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Transnational Tortillas: Race, Gender, and Shop-Floor Politics in Mexico and the United States

Abstract

[Excerpt] In this book I seek to demonstrate the state's central role in the labor process by looking at racialized and gendered aspects of state policies, especially in the U.S.-Mexico border region. In the era of global capitalism—marked by the rise of neoliberalism and concomitant dismantling of the Keynesian state—Tortimundo draws on state policies, racialized and gendered labor markets, and race, class, and gender dynamics produced on the shop floor to create different ways of maintaining labor control. Particularly central to labor control on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border is immigration policy, which serves to create a vulnerable group of undocumented men at Hacienda CA and a vulnerable group of single mothers at Hacienda BC.

Keywords

immigration, immigrant, migrant worker, United States, Mexico, labor demand

Comments

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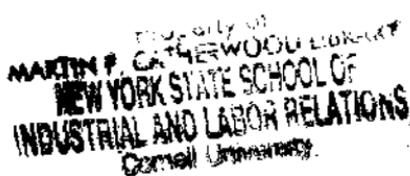
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TRANSNATIONAL TORTILLAS

*Race, Gender, and Shop-Floor Politics
in Mexico and the United States*

CAROLINA BANK MUÑOZ

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For immigrants in the United States who work in the shadows;
For workers in Mexico who fight for survival;
And for my parents, whose struggle has been a source of inspiration.

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C.B.M.

Brooklyn, New York

TRANSNATIONAL TORTILLAS

THE TORTILLA BEHEMOTH AND GLOBAL PRODUCTION

José and Eugenio—Hacienda CA

Hacienda California (CA) is a factory in the United States owned by Tortimundo, a Mexican transnational tortilla manufacturing corporation.¹ The factory is one of the largest tortilla manufacturing plants in the world. Workers at the factory labor in a highly regimented and monitored work environment. The California factory is surrounded by security cameras that watch workers' every move, and strict discipline is enforced on the shop floor. The workforce in the factory is composed predominantly of men, and managers at Hacienda CA specifically construct the work as "men's work."

José and Eugenio are two production workers at Hacienda CA. Despite working in the same factory, for the same length of time, José and Eugenio's work and family lives are vastly different. The central explanation of this difference is the fact that José is undocumented whereas Eugenio is not.

Eugenio is a documented worker who has been at the factory for eight years. He works the day shift from 6 A.M. to 2 P.M. and earns \$10.50 an hour. He started as a production worker but was promoted to line leader four years later. His position as line leader gives him flexibility and the power to report absenteeism, tardiness, and behavioral issues on the line. He also has the power to determine when workers can take bathroom and lunch breaks. While he does not love his job, he feels satisfied with it and the opportunities it has given him. After work he goes to the corner taco stand with friends from the surrounding neighborhood and some people from his shift. He then drives to pick up his kids from school and rests at home for the remainder of the day. His wife gets home from her job in a nearby factory at 5 P.M. Their dual income has allowed them to purchase a modest home in a working-class Latina/o neighborhood.

José has also been at Hacienda CA for eight years. He has been working the graveyard shift (10 P.M.–6 A.M.) for six years and earns \$8.15 per hour. He has watched younger Latino men whom he calls “Los Chicanos” come and work during the graveyard shift and get moved or promoted in three months. But year after year he is stuck in the same shift. José thinks that managers won’t give him the day shift or promote him because of his immigration status.

When José first applied for the job at Hacienda CA, managers asked him about his immigration status. They told him that they did not care if he was undocumented but that they needed to know if he was so that they would be able to protect him from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).² Managers told José that, as a Mexican company in a hostile U.S. climate, they were committed to protecting their compatriots. According to José, telling managers about his status was the worst mistake he ever made. He is treated like a second-class citizen in the workplace. José is consistently denied wage increases and shift changes. Managers constantly remind him that they have taken a risk in hiring him and that they cannot adequately protect him unless he works the night shift.

For José, working in the factory is difficult for another reason as well: he does not know whom he can trust. Women do not trust men; undocumented workers are afraid of being deported and rarely associate with anyone in the factory; and more established Mexicans look down on newer migrants. As a result of this environment, José has very few friends in the factory. After work, José drives home, greets his family, showers and rests

for a few minutes before he has to leave for his second job at a nearby restaurant, where he works from 9 A.M. to 2 P.M. preparing vegetables (washing, chopping, etc.). He earns minimum wage at the restaurant. After his second job, he drives home, enjoys time with his family, eats, and then goes to sleep until 9 P.M., when he has to get ready to go back to Hacienda.

For José it is a struggle to survive in California on \$1,500 per month (after taxes). However, he is proud that he has managed to support his family. José's wife, Irma, doesn't work outside the home. She is primarily responsible for taking care of the children and running the household. Irma is also undocumented, and the low wages she would receive for working in a garment factory or as a domestic worker would not compensate her enough to pay for child care. She also believes that staying at home will ensure that her children do not become involved with the local gang.

Both documented and undocumented workers at Hacienda CA labor in a racially charged and gendered environment. However, documented workers are treated better, paid higher wages, and can look forward to modest upward mobility within the factory, whereas undocumented workers endure poor treatment, low wages, and little internal factory mobility.

Despite a highly controlled work environment, workers at Hacienda CA have nonetheless engaged in resistance struggles. José and others attempted a union-organizing drive for production workers. This drive took place at the same time that truck drivers for the company were striking over their contract. The strike and the internal organizing drive were carried out by the Manufacturing Organizing Project (MOP), which consisted of a coalition of unions, including the Teamsters.³ Although the campaign eventually failed, it is significant because even though workers did not win a union, conditions for all workers in the factory improved.

María and Antonio—Hacienda BC

A short one hundred miles away in Mexico, workers are churning out tortillas at Hacienda Baja California (BC), also owned by Tortimundo. However, the work environment in this factory is markedly different from that in its counterpart in the United States. Here there are no security cameras monitoring workers, nor are there strict disciplinary policies. Workers casually walk into the factory, often laughing and conversing with their

co-workers. However, women workers in this factory endure chronic sexual harassment and compete with each other for job stability. The workforce is predominantly female, and the work is constructed as "women's work."

Like Eugenio and José, their counterparts in the United States, María and Antonio have worked in the same factory for the same length of time, but their working conditions and family lives are very different. The central cause of division between these two workers is gender and the feminized labor regime at Hacienda BC.

Antonio works as a machine operator earning \$3 per hour. He was raised in Baja California and has been working in the factory for four years. Before entering his current job, he worked in a variety of different industries in the region. He does not consider his job stressful. He likes the factory environment and considers himself relatively well paid. Antonio has a reasonable amount of independence and is essentially left alone by shop-floor supervisors and managers. When he leaves his job at 8 P.M., he takes the bus home, where his family awaits him. Antonio's wife stays at home and takes care of their two children and other household responsibilities. They have a large and supportive family network and live comfortably in a house with his parents.

María has a very different experience. She has also been working at Hacienda BC for four years, but as an assembly line worker she earns only \$1 per hour. She is a single mother with three children. Her husband, Ignacio, crossed the border to get a better job, and she has not heard from him since. She does not know if he died crossing the border or if he lives another life in the United States. She and Ignacio and the children migrated to Baja California from Jalisco. María comes from a family of corn farmers. Her great-grandfather, her grandfather, and her father all worked the same land. Her brothers were going to follow in their father's footsteps but were forced to migrate to Mexico City to find jobs when María's father lost the family farm. María attributes the loss of the farm to unfair competition from American corn that flooded the Mexican market after the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

After moving to Baja California, Ignacio found a job in an auto parts maquiladora and María stayed home, took care of the children, and sold food from their home. After a year they decided they would try to cross the border into the United States. However, they learned that it would be extremely dangerous for the entire family to cross, so Ignacio crossed

alone. María was left with no money and no familial networks in Baja California. Having no resources, María began working in maquiladoras that produce garments, but the industry was very unstable, so she went to work for Hacienda BC.

María leaves her house at 5:30 A.M. to catch the bus that gets her to work by 6 A.M. She arrives at the factory with several friends who take the same bus. When she arrives on the production line, she is immediately greeted by a male supervisor who hugs her around the waist and kisses her on the cheek. María squirms uncomfortably. The manager laughs and moves to the next woman on the line.

María's working conditions are different from José's at Hacienda CA. Immigration status is, of course, not an issue at Hacienda BC. María has some friends whom she trusts in the workplace. Even the pace of work is different from that at Hacienda CA. However, she is confronted with more health and safety hazards, such as open flames shooting out of uncovered machines. The problem that most distresses her is the rampant sexual harassment on the shop floor. She says that production managers and supervisors are constantly harassing her. They stand next to her while she is working and touch her. They invite her to dinner, and if she rejects the offer, they treat her unfairly the next day or dock her pay for being late, which they would not ordinarily do. María also complains that managers pit darker- and lighter-skinned women against each other. She is tired of managers' advances and favoritism, but she does not feel that she can afford to lose her job because steady employment in Baja California is hard to find.

Unlike José and Eugenio at the Hacienda CA factory, María and Antonio are represented by a union. However, they have never seen a union representative. María describes the union as a "ghost union." It exists, but it is not there to defend or protect workers. Changes in workplace conditions are negotiated by individual workers and managers.

As a single mother earning only \$1 per hour, María finds it extremely challenging to live in Baja California, where the cost of living is higher—because of proximity to the United States—than in other parts of Mexico. Her single salary is insufficient to cover the costs of rent, child care, transportation, food, and clothing. Fortunately, her neighbor is a retired older woman who does not charge her very much to take care of the children. María hopes to cross the border some day when her children are older

and the border is less dangerous and to obtain a higher paying job in the United States.

At Hacienda BC, women, who are often single mothers, are forced to compete with each other for job stability. They earn substantially lower wages than men and have to endure extensive sexual harassment. The few men who work there, on the other hand, have different job titles and the possibility of upward mobility. They earn significantly higher wages and have more independence.

José, Eugenio, María, and Antonio are linked by their transnational employer, and yet they do not know of the others' existence. They lead very different work and family lives despite the fact that they work in factories owned by the same corporation. José and Eugenio work under regular vigilance and strict discipline. However, unlike Eugenio, José is constantly intimidated because of his immigration status. María and Antonio work in a factory with more flexibility and less enforced discipline. However, María constantly has to endure sexual harassment and favoritism.

Why do two different kinds of factory regimes emerge despite the factories being owned by the same corporation and producing the same product? This book examines transnational production by comparing the shop floors of this Mexican transnational tortilla manufacturer on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. I refer to the transnational corporation as Tortimundo; the two subsidiaries in each country are TortiUS and TortiMX. The U.S. factory is Hacienda CA, and the Mexican factory is Hacienda BC. I explore how the mass production of tortillas has both led to the erosion of traditional tortilla-making techniques and created new forms of labor exploitation. I also expose the fundamental role of the state, labor markets, and race, class, and gender dynamics in the construction of factory regimes. The stories of the workers sketched above reflect the different ways in which managers at Hacienda exercise labor control. The existing literature on the labor process, state, and transnational production all provide some insight that can help explain the differences in the two Hacienda factories.

The Labor Process

Scholars of the labor process have traditionally sought to understand the organization and nature of work by viewing it through a class lens. This

theoretical approach has concentrated on the process of labor control. Karl Marx argued long ago that employers are able to extract surplus value from workers because of the inherently coercive nature of work organization under capitalism: workers have no alternative but to sell their labor power. Because there were no worker protections enforced by the state at the time of Marx's writing, there was no buffer between workers and employers. This led to fundamentally coercive factory regimes.

In his landmark book, *The Politics of Production*, Burawoy (1985) theorizes the relationship between the state and the shop floor. He argues that through different stages of economic development different kinds of factory or production regimes have emerged to extract labor from workers. A *factory regime*, according to Burawoy (1985, 8), comprises both the labor process (the organization of work) and the political and ideological apparatuses of production (those that regulate production). In capitalist labor relations, the character of these factory regimes has shifted from *despotic* to *hegemonic*, and finally to *hegemonic despotism*. Nineteenth-century sweatshops are the quintessential example of a despotic regime (one operated primarily through coercion). However, Burawoy (1985) argues that with new worker protections, such as unemployment insurance and the legal right to unionize, which was initiated by the state in the early to mid-twentieth century, employers could no longer be as unscrupulous as they had been previously. Workers now had mechanisms by which to hold employers to a certain standard of decency. If employers acted in overly coercive ways, workers could file grievances or leave their jobs and receive welfare benefits; thus, employers had to find new ways of maintaining labor control. They did so by shifting to hegemonic regimes operated by consent instead of coercion. Such hegemonic factory regimes obscure the relations of exploitation and the extraction of surplus value by making workers complicit in their own exploitation. The next shift occurred with the advent of globalization. Under hegemonic despotism, despite worker protection policies, employers could extract concessions from workers by threatening to shut down the factory and move offshore. Burawoy (1976, 1985) identifies one industry that has not shifted from despotic to hegemonic work arrangements: California agriculture. The reasons, he argues, are that agriculture has largely been exempt from federal labor legislation and that workers in the industry are often undocumented. In this industry we still witness substantial despotism.

Burawoy provides us with an insightful analysis of the state and factory regimes, but his class-only approach overlooks the complexity of race and gender on the shop floor. In this book, I argue that the processes of racialization and gender are intimately connected at the point of production, where workers' and managers' subjectivities produce and reproduce these notions on the shop floor. I also expand on Burawoy's analysis of the state to show how punitive state policies shape contemporary factory regimes. Finally, I broaden his analysis of immigrant farm workers by arguing that despotic control has, and continues to be, a dominant form of labor control in other industries that employ significant numbers of undocumented workers.

In *Gender and the South China Miracle*, Lee (1998) compares a factory in Hong Kong and a factory in Shenzhen, China, both owned by the same transnational electronics manufacturer. Different production regimes emerge across the border. The regime in Hong Kong is one of "familial hegemony," whereas the one in Shenzhen is characterized by "localistic despotism." She poses the question, "Why do two regimes of production emerge, given so many similarities across the two factories?" (Lee 1998, 9). Lee challenges Burawoy's argument about the role of the state in the labor process by arguing that the state in Hong Kong is noninterventionist and the state in Shenzhen does not have the capacity to regulate enterprises. She argues that it is the labor market much more than the state that shapes the two different factory regimes in her study. Lee also forcefully shows, unlike Burawoy (1985), how gender is central to the production process.

Lee's (1998) work was one of the first inspirations for this book. I found her argument about the state very provocative, and I wanted to see what I could find in the context of the U.S.-Mexico border. Lee's main contribution to this theoretical tradition is to consider how labor markets and gender, not simply the state, produce variations in factory regimes. While I find her arguments about the labor market convincing, I fear she may have too hastily dismissed the role of the state in her case studies. I argue that, in fact, state nonintervention or indirect intervention is a strategic policy of the state, one that plays a role in shaping labor markets and shop-floor regimes.

In *Genders in Production*, Salzinger (2003) also argues that gender is produced at the point of production. She expands the analysis by bringing to light the variability of gender in global production. Salzinger studied three

factories in Ciudad Juárez and one in Santa María. In each of these factories, gender is produced and reproduced differently based on the strategies of managers and the agency of workers. At Panoptimex, workers most closely resemble the stereotypes of the "typical" maquiladora worker, namely "docile women." At Particimex, the gendered regime is structured around women's independence and decision-making ability. The Andromex factory employs a mix of female and male labor, but in this case, the gendered regime is constructed around masculinized production. Finally, at Anarchomex the workforce is predominantly male, but the shop-floor environment is such that managers feminize the work of all workers. One of her main contributions to this subject is to show that the image of docile, nimble-fingered women in global assembly plants is not a reality. Rather, it is a managerial fantasy.

Salzinger (2003) provides a very insightful analysis into the ways in which managers use gendered discourses to produce different kinds of gendered regimes. However, she does not elaborate on why this is important or why this makes a difference in the context of the four factories she studied. Furthermore, she largely leaves out the role of the state and race/ethnicity in the production of her four case studies. This book expands on her work by illustrating how the different ways gender is produced on the shop floor and between factories give managers different opportunities for coercive or hegemonic control.

In his study of high-tech factories in the Philippines, McKay (2006) analyzes the interaction between states, labor markets, and gender. He argues that technological change, competition, and contradictions in production generate a range of organizational strategies beyond the despotic, hegemonic dichotomy. At Allied-Power, the work is labor intensive and the regime is despotic. The regime at Storage Ltd. is panoptic, because of its heavy surveillance of the workforce, but the company offers relatively high wages and benefits. Integrated Production operates by using a "peripheral human resource work regime." Here, control is facilitated by a combination of surveillance and technology mixed with a human resources approach of positive incentives. Finally, Discrete Manufacturing has a "collectively negotiated work regime," where labor-intensive work organization is negotiated with a highly unionized workforce. McKay (2006) also contends that the restructuring of work has broadened and extended labor control outside the factory. Finally, he maintains that industry and the state shape

local labor markets to reproduce "the social and gendered relations of flexible accumulation" (McKay 2006, 4).

McKay (2006) comes closest to weaving together all of the factors that create variation in labor regimes. He argues, as I do, that variation in factory regimes must be viewed by bringing together an analysis of the state, labor market, and gender. Here I add an analysis of how racialization of labor is intimately tied to these other factors.

In short, this book provides two main contributions to the labor process literature. First, I address the issue of how race and immigration status are produced at the point of production. Second, I illustrate the dynamic interaction between the state, labor markets, and race, gender, and class in the production of labor regimes. In particular, I illustrate the unique role of the state in the context of the U.S.-Mexico border.

The State: Powerful or Weak?

The recent literature on the labor process and women and work, with the exception of McKay (2006), has generally failed to problematize the role of the state. Salzinger (2003), Lee (1998), Davies (1990), and other scholars whose studies build on Michael Burawoy's work on the labor process have largely ignored or downplayed the role of the state in their analyses of factory regimes. The state, however, is central to Burawoy's key distinction between despotic and hegemonic factory regimes.

Since the 1990s, debates have raged over the significance of the state. Many globalization theorists, as well as heads of transnational corporations, have predicted the demise of the nation-state (Ohmae 1996; Strange 1996; Cox 1996). Globalization, in their view, has created worldwide economic integration, leading to the decline of the state. These scholars argue that the declining power of the state is inevitable in today's globalized world.

Others have argued that the state has retained its primacy.⁴ This strong state theory argues that accounts of globalization have been greatly exaggerated and that nation-states are in fact critical players in the process of economic development. Weiss (1998) argues that, in a vein similar to that explored by Skocpol (1985), there is unevenness in state capacity to respond to different pressures, but that "far from becoming an anachronism, state

capability has today become an important advantage in international competition" (Weiss 1998, 5).

However, as Robinson (2004, 4) points out, it is simplistic to view the state in such dualistic terms. As he argues, "the nation-state is neither retaining its primacy, nor disappearing, but becoming transformed and absorbed into the larger structure of a transnational state."⁵ While I agree with Robinson (2004) that the state is being transformed, in my view the state operates both within the context of transnational structures and locally. Borders do matter.

Transnational Production and Border Studies

The border is a muddled region, where the beginning of one nation-state and the end of another gets lost in the flurry of people and goods crossing over it every day. As border scholars have shown, this arbitrary line also marks the difference between higher wages and lower wages; a highly developed infrastructure (good roads, safe water, etc) and a less developed infrastructure; and different legal, social, political, and economic climates.⁶ When scholars began looking at the new international division of labor (Fröbel, Kreye, and Heinrichs 1980) in the late 1970s and 1980s, the U.S.-Mexico border region and the Global South in general provided rich sites through which to explore globalization and the exploitation and feminization of labor (Fernandez Kelly 1983; Fuentes and Ehrenreich 1983; Ruiz and Tiano 1987). These scholars produced landmark studies that brought the severe exploitation of women workers in the Global South to the attention of the American public. Since their ground-breaking works first appeared, the amount of literature on transnational production and border studies has exploded. Hundreds of books have been written about maquiladoras and export-processing zones worldwide.⁷ This book contributes to and expands on the vast literature on transnational production by looking at how a factory owned by the same transnational employer on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border constructs different kinds of factory regimes.

In short, the scholars in the labor process, state, and transnational production literatures, all tell part of the story and leave other parts of the story out. In this book, I combine these areas of study in an attempt to provide

a more comprehensive look at transnational production and managerial control. In what follows, I present my theoretical framework.

Two Tortilla Factory Regimes

In this book I seek to demonstrate the state's central role in the labor process by looking at racialized and gendered aspects of state policies, especially in the U.S.-Mexico border region.⁸ In the era of global capitalism—marked by the rise of neoliberalism⁹ and concomitant dismantling of the Keynesian state—Tortimundo draws on state policies, racialized and gendered labor markets, and race, class, and gender dynamics produced on the shop floor to create different ways of maintaining labor control. Particularly central to labor control on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border is immigration policy, which serves to create a vulnerable group of undocumented men at Hacienda CA and a vulnerable group of single mothers at Hacienda BC.

Unlike in most of the literature on the labor process, here I argue that the factory regimes at Hacienda CA and Hacienda BC rely on hegemonic and despotic control coexisting on the shop floor. This provides a more nuanced analysis of labor control. The main logic of control in both factories is therefore “divide and conquer.” We see this especially in how different types of workers are pitted against each other by gender, race, and immigration status on the shop floor. I have named the labor regime in each factory according to the main axis of division and control.

Figure 1 presents my theoretical framework. On the U.S. side of the border, state policies shape both the local labor market and the factory regime at Hacienda CA (both through and independent of its effects on the labor market). At the meso-level, the local labor market is segregated and stratified along racial and gendered lines.¹⁰ This kind of stratification also influences managerial opportunities for labor control. However, the influence of the labor market on employers is not unidirectional. Employer preferences for a predominantly male immigrant workforce also shape the local labor market by producing demand for these particular kinds of workers. At the micro-, shop-floor level, managers' and workers' racialized and gendered ideas give managers the opportunity to divide and conquer, therefore weakening solidarity among workers. Hacienda CA is

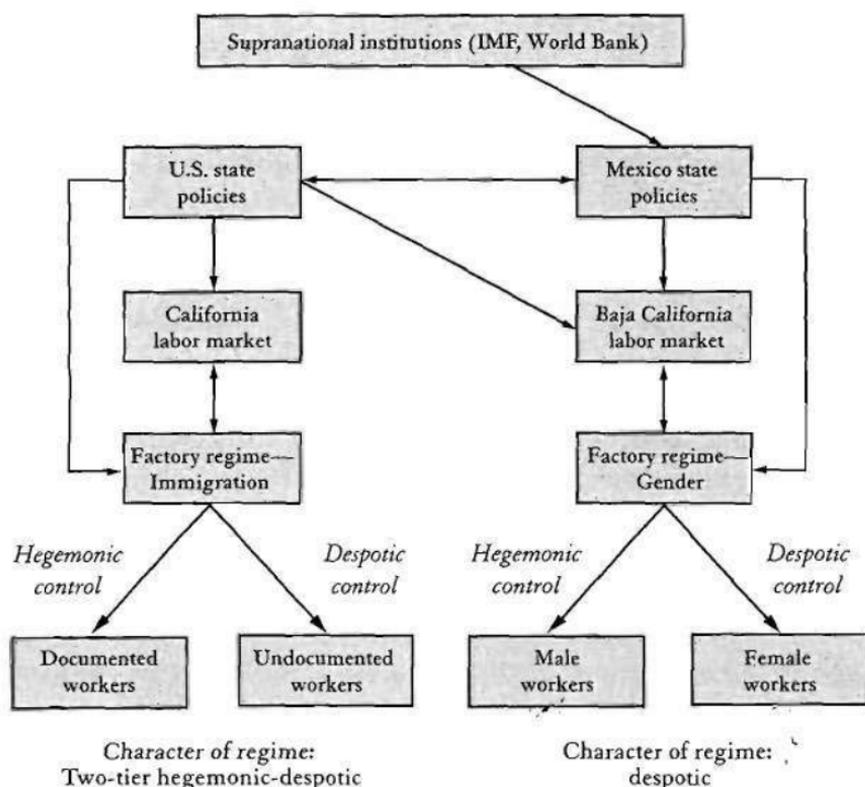


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

characterized by what I call an *immigration regime*. Managers use immigration policy, the immigrant status of workers, and a racialized labor market to enforce two kinds of labor control on the shop floor. Managers use hegemonic control with documented workers at Hacienda CA, whereas they use despotic control with undocumented workers in the factory. This leads to a two-tier regime in which hegemony and despotism coexist.

Let us briefly examine the *immigration regime* at Hacienda CA. Labor control at Hacienda CA is characterized by an immigration regime because managers use state policies such as Social Security Administration's No-Match letters¹¹ and the militarization of the border (Parenti 1999; Nevins 2002) to their benefit. Managers also rely on a segmented labor market, where a majority of immigrants are pushed into the secondary labor market (Gordon, Edwards, and Reich 1982), as well as the racialized status of immigrants in the United States, ironically a status that managers themselves

occupy (Chang 2000; Glenn 2002; Maher 2002). These factors are used to pit documented and undocumented workers against each other and relegate undocumented workers to the lowest-paid jobs and the worst shifts in the factory. Pitting workers against each other is possible and effective, not only because of state policies and labor market conditions but because of the gendered and racialized notions held by managers and workers regarding how work should be organized, who should be treated well, and what is considered appropriate in the factory environment. As I have argued, a two-tier structure is created inside the factory where documented workers make higher wages and labor under better working conditions and undocumented workers are at the bottom of the barrel.

Unlike Burawoy's (1985) model of the shift from despotism to hegemony to hegemonic despotism, the two-tier structure of labor control at Hacienda CA illustrates how, within one factory regime, despotism and hegemony can operate simultaneously.

On the Mexican side of the border, at the macro-level, Mexico's state policies are strongly influenced by supranational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, U.S. and Mexican negotiated policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), U.S. immigration policy, and internal political dynamics. These policies both directly and indirectly impact the local labor market and the factory regime (both through and independent of the labor market) at Hacienda BC. At the meso-level, the local labor market is stratified by gender (Cravey 1998), and at Hacienda BC, this creates one of the primary opportunities for coercive labor control practices. Employer preferences for single women and single mothers also affect the labor market by producing demand for the highly coveted managerial fantasy of a docile, female workforce. At the micro-level, the interaction between state policies and the gendered and racialized subjectivities of the managers and workers also produce various opportunities to control labor. This factory is typified by what I call a *gender regime*. Managers draw from a feminized labor market (in part created by neoliberal economic policy), U.S. immigration policy, and Mexican labor law to produce a regime where women are sexually harassed and have to compete with each other for job stability. Similar to the California factory, managers at Hacienda BC use hegemonic control with male workers and despotic control with female workers. However, because of the predominance of women workers in production, the area of

the factory in which labor control is most central, the overall character of the regime is despotic.

Let us look at how these processes work in practice at the Mexico factory. Hacienda BC is characterized by a gender regime because the central mode of control in this factory has been to force women to compete with each other over job stability. Managers have taken advantage of a feminized labor market and created a sexualized and racialized work environment whereby women are competing with each other for managerial attention and dark- and light-skinned women are pitted against each other. When women do not respond positively to managers' advances, they are disciplined. Many women feel that they are at risk of losing their secure employment. Despite legal protection against sexual harassment, the institutionalized structure of labor law in Mexico makes it difficult for women to contest it.

Hacienda BC is interested in hiring a predominantly female workforce because women are the most vulnerable in the Baja California labor market. Ninety percent of the women workers at Hacienda BC come from other parts of Mexico, often as a direct result of NAFTA. After the United States flooded Mexico with cheap imported corn, many families lost farms and were forced to migrate. As a result of the increased militarization of the border, many husbands of the workers at Hacienda BC crossed the border, and as a result, women were left as single mothers in Baja California with no familial networks. Most women in the factory had previously worked in the maquiladora industry, but because of competition with China and other countries with even cheaper labor, the maquiladora industry grew unstable.¹² These women sought work in stable national industries such as tortilla production.

Managers at Hacienda BC understand (and have helped construct) women's vulnerable position in the labor market. They know that many of the women in the factory are single mothers who need stable jobs. Furthermore, they have created a sexualized work environment in which women feel they must participate to stabilize their positions in the factory.

As previously stated, Hacienda BC also has hegemony and despotism operating side by side, but the factory regime is overwhelmingly coercive. The regime is centered on hiring women to work on the assembly line, paying them low wages, and forcing them to compete with each other for job stability. Coercion is prevalent because of women's labor market

vulnerability, which compels them to sell their labor power because no protective direct state intervention gives them real alternatives to withhold it (Burawoy 1979, 1985; Piore 1979; Gordon, Edwards, and Reich 1982). Men are largely invisible in the factory regime at Hacienda BC.

In short, the dynamic interaction between the different levels of analysis, the state, labor market, and shop-floor politics in each country provides managers of each factory different opportunities to control labor, opportunities that differ between the two factories as well as within each factory location. I am not suggesting that these particular state policies, labor market conditions, and shop-floor politics can produce only these two kinds of factory regimes; I am simply illustrating how and why the convergence of this variety of factors give managers varied opportunities to construct different kinds of factory regimes. By producing two different factory regimes at Hacienda CA and Hacienda BC, managers at Tortimundo are able to capitalize on what each country has to offer in order to maintain the corporation's competitive edge in the world market and expand its profit margin.

Methodology

This book was the result of my interest in the struggles of immigrant workers. Before entering graduate school, I was an organizer for the Union of Needletrades Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). At the union I worked with immigrant garment workers from across Latin America. Being an immigrant myself, I found their struggles deeply compelling. After entering graduate school in 1997, I wanted to continue doing work related to immigrant worker struggles, focusing on immigrant workers in manufacturing, in an industry that had been relatively unexplored. The idea of studying the tortilla industry came to me after talking to people who had been involved with the Manufacturing Organizing Project (MOP). Initially, I intended to concentrate on the potential for organizing in this industry.

As I was beginning to do my research, I read Ching Kwan Lee's (1998) book *Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women* and became intrigued with her research design, which explored one corporation on both sides of a border. After finishing her book, I commented on the project to an organizer at MOP, who then told me that Tortimundo was

a transnational company and operated on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. I could hardly restrain my excitement and decided to refocus the project as a binational comparison of the industry. I had read many studies of U.S. corporations that operated in Mexico, but I had not come across a comparison of a Mexican transnational operating on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Furthermore, the two cases were particularly interesting, not only because of the variation across the border but also because of the variation of labor control strategies within each factory.

Although Tortimundo has many plant locations, I chose to study its California and Baja California (Mexico) factories for several reasons. First, these two factories represent the largest tortilla-manufacturing plants that the corporation owns (in each country). They are, in effect, flagship factories. Second, both are located in cities that are in the heart of global production. This is an important factor for studying the role of the state, race, and gender. Third, although access to this corporation was difficult, and they were hesitant to give me access to more than one plant in each country, based on numerous conversations with management, I believe that the California and Baja California plants are representative of other Hacienda tortilla factories in each region.

In developing the project design, I felt that the most suitable methodology was going to be ethnographic fieldwork along with in-depth interviews and document analysis.¹³ I wanted to conduct participant observation because this method would allow me to observe shop-floor dynamics in both factories that would not otherwise be captured by interviews (because of various limitations of interview data). However, I also wanted to gain a complex picture of the factory and the industry through interviews (that I would not be able to capture with observation) with industry officials, managers, supervisors, line leaders, and workers. Observations and interviews occurred between October 2001 and December 2003, with follow-up interviews as late as 2005.

I conducted in-depth interviews with two of Tortimundo's senior executives (in the United States and Mexico) and four factory-level managers (in both countries). I had informal conversations and interviews with six supervisors and line leaders between the two locations. I interviewed twelve production workers and four truck drivers at the Hacienda CA plant and ten production workers and two warehouse workers at the Hacienda BC plant. I also interviewed two people at the Tortilla Industry Association,