

The Strong Man: Work and Masculinities in the Brewing Industry of the Northern Border of Mexico

El hombre fuerte: trabajo y masculinidades en la industria cervecera en la frontera norte de México

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ABSTRACT

The article presents the first findings of a study that seeks to contribute to the understanding of the construction of masculinities and work in the northern border of Mexico, within the specific context of Tecate, Baja California. Its objective is to analyze the articulation between the demographic and economic development of the city of Tecate from the beginning and rise of the brewing industry and its link with the construction of masculinities through a narrative design. The narratives show a homosocial system whose central value is the figure of the strong man as a model of rational male employee facing the changes in the economic system.

Keywords: 1. masculinities, 2. work, 3. hegemonic masculinity, 4. Tecate, 5. Baja California.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta los primeros hallazgos de un estudio que busca contribuir a la comprensión de la construcción de las masculinidades y el trabajo en la Frontera norte de México, teniendo como contexto específico a la ciudad de Tecate, Baja California. El objetivo es analizar la articulación entre el desarrollo demográfico y económico de Tecate a partir del inicio y auge de la industria cervecera y su enlace con la construcción de masculinidades a través de un diseño narrativo. Las narrativas muestran un sistema homosocial cuyo valor central es la figura del hombre fuerte como modelo de empleado racional masculino de cara a los cambios en el sistema económico.

Palabras clave: 1. masculinidades, 2. trabajo, 3. masculinidad hegemónica, 4. Tecate, 5. Baja California.

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INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

This article presents the earliest findings of a research on labor and the construction of masculinities, having as a context the border city of Tecate, Baja California, and one of the most traditional and prestigious firms there: Tecate Brewing Company. The study focuses on specific details of the context and social interactions, based on the analysis of dominant discourses, power relations and subjectivities, without overlooking the possibility of contributing to the comprehension from local to global. Our central premise is that generic subjectivities have been changed by neoliberal labor policies. A diachronic analysis of the masculinities produced and reproduced in an organizational environment in which the effects of the globalized economy have been experienced, namely: the pauperization of life, gender and racist violence, and the sexual division of labor (Federici, 2013 [1999]; Falquet, 2017; Monárrez & Tabueca, 2003), motivated by multinational corporations' activities in free-trade zones or from seeing them as global assembly lines.

Due to the above, we consider that *Cervecería Tecate* [Tecate Brewery] may contribute to understand the processes that configures the economic-labor-gender political relation. The analysis of personal narratives of the former workers interviewed would allow finding in the experiences and specific significances the details of both the context and social interactions in regard to dominant discourses, power relations and masculinities in each corporate stage of the Brewery. On the understanding that the methodological strategy to analyze changes in the labor market allows identifying the changes that occur in the workers' identities and subjectivities (Comas, Cicciari, & Rubio, 2016).

Over the last decades we have witnessed the consequences of the various subjectification processes in men and women from globalization, supported on the neoliberal capitalism's economic model, which has produced deep changes in the economy, society and culture. In Mexico, several are its effects, mainly associated to economic stagnation, which has turned into fall in wages, unemployment and underemployment, social exclusion, male, and most recently female migration, to the United States, as well as the national economy's dependency on remittances sent by fellow compatriots who work abroad; by and large, there is noticeable pauperization of the population both in the rural and urban spheres (Valdés & Mitiaen, 2001).

Generally, as a consequence of the neoliberal economic model, a labor crisis is noticed as the core of capital accumulation produced by the oversizing of the financial sector, the speculative market, the automation of production processes, and the crisis of labor centrality in postindustrial society (De la Garza, 2005). In this sense, Jáuregui (1998, cited in De la Garza, 2005) deems the crisis of labor activity as a center for the creation of identities of social subjects to the extent that both labor interaction (between peers), and the relation between employer and employee have changed.

Changes in the relationship between employer and employee are due to policies that have allowed labor relations to be flexible and decentralized, which has resulted in labor

deregulation and its pauperization (De la Garza, 2005). This would have various effects on the symbolic community of labor, partner, and family, both in material bonds and subjective intensity (De la Garza, 2005) since there is a revaluation of the individual, contempt for the collective and ideas such as liberty, competence, merit, and profit have emerged. Neoliberalism, according to Griffin (2005), has configured and prescribed success, as well as the successful behavior in the global market, particularly in the generic manner in which the notions of firm and worker are defined, prescribed and reproduced.

From these transformations, from macro to micro, is that we intend to approach the construction of masculinities in men, because in addition to the premise that work, as well as the relationship between employee and employer have changed, so has it between peers. Economic agencies have produced and reproduced the main narratives on labor, which serve as a scaffolding to build masculinities. Aided by Anthropology, it has been identified that organizations operate the constructions of what is masculine and feminine as a strategy to discipline the workforce inside a workplace and also beyond it (Palermo, 2016).

In this sense, organizations as workplaces consolidate both economically and historically a man-worker model, promoting certain ways of living, thinking and feeling gender relations (Palermo & León, 2016). Factories and manufacturing firms promote processes to individualize human bonds sieved by an *economic grid* accompanied by the neoliberal doctrine as competence, free market, and economic deregulation, creating a new model of labor force management (Pierbattsti, 2017).

We chose the brewing company in Tecate because of the transformations it has experienced over the last 72 years; the firm exemplifies the changes in the economic context through the various sales to national and international capitals along its history, the border condition of the city and its urban development, which influence on the construction of masculinities in the men who have worked for such firm, since under each administration certain models of being a man-worker have been configured (Palermo & León, 2016).

Let us discuss an axis concept in our work's thesis: masculinity. It has been understood as a category that allows understanding men (Greig, Kimmel, & Lang, 2000), whose identity is composed of the meanings they are allotted as sexual beings. An identity that will always be nuanced by the various historic-cultural and geographic contexts in which these significations occur.

Australian Raewyn Connell (2001), a pioneer in the systematization of knowledge on men as gendered subjects, has tried to define masculinity concurring with Jack Halberstam (1998), on that it refers to male bodies (sometimes directly, some others symbolically and indirectly), but it is not determined by biology. This is to say, the differenced body builds and physiological processes between male and female bodies are not the origin of gender differences; differences are but social constructions made on the sexual bodies. Then, in this first approach, masculinity is a social construction.

Following Connell (2003), masculinity can be defined as “a place in gender relations in the practices through which men and women occupy that place in gender and the effects of such practices on the body experience, personality and culture” (p. 109). Understanding gender, according to the same author, as a social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do.

In this text we adhere to Connell’s (2003) statements in regard to *such* place that is taken in gender relations, since for those who assume themselves masculine there will always be a mandate to occupy the dominant position (Connell, 2003; Bourdieu, 2000; Kimmel, 1994; Kaufman, 1989). Domination is the main privilege patriarchal systems provide men with. This privilege extends to all areas of life, from institutional spaces to the private life of the domestic sphere. Domination is the meaning, sometimes denotative and sometimes implicit of masculinity, and it associates with various ways of exercising power at all levels, dimensions, and scenarios of social relations. *Be a man* is a phrase that has been traditionally used for requiring men to take control of an interaction.

However, despite that in patriarchal systems a position of power is granted for men, this authority is not received automatically. Those men who want to access the privileges of patriarchy must differentiate from women through showing eagerness and controlling capacities over other individuals and the world, displaying autonomy and rational thoughts, acting courageously and taking risks and exhibit heterosexual desires (Connell, 2003). We might say that these qualities: control capacity, autonomy, rationality, recklessness, and manifest heterosexuality could be the main characteristics of masculinity of the masculine, qualities in concurrence with neoliberalism, as well as a concern for gender studies on men, which would have to delve into the ways these qualities display and their effects on social relations.

Connell (2003) has identified the need to explain men’s gender by means of the pluralization of the term: she prefers to speak of masculinities, not masculinity, to evince that the experience of being a man is variable and dynamical. She deems it useful to make visible the various positions that exist within the *men’s* collective, thus giving an account of how the social system hierarchizes the access to *patriarchal dividends* based on other elements of identity such as social class, ethnical background, sexual preference, age and other social categories.

With the development of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell (2003) tries to explain gender relations inside the men’s collective, and since there is a series of symbols and practices valued according to the epoch and place in which these would have to be unfolded by the subjects that aspire to a dominant position. Hegemony “would be established if there is correspondence between the cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual” (Connell, 2003, p. 117). Since the correspondence with the hegemonic ideal of masculinity is usually unattainable or provisional, the power of men would be related to the place, context or specific event at a certain time.

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that has become prolific in studies on men and masculinities; it points out the acceptable forms of being a man at an epoch or in a certain group that legitimizes patriarchy and guarantees to preserve men's domination and women's subordination. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) specify that these forms of masculinity are not the most common statistically speaking, but they embody the most honorable current ways of being a man, asking the rest of men to take a stance in relation to it.

In labor spheres, the concept of masculinity is useful as it is a hierarchical space with specific social practices. A stage in which there is a structure organized by gender, but also by age, schooling, ethnicity and social class, which implies particular masculine configurations that may evince local gender policies. In this sense, for this study, it becomes relevant as it enables reflecting on changes in the norms, derived from the firm's administration by transnational capitals, which come from global gender policies, considering that the relations of production replicate ways to assign tasks that are used in other geopolitical spaces.

TECATE'S URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE BREWERY

To understand the context of this study it is fundamental to approach urban development in the city of Tecate. One of the main references to understand its urban development is the construction of the San Diego-Arizona railway track in 1914 and with it the establishment of the customs office and also *Cervecería Tecate*, a firm founded by Mr. Alberto V. Aldrete in 1944 (Santiago, 2002). As pointed out by Santiago (2002, 2005), the 1940's and 1950's were important moments for the city's political, economic and social development. The industries that subsequently led to demographic and economic development were installed, such as the brewing industry, in particular *Cervecería Tecate S. de R.L.* Due to migration and population settlement, the city's political status changed to municipality and the urban space started to appear.

The setting up of *Cervecería Tecate S. de R.L.* was fundamental for the industrial, social and economic development of the city. On the one side, it generated employment through the hiring of professionals and workers; it opened the door to major economic flows and made that new families settled around the factory, producing urban growth and new neighborhoods. In time, Tecate Brewery underwent many changes not only due to local contexts, but national and international; some of these political, other economic, and some related to technological advancements. Indisputably, workers have been impacted by these changes in one way or another. Such changes can be evidenced through the different generations of people who have worked in the company since its founding in the 1940's (Santiago 2002).

As previously mentioned, *Cervecería Tecate, S. de R.L.* was founded in 1944 by the entrepreneur and politician Alberto V. Aldrete Palacio. For three years it belonged to his family, but it was acquired by *Banco Nacional de México* [National Bank of Mexico] due to

a series of economic debts from financial mismanagement (Mejorado de la Torre, 2014). Later on, in 1954 *Cuauhtémoc Brewing Group* from Monterrey, owned by the Garza Sada Family, acquired the brewery. Mr. Arturo Montejó,⁴ former worker for Tecate Brewery and one of the oldest, who helped in its construction in 1944, comments:

It was founded by the Aldretes, Don Alberto Aldrete was the founder... they only had the malt [Mexican Company of Malt] and made the factory of oils [Vegetable Oils] and made the brewery, during the war. They bought a factory that was closing down there on “the other side”, it was old... they put it in here. Quite run-down ... very old... then... as he worked with the bank,⁵ the war was over, and the sales came down ... it went down and the bank took it. The bank kept running it little by little, until it made money again and they sold it to *Cuauhtémoc* (Arturo Montejano, personal communication, August 24th, 2017).

From the start, Tecate Brewery received immigrants from states such as Jalisco, Sinaloa, Sonora, Michoacán, and Baja California Sur, among others, many of whom worked as operators, machinists and workers in the brewery (Santiago, 2002). Some of them, as pointed out by Mr. Montejó, took part in as builders in the construction of the facilities, which as of today houses *Cervecería Tecate*, as Santiago (2002) notes, back then Tecate’s urban development was in full swing.

In 2010, FEMSA sold the brewery to the Dutch company Heineken for 7.347 billion USD (Cardoso, Zúñiga, & Carrizales, 2010, p. 8). The deal was a share exchange through which FEMSA let go of the brewery by a 20% shareholding in Heineken Group (Ibid.). The historic development of Tecate as an urban center cannot be understood without the presence and development of the brewery.

Neither can it be put aside that the location of the city was key for the setting up and development of this sort of firm. Its proximity to the United States, one of the largest markets in the world and main recipient of migrants in the American continent, influenced the growth of an industry that demanded workforce and increase in the number of people looking for job opportunities, mainly over the second half of the 20th century. The advent of NAFTA brought the maquila industry to the border; a female-dominated sector which probably favored the offer of labor force for industries such as the brewery, which at first was an industry for men only.

In regard to migration, Wells Ayón (1990) studied how this phenomenon demographically affected Baja California (including Tecate); by 1950, migrant population was already 63.4% in the state; by 1989, migrants accounted for 44.2%, though the children and grandchildren of migrants were already a large part of non-migrant population in the state. In the case of Tecate, only over the 1970-1980 period —decade in which the *Cuauhtémoc Moctezuma*

⁴Names have been modified to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

⁵*Banco Nacional de México* [National Bank of Mexico].

Brewery was built—, migrant population represented a 3.03%. These interurban interregional mobilities described by Wells Ayón (1990), would be utilized at various moments and manners by the capital, and such harnessing will be mediated, to a large extent, by gender.

THE BREWERY AND THE BORDER, INTERSECTION BETWEEN LABOR AND MASCULINITIES

The labor sphere allows to reproduce various transcendental elements in the construction of the masculine, besides reproducing the social organization of masculinities: economic success and control over others (Sambade, 2010); organizational power, authority, and prestige (Hearn & Collinson, 2006); rationality as leverage for productivity and progress (Seidler, 1989); and the consummation of the role as a provider which legitimizes being the head of the family (Salguero, 2007). The above allows the subjects of masculinity to *become men* since strength and rationality are valued mainly in capitalist societies; furthermore, they serve as criteria for the sexual division of labor and the appointment of positions inside organizations.

Gender theory understands the sexual division of labor as the assignment of tasks on the basis of gender, configuring masculinities in the sphere of production relations (Connell, 2003). This has symbolically restricted the professions and occupations men and women are enabled to carry out, by dividing many of the tasks performed in both private and public spheres into masculine and feminine, since “from early ages, boys grow up with the idea that through labor they will be recognized as men, devoting a large part of their lives to accomplish apparent labor and professional success” (Salguero, 2007, p. 430). This way, for men their labor situation, employed or unemployed, successful or unsuccessful, has become the reflection of their identity.

Labor is linked to one of the main roles in men’s life: provision of economic resources. In Mexico, it has been broadly documented that having a paid job enables men from this country to fulfill their role of the families’ economic providers (Hernández, 2016, 2011; Jiménez, 2014; Hernández-Castañeda, 2013; Tena & Jiménez, 2008), and that this function is the heart of the construction of masculinities (Hernández, 2016). Hence, having a job and receiving economic incomes enables them to be identified, in the first place, as responsible men who can ensure the survival of a family (Salguero, 2007).

In heterosexual relationships, the provider role allows, also, to reproduce the traditional couple model, practiced from courting and dating, called *provide/serve* model by Guillermo Núñez (2013); in which a man who has a paid job outside the household that allows him to afford the family’s living expenses is authorized to access his partner’s cares and withdrew themselves from domestic tasks and looking after others; activities traditionally assigned to women. Furthermore, in the exercise of paternity, it has been found that it is the father’s capability of providing economic support what legitimizes his authority before his sons and

daughters, despite authoritarian parenting and that involuntary unemployment hinders the possibility to fulfill the role of father-provider-protector (Tena & Jiménez, 2008). For that matter, it has been identified that in some families when a father becomes unemployed or has no job, he is discredited as an authority as he is not able to provide for his family (Ravazzola, 2007). This evinces that paid work allows holding a position of power inside the domestic sphere.

Therefore, masculinity for men shall be validated in the labor sphere. Mara Viveros (2008) points out how important it is for men to share public space with other men; such encounters are the opportunity to unfold masculinity, mainly by means of competing. Public spaces such as labor or politics become the place in which men would have to identify themselves, compete and look for the approval of other men (Flood, 2008). Valdés and Olavarría (1998) put forward that labor is the means by which men reach acceptance, social recognition for their capability to produce, to generate material resources. This way, the labor world becomes a space in which men must have a place.

Now, the public space of labor reveals homosociality as a mechanism that regulates and reproduces alliances between men to keep patriarchal dividends and the hegemonic forms of masculinity. Homosociality refers to social bonds which become a priority between individuals of the same sex, and in studies on men and masculinities it has been utilized to give an account of how the life of men is organized by their relationships with other men; this is to say, as spaces of male union and friendship (Bird, 1996; Gutmann, 2001). Acting according to the characteristics of the hegemonic masculinity before other men is essential for the subjects, since approval is sought through it, by means of identifying and competing, using masculinity markers such as professional achievements, wealth, physical feats and heterosexual relationships with which they intend to improve their rank in the male social hierarchy (Kimmel in Flood, 2008).

Other symbols associated to labor that prevail in the imaginary of hegemonic masculinity include the man who tries to make an impression and change the world using his drive, energy, self-discipline, initiative, but more importantly, by means of his financial acumen. Behaving thus links the self-image of self-control and control over others, via the enticing representations of powerful men who successfully run the public world (Whitehead in Hall, Hockey & Robinson, 2007).

As a part of his research, Jeff Hearn has tried to identify the relation between men, masculinities, labor, organizational culture and management of workplaces. He is mainly interested in identifying how masculinities are reproduced in organizations. Hearn and Collison (2006) recognize the transcendence of studying workplaces, due to its importance:

[...] as places of production and reproduction of the power of men and masculinities [...] labor issues such as control, decision making, remunerations and organizational culture reflect and reinforce in a crucial manner male discursive and material practices. Men and masculinities are

comprised and built in the labor processes of control, collaboration, innovation, competition, obedience, resistance, and contradiction... men have been preponderant in firms' constitution, development, and change (Hearn & Collison, 2006, pp. 302-303).

Hearn and Collison (2006) also identify that employment provides men with symbolical resources and benefits that mutually reinforce their power and authority at work and at home. Moreover, one way men have to exercise their power on women is through labor segregation and discrimination, inequitable payment and harassment. This is evident, even though their growing inclusion in the workplace, there is scarce representation of women in chair positions, they receive lower wages than men who hold the same positions, and carry out a double labor shift: one at work and the other at home.

Labor and economic organizations are, to sum up, an important space for the construction of masculinities and gender relationships; more so the one which demands force, stamina, ability, control, and independence, plus solidarity with the group. The characteristics mentioned above according to Connell (cited in Gourarier, Rebucini, Voros, 2013) come from the neoliberal culture, since the rational model of neoliberal economy is a male individual, in addition its policies ceaselessly refer to the political figure of a strong man, worshiping merciless, authoritarian, rational, and efficacious decision-making. Continuing with Connell (Ibid.), through multinational corporations, neoliberal globalization has created new social institutions and spaces at a global scale that are organized according to a gender regime, and are spaces to produce masculinity in which local and global contexts connect.

Notwithstanding, the era of labor flexibility, characterized by labor precariousness, feminization and unemployment, implies the relative displacement of the male worker, who as a main provider experiences more sensitively the change from security to the instability of neoliberal policies. Women enter into a labor sphere unstable from the start, women enter into a labor sphere unstable from the start, historically created for male workers (Gómez, 2007). In this sense, if neoliberal culture has been built through the image of the strong man, in daily life it does not offer the means and material conditions for their subsistence, at least not for all men, and it offers it with little security and many risks (Beck, 1996). This study is based on the premise that the changes in labor and in Tecate's brewery, as an economic organization and considering the globalized context and neoliberal capitalism, have made an impression in every cohort of workers on the construction of their masculinities.

In regard to the context in which the study was carried out, masculinities at the border have been identified as particular ways to experience identity and gender relations. According to Broughton (2008), not only is the border a place where jobs can be found, but it is also a place where gender mandates are attained, namely: become independent, gain a sense of personal and material achievement, and improve social status. This way, geography, gender, and economy set down as constituent parts of the labor force.

METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

We chose Tecate's brewing industry because of the transformations it has experienced over 72 years. Such transformations originated from the economic context via the various sales to national and international capitals along its history, the city's border condition and urban development. Our premise is that such changes concur with the construction of the masculinities of the men who have worked in the firm, since under each administration, certain models of being a man-worker would be profiled (Palermo & León, 2016).

Since we are interested in the transformation of masculine subjectivities motivated by corporative changes, a design through personal narratives was considered (Emerson & Frosh, 2009). By personal narrative, we understand a brief story or large sections of a conversation or series of conversations, as an interview, on the participants' life within a certain context. Narratives structure the organization of memory and the perception of experience as constructions of reality interwoven with the community, culture, and society (Riessman, 2008). As shared stories, these narrations are established in social and power practices from which subjectivities, gender, and masculinities are modeled and built (Emerson & Frosh, 2009).

The approach of personal narrations allows to address a small number of respondents, as on the one side, the intention is not to generalize; while on the other, they are a sort of case study, in which the biographical, historical, and social intersect (Riessman, 2008). This is to say, the narrative analysis of a small number of participants allows accounting for broader processes, intermingling their experiences as men in a determinate geopolitical environment.

Since narrative analysis focuses on details of the context and social interaction, it enables addressing dominant discourses, power relations, and subjectivities. Consequently, we deem the method suitable to look for these links between the personal and the public in the construction of masculinities taking the organizational context as a space in which these and gender relations are produced and reproduced.

The criterion to select the sample is having worked at any of the three historical moments of the firm; such moments were thus defined for analytical purposes. Originally, respondents were reached via the former labor union; this way, some retirees and pensioners, part of the first cohort of the study, were identified. Then, through the snowball technique, they helped us find former employees who belong to other cohorts. In this study, we only included four cases which correspond to men who were related or knew each other (Table 1).

Each group of respondents was considered part of a cohort; they were organized and codified as follows:

- a. 1G: cohort from 1944 to 1954, *Cervecería Tecate*
- b. 2G: cohort from 1954 to 2009, *Cervecería Cuauhtémoc Moctezuma*
- c. 3G: cohort from 2010 to the present day, Heineken Group

In this text, the findings for four respondents are presented. The analysis comprised at least four moments:

- a. Fieldwork, where the participants were located according to the corresponding cohort.
- b. Recollection of data through in-depth interviews, in which the respondent's biographical trajectory in the brewery was reconstructed.
- c. A first analysis of the data by means of categories and sub-categories similar to that of the grounded theory; for this analysis Atlas-ti was resorted to.
- d. From these categories, the personal narratives were selected according to the corresponding cohort, as well as analyzed.

Table 1. Participants

Participant (pseudonym)	Age	Job Position	Years worked in the factory	Status	Cohort
Arturo Montejano	95	Bottling line operator	27	Pensioner	1G
José Miguel Figueroa Sr.	66	Operator of the malt storage room	30	Retiree	2G
José Miguel Figueroa Jr.	44	Purchases	11	Dismissed because of restructuring	3G
Emanuel Talamantes	44	Production supervisor	13	Dismissed because of restructuring	3G

Source: Own elaboration based on information from the respondents.

Five in-depth interviews were carried out, which were held in the participants' households once they were reached via the former union; two group interviews were held in this place, these were not integrated into this text due to analytical ends, as they were collective stories. In this article we focus on the personal. Eight months passed between the first and last interview.

FINDINGS

On Joining the Firm

Not only is it possible to identify in the respondents' narratives the social practices through which we produce subjectivities, but also the ways in which labor transforms subjectivities,

locating between a singular experience and a collective action (Dejours, 2009), since they evince characteristics of the economic and sociopolitical context, which ranges from local to global, particularly associated with the brewery's life cycle. Below we show some of the most relevant characteristics, differencing them by cohort.

The way an individual joins a firm has implications in his subjectivity to the extent that it marks a turning point in the way he interprets himself in reference to the organization. In the case of the brewery, each cohort underwent a different admission process due to various factors: the extent of consolidation of the firm's operations at the time of being hired for the position. The changes in the proportions between the availability of job positions and the labor demand during each period, the sophistication that the tasks acquired over time from the progressive automation of processes to produce beer, implementation of international norms such as ISO, among others.

The narratives give an account of the change from a mechanism to hire personnel based on the availability of job positions (1G), a selection on the basis of kinship (2G), to later opt for a selection process based on merits (3G). As an instance, in 1G we have Arturo, who is hired at 18 years of age, after being a builder of the brewery, in 1944.

Arturo describes this process as almost automatic as he states "I got a job in construction there and I started digging ditches... when they made the brewery [...] the first stones [...] till they finished it and then, they offered us a job" (Arturo Montejano, 1G; personal communication, August 24th, 2017).

For 2G, the description of the process to work for the brewery is expressed otherwise, and the recommendation of a relative becomes a cover letter:

[...] I went to the U.S., because there was no work here and then since I got married, because there was no work here, but after arriving, soon enough, I had the chance to work in the brewery and from there... her father [his wife's] was the one who helped me (José Miguel Figueroa, 2G; personal communication, September 9th, 2017).

In 3G, seemingly being kindred to an employee remains as a hiring requirement, though linked to merits, as in the case of José Miguel Figueroa Jr., who prior to his hiring had already worked in the brewery as an engineering intern:

[...] that was a very beautiful time during my professional career, more so after being hired by a firm in which many people wanted to work but couldn't; then I thought it was a very, very, very, good opportunity, right?, this one I had [...] because it is also a family tradition: my father, my grandfather. Then, you grew up with that in mind and you want to work there too, right? Then, when I was interviewed and they told me about the job offer and all, they said I had made a good impression and at the time the job positions were fought over, in fact not everyone could get in, interns came for six months or a year, like me, but only that and they left, the next ones, it wasn't easy to be hired. I had my dad who worked there by the time [and] he didn't have a say, no he

didn't [...] I was hired because of my own merits, as it is, and many of the sons of my father's coworkers were also interns, but were not hired, they simply were not hired... funny... (José Miguel Figueroa Jr., 3G; personal communication, September 9th, 2017).

This narrative evinces the way in which the firm formalizes its administrative processes, which would become a hiring policy based on merit, not on kinship, at least for this sort of positions. It is thus demonstrated that this workplace was prized by men from the community and being hired there meant a position above the rest, being a better option as *a good impression was made*. Likewise, in the narration there is a positive and emotive valuing of their careers in the brewery, in spite of not working there anymore after being dismissed. Perhaps for the firm, kinship ceased to be a hiring criterion, but for this case *family tradition* in the firm orients the employee's aspirations, which may increase the advantages of considering the workplace an extension of the household, such as loyalty, even in the face of dismissal.

The narratives show that joining the firm in this cohort has various motivations (familial, economic, meritorious) and the causes are specific for each situation. However, the main was the prestige of the brewery for its solidity in times of scarcity of places to work and mainly, because it offered the possibility of making a career and render the masculinity mandate of being the main provider valid. As Emanuel Talamantes comments, the opportunity to work in the brewery appeared with his imminent paternity:

My first formal work was in the brewery. In the last semester, ninth, after a year of internship they called me, I was in Mazatlan, and they called me and told me to come for a job interview on a Monday, I had arrived on Wednesday, I think, then I flew and arrived here, I was on vacation and was interviewed for a post as a production supervisor... it thought a bit, to start, because of school. But well, I was about to be a dad and the need definitely made me take the job. Once working in the brewery, which was my first job, and being at school, there were not any factories here, in fact there were three, Tecate, Leflex, Sleech which were the big ones back then, I think that as every young man said *I would like to work in the brewery...* get hired by a company of important level, and, more so, make a professional career there (Emanuel Talamantes, 3G; personal communication, September 9th, 2017).

Paternity led Emanuel to look for labor conditions that would secure a sufficient remuneration to fulfill the mandate of masculinity related to provide and family command. Even though the firm offers Emanuel the position after making an internship in the company, it is not clear if the invitation comes from merits or from the social capital gained by the respondent over his internship in the firm. Labor policies have become more rigorous in regard to the hiring of personnel with professional training validated by an academic degree, which Emanuel did not have at the time, as he had not finished school. In the description of the organization as *reaching such a firm*, there is an element of prestige for Emanuel, who sees in his work an indicator to be valued by the productive sector. The phrase *I think that as*

every young man said I would like to work in the brewery also indicates that at the time there is an aspirational element in the collective that he had already achieved. The road toward professionalization of working for the brewery is not in the bodies of men as merely physical strength, but as intelligence and characteristics such as ambition.

Narratives on Labor and its Changes

The working environment, at first, required strength and physical resistance, work was scarcely automated; consequently, the body of man was essential to accomplish the goals of the brewery, in Arturo Montejo's (1G) words:

I started in the bottle washer[s]. I took and put the boxes to be carried away. It was hard to be there all day standing up and sitting down, though it seemed easy, but being eight hours there, taking a box and then putting them by fours... I was there for a short time, because I came to brewing, it was here where I lasted the longest. Then they modernized it... it was another machine and another system... some Spaniards came... they set up a more modern machine... they claimed they were around the world setting up machinery and then they said, "Did you study?," "No..." and they said: "In Germany, the operator has to study." I'm a technician and you learn here, as it is said, "to play by ear... watching" ... they would come and said, more or less they explained [to the employee], and that was it. And when they brought the machine, this last the most modern, we went there at times to take a look... it was only machines there, but I walked a lot, physical effort was only used at that moment ... I had to operate three different machines (personal communication, August 24th, 2017).

Arturo opens up with a description of work that does not seem intense and physically strenuous; then, he distinguishes the transition toward a more technological work in which physical effort reduces to walking. Hence, Arturo narrates a change in the productive model and a key moment in his working career: physical capabilities are substituted by commanding the use of machinery, turning specialized knowledge into another element valuable for skilled labor.

Strength and physical resistance, formerly essential for the task, start to be complemented with the capability of using the intellect. Moreover, in the body of men lies the cunning to face the difficulties that the modernization of work involved, which for Arturo seemed as a part of his symbolic capital, because despite not having a formal education, he is capable of facing what takes place and even operate *three different machines*. It is also interesting to identify the impact it has for an employee living in a city as Tecate, to talk to the Spaniard technician about the characteristics of a skilled worker in Germany. Perhaps, by feeling his nationality was being challenged, it activated the effort to show competitiveness, and on the other hand the need to be up to workers in European countries, in a place such as Mexico, where masculinity is colonized by occidental gender mandates, and nationalism and manhood go hand in hand. In 2G, the body and strength of men are still fundamental

according to José Miguel Figueroa Sr. at the beginning, everything was rudimentary and a somewhat messy.

At first, to unload a cart I had to go to the top, come down and go up to open the slide gates and all that, and now not anymore... modernity caught me by surprise when I was about to leave. I knew nothing about computers and they put everything new in here, everything automatic, everything just by pushing a button, everything [was] moved with a balloon. About a year before I left, I recall some German technicians and our boss, and it was a Saturday, and they said: "that's it, it is ready JM, we are leaving everything on," he said "and when the cart unloads, turn off the system"... the thing is I didn't learn very well there because I was alone, but in other parts there were many people and some learn from the others... and I was here, on my own... I had to go to ask, "Hey! How do I do this?" ... and the pressure that "we are carrying out an inspection on your station, get ready!", you must have everything clean, *spotless* (José Miguel Figueroa Jr., 3G; personal communication, September 9th, 2017).

This narration agrees with the previous cohort, the transition from manual to automated work goes on, though tasks that require great physical effort to move the slide gates that allowed base materials to pass, remain. It is noticeable the experience of solitude while working, mainly in view of the changes produced by the introduction of new technologies that not only changed labor, but also administrative and supervision practices through inspections, which he had not experienced before. It is a different moment in the organization's life cycle in which a number of practices are professionalized and speeches on quality start permeating the firm until they reach the staff who faces unknown situations perceived as threats. However, adaptability and competitiveness are abilities that enabled him to overcome this situation.

In 3G, changes from corporative sales implied organizational restructuring, which for this cohort resulted in dismissals. At first, the expansion of FEMSA Corporation included promotions associated to the decentralization of the corporation, this is to say, movements in key positions in various places such as Navojoa (Sonora), Tecate (Baja California), Guadalajara (Jalisco), and Monterrey (Nuevo León). However, with Heineken Corporation operations started to be centralized in Monterrey and gradually posts disappeared and/or merged.

This occurred because Heineken's business practices tended to match with those of their factories abroad, with few employees, as commented by José Miguel Figueroa Jr., who worked in purchases for 11 years and grew three levels in the ranks. At the time of the sale, facing the dismissed, he had been assigned tasks from other factories for three years, until he was dismissal:

You know that your job position somewhere else it's being restructured, but you don't know when that change is coming, and here changes happen from day to day; I mean, they don't let you know, they just say "as of now, as of

tomorrow this post... erm, disappeared, thank you very much.” At a personal level, it hits you hard, professionally it shocks you. You can like it or not, but you feel sad at that moment because you have a lot of memories and remember other, experiences, but mmm... you have to pull yourself together (José Miguel Figueroa Jr., 3G; personal communication, September 9th, 2017).

These changes evince the organizational competences linked to neoliberal ideology in the configuration of the male worker such as effort, merit, resistance, and quick adaption to changes. In the heart of these changes is the capability to recover from adversity, which implies not *taking things personal* (that is, as if they were purposefully intended to hurt), as the essential ability to survive uncertainty and the instability of labor systems, because changes are fast and there is no time to be prepared.

The firm took no responsibility for the consequences of the changes; on the contrary, it uses uncertainty to create insecurity, which for the worker means to forcedly comply as a strategy to remain. Lack of transparency in the firm’s policies to settle labor controversies such as shifts, overtime, dismissals, etc., produces angst and outrage, which would be labeled as workers’ unwillingness to do as required so that the firm maintains its competitiveness. The system appeals to two basic mandates of hegemonic masculinity: loyalty at all cost and emotional equanimity. *Pull yourself together* describes both qualities.

In this cohort, changes in labor are not only technologic or procedural, but structural from modification of the policies, sales, and global corporative changes that are applied to this specific geographic location. Labor changes generationally and also the profile of the workers, it is noticed how gradually they go from lack of training and development of activities for operative tasks on the go, to formal instruction and development of organizational competences to participate in a changing and uncertain labor market. Besides, retaking a new sense of rationality as self-control and developing new capabilities in the face of uncertainty and competence.

Decisions are made outside the territory in which tasks are carried out and the worker never takes part in changes, he complies with them. The worker does not know the criteria that guide the choices regarding closures or restructurings of job positions, but learns that his merits will be assessed through his capability to accept them and adapt *pulling himself together*, which is nothing but to carry on generating value for the firm, either by the devaluation of his labor force or the suppression of his will. Given the atomization of labor, it is impossible that the worker’s solitary individuality can resist against the corporation’s impersonal overwhelming power.

Narratives on the Homosocial System

As of its inception, *Cervecería Tecate* is a homosocial system or homosocial space (Bird, 1996; Gutmann, 2001); since, on the one side, these are spaces of male union and friendship,

and it also produces and reproduces male workers and masculinities deemed successful by the community. As a homosocial system, it was focused on the body of men and on characteristics that distinguish men from women such as strength, dexterity, and emotional resilience. Additionally, bonds between men are privileged through kinship; this is to say, the presence of male employees with some family relationship is essential over men with no relatives and women in general, a situation that did not occur in all the corporation facilities.

In the following fragment, Arturo Montejano answers the question, why was there no women in the production area of *Cervecería Tecate*?

Back in the day, I think when construction began... no, they were not used to and they kept that way... it is that in that time it was a union and only men were part of it, I think it is that, in other factories there were a lot of women... in the brewery of Monterrey a lot of women worked in the production area, well actually they were in bottling, and here as the union started to appoint employees, and people came and then the system, there was another sort of machines (Arturo Montejano, 1G; personal communication, September 24th, 2017).

The respondent's explanation is that it has to do with the union and he associates it to the beginning of the construction of the brewery, i.e., physical work seemed to be the foundation of the homosocial system, as it is understood that this sort of work excludes women as it is heavy work. By means of embodying force in men and the supposed weakness of women, is that the latter are excluded, revealing the order of genders as a foundation for the establishment of social order, power and its practices within the organization, linked to kinship.

In 2G, José Miguel Figueroa describes there has been no women in the production area, and how they are forced into management positions, for example in the quality area, derived from the physical differences assigned to women:

I had a female boss in malt, every now and then she told me "Hey, Figueroa, and this?" or "Have you unloaded that?" She was a woman, young, but it is not the same as if there was a man, because frequently women... I got on the carts and she couldn't climb, and the one before, who was a man, he could. It is not the same, she didn't notice. I could've lied and she wouldn't have realized; it is not the same, a woman can't climb many places, for example, in the area I was, everything is high, walk on the bridges, climb and come down and all that a woman can't do (José Miguel Figueroa, 2G; personal communication, September 9th, 2017).

The respondent's interiorized sexual division of labor is evinced in his conception of women as restricted to perform certain activities that demand body strength. In this case, José Miguel states that a woman is not only not competent for a position whose main function is to supervise the work of subordinates; neither are women insightful to identify failures in the production process, they are gullible, thereby naïve and manipulable. The misogyny, perhaps

unnoticed in José Miguel's statements have an implicit purpose: privilege men in the workplace.

In a consolidated homosocial system, as in G3, there are rituals of passage with which initiates (senior employees) try to prove the rookies (new employees) through challenges, to find out what they were made of, even many problems and conflicts were solved in a brawl. In this cohort, masculinity looks for approval by means of identification, competence, and submission expressed as loyalty. Emanuel Talamantes, 3G, describes this kind of situation:

There was a man with problems, I don't know why or what happened, but he had trouble with the supervisor, he was in the palletizer. And J.M. [supervisor] told me "come, I'm gonna tell you how we solve things here." We went up on the palletizer, he said "come, let's teach this guy how things are solved here." We left the factory, we went to the backside, by the train station, and they started fighting, heavy blows, the supervisor won, the other was somewhat hurt. He gave the other guy a day off and said "well... take the day off, paid, but here you paid your debt," he looks back and said "that's the way things are solved here" (personal communication, September 9th, 2017).

This narrative allows witnessing the exercise of control on the others by means of physical force, which is seen as a marker of physical feat. Despite the changes in masculinity brought along by the new model of rational worker based on intellectuality, not in physical strength, physical violence is still a mechanism to control wills, especially when organizational bureaucracy fails. Defending honor, affirming superiority, and legitimize authority by means of violence is still a masculine mandate valued over institutional measures. However, for violence to become an actual gender capital, peers have to gather and power must be exhibited before them. There is no hegemonic masculinity that is sustained without an audience.

FINAL COMMENTS

Despite this text presents the earliest findings of a broader study, the narratives show the complex articulations between culture, economy, and masculinities at the workplace. They reveal the gender subjectivity disrupted by neoliberal labor policies, in the context of the so-called New International Division of Labor —NIDL (Federici, 2013)— in which this geopolitical area is central. It allows glimpsing how the model of masculine actor which focused on the figure of strong man gradually changes from gender based on the body to gender based on rationality and control over emotions, accumulation of knowledge, competences, and resilience. Technology expropriates the monopoly of physical force, thought essential in male bodies, while qualities such as self-management, emotional intelligence, leadership, innovation, and strategic thinking become exploitable resources for the corporations.

Entering the firm reveals there was a before and an after in the three generations, as it presents itself as an extraordinary opportunity to face consequences in the economic systems

given the precariousness and uncertainty. Mainly, it allows glimpsing over time, the management of gendered subjects and employees in the advancement of an increasingly concrete organizational culture, with clearer policies and standardized administrative processes within a firm that changes owners, and goes from local administration to subsidiary of an international corporation.

As it is established and developed as a homosocial system, which prioritizes bonds between men, it stands as a context to build and unfold masculinities, whose essential value is strong body and mind. As stated by Connell (2003), masculinity is *that* place in gender relations that is maintained through certain practices and the effects of these practices; labor used to be a space to verify the sexual division of social life, which is fading with the inclusion of women and by including exploitable qualities not exclusive of male bodies into the firm's organizational manual.

Albeit, this change does not take place without opposition: if we heed the narratives of the respondents, on the one hand, there is reticence to consider women as their peers; and on the other, violence as the norm, not only to impose but as a cohesion factor for men who solve their differences fighting, as *this is how things are solved here*, this is how *men* solve things. Fights are then a homosocial ritual, as they validate group belonging and allow moving from fighting to agreeing, as a part of the masculine pact between brothers.

An important difference that makes room for a future return to fieldwork is that glimpsed in G3, in regard to resilience, self-management, dexterity, and strategic thinking in the face of unemployment; it is not just strong men, they are males who managed to overcome the loss and faced the future in an uncertain and precarious corporative world in the context of the NIDL. That is to say, the hint of a new model of man-worker in the face of economic globalization, neoliberalism and its consequences within a political geo space such as the northern border of Mexico.

Translator: Luis Cejudo-Espinosa

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