

VU Research Portal

Meiguanxi

Uy, M.T.

2018

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

Uy, M. T. (2018). *Meiguanxi: Social Detachment and Impersonal Relations in Two Chinese Transient Employment Firms*. Delft Academic Press.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY	4
Figures	9
Tables	9
Chapter 1: Introduction: “It’s Just a Job!”	10
1. Defining the Problem	12
1.A. Guanxi as Tool in the Neo-Confucian Project	19
1.B. Guanxi as Tool within the Hofstede Values Model	21
2. Proposition Statement	25
3. Encountering Impersonal Relations in Chinese Firms	31
4. Chapters and Themes	38
Chapter 2: The Acceleration of Transient Employment in China	43
1. The Socialist Work Unit (Danwei).....	44
2. Firm Flexibility: Transition into a Socialist-Market Economy	46
3. Employee Flexibility & The Growth of Social Anxiety	59
4. Research Context of SEA-EAD and QLA	66
4.A. QLA (Qingdao Labour Agency)	71
4.B. SEA (Sunshine Education Agency).....	76
Chapter 2: Conclusion	79
Chapter 3: Expanding and Cutting the SEA-EAD and QLA Network	81
1. Expanding Office Life: Strathern’s Actor-Network Theory	82
2. The Conditions of Profit in the Foreign Education Network	86
3. The Network of Impersonal Relations in the Study Abroad Industry.....	90
3.A. QLA (Qingdao Labour Agency)	96
3.B. SEA-EAD (Sunshine Education Agency – Euro-American Department)	100
Chapter 3: Conclusion	107
Chapter 4: Information Control: Cooperative <i>Hezuo</i> Ties at SEA-EAD	110
1. Brief Background on the SEA-EAD Fraud	112
2. Benefits of Hezuo Ties at SEA-EAD	115
2.A. The “Betrayal” of EAD by Ms. Park	116
2.B. Professional Mentorship under Ms. Mina	122
2.C. Customer Satisfaction from Unsanctioned Hezuo Tie	126
3. Risks of Hezuo Ties at SEA-EAD	130
3.A. Surviving General Inquiry using Hezuo Ties	130
3.B. Advising and Assessment: Calculating Profitable Hezuo	132
3.C. School Applications and Collating Documents: Complex Hezuo	136
3.D. Visa Application: High Risk with Unknown Brokers	141
Chapter 4: Conclusion	147

Chapter 5 Information Control: SEA-EAD Manager-Employee Impersonal Ties	151
1. Introducing SEA-EAD’s Flexible Operation	153
2. Ms. Jia Resigns (June 2009).....	156
3. Mr. Dian’s Reluctant Re-Assignment (June 2009)	158
4. Degrees of Employee Resistance and Control (June-September 2009).....	159
4.A. Mr. Lao: Strategic Indifference (June – September 2009)	160
4.B. Deputy Song: Reluctant Participant (June 2009).....	161
4.C. Mr. Smith: Active Self-Development (July - August 2009)	161
4.D. Mr. Shin: Active Self-Development (August - September 2009)	165
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	170
Chapter 6: Power Difference: Customer Conflict Resolution at SEA-EAD	173
1. Power Relations in Education Consulting.....	175
2. Conflict and the Return to Impersonal Relations	179
2.A. Stage 1: Customer Outbursts	180
2.B. Stage 2: Upper Management Tactics: Disappearance and Deflection	184
3.C. Stage 3: Emotional Cooling Down, Truth Verification, & Resolution.....	187
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	196
Chapter 7: Individual Status: QLA Performances of Order and Hierarchy	200
Introducing QLA Everyday Order and Hierarchy	203
1. Shoushi as Employee Group Unity.....	204
2. Shangban Le: Individual Work Performance.....	206
3. Performing Employee Obedience under Managerial Authority	212
Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	219
Chapter 8: Individual Status: QLA Social Detachment through Eating Practices	222
1. Brief Background on Food in the Chinese Workplace.....	224
2. QLA Dinner Party: Employee Individual Distinction.....	226
3. QLA Lunch Hour: Managerial Control and Individual Distinction.....	235
3.A. Stage 1: The Rejection and Acceptance of Food Exchange.....	235
3.A.A. Employee Rejection Using the Discourse of Taste	237
3.A.B. Managers’ Counter-Discourse of Waste (<i>Langfei</i>).....	241
3.A.C. Countering Rejection with Indirect Food Sharing	244
3.B. Stage 2: Lunchtime Conversations and Social Power.....	245
3.B.A. Excerpt 1: Tipping Experiences – Sandra wins	246
3.B.B. Excerpt 2: Saving your Loved One – Sandra Reasserts Her Distinction	247
3.B.C. Excerpt 3: Post-Partum Practices – Mrs. Ying’s Authority.....	249
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....	250

Thesis Conclusion	253
1. The Category of Impersonal Relations	255
1.A. Strathern’s Actor Network Theory (ANT) and Impersonal Relations.....	256
1.B. Three Types of Impersonal Relations.....	257
1.C. Impersonal Relations and Mobility	264
2. Ritual in Flexible Firms	266
3. The Significance of Transient Workplaces	272
4. Limitations and Further Research.....	277
References:	280
Appendix 1: Glossary	303
Appendix 2: A Snapshot of Belle’s Work Mornings in a Week	305

Figures

Figure 1: China: Fourteen Coastal Cities Designated for Development (China’s Special Economic Zones Map 1997, UT Library).....	49
Figure 2: Qingdao-China-International Regional Map 2014	68
Figure 3: Shandong Province 2014 and Qingdao Administrative Districts 2014.....	69
Figure 4: Diagram of QLA Office Space (not to scale).....	213
Figure 5: Seating Arrangement During Meetings (I was excluded)	215
Figure 6: Restaurant Seating Arrangement.....	229

Tables

Table 1: Statistics of Total Employed Individuals by Sector 2009 - 2012.....	54
Table 2: Number of College Graduates (Wang et. al. 2012).....	62