The workers did not share this knowledge with him; they had their own ways of collecting information. They knew their salaries were lower than those offered at other maquiladoras. Accordingly, almost all of the workers I interviewed told me that they were poorly paid, or that their earnings were not enough to cover the cost of living. Indeed, 3,800 pesos a month was approximately \$200 US dollars during my time in Mexico. According to an online

database, the monthly average cost of living in Tijuana for a family was, on average, approximately 7,700 pesos (<https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Tijuana>). Thus, workers at CMSC earned far less than the average cost of living in the area.

Low salaries³¹ might explain why CMSC had difficulties hiring new workers and had to rely heavily on temporary employees. Using temporary workers deepened the feeling of exploitation among CMSC employees because often they would discover that their salaries were lower than those of the temporary employees, at least in terms of wages. Assembly workers who worked at CMSC earned 900 pesos a week, but temporary workers who did the same job earned 1,100 pesos a week. Quality control workers earned 50 pesos more than CMSC's assembly workers, but temporary quality control workers earned 1,200 pesos a week.³² Although employees were aware that they earned less than most other Tijuana workers, there was a significant number willing to stay at CMSC. There were two main reasons for this acceptance. First was age. Many CMSC employees were in their late 40s or 50s. Workers in this age range face greater difficulties changing jobs. Most workers on the assembly line and in the logistics and packing areas fell into this category. Second, some employees on the assembly line and in quality control were young adults between the ages of 18 and 30. For these youth, lacking an advanced education was reason enough to remain at the factory. It was not uncommon to see some of these workers attend school after resigning from CMSC. Both

³¹ This information was provided by a Mexican manager who told me that the survey was conducted by a local association of maquiladoras.

³² I confirmed this information with Pablo, who told me that workers ignored social security and other work-related benefits paid by CMSC. Such benefits were not paid to outsourced workers. A number of outsourced workers agreed with Pablo's comments, but CMSC employees did not consider those benefits to be a part of their salary.

groups of workers, old and young, occupied inferior positions in the local job market. Though their specific reasons for remaining might have differed, most workers, especially the young, were keenly aware that their lack of a sufficient education blocked their way to better jobs. Several Mexican managers told me they had asked Jackie Chan to increase line workers' salaries, but he always remained silent or answered that the topic required further evaluation.³³

In addition to aggressive managers and low wages, the work environment and job-related welfare also affected CMSC's workers. As discussed in Chapter III, because CMSC was reluctant to improve worker-related facilities such as the cafeteria and restrooms, the work environment was a constant source of complaint. After I returned to Taiwan and began writing my dissertation, a friend from CMSC sent me a message through Facebook; the news was bad. Luna, my teacher on the assembly line who helped me from my first day and until I could handle my tasks on my own, had died due to multiple organ failure caused by a urinary tract infection. Urinary tract infections were common among the female workers who spent long hours on the line and did not have enough time to drink water or use the restroom. Female workers like Luna who held

³³ Fernandez-Kelly explained the generally low salaries at maquiladoras by arguing that they preferred to hire female employees. One main advantage to hiring women was that it allowed maquiladoras to pay less than they would to male workers. Because Mexican society is patriarchal, it assumes that men rather than women are the main breadwinners in each household. Following this assumption, even when women join the regular labor force and become the main breadwinners (such as when men are unemployed or underemployed), women's incomes are still considered supplementary. Maquiladoras managers use this as an excuse to provide insufficient salaries to female workers (Fernández-Kelly, 1983).

Later researchers such as Salzinger have argued that the situation has gradually changed since Fernandez-Kelly conducted her fieldwork in the early 1970s. Salzinger explained that the gender component changed in the maquiladora industry. However, the salaries have remained low because even though men have joined the workforce and maquiladora managers no longer resist hiring male employees, the entire maquiladora workforce had been feminized. That is to say, regardless of workers' sex, they are treated like females; thus, their salaries have remained at the supplemental level (Salzinger, 2003).

important positions requiring experience and delicate hands (such as those who placed glass panels in position in the dust-free room) were at even greater risk of developing urinary tract-related diseases. While such workers are generally categorized as unskilled, in reality, many tasks on the assembly line required tremendous skill and concentration if the line is to move smoothly. Luna's station in the dust-free room was crucial to the entire assembly process. The panel is the most important and expensive part of a television, and also the most vulnerable. It is thin but large in size. Any scratch or crack will automatically render it useless. Therefore, workers in charge of panel installation are essential when the line is moving. This means that they have less time to rest compared to other workers.

Luna's role in assembling the TVs resulted in her having less rest time than did the other workers, even those working on the same line. Moreover, the facilities, including water fountains and restrooms, were insufficient for all of the workers to use during break times. Luna developed a urinary tract infection because she regularly stayed in the same position; the disease is extremely difficult to cure. By the time she went to the hospital, it was already too late and the infection took her life. In addition to Luna's sad case, I observed that most senior workers took one or two weeks off, unpaid. At first, I assumed they were traveling on vacation with their families. I realized, though, that they had chosen to stay home. Their actions matched maquiladora researchers' descriptions. Assembly work is extremely boring and tiresome (Cravey, 1998; Denman, 2006; Moure-Eraso, Rafael, Wilcox, Punnett, MacDonald, and Levenstein, 1997; Miller, 2001; Salzinger, 2003; Wright, 2001; Cedillo, Leonor, Siobán, Roberto, and Monroy,

1997), even for young women (and more recently, men). Workers cannot continually work without taking breaks because the fatigue that accumulates daily will eventually seriously undermine their health.

With the introduction of flat screen TVs in 2002, some of these issues have changed. It is safer and less chemically hazardous for workers assembling LED or LCD televisions than it was for those producing cathode ray tube (CRT) televisions. However, even with this improvement, medical care continues to be insufficient. CMSC had only one nurse who took care of all factory employees. Occasionally, a medical team with a doctor would come to vaccinate workers against the flu, but that was the only time a doctor would step through the factory gate. Otherwise, a single nurse with limited supplies was all that was made available. The long work hours, tedious work content, and insufficient medical support all caused the workers to feel like their work conditions were poor, and that they would leave CMSC if they had other choices. These conditions are examples of how the “Pure Labor” work ethic affected Mexican workers’ experiences at CMSC.

Besides these aspects, the pre-work training offered also illustrates how the “Pure Labor” managerial style affected production. The Taiwanese management only invested in human capital at the absolute minimum level. Before they stepped onto the shop floor, both CMSC employees and temporary workers needed to go through pre-work training to familiarize them with the environment, working conditions, job description, safety codes, and other work-related information. In other maquiladoras, this process usually

took at least a full day; some even spent a week or up to a month training new employees. This was not the case at CMSC. All new recruits received one hour of training, which was conducted by the production assistant. The content in this training included an introduction to the company, safety codes, and general information about the organization. After the hour of training, workers stepped out of the meeting room near the cafeteria and walked to the shop floor. If the temporary workers were not operating a line independently, they usually remained close to a worker at the same station so they could see how to perform their tasks. This is the only work-related training they received at CMSC.

I worked as an industrial engineer for several months. During that period, I measured the time that experienced and temporary workers spent at the same task. The difference between these groups was considerable. Temporary workers sometimes required double or even triple the time an experienced worker would need to finish the same task. The defect rate was also higher for lines operated by temporary workers than by regular CMSC's employees. Therefore, the production manager usually assigned some experienced workers to serve as temporary line leaders on lines operated by temporary workers, in order to keep the operation from stalling. For outsiders, this might have appeared like a good way for workers to climb the internal job ladder. However, such a promotion was only temporary. Workers who had been promoted to line leader received two hundred extra pesos a week during the busy season, but their salaries would return to normal as soon as the busy season ended.

One Mexican industrial engineer complained about this arrangement to me. He believed that if the company really wanted to train workers to be line leaders, then those chosen workers should receive regular training during the normal season; even though these workers were all experienced in their tasks, line leaders actually required more than just experience. They needed to perform more tasks and pay attention to more details than simply an experienced worker would. Moreover, they needed some basic leadership skills. Otherwise, no one would listen to them. The engineer's opinion corresponded with that of the new human resources manager, Roberto, who replaced Pablo after he retired. In his second month as HR manager, I arranged an interview with him. During that interview, he described his future plans for how to motivate workers. Although the factory needed to reduce human capital expenditures, he would offer the line leaders' salary to some experienced workers, even during the normal season. Since they would receive better salaries than normal workers, they also needed to spend extra time receiving training. Roberto believed that this arrangement would motivate workers to work harder and take on more responsibilities. However, his plan was never implemented because Jackie Chan did not approve it.

Not every experienced worker who received such a "promotion" was happy about it. Although being a line leader meant temporarily higher pay, it also meant more overtime, regardless of their shift. Though this meant they would receive higher paychecks, most workers expressed how difficult the overtime was, especially for those working the night shift. According to Mexican labor law, employees have the right to decide if they want to work overtime. Employers cannot punish those who decline. At

CMSC, when workers refused to participate in overtime, they did not receive direct punishment. However, if they quit their job and later wanted to return (as was very common), this previous refusal might prevent them from being rehired. Mateo, an experienced repair worker, encountered this situation after he quit his job to go on his honeymoon. Afterward, he started working at a different nearby maquiladora but eventually wanted to return to CMSC because he did not like the task that was assigned to him in another maquiladora. When he did, it was at a time when CMSC had just lost several repair technicians. Presumably, they would have welcomed his return. Actually, though, he paid several visits to the factory gate to meet production managers and beg them to rehire him. I helped him ask the production managers and other repair technicians what exactly prevented his return. Eventually Mateo returned to his original position, but without his seniority. The reason they blocked him was that after he quit, his leader commented that Mateo was uncooperative with regards to working overtime. It is clear that even though Mexican labor law gives workers the right to decide if they want to work overtime, in reality, if they choose not to, irrespective of the reason, it may affect their future opportunities.

Most CMSC workers realized that even though the labor laws protected their right to refuse overtime, they were not protected from the company taking revenge. Because of their previous record, they might not be able to return to CMSC if they quit. Combined with other factors such as low wages, the below-average meal plan, and facilities insufficient to meet workers' basic needs, workers generally had a negative experience working for CMSC. Some more minor features also underscored workers'

negative experience. For example, most Mexicans are fans of local soccer or baseball teams and are passionate about the professional leagues. During the season, many workers are absent from work on game days or the day after. This causes problems with absenteeism during the season, delaying the production schedule. Therefore, in order to decrease potential absentees, some maquiladoras provide a live stream of the games on the shop floor. Others might even stop the line during games, and restart it after the game is completed. For managers, allowing workers to watch the game during work hours helps secure enough workers coming to work and staying sober the days of and after games. Factories might lose a couple of hours of productivity, but this practice secures the workers coming to work and minimizes the uncertainty that otherwise companies these games. CMSC had no policy to resolve this issue.

Besides external games, some maquiladoras have regular recreation activities at their factories. Workers can join basketball, baseball, soccer, or volleyball teams sponsored by the factory and practice the sports they enjoy. Moreover, some maquiladoras regularly host parties and provide free food at such events. CMSC did have a basketball court behind the production facility, but when I was there, it was being used as a temporary warehouse to store pallets. I never saw a ballgame played at CMSC and no company-funded team³⁴ existed. Furthermore, during my time there, CMSC held

³⁴ According to Lopez, a senior Mexican manager who also worked for the previous Japanese company, when the Japanese company operated this maquiladora, there was a company-funded baseball team. The company provided all of the gear and uniforms for each team member. This baseball team was dismissed on the same day the maquiladora changed ownership.

one taco party, to celebrate Mother's Day. I asked workers who had worked at CMSC for years, and they could not recall any other party in the past three years.

All of these recreational activities promote workers' happiness and make them more willing to stay in their current jobs. When I conducted my fieldwork, there were plenty of jobs for the local labor force, and workers had more opportunities and choices than in years past. Since more and more employers and transnational enterprises are operating in Tijuana, maquiladoras must compete with one another for workers. In this context, the jobs offered by CMSC do not attract the ideal workers they want, but rather only those left behind by the local labor market. However, this arrangement matches Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy and the "Pure Labor" work ethic. It would be an extra cost for the company to fund a sports team and maintain the related facilities (such as a basketball court). Besides, allowing workers to play sports might potentially decrease their overtime. These factors would prevent the company from extracting maximum productivity from its workers.

Workers experience a variety of working conditions and employment relationships at maquiladoras. CMSC's employees felt that they were part of a machine. This feeling was shared widely by line workers and Mexican managers. Workers spent at least ten hours a day at CMSC with insufficient facilities for resting, and were ordered to complete a vast quantity of production as a part of their daily routine. CMSC employees experienced the "Pure Labor" work ethic directly through their fatigue and deep feelings of being parts of a machine. Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy was to "run the horse fast, and feed the horse the least." CMSC's workers felt that they had been

mechanized and were not treated like human beings. Although CMSC's employees might not be able to identify the specific factors causing their negative experiences, it is clear that they were deeply affected by the “Pure Labor” work ethic.

1.3. “Somos Trabajadores Nómadas”—Temporary Workers in CMSC

One of the most prominent phenomena occurring in Tijuana’s maquiladoras in recent years is that factories no longer hire enough employees to achieve their production goals. Instead, they hire temporary workers (trabajador de soluciones). Currently, it is not uncommon to see people wearing different uniforms walking out from the same maquiladora at 5 p.m. each evening. For companies, hiring temporary workers is already a common practice in the Tijuana area. For workers, being temporary is now almost an unavoidable first step in joining the local job market. After the Mexican government changed regulations on hiring and firing practices and lost its control of employment contracts, temp agencies become a new and energetic industry in Tijuana. Temp agencies have changed the hiring process in maquiladoras, as well as workers’ career trajectory and their ability to shift from one plant to another.

After the Mexican government passed their labor law reform act in 2014, the scene changed significantly. Government agents claimed that this reform would help to boost Mexico’s GDP and create more jobs. After the reform passed, companies gained more flexibility in how they handled their human capital and production schedule. In

Tijuana, temp agencies grew rapidly after 2014, and became an important element of the local labor market. This new player significantly changed the local labor market in many respects. When I began my fieldwork in Tijuana in May of 2016, many maquiladoras were hiring a significant number of temporary workers. It was common to see many temporary workers who wear different uniform vests (as shown in Figure 11) walked out from maquiladoras at 5 p.m. This was a relatively new practice in Tijuana.

The 2014 labor reform act made this practice possible. Two of the most important adjustments are as follows.

1. The Mexican government loosened its regulations on the hiring and firing process. This allowed companies to fire its underperforming employees in a short period of time and with reduced compensation.
2. The Act also introduced a three-month training trial for companies to test if employees would be able to perform well in their assigned tasks. If an employee's performance did not meet expectations, the company could fire them without any compensation.



Figure 11 A Birthday Party in Cafeteria, workers wear different uniform indicates they come from different temp agencies.

The purpose of the labor reform act is to allow companies more flexibility in their hiring and firing of workers, and in general with how they manage human resources. After three years, though the results of the reform remain unclear, the act has clearly opened the door for maquiladoras to hire more temporary workers and gain a greater level of flexibility in terms of labor management. Temp agencies have become an integral part of Tijuana's job market, taking over certain tasks that used to be conducted by individual HR departments at local maquiladoras. For example, in the past, companies were responsible for recruiting their own employees; now, the temp agencies have taken over this task. HR departments no longer need to go out to the street early in

the morning, set up a tent and use a bullhorn to announce their recruiting details to the neighborhood, hoping people will leave their homes and take the jobs. All maquiladoras now need to do is make a phone call to the temp agency and tell the agent how many workers they need and on what date. Then, when the day comes the temp agency delivers the workers directly to the maquiladora's front gate.

One HR manager , Pablo, described this change as follows:

“Right now it is very difficult for me to hire people [on] my own because almost all employees are looking through the outsourcing [companies]³⁵ for [a] job. They are not walking on the street and looking for [a] job. They are looking at the temp agencies, sometimes on the internet maybe, and then they go to them and say, ‘hey, I want a job. Ok, come in. What do you want to do? I want to work at XXX company. How much you want to work? I want to work for 2000 pesos. Something like this... (Interview transcript, 2016/06/24).”

Pablo also told me that temp agencies save them a lot of time on recruiting tasks that would otherwise be outside in the burning hot sun of summer. Now they can concentrate on internal affairs like making the production line more efficient. He mentioned that the temp agencies share not only the burden of recruiting tasks, but other

³⁵ Pablo always used the word: "outsourced workers," and "temp agencies" to refer to those temporary workers and temp agencies.

responsibilities, as well. For example, by hiring temporary workers, maquiladoras can avoid paying social security, pensions, and other benefits to workers. Factories only pay the temp agencies for their services. All other costs are paid by the temp agencies themselves. Since almost all maquiladoras have busy seasons and slow seasons, there is a huge delta in their labor requirements. In the past, maquiladoras had to hire and fire workers and incur the related cost, but now they can avoid the extra expenditures associated with laying off workers, simply by outsourcing. In this regard, maquiladoras gain more flexibility in managing their labor, with minimum cost.

Besides the flexibility that maquiladoras gain by hiring temporary workers, factories are also able to reduce other responsibilities related to labor, such as personal safety and compensation in case of an accident. In the past, the factory was directly responsible for each employee's safety on the shop floor. Although factory managers still put a good deal of effort into keeping the shop floor safe for work, if there is an accident and the temporary employee is injured, the factory has no direct responsibility since he or she is not a factory employee. The injured worker is employed by the temp agency. Therefore, all of their social security, work insurance and other compensation (if any) come from the temp agency, and not the maquiladora where the employee was injured.

The changes to the labor market in Tijuana are not subtle. Temp agencies are now even more pervasive as brokers in the job market. Almost all workers need to rely on temp agencies to find jobs when they first join the labor market. In this regard, these companies affect both workers and their potential employers. Some workers believe

that there is a positive side to outsourcing. For example, several young workers told me that they liked this type of work setting, since outsourcing provides them with the opportunity to explore different options when trying to determine what kind of job they would prefer, before settling down in a specific industry or position. However, most young workers I interviewed said that eventually they'd want a stable, permanent job after they'd had some time to explore.

Outsourcing is often the first job for freshly graduated young women and men. It is also a way for students to find short-term, part-time work during summer vacations and earn money to pay for school. For them, the unstable, short-term, and consistently migrant nature of temporary work is preferable; job security is less of a concern. Being an temporary worker and holding a temporary position does not bother them. These workers occupy a much better niche in the local labor market, because of their age and education. They still have options, or at least they believe they do.

Other workers, ones who cannot occupy this elevated niche in the local labor market, interpret outsourcing differently. Workers in this group tend to have more work experience and be in the later stages of their careers. These aged workers have usually held better positions in other companies in the near past. They left those jobs for various reasons, but soon after, when they returned to the local labor market, they realized they would no longer be able to occupy positions similar to those they once held. Temporary work is the only work left that they can find. For workers occupying inferior positions in the job market, the only reason to take an temporary job is because they need to make a living. Some older workers demonstrate their willingness to find a permanent position in

whatever company they've found temporary work, but only a few accomplish that goal. Regardless of their age, temporary workers understand their circumstances when it comes to looking for more stable jobs with better benefits. A permanent position would be a gift. Most temporary workers go from job to job for years. They are nomadic people living in border cities.

When the temporary workers became a vital source for maquiladoras to fill labor demand, temp agencies and temporary workers were not only changed the local labor market but also provided a new means to maquiladora managers to manage the shop floor more easily when compared to the past. According to the older workers and HR staff, temp agencies did exist before the labor reform act, but in the past, most maquiladoras only hired temporary workers to do peripheral jobs such as cleaning tasks. Now, an temporary worker can do most jobs inside a maquiladora, just like an official employee. This was a significant change because it also changed the way of shop floor management. Also in the past, maquiladora managers needed to carefully oversee their shop floors by themselves. Although strategies might vary, the goal remained the same: prevent workers from organizing and disrupting production.

For example, Peña described how some managers used “loyal” workers to penetrate the existing informal groups inside their firms, in order to collect first-hand information and prevent any potential conflict or strike (Peña, 1997). However, Pena also mentioned that each maquiladora manager might vary in their attitude towards informal groups and implement different strategies to manage their employer-employee relationships. It is no doubt that keeping worker discontent below a certain level and the

production line consistently operating are two major tasks for maquiladora managers. In the past, they could only rely on themselves and their staff to accomplish these goals.

Currently, temp agencies are able to assist maquiladora managers with overseeing the shop floor. When a temp agency sends workers into a maquiladora, they usually send several staff (depending on the number of workers sent) to help manage work inside. Besides recording the attendance of the temporary workers, temp agencies often assign an temporary worker to serve as a line leader. Since the temporary line leader is not a factory employee, he or she might not be equipped with sufficient knowledge and experience to supervise production. Therefore, their role on the production line is usually to help the “real” line leader communicate with and look after the temporary workers. Moreover, the temporary line leader is also in charge of monitoring production progress and the temporary workers’ productivity. Usually, any “problematic” workers are reassigned to other tasks for the day’s remaining work hours, and removed from the factory the following work day.

For example, when I was assigned as an assembly worker, one day a group of temporary workers came onto the shop floor. Some joined the same line I was on. One senior CMSC worker, Luisa, needed to leave work early that day. Soon after the temporary workers joined, the line leader assigned a young woman to watch Luisa perform her task and took over the work when Luisa left the factory. Luisa’s station was not an easy one. Depending on the model we made, Luisa needed to attach two or three information sheets and barcode onto the back shell of each television set. Each information sheet had a different serial number on it, and the serial number needed to

match every other one on each information sheet. Therefore, despite there only being one step to Luisa's work on the line, line preparation consumed a lot of time and made this station a very stressful one for any inexperienced worker because if they failed to match the serial number, this set of TV would not be recognized by the shop floor system and would not be able to trace. That is to say, once the no-match occurred, the entire line would stop until the proper serial number has been found.

When Luisa took her afternoon off and left the factory, the young and inexperienced female temporary worker took over her station. She actually did very well and it only took her a short time to develop her own way of catching up the speed of the production line. Unfortunately, she had serious cramps and went to the factory nurse. The nurse allowed her to rest a short time in the nursing room. Her long absence from the line drew the attention of the line leader and CMSC employees. The line leader even sent some logistics workers to search for her. After she came back from the nursing room and explained why she was absent, nobody blamed her or treated her badly. The line still ran as usual and the workers acted normally, but I never saw this young woman again after that day.

A couple of days later, I went to ask the line leader what happened with that temporary worker. "We don't want her to work in here," was the answer he gave me. It was clear that when the maquiladora managers were not satisfied with an temporary worker's performance, they could directly dismiss him or her, without any consequences. If the company fired an temporary worker, they did not need to compensate them in any way. The maquiladora managers simply contacted the onsite outsourcing staff and the

worker immediately disappeared from the factory, or soon thereafter. Thus, when temporary workers started to do the same tasks with other maquiladora employees, their existence in the shop floor became a means for maquiladora managers to keep the shop floor in order.

It is not news that since the first day of the Border Industrialization Project, maquiladora workers have been treated as a disposable labor force. Most researchers have noted that the turnover rate is high in most maquiladoras (English, Wilke, Williams, and Ibarreche 1989; Rivera, Rosa, and Tovar, 2007; Maertz, Stevens, and Campion, 2003; Miller, Janice, Hom, and Gomez-Mejia, 2001). In fact, some studies have shown that maquiladora managers tend to use the high turnover rate to keep production expenditures low, since workers who leave their jobs voluntarily automatically lose their seniority (Fernández-Kelly, 1983; Kopinak. 1997). In the past, a job at a maquiladora meant a stable income (if not a better one, when compared to the informal and service sectors) and good work-related benefits such as social security and health insurance. Therefore, maquiladora managers are not afraid to fire workers since they can always find someone else to fill the empty spot (Carrillo and Santibañez, 2001; Rodriguez, 1988). Conversely, because assembly tasks are repetitive, most assembly workers find them tiresome and very physically demanding; therefore, even the youngest workers cannot last for long in such jobs. Workers need time to rest before returning to work. However, if they resign, they lose their seniority. If later they return to the same company, most will not reinstate their seniority. Because of practices like this, workers feel they are a disposable labor force. Outsourcing work may intensify this disposable

feeling and feature because it is more unstable than other types of employment. Moreover, since the temporary workers performed the same tasks as regular employees of maquiladoras, the disposable feature of temporary workers became a means for maquiladora managers to manage both their own employees and temporary workers in an easier way. In the individual level, now managers can dismiss an "unwanted" temporary worker without any compensation to the worker. This allowed managers to fire temporary workers without less hesitation. Meanwhile, knowing that many temporary workers were waiting for jobs outside the firm that allowed managers to put more pressure on their employees to cooperate with managers.

From the collective level, since temporary workers are often nomadic, migrating from one factory to another. An individual might stay in a factory for weeks or months for a specific production project. Once that project is finished, however, the temporary worker will move to another company and start over again. Since the number of workers required by each factory is different, temporary workers often have totally different colleagues or team members in each factory. In such circumstances, individual workers not only need to adapt to new work environments, line-leaders, and managers, they also need to get to know their new colleagues in a very short period of time. The nomadic nature of temporary work prevents workers from establishing relationships with most of the people they encounter in the workplace, not to mention that it is almost impossible for them to organize any type of collective bargaining power or association. In other words, the nature of outsourcing diminishes the possibility of any kind of collective effort.

It is almost impossible for temporary workers to form any type of organization that works for their collective wellbeing. It is also nearly as difficult for them to wield what James Scott called the “weapons of the weak” (Scott, 2008) or what is termed a “subaltern struggle” in Peña’s book *Terror of the Machine* (Peña, 1997). There was one thing in common of these two theories: if they wanted to be successful in their efforts, they needed to persuade other workers to join the fight. At the very least, other workers needed to be convinced not to reveal any information to management.

As a repair technician during the busy season, I worked on a line composed of workers from a company called HDR. They were hired to support a special project from another TV assembly maquiladora. The workers were of both genders and various ages, and, education levels. Some were from the local neighborhood, but others were from as far away as Oaxaca. I asked them if they knew each other before they worked at CMSC, and most told me they had met each other for the first time on the day they began work at CMSC.

One day, after I finished some paperwork the GM had requested, I walked to the production line prepared to begin my repair work. The atmosphere on the line, however, was slightly different from normal. Generally, people would chat with one another without trying to hide it. They would make good-natured fun of each other or discuss chicken recipes while their hands performed nonstop assembly work. The general manager didn’t approve of workers chatting during work. However, here in Tijuana, people constantly spoke with one another while working.

Because workers chatted regularly, this day, when I walked onto the production line and no one was speaking, I knew that something was unusual. People were quiet. More precisely, they were talking but not at a normal volume. They were whispering. I asked my friend David, who worked as a repairman at the same station, what was going on. He told me that the temp agency had not deposited their salaries into their bank accounts (“*no tenemos el dinero en la tarjeta*”). People were angry and the line workers were discussing how if the money was not deposited into their accounts by the afternoon, they might organize a walk out. He then told me that he was not positive that if the money was not deposited, people were really going to walk out; this was only the third day he had worked there and he knew no one. How could he know if he could trust them? Our conversation stopped there because the manager appeared. After lunch, the money was deposited into their accounts, so the walkout never happened. However, David’s comment shows that even when people share information, the lack of an informal network and rapport with other temporary workers makes it difficult to escalate efforts to solve problems. This event indicated how difficult for temporary workers to protect their rights collectively. Hiring temporary workers allowed maquiladoras to control shop floor easily.

This event indicated how difficult for temporary workers to protect their rights collectively. Hiring temporary workers allowed maquiladoras to control shop floor easily. For CMSC, labor control was not the exclusive advantage to hire temporary workers. Hiring temporary workers matched Jackie's managerial philosophy. First, during the busy seasons, hiring temporary workers allowed CMSC to reduce its expenditure of

production cost because it helped CMSC to transfer the work-related cost such as social security, seniority, and disbursement fee to the temp agencies. More importantly, this arrangement allowed the maquiladora customers such as CMSC was able to adjust its number of workers without any extra cost while pursuing flexibility of labor.

Second, it was no doubt that experienced workers could provide faster assembly speed and better product quality that temporary workers could not achieve. Sophisticated workers could help the company to control the defective rate at a reasonable level. Ideally, this could help CMSC to reduce its production cost as well. However, as I discussed above, product quality was not the priority for CMSC; the quantity was. Besides, because Outstanding Technology was a global corporation and CMSC used many raw materials from other factories which belonged to the same corporation. This arrangement could help CMSC to lower its production cost and to reduce the defective rate by blaming other factories produced problematic parts for CMSC to assembly. Therefore, CMSC was able to modify its annual production statement without improved the production process and product quality.

In sum, although hiring temporary workers might affect product quality and increased the defective rate, but since these features were manageable and were not the priorities items for CMSC. Temporary workers could provide CMSC the advantages of the flexibility of labor between the slow and busy seasons. It also allowed CMSC to transfer labor-related expenditure and portions of shop floor management to temp agencies. In this regard, temporary workers could provide CMSC the advantages that matched Jackie's managerial philosophy and corresponded to “Pure Labor” work ethic.

2. Conclusion

Overall, in this chapter, I discussed how Mexican employees experienced the Taiwanese style of management. I separated the discussion into three categories of employee: Mexican managers/engineers, line workers, and temporary workers. These three categories of employees experienced the Taiwanese style of management differently. For managers and engineers, they have more opportunities to interact with Taiwanese general managers and other Chinese support team members. In their daily interactions, Mexican managers and engineers felt the employment relation, and the working condition has been changed significantly after the day that Outstanding Technology purchased the facility. They encountered longer working hours and less work autonomy when they still conducted the same tasks as they were in the previous Japanese corporation.

For line workers, because they did not have many chances to meet Jackie Chan or other Chinese support team members, their experience among the Taiwanese style of management came from the production arrangement daily. They were facing endless overtime work, long working hours, low pay, and insufficient facilities for them to rest. Under such working condition, line workers tended to feel they were just a part of a machine. Workers have been highly instrumentalized. Their experience was originated from the guide of the “Pure Labor” work ethic which emphasized to extract maximized productivity with minimum capital input toward human resources.

Hiring temporary workers to match the labor demand during the busy seasons could be seen as a consequence of the Taiwanese style management that pursued the flexibility of human capital and labor force. Although I also indicated that hiring inexperienced workers like temporary ones might create many problems such as unstable product quality and increased the defective rate. But without doubt, temporary workers provided a means for CMSC to adjust its labor input accordingly without extra expenditure. Temporary workers also became a tool, for maquiladoras to control their workers and maintained a good order in the shop floor with less effort. All these advantages that came with hiring temporary workers were matched to the Taiwanese style of management. From these Mexican employees' experience, we can see how the “Pure Labor” work ethic penetrated the daily operation of CMSC and profoundly affected the way that local workers experience their work lives.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The primary question this dissertation tries answers is how the cultural roots of foreign managers of maquiladoras affect the local labor process.

Previous studies have described corporations with the ability to set up multiple bases around the world as symbols and agents of capitalism. These corporations are driven by profit and thus are willing to pursue their niches by relocating production bases to international locations. Previous research has described these agents of globalization as a group of elites who share a similar class, educational background, and interest. Regardless of their ethnicity or nationality, their characteristics and values are the same. They are the executors of and decision makers for transnational enterprises around the world, benefitting from globalization and exploiting the possible advantages by their ability to travel at will.

The profile of these global elites is similar to the Chinese elites described by Aihwa Ong (1999). They can travel easily to multiple locations around the world. Their family structures and arrangements are deeply affected by globalization. Ong argued that it was not uncommon to see the father of a family working in a developing nation while his entire family was settled in another location, a developed country. These Chinese elites and their families might only reunite a few times a year and then only for a limited duration. Ong reminded readers that this type of family life might not be recognized as traditionally Confucian (1999). Thus, Ong placed culture and globalization on two sides

of a single scale, believing that cultural practices respond to challenges created by globalization. People must adjust their cultural behaviors and family arrangements to fit into this world where time and space are compressed (Harvey,1989).

Considering that culture is something that exists locally and responds to challenges from the forces of globalization, Ong's (1999) approach toward the relationship between culture and globalization shares Wallerstein and his followers' basic viewpoint. However, including Ong's earlier study based on a Malaysian factory, many scholars who have examined export-oriented factories have generally focused on how the culture of the host country interacts or cooperates with transnational enterprises. This type of interaction is the spirit of resistance used by women workers to battle the exploitative capitalistic mode of production described in Ong's book. This also harkens back to the many maquiladora studies mentioned above. Scholars such as Salzinger, Tiano, and Plankey-Videla have discussed how local cultural factors such as a patriarchal ideology have been manipulated or cooperated with managerial strategies and processes of labor control (Plankey-Videla, 2012; Salzinger, 2003; Tiano, 1994).

This approach follows the legacy of Eric Wolf who emphasized that local culture should not be considered vulnerable when it encounters the forces of globalization. Each culture has its own way of recognizing and cooperating with capitalism, and eventually gives capitalism a place in the original system. Regardless how local culture responds to the arrival of capitalism, whether people resists or cooperates, the point is that following this intellectual tradition, local culture has been given the subjectivity and agency necessary to interact with external forces such as capitalism and globalization. However,

when scholars focus on local culture and imagine that culture might have its own agency and dynamic, they overlook that so-called globalization is not a homogenous force and can instead be diverse; the term globalization means an era in which people, goods, and ideas can travel and affect markets around the world in very short periods of time. All of this has cultural roots. That is to say, even if one considers globalization to be a force that penetrates every corner of the globe, it still needs people to carry out the actions it inspires.

Agents of globalization come from different countries and immerse themselves in different cultures. For these business elites, before they depart to another location and begin a new journey, they often already have years or decades of work experience at the headquarters of a transnational enterprise. These agents experience different life and work trajectories, and eventually develop a variety of work ethics and values. Once each begins managing a production base or a maquiladora and representing their mother enterprise in another country, their previous work experience and ethics affect their management style and decision-making process.

In this work, I explored how cultural factors affect transnational enterprises' operation and managerial strategies in Mexico and Asia. I also analyzed how local employees experience cultural differences introduced by representatives of transnational enterprises. By conducting fieldwork in a maquiladora managed by a Taiwanese enterprise and located in Tijuana, I illustrated how the cultures of those in important positions and possessing the most resources and power affect the labor process.

To illustrate this idea, I began by describing Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy and its cultural roots. Looking back at Chan's work experience, we can see that his managerial philosophy is not uncommon and instead is actually widely shared among many Taiwanese business personnel. Researchers like G.S. Shieh have described how through the export industry, the Taiwanese experienced a substantial economic boom, embracing the capitalist mode of production through factory work and putting-out piecework at home. This work mode and wage system shaped the Taiwanese people's experience of capitalism and developed what Shieh called a "Pure Labor" work ethic. This "Pure Labor" work ethic emphasized several features such as flexibility, minimized production cost by cutting labor-related expenditure and pursued maximized profits by extracting as much productivity as possible at the same time. Furthermore, because the "Pure Labor" work ethic has emerged from the putting-out system that was popular in Taiwan during the 1970s and the 1980s, this work ethic put the volume as a more important goal than the quality of the product. Decades later, there resulted clear changes in Taiwanese society in a variety of social, political, cultural, and economic aspects. However, a recent speech from Premiere Executive Yuan and debates about the labor reform act suggest that the Taiwanese work ethic remains the same. The discourse of "Gong De Taiwan" suggests that despite the changing rhetoric, the main concepts remain unchanged. In general, Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy is similar, emphasizing that the best management practice is to minimize the expenditure of human resources and maximize employees' work hours and productivity. In practice, a general manager should be willing to save every penny that could be spent on workers, so long

as the factory still can find enough labor to fill the production line. Chan's managerial philosophy of providing only a minimal infrastructure and few work-related benefits to workers and keeping the number of employees to a minimum has penetrated to all aspects of the labor process and operation of CMSC. Thus, this Taiwanese cultural element deeply affects every Mexican worker and manager in CMSC.

Chapter IV discussed the experiences of these Mexican employees. Before Outstanding Technology purchased the maquiladora about a decade ago, the factory was operated and managed by a Japanese corporation. Many senior Mexican workers and managers had experience working for a Japanese company. Besides different work experiences at this particular enterprise, employees and temporary workers might also have worked for other maquiladoras before coming to CMSC. In such circumstances, almost all workers have comparable work experiences with employers from different countries. Based on this, I argue that the Taiwanese style of management makes both Mexican workers and managers feel like they have been highly instrumentalized and mechanized. Many senior workers mentioned that the first day after transferring their management rights, they were already experiencing culture shock. They performed the same tasks as before, but their salaries were cut in half. Besides this unhappy change, they also experienced conflicts in terms of work ethic and the prioritization of tasks and goals, and with interactions with their foreign colleagues. The conflict that Mexican employees experienced between their worked for CMSC and Japanese company was evolved from the managerial strategies which guided by different work ethics, and therefore, has cultural values involved in the scene. This strong feeling of

instrumentalization suggests that cultural factors deeply affect local workers' work experiences in maquiladoras.

After the Mexican parliament passed the Labor Reform Act at the end of 2014, the law allowed employers more flexibility in hiring and firing their employees. It also relinquishes control over the use of temporary workers. In response, CMSC began using temporary employees to satisfy its labor demand during the busy season. This strategy allowed CMSC to adjust its labor force and decrease the number of official employees. The booming outsourcing industry has now become a part of the local labor market in Tijuana, affecting recruiting practices, labor market conditions, and more importantly, the method of labor control. These rapidly changing circumstances must also alter our understanding of the labor process in the maquiladora.

Compared to the past, in the Tijuana area, temp agencies have now become something akin to human resource brokers. Their appearance has changed the management practices and hiring strategies commonly seen in maquiladoras. It has also altered the environment of the local labor market. Being an temporary worker might be a first step for people who need work. Temp agencies provide maquiladoras with an easy way to hire workers, and a more individualized, faster, and cheaper means of labor control. Thus, they have become an important part of the labor market and the effects they have both inside and outside of maquiladoras require further attention and analysis.

It should also be noted that even though outsourcing has become a method available to maquiladoras needing to adjust their labor demand and productivity, and even a means to conduct labor control, each maquiladora has a different attitude

regarding how to use temporary workers. Some might use this type of worker as the primary labor force during the busy season, as was the case with CMSC. Others might only use temporary workers to fill a small number of positions on their production lines. In this dissertation, I only focused on one Taiwanese owned and operated maquiladora and showed how temporary workers became a way for maquiladora managers to conduct their labor control policies. But how the outsourcing industry affects the labor market and the labor process in other maquiladoras remains unclear. To understand this new industry and how the temporary workers are used by maquiladoras managed by representatives from other foreign countries requires more studies and scholarly efforts in the future. Outsourcing is a strategy that fits perfectly into the general manager Jackie Chan's managerial philosophy. Despite the fact that using a high percentage of temporary workers might mean that product quality is unstable and the defect rate high, so long as these shortcomings can be controlled or kept to a manageable level and the production goals are achieved, the company will continue to follow this strategy and the high defective rate will be tolerated. In other words, decisions regarding how many temporary workers to use and how to use them follow the cultural guidelines that the general manager belief.

I would like to conclude this dissertation by addressing two topics. From a theoretical perspective, this study has delineated the cultural elements affecting the managerial practices of a maquiladora. Though we can fairly assume that most transnational enterprises share similar goals such as maximizing profits and expanding market share, when pursuing these goals, different companies might take entirely

different approaches. In this regard, besides those strategies built upon the assumption of “Homo Economicus” and what has been called “professional” behavior, various cultural backgrounds might also play an important part in this process. This study has focused on the work-related cultural elements introduced by representatives of transnational enterprises that highlight the work ethic and habitus accumulated from previous work experience; these may deeply affect these representatives when they make decisions regarding production bases in other countries.

The second topic of this dissertation is that once we understand the role that foreign managers’ cultural characteristics play in the daily operation of maquiladoras, we will be better able to trace the different patterns in maquiladora management and operation. Previous researchers have tended to categorize the different managerial styles of individual characters. For example, Salzinger pointed out that aspects of a manager’s personal background such as their education level, nationality, and career path and trajectory all affect their perspective on and knowledge of what Salzinger calls “maquiladora grade workers.” These characteristics also affect managers’ notion of the “productive feminine” and how they discipline and shape their workers (Salzinger, 2003). Salzinger described this phenomenon and argued that managerial styles are affected by personal features; however, my research suggests that besides these personal features, elements such as cultural tendency and habitus which developed from the previous work experience might also affect managerial style. The testimonials I collected from workers with experience in multiple factories suggest that managers and other representatives of transnational enterprises have different styles of interaction with

local colleagues and workers, a variety of managerial styles, and numerous priorities and production goals. The discussion of Foxconn in Chapter III also suggests that managerial style tends to be consistent among enterprises from the same country, but it is very different when comparing enterprises from other countries. This might be related to the representatives of enterprises from the same country shared common work experience and similar career trajectory in their mother country, and they developed a similar work ethic from these common grounds. Hence, adding the cultural aspects of maquiladora managers into the analytical framework enriches our understanding of labor process in such enterprises, and facilitates our understanding of the decision-making process and other aspects of maquiladora operation and management.

On the empirical level, I also addressed the importance of temporary workers. Temporary workers are not only used by maquiladoras to adjust their labor demand to meet the needs of different business seasons, but also comprise a new method of labor control. Compared to other labor-control strategies discussed in previous research, outsourcing is more direct but also a more insidious, brutal, individualized approach to controlling the labor force. Using temporary workers as a method of labor control minimizes the possibility of workers acting collectively. Unlike peripheral human resource work that molecularizes individual workers and manages worker discontent at a personal level to keep a good atmosphere and generate incentives to improve productivity which McKay discussed in his book (McKay, 2006I), using temporary workers allows the labor-control process to operate on a city-wide scale, and not only in a single maquiladora. By using temporary workers, maquiladoras can dismiss “unwanted”

workers in a very short time without any consequences or additional compensation. Workers dismissed from one maquiladora can easily transfer to another. In such circumstances, workers find it difficult to organize with their colleagues. Any of their demands can be considered a problem on the shop floor. In this regard, temporary workers are significantly more vulnerable than workers without a union's protection.

In sum, in this era of globalization, business elites are able to travel to almost every corner of the world to generate profit for transnational enterprises. Regardless of how similar their training and how many characteristics they share, each still has their own cultural roots. It is this cultural variation that makes globalization a non-homogenous force that undermines local culture. Even though foreign forces influence local culture, globalization is better understood as a cultural encounter similar to what I have tried to describe in this study. What Mexican employees experience at CMSC is not simply the capitalistic mode of production; it is the capitalistic mode of production as modified by a managerial philosophy deeply rooted in the concept of ““Pure Labor,”” “Gong De Taiwan,” and other Taiwanese work ethics and habitus. The feeling of being instrumentalized and mechanized is the outcome of the tension between different attitudes toward work and life from two disparate cultural traditions. In this context, I suggest that in any social space composed of people who come from multiple cultural backgrounds and with unevenly distributed power such as a maquiladora, cultural elements, especially from those with more power and resources, should be as carefully examined and equally weighted as gender, age, and educational background in any analytical framework. Once we add cultural factors from the management side into the

analysis, we will be better able to develop new and insightful approaches to examining export-oriented factories operated by enterprises from different countries that draw upon various cultural backgrounds.

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Figure 9 Original data from : <https://www.coca-colacompany.com/cs/tccc-yir2012/pdf/2012-per-capita-consumption.pdf>