

2019

#UsToo: control pathologies and gender in East Asia

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Abstract

Many East Asian companies employ a Confucian management style. A Confucian management style is characterized by: paternalism, centralized control, harmony and expectations of obedience (Miles and Goo, 2013).¹ Accounting is a mechanism that enables control by providing knowledge that can be used to control employees and with such control come expectations of obedience. Several accounting researchers have employed the Foucauldian concepts of surveillance, enclosure and the making of efficient, docile bodies to show how accounting enables managers to discipline, control performance and exact obedience (Knights and Collinson, 1987; Cowton and Dopson, 2002; Hopper and Macintosh, 1993; Macintosh, 2002). While these case studies concentrate on worker discipline generally and males in particular, the emphasis of our paper is concerned with how, in China, vulnerable migrant (being internal migrants without city identities) female workers are made into docile, efficient bodies.

Keywords

east, asia, gender, #ustoo:, pathologies, control

Disciplines

Business

Publication Details

Wang, J. & Monroe, G. S. (2019). #UsToo: control pathologies and gender in East Asia. AFANNZ Conference (pp. 1-33).

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Introduction

Many East Asian companies employ a Confucian management style. A Confucian management style is characterized by: paternalism, centralized control, harmony and expectations of obedience (Miles and Goo, 2013).¹ Accounting is a mechanism that enables control by providing knowledge that can be used to control employees and with such control come expectations of obedience. Several accounting researchers have employed the Foucauldian concepts of surveillance, enclosure and the making of efficient, docile bodies to show how accounting enables managers to discipline, control performance and exact obedience (Knights and Collinson, 1987; Cowton and Dopson, 2002; Hopper and Macintosh, 1993; Macintosh, 2002). While these case studies concentrate on worker discipline generally and males in particular, the emphasis of our paper is concerned with how, in China, vulnerable migrant (being internal migrants without city identities) female workers are made into docile, efficient bodies.

There is a legacy of Confucianism in East Asia. The positives of Confucianism are respect for hierarchy and a striving for harmony. The negatives are the expectations of obedience especially for women. A common theme of Confucian culture is that women should not protest, and that silence is a virtue. Yuan (2002) points out that the followers of Confucius endorsed special virtues for women, including the virtues of obedience, following others, and being silent to authority (Yuan, 2002, 114). Confucius never explicitly denied women rights, but on a scale of Confucian prescribed hierarchies, women were placed at the bottom. However, within such a hierarchy women were accorded protection from predatory males. Confucian hierarchies are seen to promote harmony, whether in the family or organisations; harmony being the highest virtue.² In traditional Chinese society, women had to observe the Three Obedience's and the

¹ This is not to say that Western styles of governance have not had an impact in East Asia but rather that deeply held attitudes of governing families, organizations and societies persist. Recently many Western business practices have been absorbed into East Asian companies. Miles and Goo (2013) point out that Western business systems are designed for impersonal control mechanisms that demand independent directors, audit and remuneration committees; all of which require disclosure and transparency.

² According to the International Encyclopaedia of Sexuality (1997), Confucius and Mencius defined the superior-inferior relationship between men and women as heaven-ordained more than two thousand years ago. Even in the twentieth century, the painful practice of foot binding persisted for middle class and upper class women, so that they would please men by their tottering style of walking. One particular Confucian legacy that still strongly

Four Virtues. Women were to be obedient to the father and elder brothers when young, to the husband when married, and to the sons when widowed. Thus, Chinese women were controlled and dominated by men from cradle to grave but protected from external exploitation. (International Encyclopaedia of Sexuality, 1997). However, female migrant workers in China move from the countryside to the city to seek employment. As migrant workers they have limited rights and legal protection. Many leave their families behind and send most of their wages back to their families. As a result of leaving their families behind, they lose the protection of the men in their family and become vulnerable to exploitation by male managers in the workplace.

The virtue of women being silent extends from family groups to Chinese organizations and reflects a legacy of the domination of women. On the surface, having a docile labour force is a management dream: no risks of strikes and poor performers can be easily dismissed. In addition, performance standards can be raised to lift productivity without incurring extra labour costs. However, there is a dark side, a culture of silence allows a practice of harassment and exploitation to flourish. The literature around the plight of migrant women workers in China with respect exploitation and harassment is scant and this paper sets out to open up this area of study.

The research question addressed is to what extent do the control and behavioural concepts of management accounting marry with traditional Confucian concepts of hierarchy and obedience to effect the conditions for female workers in the hospitality industry? Our paper illustrates how a culture of silence and obedience extends to migrant women in the Chinese workplace.³ We show how silence and obedience is maintained in the hospitality industry, where many migrant women are subject to management accounting controls effecting their costs, their performance and their behavior. employed. Our paper is concerned with the millions of migrant women who have left the countryside and their families to work in the cities to be controlled by managers, many of whom see such women as needing to be dominated in a Confucian sense, i.e., women should not exist independently of a male. Migrant women in China are often poorly educated,

persists is the belief that a woman must belong to a man – whether as a father, husband or as in later life a son. In modern China, no woman has ever been a member of the seven man polit-bureau that controls China and only a minority of the over 200 members of the central committee are women.

³ Wu and Wokutch (2015) point out that Confucianism remains the central value system in China and other East Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Vietnam. Moreover, Confucianism is experiencing a revival and ascendancy as a major traditional value system in China (Lau and Young, 2015; Miles and Goo, 2013). Lau and Young (2013) maintain that the Chinese system of governance is the product of its rich heritage and entrenched values system. They argue that China will not completely shift from a relation-based to a rule-based governance regime.

as in the countryside families give preference to educating males where resources are scarce. Without qualifications and labour rights these migrant women are vulnerable to exploitation and harassment from male managers. They maintain a silence around harassment because their jobs and incomes are important to sustain their families and because of a sense of shame. For many women working in industries in Asia, there is rarely an opportunity to complain against male superiors because males have all the power (British Broadcasting Commission, 13 December, 2017). Our paper supports the finding that women in Asia rarely have an opportunity protest or complain. The economic issue is that in the case of Chinese female migrants supply exceeds demand. Moreover, traditional culture supports hierarchical obedience. We argue that that the management accounting concepts employed - maximise revenues and minimise costs - also support a deterministic outcome that privileges profit over human rights. The latter outcome contributing to our ethical conclusion that unless coerced by labour legislation, managers will not change their behaviour or their expectations of unconditional obedience.

This paper is organized as follows. First, a background of Confucian governance is presented to demonstrate its emphasis on trust, obedience as well as implied gender roles. Second, prior research on gender, silence and accommodation is reviewed. Next, a case study in the hotel industry in China is used to illustrate the extent of exploitation and harassment encountered by female migrant workers in China. The qualitative approach is genealogical. Such an approach is what Foucault (1980) refers to as “subjugated knowledge”, i.e., “local memories regarded as unqualified or actively disqualified within the hierarchies of scientificity” (p.82). The literature is reviewed to provide a background to a culture of female domination and exploitation in China. The empirical data comprise over 60 interviews with hotel staff and the first author’s own experiences as a trainee manager in the hotel industry in China. The paper concludes with a final discussion of the findings arising from the interviews.

Background – The Confucian Legacy

To understand how managers in China can exercise the mechanism of power over female migrant workers, it is necessary to have a background understanding of Chinese self-subordination and how it has come to be such a strong behavioural response. This section reviews the Confucian legacy in modern China, especially with regard to females and their silence and obedience. The Confucian *Book of Rites* advises inferiors to accept the authority of

superiors even when they are wrong. A well-quoted passage recorded in the *Book of Rites* states:

If a parent has a fault, the son should quietly, with a gentle voice and a blank expression, point out the problem. If this has no effect, the son should increase his reverence and filial piety. Later the son can repeat his point. If the parents are displeased, the son should strongly state his point, rather than let them do something wrong in the neighbourhood or countryside. If they are even more angry and more displeased, and, even if the parents beat the son till the blood flows, the son should not dare be angry or resentful, but instead should increase his reverence and filial piety (cited in Rainey, 2010, p. 26).

The *Book of Rites* provides the example of a parent, who although in the wrong may beat his son until the blood flows and the son should bear no resentment and accept the punishment with reverence and piety. This concept of *Li* (rules of conduct) is quoted and extended elsewhere with regard to men and women and husbands and wives, managers and workers, and is well grounded in East Asian culture (Rainey, 2010). It is a prescription for silence and acceptance.

The family hierarchy which demands silence and acceptance is reflected by an authoritarian social structure. As Jacobs, Gao and Herbig (1995) point out:

Rule by man is interpreted to mean not merely that top decision makers have the final authority. In China, this has come to mean that decisions should never be questioned. The problem with business management is that top decision makers have unlimited powers. On the other side, there is no mechanism to ensure that these powers are not abused (p. 31).

This view by Jacobs et al. (1995) supports the contention that managers and officials operate within a wider range of sanctions than is common outside of China. One aspect of this emphasis on privileged authority is that civil labour laws are used to buttress authority (Jacobs et al. (1995). Chinese companies often ignore harassment in their terms of employment. In the context of labour laws offering scant support to harassed workers, Chen (2002) states that the cultivation of supervisors in a Chinese organizational context is a common practice that results from the lack of a grievance system in the Chinese workplace; employees cannot normally voice their concerns to top management if they feel unfairly treated. Individual workers may seek to please their managers such that accommodation prevails, as Han and Altman (2009) point out, which may build workplace resentment when some staff are preferred (based on their affinity with supervisors). Bozionelo and Wang (2007) emphasise that this aspect of staff

accommodation to managers is negatively perceived when it appears to influence rewards, but usually the influence that workers seek is to be treated fairly and protect themselves.

Hu (2013) argues that a distinctive feature of Chinese culture is its punishment mechanism, which is directed at creating a behavior of self-subordination in the laboring classes. Such self-subordination is fostered by a sense of “shame” and public humiliation leading to loss of “face”.⁴ which is why, according to Hu (2013), power and punishment have over the centuries been designed to engender accommodation and shame. The latter sense being etched into the Chinese psyche by inculcating Confucian values, where, as Hu (2013) observes, the loss of face and public shame are to be avoided whatever the price in self-subordination.

Supplementing the official punishment code were the social rules prescribing standards of conduct, and an individual’s status in the Chinese society (Lai, 2008; Liu, 2004). For example, according to Yao (2000), to show respect to older generations, younger generations are required to bow or kneel down and say “good morning” every day. “If everybody acts in accordance with *Li*, then the world would be peaceful and orderly, ruled without ruling, governed without governing, and ordered without ordering” (p. 192). In other words, status should be ingrained and internalised such that harmony is achieved through obedience.

The purpose of social rules is to seek conformity by internalising behaviour. The performance of rituals also cultivates the understanding of social rules to preserve harmony. Fan (2010) provides a good example:

If I teach my children that bowing to their uncle is showing respect to him, they will know what to do; but if I only tell them that they should respect their uncle, they will not know what to do (p. 177).

In this example, respecting elders is implied in the virtue of *ren* and bowing to elders is the ritual to reflect such respect. Hence, rituals provide clear guidance on how to behave properly in society (Fan, 2010). For example, managers may suggest that staff should bow to show

⁴ Grey (1867) describes how victims were led through the streets preceded by an official with a gong whose sound signaled a further application of the lash. Public punishment of the body was ubiquitous and continued officially until 1911. Photographic evidence depict the humiliation of punishment while government officials look on.
https://www.google.co.nz/search?rlz=1C1GCEA_enNZ812NZ812&biw=1680&bih=919&tbn=isch&sa=1&ei=K1nWW-WIHNS8rQHLsb8Y&q=whipping+of+women+in+old+China&oq=whipping+of+women+in+old+China&gs_l=img.3...25442.31646.0.33576.18.18.0.0.0.237.2662.0j16j1.17.0....0...1c.1.64.img..1.0.0....0.1m27w5BQ-Uk#imgsrc=uyvpN54RfpKznM

respect for senior staff or even to kneel when required. The idea is to cultivate obedience by self-subordination. When sanctioned by a superior, it was traditional for the accused to kneel.

It was also traditional to assume that the accused were guilty because a superior person was the accuser. Confession was important to preserve harmony. From the last Qing dynasty until 1911, whipping was used to extract confessions, (Park, 2008). A special bamboo cane was employed calculated to maximize pain in the victim and with each lash to draw blood. The resigned acceptance by the accused of punishment by a superior, even when the accusations are false, is a central characteristic of Confucian authoritarian moralism (Hwang, 1999). China did not punish officials, or members of the superior classes as that would send a dangerous message to the masses who were assumed to look to superiors with respect and for guidance

Modern organizational internal management controls draw on elements of structures from the past. In modern China, there is still a reliance on parades, inspections, and denouncements, coupled with an acceptance of authority and their right to punish (Chen, 2002). The belief in a superior class has its corollary in the concept of an underclass of “*Waidiren*” (migrants lacking a city identity), where the civil rights of the migrants do not apply in a work situation. Migrants without civil rights are in a similar situation to laborers in old China pre-1911. Also, the greater agency that was allowed by pre-1911 magistrates is reflected at the micro level of management by the greater agency available to relatively low level managers.

Women in Confucian Society

Chinese culture is traditionally patriarchal, with Confucianism for many centuries establishing the rule for what is appropriate behaviour (Chan and Lee, 1995; Gallin, 1992; Stacey, 1983). Long before women occupied positions in business organisations, Confucianism prescribed a patriarchal, family system, placing the position of Chinese women as inferior, dependent, and submissive.⁵ Patriarchal brutality was considered legitimate in traditional Chinese families and upheld within the "rules of the family". Such views are reflected in many Chinese popular

⁵ Many writers argue that Confucius should not be blamed for a discriminatory view of women. Valutanu (2012) points out that later developments, notably Neo-Confucianism cemented the position of women in the social hierarchy. Tang (1997) suggests that the low position of women in the social hierarchy was to achieve a better division of labour. Moreover, a wife's patience and obedience can be interpreted as signs of greater inner strength and not of weakness. A woman should be seen as the equal of a man because of her capacity to adapt and manipulate silently. Brindley (2009) maintains that in respect of possessing authority certain people are not eligible (farmers and women) because of their work and gender.

sayings, such as: "*Women are like wheelbarrows; if not beaten for three days they cannot be used,*" or "*Women under sixty years old should be starved and not given full meals.*" (Gallin, 1992; Honig and Hershatter, 1988; Chen, 1991; Tang, 1994, 1997).

Richey (2008) makes the point that women are at the bottom of the Confucian hierarchy. Exemplary behaviour and uncomplaining obedience is expected of women. As Richey (2008) observes in the ideal Confucian home – a microcosm of the state – women are expected to demonstrate obedience. Huang (2010) points out that that a famous proverb in China is – *a woman without knowledge is a woman of virtue*. As Foucault (1980) points out, knowledge conveys power and power requires knowledge. Thus, women without knowledge are rendered powerless.

Harmony implies silent obedience to authority and never calling attention to yourself – “he who speaks out destroys harmony” (Arisaka, 2000, p. 6) Harmony when combined with a woman’s traditional function contributes to the stereotype that East Asian women are docile, obedient and eager to please. Not to have an independent critical voice is a female virtue according to Confucian rules of conduct (Arisaka, 2000). Moreover, such Confucian virtues are so strongly inculcated that they are “enforced by women themselves” (Arisaka, 2000, p. 7). The Confucian thinker Zhu Xi (1130-1200) observes: “*To do wrong is unbecoming in a wife, and to do good is also unbecoming to a wife. A woman is only to be obedient to what is proper*” (Chan, 2002). Reinforcing the concepts of harmony, silence and male ownership, Huang (2010) goes on to add that traditionally a woman should be held under the dominance of a man. What is proper is determined by the immediate superior. Such observations continue to undermine the independent voice of woman in a work context.

In recent decades, with Chinese women's increasing educational opportunities and the public's acceptance of a greater flexibility of gender norms such as employment outside their homes (Westwood *et al.*, 1995), the roles of Chinese women have expanded alongside with their increasing demands for greater gender equality. However, traditional patriarchal values and orientations still persist in Chinese societies, especially within the family system (Chan and Lee, 1995). According to the Economist (2018), despite social attitudes towards women in China changing dramatically in the past 30 years, “traditional sexual roles remain entrenched. Women are expected to look demure and shut up” (p. 28).

In December 2017, the Fushun School of Traditional Culture was closed by Chinese government. It is one of many traditional schools that teaches women to be obedient (British

Broadcasting Commission, 4 December, 2017). So although it can be said that in a modern socialist state, the teaching of obedience to women has no place in education, many Party officials, particularly from the countryside, adhere to traditional values. Among the traditional values is the principle that women should never answer back to or argue with men. They should see themselves as subordinate to men and never fight back when being beaten. Such teachings are more in keeping with Confucian values than the socialist values of the State. But Confucian values with their emphasis on harmony and hierarchical obedience are still upheld by the State.

A Culture of Silence – The Gender Factor

Within an East Asian organisational context, such as in the service and garment industries, where migrant women occupy the junior and menial positions, the carry-over of the practice of silent obedience is uncontested. Managers can expect migrant women employees from the countryside without city registration to be submissive as they have no labour rights in cities and are easily dismissed. According to the Economist (2017) migrants are not allowed to have proper jobs without residency papers and denied regulated housing.

Within industries which employ numbers of women in menial roles, such women are become vulnerable to managers who are in a position to exploit them. A major form of such exploitation is harassment. According to the Economist (2018) “there is no legal definition of sexual harassment in China” (p. 28). The Economist (2018) goes on to report, “Chinese companies often ignore harassment in their terms of employment and training. A report appearing on the BBC news website (British Broadcasting Commission, 2017) claims sexual harassment can be found everywhere from the paddy field, to public relations firms, the marketplace to the managing director's office. Sexual harassment numbers are extremely difficult to estimate because offences go under-reported.⁶ Silence is maintained but, when assured of anonymity, female migrants will speak with other females about abuse and harassment they have witnessed. Such failure to speak out is borne out by a recent study of the Guangzhou Gender Centre which found 70% of female students said they had been harassed but fewer than 4% said that they had or ever would report assaults (Economist, 2018, p. 28). Research using

⁶ A more common feature parallel to abuse at work is the problem of wife abuse in China. Wife abuse is considered to be endemic and a reflection of a wider and systematic form of domination and social control of women by men (Milwertz, 2003; Xu, 1997; Liu, 1999). With regard to violence against women there exists in China what the Washington Post (2016) describes as a culture of silence. Representatives of women's groups in China claim that 40% of women have experienced violence and respect the culture of silence (China Daily, 2014).

Chinese data with regard to harassment at work is scant due to a culture of silence coupled with a strong sense of shame.

While silence prevails around the topic of harassment, according to Vaswani (2017), experts agree that the level of abuse is now much higher, because more women have entered the workforce in Asia in recent years. In most East Asian countries, including China, Vietnam and Singapore, the female labour participation rate is now more than 50%, according to data from the International Labour Organisation. What this means is that there are now increasing numbers of Asian women working in factories, uniquely susceptible to being sexually harassed. Despite more women entering the workforce in Asia, the power dynamic still clearly favours men - and that means women are vulnerable to harassment because they lack similar power, lack self-confidence and suffer in silence. Another motivation may be that sexual harassment is also often used as a tool to discourage women who may be seen to be competing for power (Vaswani, 2017).

Joseph (2016) maintains that Asian women often feel too awkward to bring sexual harassment cases up to their superiors because they feel they will not be believed. Joseph (2016) maintains that men in some Asian cultures believe that women need to be responsible for the message they are sending to their male colleagues - a view widely considered unacceptable - but which activists say has a degree of open acceptance in Asia. It may be because some men don't know where the boundaries are, because as more women enter the workforce in Asia, there is a clash between "tradition and modernity", observes Vadaketh, (2017). Vadaketh (2017) states that men from reserved societies are coming into contact with women who are more gregarious and modern in their dress. These men completely misinterpret their dress and friendly office banter to believe their female colleagues are flirting with them.

Discipline, Industry and the Chinese Context

Han and Altman (2009) state that in cultures like that in China, there is no clear demarcation between personal and organizational life. Such a combination of the personal and the organizational is illustrated by the concept of "guanxi". Guanxi can be defined as a form of patronage that requires reciprocal obligations. The concept is deeply embedded in Chinese culture and may have positive business aspects but can also encourage organizational injustice. Chen, Chen and Xin (2004) maintain that some effects of guanxi are negative such as:

unwarranted influence on employees' promotion, bonuses and salary; task allocations; performance appraisal; and employees' trust in management. Bozionelo and Wang (2007) find that employees' guanxi with their boss, top level managers or even important outsiders is instrumental in engendering performance related pay and positive evaluations, which can result in negative perceptions of distributive injustice. On the other hand, a positive attribute of guanxi is that when favours are distributed, a reciprocal loyalty is demanded.

However, Zhang, Song,, and Bycio (2006) argue that Chinese employees are more likely to falsely underscore loyalty, selflessness, and respect for authority. Walder (1983) points out that employees' loyalty to superiors is based on an on-going exchange of loyalty for advantage. For example, when "someone purposely cultivates a relationship with someone in a superior position "through the giving of small gifts and the performance of favours, for the purpose of future advantage" (p.52). Likewise, Liang (1998) reports that an employee may engage in flattering, exaggerating or condescending behaviour to feed their superiors whatever they believe the latter might wish. This kind of accommodation to superiors may not well serve the bottom line and can produce a hidden gift culture.

Chen (2002) states that another reason for the cultivation of supervisors in a Chinese organizational context is the lack of a grievance system in the Chinese workplace. Employees cannot normally "voice their concerns to top management if they feel that they were unfairly treated by their direct supervisors" (p.328). The result is resistance by accommodation. Accommodation occurs when junior staff seek to gain a preference by gift-giving or by being friendly with their managers. It is a form of resistance as it aims at doing less for more. Some staff cultivate their supervisors while others do not. Han and Altman (2009) point out that, when some staff are preferred (based on their affinity with supervisors) workplace resentment builds. Such cultivation of supervisors by migrant female staff is common in Chinese hotels and results in competitive gift giving. Bozionelo and Wang (2007) emphasize this aspect of staff accommodation to managers is negatively perceived when it seems to influence rewards.

Relevant to the context of Chinese hotels is Hartstock's (1990) observation that "Power is associated firmly with the male and masculinity" (p.157). In light of this observation, Hartstock (1990) asks: "Are relations of power between the sexes comparable to other kinds of power relations?" (p. 157). Roberts (2014) points out how accounting mechanisms become embedded in organizational structures, and, as such, enable managerial dominance; the reaction to such

dominance is not necessarily resistance. As Hartstock (1990) observes, “It is certainly true that dominated groups participate in their own domination” (p. 169).

With respect to women and accommodation in Chinese organisations, Weitz (2001) states that women are neither “docile bodies” nor free agents; rather, they combine accommodation and resistance as they actively grapple with cultural expectations and social structures. There is a downside to accommodation as Weitz (2001) observes with respect to strategies of accommodation:

Women often find that power obtained through these strategies is circumscribed, fragile, bittersweet, and limiting. Similarly, women who attract men and increase their power through appearance can at best experience only a modest sense of accomplishment, since they receive attention only for physical characteristics at least partly outside their control. Nevertheless, we must not overstate women’s agency in this matter, for their options are significantly constrained by both cultural expectations and social structure (p. 682).

Internal Control

Loft (1986) argues that management accounting facilitates control at a personal level:

Records are not just an enabling device for power to use; the creation of a record is an act of power itself. Not only does it represent the result of a choice concerning what is important in the organization but its creation can induce obedience (p. 140).

Because management accounting control systems induce obedience, they can be used to reinforce managerial domination of workers unless checked by unionisation or labour laws (Roberts, 2014). To be accused by those in authority, in a Confucian sense, of not meeting performance standards is to be guilty and, in the interest of harmony, meek acceptance of whatever sanctions are imposed is expected. Workers without labour protection can only protect themselves by seeking accommodation with exploitative managers. Foucault (1980) observes that power is not necessarily repressive or negative. In fact, people may enjoy obedience to authority. So, rather than resistance, the exercise of power may bring about worker accommodation to managers. Chen (2002) states that workers in China need to cultivate their supervisors because of a lack of a grievance system available to Chinese labour. There are no complaints procedures.

According to some researchers (Hopper and Macintosh, 1998; Penfield, 2014) rewards and penalties operate effectively as behavioural controls without the need for corporal punishment to control staff behaviour. Corporal punishment may not be needed to make workers achieve their allocated metrics but in Chinese factories, the beating of workers is not unknown. Nonetheless, different forms of punishment may be applied as a sanction: casual fines levied by managers, allocation of extra duties, the performance of other services and even slapping or spanking. With regard to assaults on migrant workers, a lawyer specialising in legal aid for migrant workers is quoted as saying, “Responsible government agencies will always kick away from their doors migrant workers seeking help and refuse to punish their employers; which has only worsened the situation” (China Daily Newspaper, 2015, p. 8).

However, internal controls are structured not just to achieve the goal of profitability but also to empower the idiosyncrasies of some managers. Such empowering of managers causes Foucault (1980) to draw attention to what he calls the “multiple forms of subjugation” that function with organisations and that become embodied in techniques (such that accounting provides) and “eventually violent means of material intervention (p.96). Sharma and Irvine (2016) in their study of the role of accounting in Fiji’s sugar industry, refer to corporal punishment as being common on plantations as overseers sought multiple forms of domination. As Roberts (2014) observes accounting becomes a necessary part of a structure of domination.

Such forms of domination match with Foucault’s (1980) observations of power in its ultimate destination taking violent forms. While staff are motivated by their sense of a struggle to survive at work, it is a struggle that Foucault (1980) refers to as an attempt by the subjugated to emancipate themselves from a centralising discourse such as imposed accounting controls. Foucault (1980) asks “What are the contrivances of power, whose operations extend to such differing levels of society and are posed by such manifold ramifications? What are their mechanisms, their effects and their relations? (p. 88) Accounting then is a necessary contrivance of power that operates to affect the relationships between managers and their workers.

In China, especially in the manufacturing industries, internal controls are rigorously enforced and managers are able to exercise a range of punishments over a mainly migrant workforce. The Spectator (2018) reports on shady factories in China, where exploitation can occur out of sight and an abundant supply of migrant labour leads to a disregard for individual suffering, with bosses pursuing larger goals for productivity and profit. Working conditions in these

factories repeatedly slide into exploitation, harsh physical conditions and long hours for low wages. “Chinese factories such as Foxconn and Pegatron regularly violate national labour laws. Work shifts are 12 hours a day (including enforced, unpaid overtime), with public humiliations for minor infringements, and talking strictly forbidden ... In 2010, 18 workers at Foxconn (none older than 25) attracted widespread coverage when they flung themselves to their deaths in despair” (The Spectator, 2018, p. 32). Moreover, numerous reports on Chinese factories reveal that workers may be beaten for failing performance standards.

Within the service industries and, in particular the hospitality industry, internal controls may be more selective and personal, as workers have a closer working relationship with their managers than in large factories (Sherman (2007). However, managers are more likely to punish than reward staff as rewards can incur ‘costs’ and lower work expectations (Chen et al., 2004). In China, sanctions are often used to control staff. Sanctions can take many forms from a public hectoring, to fines, or the imposition of longer hours or even violence. For example, a video that went online, showed eight staff of a Chinese bank that were publicly spanked for poor performance. One female bank worker commented on her reaction to watching the public shaming, “I wasn't physically punished, but I feel fear and humiliation whenever I think of that session.” She added “The bosses would just justify it all in the name of performance boosting.” (Shen Lu and Hunt, K 2016, p. 1). Such punishments are known to occur in the hospitality industry, often with staff preferring to elect to be spanked rather than be fined or do longer hours. Dismissal is the ultimate sanction. Migrant workers have no means of protest, and the threat of dismissal is constant. Accommodation with managers, where possible, becomes the best form of job security.

Workers in China cannot organise a collective resistance because such an organisation would be illegal in China. Collective organisations are only legal with party approval. In addition, individual resistance is futile because it would result in dismissal. Jobs for migrants are scarce so dismissal would result in a return to the countryside and imposing a burden on a family’s meagre farm income. Most families rely on remittances from sons and daughters working in the cities. In a Confucian culture, females are particularly vulnerable from demanding managers and from husbands and fathers who have sent them to the city to find work. They cannot afford to be fined and dread the shame of losing their job. Accordingly, they silently accept the sanctions and demands of their managers without resistance.

In summary, managers in China are largely free of labour constraints especially where migrant workers are employed. Capitalism coupled with a legacy of authoritarian management results in internal control environments that reflect the conditions that applied in the West in the 19th century (Edwards & Newall, 1991).

Research Method

To answer Foucault's inquiry as to what are the contrivances of power and its ramifications, the research method adopted follows Foucault's genealogical approach to record the stories of migrant women at risk in the work force. The stories presented will be concerned with tracing the disciplinary rationales that evolved from earlier physical methods of discipline. Miller and O'Leary (1987) point out that:

The emergence of our contemporary beliefs is viewed by reference to a complex of dispersed events, rather than looking for a single point in history which would be the origin of our current practices. Genealogy does not lead us to solid foundations: rather it fragments and disturbs what we might like to see as the basis of our current ideas and practices (p. 237).

Foucault (1980) explains: "In the specialized areas of erudition, as in the disqualified popular knowledge, there lies the memory of hostile encounters which even up to this day have been confined to the margins of knowledge" (p.81). According to Burrell (1988), "Genealogy is concerned with locating traces of the present in the past, not with the reconstruction of the past" (p. 225). As Foucault (1980) observes, such encounters are ignored and buried as being unscientific.

The research method utilised in this study approximates to what Sherman (2007) calls the ethnographer as a staff member. Accordingly, the paper draws on observations made during the period 2004 - 2009, when the first author was employed as trainee manager for a large Chinese hotel chain. Her duties were varied as she was expected to gain experience in every aspect of hotel work. Part of the training programme involved making copious notes of her experiences. The idea being that besides gaining practical experience, she would also reflect on what she had learned and the empirical section of this paper is based on such reflections. Conversations reported were recorded as notes during her employment period as were notes of meetings and operational practices. As a trainee manager, the researcher had access to various

hotel departments, the staff and managers involved. Her daily journals and reflections are written in Mandarin and contained within ten notebooks.

Besides journalised reflections, she socialized with staff from the hotels, and often went out for drinks after the evening shifts. Both on and off the job in hotels, she talked extensively with workers about their jobs, the work environment, and their personal lives. Although these were not formal interviews, they allowed her to get a sense of what workers thought about a broad range of practices. For the purpose of functional identification, receptionists informally interviewed are referred to as R(n), housemaids as HM(n), Concierges as C(n) and Managers as M(n). It should be recognised that most of the junior staff are migrants or interns and that nearly all the receptionists, waitresses and housemaids are female. On the other hand, the concierges and managers are mostly male.

Empirical Results

Observations

Chinese hotels are labour intensive. In their hospitality roles, junior staff are objectified to conform to disciplinary models. Techniques, such as enclosure by work space, uniforms and surveillance further enhance objectification by management, and these techniques have become methods of subjugation. Typical of this process is the morning parade of mostly female receptionists at the hotels where a ritual of who may speak and who remains silent is played out. The ritual always follows the same pattern of subjugation. For front line staff, it begins at 8:00 am with the uniformed receptionists lining up in readiness for the manager's inspection.

The manager stands in front of the uniformed receptionists and shouts at them. He is proud of the way he shouts. The secret, he acknowledges, is to shame individuals by shouting at them while in a group. The parade is about appearance, inspection and motivation. Identical uniforms and hair styles are required for staff to fulfil their productive and symbolic functions. Throughout the normal morning parade of receptionists, they stand like soldiers, and are not allowed to move around or adopt different postures.

During the morning parade, staff may be punished for minor deficiencies such as poor time keeping, talking, going slow, or by conveying to guests the wrong sense of their symbolic function. Normally, such rewards and punishments are specified within a narrow range. At this

time, managers determine who will be rewarded and who will be punished. Being criticised can mean lost job opportunities, fines, extra workloads or in some situations being dismissed. To avoid critical attention, most staff choose to stand in the middle of the parade hoping to be part of the “herd” and to be passed over. By being as inconspicuous as possible staff may avoid the verbal punishment by shaming. Staff repeatedly subjected to shaming by verbal invective often resign of their own volition. What may be regarded as constructive dismissal does not apply in China and invective can be used by managers to force resignations.

The parades provide opportunities for inscribing correct body postures and appropriate speech. Junior staff must stand with their hands clasped in front of them and eyes downcast. They must not clasp their hands behind their backs or on their hips when addressing managers or guests. Speech should be soft, warm but short. Staff should not say too much or engage in conversation, generally agree with managers and never argue.

Pointless orders could be part of disciplinary discourse to shape staff behaviours such as polishing the intricate ironwork on a staircase bannister; a tedious task with no obvious result in terms of productivity or real symbolic improvement. From the first author’s experience in several hotels, it seems that Chinese hotel managers tend to employ the extreme ends of the range of rewards and penalties with some of the “hall of shame” effects that Spitzer (2007) observes. Generally speaking, staff in the hotel industry tend to do what it takes to obtain rewards or to avoid punishments. Thus, what is measured tends to get their attention. In other words, it is well known that staff will do what management inspects (measures), not necessarily what management expects (Spitzer, 2007, p. 16).

Staff observation by deploying video cameras for 24 hour monitoring of staff and guests is a standard procedure (Wines, 2010). Hotels employ camera surveillance to monitor the workload of staff, such as staff in kitchens, receptionists to ensure they are working in their shift time rather than playing or doing nothing. It is easy to inspect whether staff are in their appropriate uniforms, enclosed spaces and observe their behaviour to customers. Such surveillance helps managers and supervisors determine appropriate performance benchmarks because if staff have too much idle time, then cost reductions are possible.

However, in some areas there are no cameras, e.g., hotel guest rooms are not monitored by cameras, so there is a risk that housekeeping staff may rest in empty rooms or even enjoy a cigarette, but such resistance is limited by other means of control. In the hotels where the first author worked, departmental managers keep records on the staff’s performance and supervisors

carry out spot checks and measure the time taken to clean rooms. As well as maintaining high cleaning standards in the rooms, housemaids are expected to clean the rooms in a timely fashion. They are expected to clean a set number of allocated rooms per hour. Failure to achieve the standard number of rooms per hour according to the performance benchmark applied will subject the housemaid responsible to further examination and review. However, the allocation of rooms to be cleaned by supervisors is subjective because some allocations due to position, size or occupancy are less demanding than others. Therefore, housemaids cultivate supervisors by gift giving, which is a negative feature of guanxi as it leads to competition among housemaids. The gifts are usually small but constant such as supplying their supervisor on a weekly basis with home-cooked treats. Most housemaids are hard put to find the money for this necessary but added expense of working.

With regard to interns and migrant female staff, a manager (M4) admits his preference in the context minimising costs and maximising control:

The cost of these students and migrants is a lot cheaper than local staff. Another reason is that these temporary workers are easy to control. Most of them are very young and with little work experience. They are frightened to lose the working opportunities and will listen to their supervisors quite well. If by any chance these staff are not very good, we can get rid of them very easily in only a few minutes. But for tenured staff, the government law protects them. It is a much harder process.

On the other side, a receptionist (R12) knew of her manager by reputation. He had offered to drive her home after her late shift. He had done this to other women so she was wary of him. She explains her struggle between accommodation and overt resistance:

Sometimes he would slip his arm around me and sort of squeeze me. I did not like it but did not know how to say no as I could see he acted offended if I moved away a little. Once in the car he put his hand on my leg and when I pushed his hand away he became angry and stopped the car and told me to walk home. I did not know what to do. I could not tell my parents who had paid money to get me the job in the hotel.

She relates that for a week she did not have contact with the manager who acted coldly towards her. Then, one night as she was leaving, he called her into his office and told her she had to sleep with him or resign. So she resigned.

Another receptionist (R13) suggested that migrant staff are driven to seek favours and preferences from managers because of the lack of job security. She indicated that staff are always trying to please managers by doing things they know the managers will like. For

example, many male managers like dancing with girls and drinking after work. The managers see it as a form of bonding and staff accompany the managers to keep them happy. Such behaviour puts pressure on them to abandon their constraints. Because R13 was very shy and held fast to her principles, she did not know how to go about getting invitations to go dancing or how to please managers by flirting with them in a modest way; so she was ignored by the managers. Her colleagues were not helpful because they saw themselves as being in competition for managerial attention. R13 was shocked by the way her colleagues prepared themselves to accompany the managers. Uniforms were swapped for very short, backless dresses. Such attractions were not lost on the managers who enjoyed the company of those girls who were bold and provocative. R13 said she could not escape her upbringing and could never go out with men like that.

R13 pointed out that most managers are male. Most junior staff are female migrants from the countryside. Having married in their teens, often they must provide for husbands and children left behind. Most miss their children but not their husbands, the latter are viewed by some as useless dependents, who being in the countryside may work as farm labourers or not at all. To improve their lot, confident female staff employ their charms to get more money and the married ones may cheat on their husbands to build relationships with the managers. R13 revealed that these things occur in organisations that employ many junior female staff lacking any job security; they must compete for the attention of managers to obtain organizational benefits. R13 maintains everybody knows about this, but it is not openly acknowledged.

Another female migrant hotel worker (HM7) revealed that she does not want to upset her manager by pressing for permanent status; her current wage is 1900RMB (\$380) a month. She is fearful of being criticised as she is aware that there are many others who would like to fill her position.

There are a lot of people like me who have no contacts and come from the countryside. They are all looking for a job. So I really value my current job and will try to keep it as long as possible.

She went on to say:

I had no choice but to go to the city because in my hometown, there is nothing else I can do. In the past, as farmers, we made money by planting things. But nowadays, there is no land for us to work on. We need money for living so my husband and I have to find jobs in the city.

She values her job even though it is hard and involves working 6 days a week. She has two children in city schools so, being a migrant, she must pay for their education. As a temporary worker, the hotel is not obliged to provide insurance cover, so she fears becoming ill or having to go to hospital as she cannot afford the hospital fees. She states:

I do not have any insurance at all. Because I am a migrant worker, the hotel does not want to pay insurance for me. I cannot be ill. If I am, my whole family will be in trouble and I will only be waiting to die because I have no money to pay for the hospital.

With regard to her work situation, she observes:

If the managers do not like you, they will shout at you if your work does not please them. Working with managers is like being with a tiger. You never know when they are in a bad temper or when they are angry about something. Always, I need to be careful of everything, and anytime be like a mouse.

R8 also reiterates the themes of managers being like tigers and unpredictable. She recounts how in one hotel, for trivial offences such as being late or too long in the bathroom, her manager would order her into his office and rage at her. She was expected to stand meekly with her hands clasped in front of her and her head bowed. In the fashion of the traditional Confucian expression of obedience, she would not argue but instead confess her guilt, however, unfair it was to be made to do so. To argue could mean dismissal. Even with a meek demeanour and a nervous confession, the manager could work himself into a fury and, although R8 said it was never her choice, she knew that some receptionists elected to be spanked rather than have arbitrary fines imposed or given extra work.

In a second interview with R12, she was more forthcoming about her experiences with Manager 8. At first, after she had been at the hotel a few weeks he was very nice to her and allowed her small favours and easier work shifts. He asked her to go for coffee with him, which she did. At that stage, she was pleased to be preferred by the manager as it made her work life easier. Then while out with him, he began to put his arm around her and request “hugs”, which she accepted, but later he said that he wanted to go further and date her. It was clear that he wanted a relationship with her. She knew that he was married so she refused. He then became very hostile and began to shout at her in front of others and took every opportunity to humiliate her. His hostility diminished when he turned his attentions to others but she still does not enjoy working at his hotel. She is a migrant and she has a family to support; she keeps looking for another hotel position but they are hard to find because she will need a reference from Manager (M8).

The mechanism of power employed by M8 produces its own kind of truths: Foucault (1980) points out: “We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth” (p. 93). The truths emerging from M8’s exercise of power are both traditionally Confucian in the sense of a hierarchical domination of women and Foucauldian in the sense of power” surmounting the rules of right” (p. 96) to the point of becoming violent.

M5 talked about junior female staff at first in general terms that the first author had heard before: they were from the countryside, most had married in their teens, had a baby and lived with their in-laws. The hotel was an escape from a life of labour as their place in the family home was subordinate to everyone. The manager’s attitude reflected that of many Chinese males. These women were lucky to be working for him and owed him favours for continuing to employ them. He held a “guanxi” view of employment relations. He expected that junior female staff needed to please him. Those that did not make an effort with gifts or favours could expect no favours from him. He reflected the traditional male view of ownership, a kind of Chinese father-in-law power role. He did not see that the guanxi he practiced could compromise the way he managed staff. To shock the first author and impress her with his power over female staff, he quoted a traditional saying common among rural Chinese men, “Owning a woman is like owning a horse to ride and beat whenever you like”. With such attitudes among male managers, junior female staff must learn to survive in the hotel industry and cope with arbitrary punishments and the stress of job insecurity. On balance, the plight of rural women may be eased by migration to the city, where their status within the family is raised because their earnings sustain their families back home; however, they pay a price in terms of abuse and harassment.

The attitudes of this manager are borne out by the literature on women in China, especially with respect to ownership, subordination and violence. Liu Meng (1999) points out that while Confucianism advocates social harmony pre-1911 and for some time thereafter, corporal punishment was a prescribed part of the Confucian tradition of governance (Gray, 1878) and beating one’s wife was considered an appropriate way to discipline her. Parish et al (2004) report a much higher rate of domestic violence in the countryside than in the urban areas. However, by moving to the cities many women find that, as a result of their employment, they do not necessarily escape male domination or male violence. The Economist (11 May 2017) reports that there are now 282 million migrants from the countryside living in the cities and most earn around 3,000 yuan a month but may pay half their income in rent for cramped

accommodation. Parish et al. (2004) also alleges a general level under-reporting of male violence and abuse against women and it is this silence with regard to the workplace that is of concern. Such a culture of silence is a legacy of the long Confucian tradition but that there are very high levels of abuse by men that persist is referred to currently as a hidden epidemic (The Washington Post 2016).

Whatever, the social truths of Confucianism, or of violence against women or of managerial attitudes such truths as Foucault (1980) points out are the product of exercise of power. Such truths are the product of power and become what is right. "Right should be viewed. I believe, not in terms of legitimacy to be established but in terms of the methods of subjugation that it instigates" (Foucault, 1980, p. 96). As Sharma and Irvine (2016) show, such subjugation results in domination and brutality.

Foucault (1980) urged that research, "should be concerned with power at its extremities in its ultimate destinations" (p. 96). He argued that where power surmounts the rule of right and where power gives way to, "even violent means of intervention" (p.96). Some of the respondents' hint at such interventions. A migrant female housemaid (HM7) reported that she once accused her supervisor of being unfair and deliberately finding fault with her room cleaning. The supervisor became very angry and shouted at her, so she shouted back. The supervisor then lost her temper and slapped her hard on the face, telling her to, "think about that"; she said there was nothing she could do by way of complaint. Although this is a case of female on female abuse it shows that in an environment without worker without rights physical abuse is allowable and unreportable.

Furthermore, Foucault suggest that research should concern power where it is, "invested in its real and effective practices" (p.97). The issue is to follow Foucault's (1980) guidance and not to ask why certain people want to dominate or what they seek. Instead, to ask, "How things work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours, etc." (p. 97). Showing how things work in hotels employing migrant labour has been the aim of this paper. The interviewees have shown in their stories how managers govern their gestures and dictate their behaviours.

It may be assumed that a female housemaid who brings a lunch for her supervisor every day is acting out of love or friendship, but the reality is that the housemaid hopes to be under less pressure and ease her workload. Female receptionists who at the end of their day-shift, dress

and put on make-up to go out drinking with their managers, likewise, are expecting that by flirting with their bosses they will gain favours. Such accommodations are forms of resistance because in seeking friendships with their managers, the receptionists undermine standards and controls particularly so when a friendship is formed. If they did not achieve the intended result then the gifts and favours would cease. It is a form of corruption driven by necessity.

Finally, we report on conversations with two receptionists (R(x) and R(y)) working at M2's hotel. M2 was typical of what may be described as a successful manager in a capitalistic sense. He is demanding and bullying but these traits work as his staff may be described as docile, efficient bodies. He is watchful of costs, and staff who protest their workloads are soon replaced. The story that two receptionists told concerned the coffee machine in the manager's office. Receptionists were rostered to provide the manager with a coffee every morning and afternoon. This role included maintaining the machine with beans and water. As the machine is situated in the manager's office, he could get his own coffee but his status, as is normal in China, meant he should be served. It was his habit to engage the girls at the machine by standing behind them and pressing himself against them. Most froze at being touched in this way, some tried to laugh off the manager's approach and wriggle away from him complaining that they could not do their job. Some female staff members stormed out of his office leaving the job unfinished. The latter did not last long at the hotel. Some complained to the assistant manager who laughed off their protests and even warned them of their complicity. Only the female reception manager was sympathetic but pointed out that resistance meant dismissal and learning to accommodate the manager's behaviour was really the only option. Even if they could find another job and that is not easy for a migrant worker, silence as to their real reason for leaving would be prudent. In summary, the receptionists, like many women workers in East Asia, had to become docile, efficient bodies.

Finally, in this section, we consider aspects of determinism in the behaviour of dominant male managers. As our brains evolved over thousands of years of semi-primate existence it can be concluded that dominant males evolved to see subservient females as ownership opportunities, explained by Dawkins (1976) in terms of a selfish gene. When life was nasty, brutish and short, the sub-primate male brain evolved to take opportunities to spread his genes as widely as possible. Females that were unprotected by other males were subjugated to be available gene carriers. In the manager's office the process of subjugation begins with making his morning coffee, with resistance at any stage becoming a confrontation to the exercise of power and a challenge to the male. As Foucault (1980) observes the exercise of power is not always met

with resistance. According to those interviewees who were prepared to talk of harassment in general, resistance, even in its mildest forms, provokes male anger and continuing hostility. Often, females who resist face a stark choice: dismissal or accepting punishment. Dismissal often results in return to the family home in shame to a husband or father who needs a flow of remittances to maintain the family. Accepting punishment involves submitting to a process a subjugation beginning with abusive hectoring and often concluding as Foucault (1980) observes in acts of violence. Migrant female workers are victims of socially constructed employment relationships that affords them no protection. Thus, the migrant female worker who is grabbed while making her manager's coffee and protests, experiences shame whether because of her return home having lost her job or because of her subsequent acquiescence. There is no MeToo movement in China, where the sense of shame can be easily set aside to give expression of solidarity. Rather there is a rule of silence over such abuses that can only be divulged to the very closest of friends. However, some interviewees were willing to talk of harassment in general as being pervasive within the hotel industry. On the other hand, after thousands of years of evolution the male brain still provides hormonal stimuli directed at the possession of females. To expect changes in dominant male behaviour is to deny the deterministic findings of neuro science (Blakemore, 1990; Libet, 1995; Dawkins, 1976). Unless labour laws are enacted to afford protection - nothing changes.

Summary and Conclusions

To address the ethical issue of whether a culture of silence and exploitation of the weak good for business or is it a source of internal control weakness, the paper has considered many factors. First, there is the breakdown of migrant families and the traditional Confucian male protection of women within the family, which provided some degree of protection from predatory males outside of the family. Second, there is the nature of poor protection or workers' rights in East Asia, an area targeted by global corporates seeking low costs and a lack of governmental restrictions. The managers of such enterprises are rewarded for their ability to deliver results. To improve profitability, migrant labour is hired as it is cheaper and unprotected by labour laws or unionisation. Third, there is an incentive for managers to drive staff hard and be demanding to the extent of bullying to get results. Such characteristics are also the characteristics of predatory males. The Harvey Weinstein case, which in late 2017 made

headlines around the world exemplifies these characteristics of a successful manager: with an amoral ability to exploit an excess of supply.

This paper alleges that this story is re-told a thousand times in East Asia but makes no headlines because of an Asian culture of silence and shame – no equivalent “MeToo” protest is likely. Another factor supporting the exploitation of Asian women is the nature of accounting. It is a mechanism that, as such, enjoys a reputation of functional neutrality based on the metrics provided. Accounting is about the recognition, measurement and disclosure of costs, it individualises those costs into performance standards. However, the process of individualisation and meeting performance standards is subject to managerial agency. The few receptionists that refused to make the manager’s coffee are by their non-performance, failing to meet standard expectations. The workload metrics constructed determine that non-performing staff cannot be efficient, docile bodies.

The Economist (*Capitalism for the people*, 2 December, 2017, p. 59) makes the point that “A relentless pursuit of shareholder value has led big firms to act in way that often seem to make the world a worse place” (p. 59). In the same vein, accounting is about calculating profitability and, by implication, advancing efficient management practices. It provides a means by which owners can measure managerial performance. In order to please owners by maximising profit, managers will make use of labour and the environment unless some regulation is in place to provide safeguards (Gleenson-White, 2011). Bakan and Achbar (2004) tested the psychological profile of the modern corporation using the American Psychiatric Association’s “Diagnostic Manual for Mental Disorders” and found that the corporation shares many of the characteristics that define psychopaths i.e., they break the law; hide their behaviour; sacrifice long-term welfare for short-term profit; are aggressively litigious; ignore health and safety codes; and, cheat their suppliers and workers without remorse. Managers, whether male or female are expected to keep costs low and maximise revenues. The characteristics required for successful management are to deliver what corporations expect and there is no place for soft-heartedness. Bonuses further encourage managers to seek profitability and efficiency.

As the paper has shown, many managers may take the view that migrant workers are lucky to get a job and should be grateful to their employer. Some female workers under pressure to survive also accept the view that by being employed they owe a debt of gratitude to their employer and seek to accommodate the wishes of their managers. Feelings of self-shame may be the price to pay for job protection or easier workloads. Dominance is about power and as

Foucault (1980) observes power is about knowledge. Knowledge that reinforces power is understanding that accounting is a recording and a political mechanism. The aim of successful corporate manager is to lower marginal costs and raise marginal revenue. Migrant workers are low cost and easily dismissed. Resistance and protest if tolerated will raise unnecessary costs. The aim of management is to create a labour force of what Foucault (1980) calls docile, efficient bodies.

This paper seeks to show how a tradition of silence carries over to create docile, efficient bodies among migrant female workers in the service, garment and light assembly industries within Chinese and East Asian urban centres. The paper explains the mechanisms and structures which make possible female vulnerability. It makes the observation that many of the characteristics that make strong corporate managers are also the characteristics that make for male predators.

To answer the ethical question posed as to whether exploitation is good for business, the answer may be seen by the practice of global corporations setting up their supply chains where labour is cheap and unprotected. The “should” of corporate social responsibility is practised elsewhere. The paper adopts a bleak, deterministic philosophy that argues wherever business conditions identified in the paper apply, then the weak will be exploited and female workers subjected to harassment. What the paper does try to do, however, is raise awareness for the necessity of worker protection, whether by unionisation and labour laws or both. In this sense the ultimate aim is emancipatory.

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