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ACCULTURATION TO A WORK FORCE OF DIVERSITY: TWO CASE  
STUDIES OF JAPANESE-OWNED COMPANIES OPERATING  
IN THE UNITED STATES

by

Jun Nagasawa

A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
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requirements for the  
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Department of Sociology

Western Michigan University  
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Jun Nagasawa

ACCULTURATION TO A WORK FORCE OF DIVERSITY: TWO CASE  
STUDIES OF JAPANESE-OWNED COMPANIES OPERATING  
IN THE UNITED STATES

Jun Nagasawa, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 1995

This paper explores the acculturation processes associated with Japanese companies coming to the United States, especially focusing on race and gender issues. This was done by related literature review and two case studies of Japanese-owned companies operating in the Midwestern region. Data were obtained using unstructured interviews with workers of the two companies.

Accusations of discrimination against Japanese companies operating in the U.S. of discrimination based on race, gender and nationality are introduced. Japanese and American social backgrounds relating to race and gender, especially in employment area are reviewed. Also Japanese and American management styles are contrasted for analytical purposes.

It was concluded that acculturation involves three levels; individual, organizational, and societal. The results suggest that Japanese companies in the U.S. may be creating a harmonious environment for a diverse labor force.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The number of Japanese corporations operating in the United States has been steadily increasing since the 1980s. This is not an isolated event. This is just one facet of the so-called globalizing economy. Since a number of corporations have started to operate in foreign countries, many issues have been brought up as a result of the direct encounters of different cultures. One of these issues is the matter of different cultures adapting to one another. Local employees sometimes have to adapt to the foreign corporate culture. At the same time, foreign employers sometimes have to change their management styles in order to fit the local culture. A great deal of research has been done on different kinds of management styles to compare and to see whether these are transferrable to other settings.

For the Japanese corporations operating in the United States, the diversity of the work force in terms of race, ethnicity and gender is a big challenge they never have in Japan. Since Japanese society is relatively racially homogeneous, they are not sensitive about racial discrimination. In other words, there are ethnic minorities in Japan, however, in general, Japanese people believe so much in homogeneity that they have never brought up minority issues seriously. Also, Japanese society is a male-dominated society.



Women in the work-place are like second class citizens. They are still confined to unimportant, routine work, and expected to leave when they get married.

In contrast, the United States is a racially heterogeneous country. Racial discrimination has been and is a big issue in this country. Especially for the Japanese, the U.S. has a history of anti-Japanese attitudes. Though a solution has not been found yet, at least the problem is being confronted, and efforts to make the situation better are being tried. One of the efforts in the realm of employment practices is the enactment of anti-discrimination regulations, especially the implementation of the affirmative action program enacted in 1964. After 30 years, competitive business people are talking about valuing diversity in the work-place. They have started to recognize that it is absurd for business corporations to go without potentially beneficial employers comprised of people of many different backgrounds.

The Japanese companies have to become aware of these differences in order to be successful in the United States. This learning process may be driven by many factors such as abiding by the laws, social pressures, and their own strategies.

The purpose of this research is to explore the acculturation process of the Japanese companies as they come to the United States, specifically focusing on the factors which are related to racial and gender issues. This will be accomplished by reviewing related secondary sources and conducting two case studies which will be based

on interviews with workers in Japanese corporations operating in the  
U.S..

## CHAPTER II

### THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Acculturation Theory

According to The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology, acculturation refers to "a process in which contacts between different cultural groups lead to the acquisition of new cultural patterns by one group, or perhaps both groups, with the adoption of all or parts of the other's culture" (Jary & Jary, 1991, p. 3).

A Subcommittee on Acculturation was appointed by the Social Science Research Council in the middle 1930s to analyze and chart the dimensions of this field of study. There acculturation was defined as follows (Gordon, 1964):

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (p. 61).

Another common definition of acculturation provided by Berelson (1964) is "the process of learning a culture different from the one in which a person was originally raised" (p. 646). Learning the original culture is usually called socialization (Kitano, 1991). Kitano (1991) pointed out the mutuality of the process. Both groups learn from each other. However, an equal-power acculturation as well as a purely one-way flow of acculturation (one group completely overpowering the other) is rare.

I would like to emphasize that acculturation is a process which is continuously occurring as long as more than two different sets of culture are in contact with each other. Also, the above definitions are focusing on individuals or groups of individuals. However, I will apply this concept also to organizations. An organization is run by people, however the organization itself has its own culture. Japanese management style was developed in Japanese society as its background. So when the Japanese companies are transferred into a foreign society, it is natural that their organizational culture will be affected by the local culture (Dicle, Dicle, & Alie, 1988).

Two types of processes characterize the Japanese corporations' move to the United States. One is that American workers adopt parts of the Japanese corporate culture when they work for the Japanese companies operating in the United States. The other type of process is that the corporate culture which had been developed in Japan adopts parts of American culture as a consequence of the Japanese corporations moving to the United States and establishing contact with American workers. In this case, American culture is more powerful than Japanese culture in that it can compel the Japanese companies to meet certain standards.

In this study, I will explore mainly the latter process and specifically focus on the differences between Japanese and American cultures with respect to the recognition of racial and gender issues. In the following literature review, I will examine the dif-

differences in racial and gender issues, some of the experiences that the Japanese corporations have been through as they come to the United States, and compare Japanese and American management styles which will provide a framework of analysis in later chapters.

### Affirmative Action and Japanese Corporations

#### Career Forum

I went back to my college town from Boston being upset by one Japanese company. I was interested in applying for a job and went to the company's booth in the big career forum. I had to wait for about 30 minutes to just talk to the person. And the first thing he asked was: "Excuse me, but which year were you born in?" I said, "In 1969." "I'm sorry, but you are not qualified."

I was really upset. At the same time I noticed a big difference between the U.S. and Japan. They could get sued if they did this in the U.S.. Actually it happened in the U.S., but they were hiring people that could work in Japan. However the fact was, this kind of response is still common and acceptable in Japan. This experience inspired me to start this research.

#### Accusation of Discrimination Against Japanese Companies in the U.S.

Right after I came back from Boston, I went to see a professor in the Business School to get some information. He said without a pause, "Oh, yes. The Japanese companies are having a lot of problems here." And he let me watch the T.V. program that he recorded

and kept for his class presentation. This was a segment of 20/20 on ABC News reported by Stone Phillips on September 27, 1991. The report titled No Room at the Top was a story about American managers who had worked for Japanese companies in the U.S.. They claimed that: (a) Americans were brought in to launch companies; (b) Americans hit a "glass ceiling;" (c) highest positions are reserved for Japanese; (d) Americans don't have clout. One case reported concerned Mr. Chef Mackentire who had worked for the Ricoh Corporation. He was accusing the company of discrimination based on race and national origin. EEOC ruled, "if Ricoh had not used national origin biased recruiting, hiring, and transfer procedures, Chef Mackentire would have been promoted because he was better qualified and would not have been selected for lay off." In the end, the reporter said, since August (to the day), that is, in less than 2 months in August and September of 1991, EEOC had received about 500 complaints from Americans who had gone to work for Japanese companies, and most of them coming from women who said the Japanese business culture is so acutely male dominated.

It didn't require a lot of effort to collect the information on the Japanese companies sued for discrimination: A federal court in Illinois concluded that Quasar, a wholly-owned subsidiary of a Japanese corporation, engaged in national origin and age discrimination when it terminated four American managerial employees during a reduction in force by reserving certain of its managerial positions for employees of Japanese origin on an entirely different basis from

that used to evaluate and pay Quasar's managerial employees of American national origin, and by exempting all of its managerial employees of Japanese national origin from the work force reduction (Pepin, 1993; Piskorski, 1992). The court in December 1990 awarded the plaintiffs a total of \$2.5 million in damages. This is believed to be the first time a court ordered a Japanese company to pay damages for discriminating against Americans (Winski, 1993). Dentsu Corporation of America and its Japanese parent, Dentsu, are being sued by five Americans whom the agency fired in September 1990. They claim they were fired because they are Americans and Dentsu has a policy favoring Japanese employees, even though they are less competent than the American dismissed (Pines, 1993; Winski, 1993).

Three women, former employees in C. Itoh's finance division, charged that the company discriminated against them on the basis of sex and nationality, restricting them to clerical jobs and paying them less than their male, Japanese co-workers (Jacobs, 1991b; Kashiwagi, 1988; Simon & Brown, 1990). In November, 1977, twelve female secretaries at Sumitomo Shoji, a wholly-owned Japanese trading firm incorporated under the laws of New York, filed a class action suit in the District Court for the Southern District of New York. They alleged that the company promoted only male Japanese nationals to managerial positions while the secretaries received only simple office work and had no chance for promotion. They alleged, Sumitomo discriminated against them on the basis of sex and national origin (Kashiwagi, 1988; Simon & Brown, 1990; Tolchin & Tolchin, 1988).

This reached the settlement of \$2.6 million cash reward and career development programs for women which aims to have 25% of management positions within three years (Breslin, 1987; Rehder, 1990).

Honda Motor Co. paid \$6 million in March 1988 to blacks and women to settle discrimination charges at its plant in Marysville, Ohio (Galen & Nathans, 1989; Kashiwagi, 1988; Thompson, 1988). Critics mentioned that Honda had drawn its recruiting boundaries to exclude the black population of Columbus, 22 miles away (Treece, 1988). In 1989, Nissan Motor Corp. in California settled a discrimination investigation by the EEOC for \$605,000 and agreed to award management jobs to 68 African Americans, Hispanics, women and workers over age 40 who were passed over for promotions between 1984 and 1987 (Healy, 1990).

The above cases cited are just the tip of the iceberg, since most cases were eventually settled out of court and the records were made confidential (Jacobs, 1991a). There is no official tally of the number of lawsuits against Japanese companies (Jacobs, 1991b), and there is no categorization of cases brought up to EEOC which allows it to sort out the cases according to the ownership of the companies, so it is impossible to mention how many cases are brought up against Japanese-owned companies in comparison with, for example, German companies.

However, the survey was conducted in 1990 of all the Japanese firms operating in the United States whose corporate parents are listed on Japan's eight largest stock exchanges (Bob, 1990). Its



results show that one of the problems facing Japanese companies in the United States is the accusations of discrimination in hiring and promotion practices. As a matter of fact, almost one in three of the firms surveyed had been accused of discriminatory hiring and promotion practices. The study on Japanese subsidiaries overseas revealed that U.S.-based Japanese firms find it difficult to comply with U.S. anti-discrimination laws and promote women to management positions (Nagandhi, Eshghi, & Yuen, 1985). A study done in 1988 of 12 Japanese organizations in Fort Custer Industrial Park, Battle Creek, Michigan also revealed that one of the toughest problems faced by the Japanese manager is the legal requirements of equal employment opportunity (Dicle et al., 1988). Payson and Rosen (1991) reported that U.S. anti-discrimination laws have been particularly problematic for Japanese organizations. It attracted the media's attention around 1991 when the Employment and Housing Subcommittee on Government Operations held three hearings that investigated the compliance of Japanese-owned companies with EEOC guidelines (Goldberg, 1992). Chairman of the committee said in the opening, "I think we are opening up an ugly chapter in U.S.-Japanese relationships" (Winski, 1993b, p. 16).

#### Japanese Social Background

Japanese managers are ill prepared to deal with female workers and a diverse work force (Moffat, 1990). As William Carmell, an expert on human resources law (Bob, 1990) in the United States says,

The Japanese have difficulty implementing human resources practices because generally they don't have the opportunity, prior to their assignment in the United States, to learn the impact of American employment law on daily human resources issues. (p. 40).

Such concepts as equal employment opportunity, women's rights and affirmative action are alien to the Japanese community (Kearney, 1992).

#### Racial Issue

There are ethnic minorities in Japan, such as the Ainu, Koreans, and recent immigrant workers. Though they are not distinguished by ethnicity, the Burakumin, village people, are a group of people who has been discriminated against since the 17th century. However, too many Japanese people accept the myth of homogeneity without realizing that diversity still exists in Japan (Kearney, 1992). They often use homogeneity as an explanation of their superiority. They regard racial homogeneity as a strength and America's diversity as a weakness (Treece, 1986; 1988). Robert (1988) argued that Japanese companies purposely locate their facilities away from areas with minority populations. Though they denied this criticism, it is a fact that only after learning that it might be offensive did Nomura Securities Co. rewrite a brochure promoting investment in Oregon because of its small minority population (Treece, 1988).

#### Gender Issue

Japanese women did not gain suffrage as a result of their own

efforts, but, ironically, were emancipated by American Occupation forces. In 1985, the Japanese government passed the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL), which went into effect the following year. It was a failure, because it has no penalties for violators. In a survey, 30% answered that the EEOL had resulted in changes at the workplace, while 40% answered that there was no change at all (Philip, 1992). So, discrimination against women in the work force is still common in Japan (Katzenstein, 1991):

While men pursue careers and can rise to top of Japan's corporations, women by and large are barred from professional positions. Instead, most Japanese women become office ladies, who pour tea, answer the phone, do clerical work and look pretty. Although many companies force their unmarried female employees to live with their parents, by age 26 or so women are expected to have found a husband and left the full-time work force for a while. (p. 100)

## U.S. Social Background

### Anti-discrimination Regulations

If the Japanese companies came to the U.S. with this kind of social philosophy, it is no wonder that they have a problem in the U.S. where there are diverse people and strict anti-discrimination regulations. Though the U.S. has a long history of discrimination, there has been a serious committed effort to stop the discrimination. In one form, these efforts crystallized as anti-discrimination regulations represented by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act enacted in 1964. The act made it unlawful (Weatherspoon, 1985),

(1) to fail or refuse to hire or discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect

to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; or

(2) to limit, segregate, or classify his employees or applicants for employment in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or other otherwise adversary affect his status as employee, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (p. 14).

Among those regulations, Affirmative Action has a significant meaning, because it aims not only to stop the discrimination but also compensate for past discrimination. The company is classified within the following two criteria has to implement the plan, though many other companies are implementing the plan voluntarily: (1) Contractors and subcontractors having 50 or more employees and \$50,000 in contracts (Weatherspoon, 1895, p. 23), and (2) Companies against which discrimination case was brought up to the court and upon which remedies were imposed (Sakai, 1991). This is a controversial policy. Members of the majority may feel that they are victims of "reverse discrimination," in which they are being penalized for the wrongs of earlier generations (Kornblum, 1991, p. 409). Conservatives bitterly oppose affirmative action, whereas liberals feel that it is necessary if our society is to undo the effects of past discrimination (Kornblum, 1991). The nature of controversy is recapitulated in the following discussion between Nathan Glazer and Ronald Takaki (Takaki, 1987):

Takaki: Equality of individuals was unlikely to occur in a society of unequal groups. Structures of inequality such as poverty, inferior education, occupational stratification, and inner-city ghettos required the government to act affirmatively and to promote opportunities for racial minorities based on

group rights. The ideas of individualism and meritocracy actually reinforced the reality of racial inequality, for they in effect blamed minorities themselves for their impoverished conditions.

Glazer: The state should only outlaw racial discrimination. No longer subject to discrimination, racial minorities would be able to follow the path of European immigrants and their offspring and advance themselves as individuals into the mainstream of American society. Treated as individual rather than as a member of a group, everyone would be judged according to merit. The law guaranteed to everyone the promise of America: equality of opportunity. (p.11)

### Diversity Management

The term diversity is becoming popular among management people in the U.S. (Freeman, 1994; Smith & Soeder, 1994). There are three major incentives for this trend:

1. Largely, thanks to the affirmative action program, the once homogeneous workplace of white males are becoming gender and ethnically diverse with more women and more racial minorities. However, some companies are successful in hiring minority members, but not in promoting and retaining them. Thus the need has arose to effectively deal with this diverse body of employees inside the company (Castelli, 1990; Gerber, 1990; Thomas, 1990; Tucker & Thompson, 1990; Whalen, 1991).

2. Looking into the future, the U.S. work force is getting more and more racially and ethnically diverse. According to demographic estimates by Hudson Institute Inc., in the year 2000, white males will constitute only 15% of the net additions to labor force between 1985 and 2000 (Johnston & Packer, 1987). It will be impera-

tive for the company to be able to attract and retain a diverse work force and get the most out of it to survive (Belfry & Schmidt, 1988/1989; Geber, 1990; Gordon, 1992; Haight, 1990; Jackson, LaFasto, Schultz, & Kelly, 1993; Tucker & Thompson, 1990).

3. Many people have started to think about diversity as an advantage (Belfry & Schmidt, 1988/1989; Castelli, 1990; Caudron, 1992; Greenwald, 1994; Jackson et al., 1993; Jenner, 1994; Tucker & Thompson, 1990). With diverse workers, they can come up with better ideas and can serve and satisfy diverse customers. This is necessary especially for multinational corporations operating in a variety of international markets (Gordon, 1992).

#### History of Anti-Japanese Sentiment in the U.S.

It has to be noted that this country has a history of discriminating against the Japanese. Since the Japanese population was visible in West coast, the anti-Japanese feeling prevailed in the area. By the early 1900s, the anti-Japanese campaign was in full swing, and demands were being made to exclude Japanese immigrants (Healey, 1995). There was an attempt to exclude Japanese children from schools in San Francisco in 1905. The Japanese government was opposed to this movement and this resulted in the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907. By this agreement, the Japanese government agreed not to issue passports to "laborers" (Aguirre & Turner, 1995, p. 166). Finally, in 1924, immigration from Japan as well as other Asian countries was banned completely by the National Origin Act known as

the Oriental Exclusion Act (Nishi, 1995).

Also, in the U.S., many people of color were not allowed to get citizenship. In 1922, a Japanese, Ozawa brought the issue to the court and the court ruled that: Japanese aliens, not being of the "white" race or African background, were ineligible for citizenship (Nishi, 1995, p. 102). In accordance with this decision, Japanese were not allowed to own land. It was an attempt to damage Japanese because the main industry of Japanese in the U.S. in those time was agriculture. These exclusive laws were not lifted till 1952.

During World War II, about 112,000 Japanese, regardless of their citizenship status, living in West Coast were relocated to internment camps. This was a consequence of discrimination because neither German nor Italian had this experience (Fairly, 1995). The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment Of Civilians was formed later to investigate this incident and concluded that "race prejudice, war hysteria, and failure of political leadership" not "military necessity," were the causes of the "grave injustice done to Americans and resident aliens of Japanese ancestry who, without individual review or any probative evidence against them, were excluded, removed and detained by the United States during World War II" (Nishi, 1995, p. 107).

Recently, economic competition between Japan and the United States is provoking "Japan bashing," and one of the consequence of that is increased hate crime against people of Japanese background

in the U.S. (Nishi, 1995, p. 108).

### Need to Adapt

Japanese managers in the United States face a completely different situation: a heterogeneous population, greater acceptance of women and minorities in the work force, and far stricter law on discrimination (Bob, 1990). In addition to the change in the demographic environment and legal requirements, there are some external pressures which compel Japanese companies to modify their management practices. Although American companies have also been guilty of discrimination, U.S. governmental agencies have been more inclined to protect the interests of minorities when foreign companies are involved than they might be in situations involving domestic companies (Cole & Deskins, 1988; Kearney, 1992). Also, the research revealed that almost two-third of Americans say that their views of Japanese direct investment are somewhat or very different from those they hold toward other foreign investors (Bob, 1990).

Japanese companies doing business in the United States have had to learn to accommodate many of their customary practices to the mores and laws of American society, not the least of which are U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity laws and standards (Keyser, 1993). According to the same source, Japanese companies are becoming well aware of the need to modify their practices. In 1989, Keidanren (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations) established the Council for Better Corporate Citizenship (CBCC) in recognition of how Japan-



ese ignorance of local business practices and social values may adversely affect the climate for U.S.-Japan economic corporations. As part of its program, CBCC attempts to educate its 350 member companies about minorities and issues important to them, inviting all speakers of all races to speak to corporate representatives. CBCC also encourages companies to give special consideration to minority hiring and promotions (Keyser, 1993).

#### Contrasting Japanese and U.S. Management

Contrasting Japanese management style with the American management style had to be provided as a basic frame work for this research. There is a large amount of literature which focused on this topic. There are two motivations for this trend. One is the global economy: The company's location is not limited to the original country anymore. More and more companies are now locating their offices or plants in foreign countries. Often the culture of the company and the culture of local employees clash. This environment demands study of various management styles to eliminate some of the barriers caused by misunderstanding or lack of understanding among each culture. The other is Japanese economic achievement. The "Made in Japan" label used to be a sign of cheap and bad products some 30 years ago. However, now, it's a sign of high quality products. We can find Japanese products virtually every place in the world. If you go to New York City and look around the illuminated advertisement boards, you'll find that Japanese company names dominate in

this area. This motivates people to study the secrets of Japanese success. There are many factors that explain Japanese economic achievement, such as the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, Japanese didn't have to spend so much money on maintaining a large army or security force like most of other countries, and the strong relationship between business and government (Munchus, 1993). Some find the answer in their management style or corporate culture in Japan, and some find the answer in Japanese approach to quality management and union system (Ebrahimpour & Cullen, 1993; Rogers, 1993).

Here I will summarize only the basics to provide a context for the following discussion. To fully explain this topic requires another entire thesis, those who are interested in this topic can find an unlimited number of good materials.

Table 1 summarizes and contrasts practice in typical Japanese organizations and typical American organizations (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1992; Ouchi, 1981; Ouchi & Jeager, 1978; Rogers, 1993). Though this way of presenting data has a problem of over-simplification, and there are lots of Japanese or American organizations which don't fit in this model in every sense, it will provide us a useful framework of analysis (Ouchi, 1981).

The theme of individualism in the United States versus collectivism in Japan is readily apparent (Alston, 1982; Hellriegel & Slocum, 1992). There are good proverbs which illustrate this difference. In Japan, we are brought up being told, "The nail that sticks out will get hit," and "He who knows most speaks least."

Table 1  
Contrasting Japanese and American Management

	Japanese Organization	American Organization
Employment	Long term (Life-time employment), stable, secure	Short term, unstable, insecure
Promotion & Pay	Slow promotion, paid according to base up, less distinctive pay scale	Rapid promotion, paid according to individual's contribution, competitive pay scale
Labor-management relationship	Paternalistic, harmonious, management shows concern for personal life and family, worker shows loyalty	Contractual, adversarial
Work responsibility	Collective, coordinate with other departments, team-work-oriented, generalist-oriented, transferring across and job rotation is common, consensual, bottom-up decision making	Individual, independent and segmented from other specialized assignments, individual, top-down decision making
Relationship with co-workers	Cooperative, nature friendship	Relatively competitive

In the U.S., people say "A wheel that squeaks gets the most oil."

James Hodgson (1978), former U.S. ambassador to Japan, explains this basic difference between Japanese and U.S. societies:

In American life, the individual strives to stand out. The

Japanese citizen, however, seeks to fit in. And fit in he does--into his family, his schools, his company, his union, his nation. Japan is a nation where the parts fit. (p. 3)

Another big difference between Japanese and American culture is the union system. Japanese have enterprise unions as opposed to industry unions in the United States (Brannen, 1991). The essential characteristic of the enterprise union is that its very existence depends upon the survival and growth of the firm (Nagandhi et al., 1985). There are three major labor structural differences due to this different union system; wage system, job categorization, and labor management relationship (Barannen, 1991; Sakoh, 1990; Shenkar, 1988).

American unions demand wage parity whereas Japanese are concerned with base-up or percentage wage increases. American unions are generally organized on an industrial or occupational basis and emphasize the systematic categorization of jobs, whereas Japanese company unions preclude this type of categorical rigidity and favor a flexible job transfer system within the company (Brannen, 1991). Also, there is no strict distinction between blue- and white-collar workers. Japanese are members of the same union up through the rank of chief supervisor (Brannen, 1991).

Another difference is an approach to quality management. Japanese strives for the zero defect. They try to eliminate all the defects in every stage before their product are distributed to the market. Whereas until recently, most of U.S. manufacturers are concerned with short-term profit, and defects are something that should

be corrected after inspection or returned from the customer (Ebrahimpour & Cullen, 1993). Now many large American corporations are heading toward Japanese way of "Total Quality Control (TQC)" management (Young, 1992). TQC is define as "organized improvement activities involving everyone in a company--managers and workers--in a totally integrated effort toward satisfying such cross-functional goals as quality, cost, scheduling, manpower development, and new product development (Imai, 1986, p. xxv). To successfully implement the TQC, the company needs contribution from every worker. Each one of them are responsible for the quality of all aspects of their work (Fischetti, 1987). Sometimes, it also requires team efforts. In another words, TQC is a management system that fits the Japanese corporate culture of collective emphasis.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### Theoretical Perspective

The Naturalistic perspective offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) informed the formulation of this research. While, conventional sociological research is done in a certain way, that is; state an hypothesis which is constituted of independent variable and dependent variable, convert these variables to a measurable concept, collect data, test the relationship between these variables, and prove whether the hypothesis is true or not. This kind of method is based on a positivistic view. Positivists assume the world is regulated by laws that is detectable by human beings. I don't believe this idea. Rather, I believe that there is no reality that is true for all people anytime, and anywhere. Everything in this world is an ongoing process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) presented the alternative to the positivistic idea, and they call it naturalistic viewpoint. My research has been conducted from this viewpoint.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) contrasted positivistic and naturalist view. To summarize, positivists believe that reality consists of independent variables which can be separated and detected by human beings. So, we can separate causes and effects and establish causal linkage. Also, we can separate knower and known. It is possible to be totally objective by not being bound by any value.

Finally the purpose of study is to make generalizations which can be applied to any settings without being constrained by time and context.

On the other hand, naturalists believe everything in the universe is in a state of mutual shaping interacting with each other. Thus, it is impossible to separate one from the whole. The event should be studied only holistically, and it is impossible to separate cause and effect, needless to say, to establish a causal linkage. Also, knower and known are interacting and it is impossible to separate. Everyone has his/her unique stand point so it is impossible to be free from any value or being objective. Finally, the purpose of study for naturalists is not to make generalizations, but to acquire a better understanding of the ongoing events by investigating individual cases.

Based on this idea, my research will not try to prove an hypothesis; rather it will explore and understand the process which is occurring right now. So the use of acculturation theory is not to prove causality but to explore. Acculturation is a process which is continuously occurring, and there may be many factors related to this process. I will try to investigate these factors and try to understand the acculturation process better.

In order to accomplish this goal, I conducted in-depth, unstructured, face-to-face interviews with workers in two Japanese-owned companies in the Midwestern region. Neither questionnaire, nor structured interviews is adequate for my research because they

confine you to a certain topic and don't allow new ideas to come in. My purpose was not to confirm preexisting ideas but to facilitate understanding about the topic by obtaining as much information and opinions as possible that the interviewees could offer. So it is important that the participants feel free to talk about anything, and that I was not confined to ask questions which were not in my mind before the interview. This interactive style allowed me more flexibility to respond and even develop a new topic while conducting the interviews, rather than just to reject and accept preexisting assumptions. A naturalist selects oneself as an instrument of research "because it would be virtually impossible to devise a priori a nonhuman instrument with sufficient adaptability to encompass and adjust to the variety of realities that will be encountered" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39).

However, this interactive style has some drawbacks as well as advantages. The fact that I am a Japanese may influence their responses. One possibility is that they may feel hesitant to speak some comments, especially negative ones, on Japanese. Also, they may feel suspicious about me as a representative of the company. However, being an Asian and a foreigner, not being white nor black may make them feel relatively comfortable about speaking about racial issues.

I chose two companies which are different in their size and the products they manufacture. I interviewed 16 workers of various backgrounds and positions. I tried to have maximum variation, be-



cause my purpose was not to make generalizations. In naturalistic investigations, the purpose of sampling will most often be to include as much information as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Some may question the reliability and significance of this research. But, again, Naturalists don't believe in a single, tangible reality. We believe that reality is multiple. So generalization has no significance to us, but transferability does (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the naturalist, a research study is meaningful if it promotes understanding (*verstehen*) and provides a base for future research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) states, "(i)t is the responsibility of the inquirer to provide a sufficient base to permit a person contemplating application in another receiving setting to make the needed comparisons of similarity" (p. 359). So I will provide thick description of my case studies so that a future researcher can decide whether my cases are applicable to his/her study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the reliability of the content of the interviews, I recorded interviews with permission of the interviewees, and later I made transcriptions. The transcript were verified by another reader who listened to the interviews and edited as they listened.

### Subject Selection

I conducted interviews in two Japanese-owned companies in a medium sized city in the Midwestern region. I selected this site, because a variety of products are manufactured at this location by various companies.

The land on which the companies are situated was purchased by the city in 1969, and since then as a part of city's development plan, there have been aggressive efforts to attract foreign companies. A nonprofit organization was founded in 1971 to achieve this goal. This organization played and has been playing a major role in assisting Japanese companies to do business here. They give them advice as to the local employment pool, how to build a good relationship with local residents and so on.

I purposefully chose two Japanese companies that are different in size, and in the types of products they make to maximize the variation. Company A produces confectionaries and foods and has approximately 100 employees. Company B produces automobile parts, and they have approximately 800 employees, including temporary staff.

In each company, I interviewed seven to nine persons of different positions and different backgrounds. First, I interviewed a human resource personnel officer to get information on things that are in any way related to dealing with a diverse work force. Second, I interviewed a Japanese manager. Usually, Japanese managers are the only people in the company who can compare operations in Japan and the United States, and can give a unique perspective. Finally, I interviewed 5-7 workers from a variety of positions, gender, and ethnic backgrounds. To decide upon participants, I gave the following information to a person who assisted me in arranging the interviews and I left the process of picking participants to

him/her. I need upper-level managers (preferably at least one Japanese national), a Personnel director (who is specially in charge of the Affirmative Action Plan and/or Diversity Program if you have one), and a variety of participant workers (5-7) from different levels, gender, and ethnic backgrounds.

### Interview Setting

Interviews were conducted in the company, and each interview lasted about 20-50 minutes. I tried to let the respondents talk about what they wanted to talk about first. I valued the flow of conversation rather than jumping into the topic that I was pursuing. This method allowed me to discover what they thought was important or what means a lot to them rather than what I thought was important. Then, at the end, if the topic that I wanted to cover, that is, the things that are related to dealing with a diverse work force was not mentioned, I asked them questions. The following section is mainly based on the data collected in this way and some documents that I obtained from these two companies. For the purpose of confidentiality, all names used are fictitious.

## CHAPTER IV

### CASE STUDY

#### Company A

##### Company Profile

Company A was founded in 1979, fifteen years before the time of the interviews. Company A is a division of the parent company in Japan. The parent company was established in 1948 by "Mr. T" who is its present president. It began with the production of a single food item and later expanded to other food products.

Company A has its plant in a medium-sized mid-western city and a sales office in a major midwestern metropolitan area. The president of Company A is the same as the parent company in Japan. The vice-president who is the son of the president is located in the city mentioned above.

There are two plants: plant 1 and 2. In plant 1, there are about 60-70 people working. In plant 2, there are approximately 20 people working to manufacture confectionary items. There are basically 4 Japanese in the plant, a coordinator who is in charge of importing and exporting, two technicians who are experts on machine operations and a translator who is locally employed. The other three Japanese are sent from Japan on a working visa status. Limited to the plant, there are 90-100 people working as a total. There are

temporaries working everyday. The number of temporaries varies from one to half a dozen. Females are more than 50% of the work force. According to one of the workers interviewed, there are 14-17 African Americans employed. Among six supervisors, one is a black male, one is a black female, and the rest are white males.

### Interview Setting

Interviews were conducted on August 17, 1994 in the office area adjacent to the plant. The first interview was with a company personnel administrator and others were in the conference room. Each interview took about 20 to 45 minutes. I began at 9 am and finished at 4 pm with the 9 interviews with about a 30 minutes lunch break.

### Company Administrator

I was able to obtain an interview with a middle-level manager in the personnel department. The following are basically based on the interview with this respondent who was a caucasian and items found in the employee handbook.

### Affirmative Action Program

Company A is not required to have an Affirmative Action Plan by law, because they don't have any government contracts. Though they don't have a written affirmative action plan, s/he thinks that they practice that at heart.

We don't have a written Affirmative Action [Plan], but I think that we practice affirmative action, whether we have a formal program or not. We are not required to have [an affirmative action plan], because we don't have any government contracts. Affirmative action says you got to follow certain criteria. And we don't have to. We don't meet the criteria that have to have a formal program, so, you have an informal program. It means that you go out and you hire the best candidate for the job. Even EEOC you are supposed to be able to hire the best. You are not supposed to treat women differently because of sex, age, or race. And I think we practice that. We have minorities working for us. Because of the work force, we have a lot of females, because we think they probably can do the work better. They're more ambidextrous with their hands. It is a light product, but you use your hands. They've got to be quite flexible.

Also, they include "Equal Employment Opprtunity" policy in their employee handbook:

The policy of [Company A] is to provide equal employment opportunity to all applicants and employees without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, height, weight, ethnic origin, marital status, non-disqualifying disability, and other protected characteristics, and to base decisions on employment so as to further the principle of equal employment opportunity.

Matters dealing with employment, such as compensation, benefits, transfers, promotions, layoffs, training, or social and recreational programs, will be administered within the framework of the Company's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy.

Equal opportunity employment policies, personnel procedures, and record keeping requirements will be maintained to Federal and State Standards.

[Company A] will make reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with known disabilities unless doing so would result in an undue hardship. This policy governs all aspect of employment including selection, job assignment, compensation, discipline, discharge, and access to benefits and training.

### Hiring

One thing s/he emphasized was that their work force is very

stable. They don't have a lot of people who terminate their employment. So, there is not a lot of hiring. If they need extra help, they hire temporaries, like most of the other companies in this area. S/He explained;

That fills the gap because we are kind of up and down. We may get a huge order, and we might need extra people, so we will hire temporary people. And that allows you to bring them in on the spur of the moment, [have them] work and when they finish, and you don't need them, they can go back to the agency where they came from. Whereas if you hire full-time people, what do you do with them after the business drops (decreases)? Hiring a temporary means you just hire for the period of time that you need them, and when you don't need them, they go back to the agency where they came, whereas if you had a permanent person, they'd still be on the payroll, and you really don't have enough work for them, so, you'd have to lay them off or terminate [them]. And that you really don't want to do.

If they needed a permanent person, they would give first preference to a temporary person. If they are hired for a permanent position, employees are considered to be in a probationary period for the first 45 calendar days of active employment. During this period, performance, ability, attitude and other items will be evaluated and reviewed with the employee. After the probationary period is completed, the employee will become a full time regular employee and eligible for Company benefits.

### Promoting

They have job categories classified as one, two, and three. Class one includes those with the highest skill to the class three with the lowest. Within the categories, they get pay raises after 45 days, 1 year, 2 years, and 3 years of employment. To get from

one level to another level, they have job bids. Openings will be posted. People who are not at that class level will have a chance to bid on it. And it goes to the most senior person who has the ability to perform it.

### Others

Other things which s/he stressed were that they don't have a union, and that employees participate in many activities, such as a picnic, the Corporate Olympics, and a Christmas service award banquet. S/He repeated that the Japanese are very respectful and this company is very generous to the community. Also, s/he said the objective of this company is to be the best company for people to work for regardless of who they are: Japanese or American.

Ralph:

I think that even though we are Japanese-owned, we are still a group of people, regardless of race, working together to make up a product that can be used by lots of people. I think he [the president] is open to suggestions, open to things that will make us a better company, not a better Japanese company, not a better American company, but a better company for people to work for.

### American Employees

Table 2 shows the participants information.

The personnel representative (Caucasian) was relaxed enough to express and mention his/her personal opinions. So some parts of his/her interview will also be incorporated into the following section.



Table 2  
List of Participants From Company A

Participants*	Ethnicity
Robert	Caucasian
Michele	Caucasian
Clarence	Caucasian
Kathy	Caucasian
Glenn	African American
Jack	African American
Shirley	Caucasian

\*Participants' names are fictitious.

#### Overall Atmosphere

All of the associates interviewed are happy working for Company A. They don't have real complaints, though they have some minor problems such as the communication gap. They are happy because the work at Company A is not so demanding, and the size of the company is small. There are less than 100 employees, so everybody knows each other and they have a close-knit family type atmosphere.

Jack:

Yeah, the company's atmosphere's really good, relaxed. Yeah, I'm really glad when I come to work. I don't get real stressed out. In smaller companies, it's usually close knit. There is really no conflict at all. Not that I've seen at least. That depends how big the company is. I imagine if there was a big Japanese company, maybe like a big American company where you didn't feel you could talk to the higher-ups [the staff in higher positions].

Kathy:

The atmosphere is calm, is relaxed. The other [American] company, the amount time I did work there, it was push, push, push, all the time always pushing which I know [is important in] any production, but here they don't push so much. I've heard just talking [with people from] the factories [that] quite a number of Japanese are very strict, rigid, almost military. I don't know; that's just what I've heard, so, like I said, I don't know. But I've heard that also, they are very hard people to work with and work for, but not in this instance and not in this building. It's rather hard for me to imagine that, I guess. And the people are just talking. I've known that maybe they have to be more strict in a bigger factory or bigger environment. Nippondenso, they are very big. And I heard they are very very strict.

Overall the company seems to be successful in satisfying workers to the extent that Jack started to feel loyalty to the company.

Jack:

The Japanese are really loyal to their company. In fact, I've noticed that instead of saying, I work for this company, or referring to this company, they'll say my company, or we founded it. I am starting look at it like that, like it's my company, too. Because I spend a lot of time here.

Another thing is that the management of this company is done in large part by Americans. They have three Japanese technicians who work with assembly line workers, however, as far as the management is concerned, they don't have much contact with Japanese upper level management. This way seems to be working good by eliminating unnecessary pressure or conflict which is likely to be caused by contact with Japanese management. For the Workers at Company A, the fact that this company is owned by Japanese is not a concern.

Glenn:

I don't think just Japanese. It's just [Company A]. Because who I work with, it's all American, I will see a Japanese every once in a while, in the front side of the company, in the plant. I see Keiji every once in a while, or Marty, and

[I see them] when we go out and play sports. I see Tom. I play ball with him. I don't think of this company as Japanese. I don't feel that.

Michelle:

In this company we do not deal with the Japanese as much as I feel other companies do. We are more American. And the Japanese are higher. They let us work among ourselves. And just more or less ideas for a help if we need it. Which makes it very convenient, for us very easy. Makes us very comfortable.

### Advantages

All the participants were satisfied with working for this company, because the management seems to be very concerned about workers and their families. By being perceived as supportive and generous, the management seems to be successful in getting the commitment and loyalty of workers. They do this by providing them with good benefits, bonus, stable employment, and so on. They feel they are fairly treated.

Shirley:

Another one I thought of was the fact that, they are pretty family-oriented, and take care of the families. They do. They take care of us and our families. If we have a problem, they're concerned. My mother recently had a knee replacement, and I had to ask for a couple days off while she had her surgery. And, they were very concerned about her. And I thought that they are very good to our family. The only thing that I can say (and nobody's put me up to this) is that I just feel that I am very fairly treated here in every way. They are good to me, and when I have a problem, they help me with that problem.

Glenn:

Ever since I've been hired in, they've been treating me pretty good. And usually you have to work so long to get vacations, to get a raise. Not even a year [after] I come in here, they give me raises, they give me vacations, they let me partici-

pate in the programs, and I like that. I've never had this at other companies. The Japanese company has helped me a lot. From what I see, the Japanese work very hard to please. They help the employees. They are happy. They enjoyed their Christmas bonus. The employees I've talked with, they say, they haven't never received a Christmas bonus or nothing like that. But last year, they received a nice lump sum, and they were surprised. But I look at that as encouragement. They want to encourage the employees: They are doing a good job and [they should] keep up the good work. Everyone in the plant received the bonus.

Robert:

I think they are family oriented, and they are loyal. They don't see me as loyal as them, but they do treat you like a family. I think they are very very concerned about their employees, and would like to probably do more for them. And I've seen the Japanese are more giving than Americans. They are kinder at heart. Americans, they are more, I would say, negative. The Japanese are looking in a positive sense. If you give, then hopefully you will receive as well, and the same kind of thing working back and forth. What I am trying to say is: The way they work with me is I organize outside the company and work a lot with the Japanese through a health program. So they think that the more they give to the health program, the healthier the employees are, they're more likely to have less absenteeism, sickness, stuff like that.

Also management and workers have harmonious relationship, and much of it seems to do with the fact that this plant is non-union. Ralph, the personnel manager, explains that this company has a harmonious relationship, because this is a non-union plant and this is a small plant.

Ralph:

I think that a lot of it is because it's a non-union plant. It's a small plant and most people know one another. When you get 500 to 600, you don't know the person that works around the corner. Here everybody knows if you get sick. as soon as you [get sick, people are gonna say], How's Jun? Oh, boy, I don't know, she's got the measles; she's gonna be off for two weeks. [In a smaller company], you get a little bit more caring. In a large group there's just too many people. It's just hard to know everybody. But in a smaller group, when

something happens to somebody, you hear about it. When somebody's wife is going to the doctor, somebody having a toothache, you hear about it.

In any kind of group setting where you've got a large number of people, there is a problem there. But I think that most people here come to depend upon one another and know one another. And it's like a family. And if you are born here, and if you live the majority of your life here, you live with family; you're close. Working here in the smaller company throws you closer together, and families usually stay together. [Company A] being small, probably stays together.

This is the smallest company I worked for. I worked for a company with 4,000 and knew just a very few people. I could walk down the street, run into 50 of them and not even know who they were. But if I were to run into anybody here, I'd pretty well know it. Even though I've been here only three months, I've gone around and met almost every person, shook their hands and said hello, and if I see them in a store, I may not remember their name right now, but I'll recognize their face. And I always speak to them.

There are no distinctive barriers which exist in many union plants in the U.S. Unlike other American companies, they see upper management coming to the floor, and talking to workers. The management seems to be willing to listen to workers. And the open door policy seems to be working. As Shirley mentioned, "if we have a problem, we can talk to them, just like I am talking to you."

Five workers mentioned about the union. They all agreed that this company doesn't need a union. Ralph, the Personnel manager, shares the same idea with these five workers.

Shirley:

We don't have a union. We don't need one. We just don't need anything like that because they do keep in contact with us, and they do recognize what we need.

Jack:

I don't see any trouble here. And as far as having the union,

I really don't want one here. We get paid average wages, and we get the raises every year, so I don't [want a union].

Glenn:

Really, I experienced a union in Chicago, and the union, they wasn't doing anything for us, so we decided we didn't need the union, because we work better without them. We got what we need, what the employees demanded from the employer. We got that without the union. So we probably don't need a union. And when I come here, they say, it's not a union here. And it don't bother me about the union. Because I feel what we have, what we're getting is just fine. And a lot of things that we have received usually take a union to help it go through. But our company, to me, is personally O.K.

Clarence:

Well, when I think of advantages, well, in my ways, they don't like unions. I don't like unions. They feel that if you do right with a company, then they'll take care of you. And my Dad even said that when he went to [a major U.S. food company in the city], even though that was a union company. But he's always felt, do your best and the company will take care of you. And I've always felt that [Company A] is taking care of me, even when, as bad as things were, they always made means that I had a pay check every week.

Michele:

I do not believe in unions. I think a company that is growing should not be inhibited by having a union. because it permits the workers so they can't do the things the company needs to have them do. If a project goes down, then you could move them wherever you need to. Where if you have a union, it would be more or less laid the person off.

Ralph:

In 15 years, there have been two [union] movements. As I understand it, both of them were shot down, meaning that people did not want them. I think that the people speak when they vote them out. As long as people are treated fairly and nicely and still have to work, [they] don't need a union. And I think it's been proven at least twice here.

Other advantages they talked about are; to be able to meet with and learn from people of a different culture, outside activi-

ties, and cleanliness, long-term focus and no lay-off, and emphasis on quality.

Associates appreciate working with and being able to meet with people of a different culture, and they seemed to be enjoying the diversity inside the company. The presence of Japanese staff was not considered as a minus, but as an advantage. Shirley said one of the advantages of working for a Japanese company is to be able to learn from different cultures.

There are many kinds of outside activities such as a Christmas party, company picnic, corporate cup, and so on. It seems to help promote team work and enhancing communications, especially with the Japanese.

Shirley:

We have picnics, and we have a bowling night. Oh, yes, we do a lot of things together. Corporate Cup is coming soon, and we'll participate. We'll go out and have a tug-of-war [a game] together. I don't know if any of them are going to walk the 3-mile [race] this year or not, but last year, we walked together, and some of them ran together and play volleyball together.

Glenn:

They have a Christmas party. They have Corporate Cup. That's with all the companies participating in different sports. I'm able to participate in programs like volley ball, running, biking, and stuff like that. Good exercise. Here they do things with their employees. They give employees activities. I like that because it's helpful to me. It helps me exercise, helps me feel better about myself, participate in different activities. I like it.

Robert:

I have outside activities with a lot of Japanese personnel here, too, so, I think we open up communications that way. I think it's a lot easier, because at work they are work-

oriented, but when they go out to play, they are more open, and so I think it makes it easier for me. I have that opportunity.

Shirley said that not only are the plants clean, but also people's minds are clean in this company. To keep the place clean may have something to do with people's attitude.

Shirley:

Everything is always clean. Sometimes, when you get into certain factories, you get to where the language is rough, and the people are rough, and ours isn't. It's not only clean in appearance, but our people have clean minds. That's what I enjoy. Because that is one thing that the Japanese don't put up with. That's what I enjoy.

Company A strives not to lay off workers, and offer stable jobs. From past experience, when they had a slow time, they tried very hard not to lay off workers and they survived. Workers have seen this company's efforts and really appreciate it.

Kathy:

I just wanted a steady job, and that was one thing that did impress me in my interview. They said they would not lay us off, but if they did lay us off, it would be very short term and we would be right back. And they would do their very best to keep us working because they knew we needed the income. That quite impressed me.

Glenn:

To me, there is nothing bad, because they have been helping me. And they give me work, and they don't lay off. From what I hear, they don't lay you off, only if you get fired. And I like that because they keep me working.

Clerance put it in a little bit different way and said the Japanese think of the long range.

Clerance:

There is an article in the paper, Detroit News, about Company



A, just recently. And it made mention about the period of time that Company A has been here in the country and trying to get into the market, and just like the Japanese car industry, how they slowly progressed and they went through their slow times, or whatever, bad times, and they persevered. And that's the one thing the Japanese have--they persevere. Now, even the days that we at [Company A], we try to make our way, I think, in many ways we should have been shut down, or maybe even closed the doors. That's my outlook. But, the difference was they keep working. They keep trying, and a few companies that I've been with, they don't think of the long range, [the long] term. They [the Japanese] think of the long term. That's a lot of advantages, where compared to American company, their outlook of the future is dimmer. By dimmer, I mean, they don't look at a long range.

The Japanese are very concerned about quality. And this quality management seems to be accepted and understood. Jack dismissed the importance of quality.

Jack:

They are more sticklers on the quality, as far as quality of the product going out. They more into the quality control. They are real sticklers in their Q.C. [quality control]. That's a difference I have noticed. I like that too, because when I make something, I want it to be good enough to where, if I walked out there into a store and seen it, I would want to buy it. There's some things you see out there, and [you feel] like, I wouldn't buy that. It don't look like it's put together well, or it don't look like it's made right.

Finally, unlike Company B, which I will mention later, workers at Company A seems to be satisfied with the pay scale. As Shirley said, "we have never been mistreated in any way; we are just not. They try to see that our wages are in sync [synchronized] with everything else.

#### Disadvantages

Communication is certainly a disadvantage, though to different

degrees depending on persons. Some don't see any trouble in this area; others see the communication gap as a possible cause for misunderstanding and mistrust. However, both sides seems to be respectful in this matter.

Shirley:

I don't feel that it's any different than working for the American companies. As far as communicating, sometimes we have trouble. We have to write notes to one another, but, no, I don't really find it any different.

Robert:

Some things could be better communication wise. I think, we have problems understanding each other. They know a little English. Communicating things in depth and in a detail is very hard--specific words that they don't know, generalizations, and stuff like that. And, they can be stubborn. I think that stubbornness comes out of the communication [problems]. When you try to discuss something at length, then I think they get lost in the transaction [translation] somehow, and they are fearful of being taken advantage of. The American might take advantage of them. Maybe [they are fearful of] being lied to. I don't think that's the case. But I think it's fair. And so that puts up walls, barriers. I think communication is a big key and working together. They misinterpret also, meaning that when you communicate with each other, you think that they understand what you trying to say, but they didn't get a full understanding; they just got a part of it. Then they come back, and what you were trying to say is tainted a little bit. Then they feel like they are being lied to. And you, then you feel that mistrust or something like that. That's the disadvantage of the communication part--that [miscommunication] can happen so fast, so easily that you can become mistrusted, and then that creates bigger gaps--things that we don't need. So I think that the disadvantage is the communication.

Ralph:

I think, one problem is still the language barrier. I still have to intently listen to make certain that I don't hear something wrong. I think it is just that each side needs to work on it. Let's say, if I don't understand, I would say, I'm sorry, could you tell me again? So I think you don't have to take sides. I think both sides are respectful.

All the Japanese except for a translator/secretary who is locally employed are sent over here on working visa status. Because of that, they can't stay beyond a certain period of time. This is a disadvantage in two ways:

Jack:

One disadvantage is that you get used to working with the people, with the Japanese, and they are on visa, and they have to go back. And I get real attached to some of them, because I work with them all the time, and I talk with them, and then they gotta [have got to] go. That's the only disadvantage I see. It's like [losing] a part of your family.

Robert:

They send some Japanese that have very little English skills and some have more. Once you start breaking into that barrier, where you begin to understand each other, then they end up with their visas up, and they end up with leaving, and we get a new one in, and it's like retraining all over again. See, that's become a very [big] disadvantage when you have to constantly re-train. Now, we have a new guy in, and he is a little shy. We have to break that mold of him, help him feel comfortable with you, and then again train him to help him know how to work our communication gap out. Once you get it figured out, then all of a sudden he leaves, and a new one comes in. So there is a disadvantage.

Some feel that the Japanese are not willing to try new things, which inhibits possible success. Michele explains it is because Japanese team work doesn't allow anyone to do anything before everybody agrees; and Robert gave me a different explanation emphasizing that Japanese are rigid and afraid of failure, whereas American are more flexible in that they allow mistakes to happen and learn from mistakes.

Michele:

I heard that so many people saying, in Japan, they have team work. They all have to get together, and figure one project

out. I think that's good in one circumstance. But it also inhibits a person because if they have ideas, and you're afraid to try them, because of what your co-worker says. You might not even want to try them. So if you try and before you even discuss it with your coworkers, just to test them out, sometimes it's better. And you can bring, get to their attention. It works much better this way, why don't we do this, this way because. where the Japanese, we are not to try after no one agrees. I think it needs to be combined. Not just all team work but sometimes if you get a bunch of people together, if people says, no cannot do, they have to all agree. Sometimes, just by trying, things might work.

Robert:

I think that there is a split. I am sure they're accustomed to their ways, and the Americans are a little bit more laid back. I think the Japanese are worried about a failure. It's in the back of their mind constantly that they are not going to fail, and American are a little bit more laid back. They figure if they are going to make mistake, we will deal with it as we go along. Not that it's good to make mistakes, but that's the generalization--that we allow mistakes to happen. And the Japanese take it a little bit more personally than the Americans do. And I think that's where our conflicts begin. They're more set at, We don't make mistakes, and we're saying, We're going to make a few mistakes down the road. We have to work together on it. So I think it's really the conflict. When they get out of their work area, then they think a lot like us. They are less inhibited. They are more open-minded. They feel less pressure to. They can fail. Like we play volley ball and stuff like that, and they mess up, and no one's on them about messing up. Then they can feel relaxed about that. If they did that inside the work area, they would feel a lot of pressure that they did wrong, and [would feel] very ashamed of that. And you can tell that.

Robert also mentioned that loyalty to the company by the Japanese can sometimes be a problem, when a decision by the management needs to be examined:

Robert:

I have noticed that the Japanese working here are a lot more loyal than, I would say, Americans are. And I think that upsets them that maybe Americans are not as loyal to their company. Whether it's right or wrong, if the company says go one way, right or wrong, I believe that the Japanese people follow

that. And American people say, Well, no. I am my own person, an individual, I think I'll go and reflect about the system [analyze the problem]. [With the Japanese] you can't.

Clarence is a very enthusiastic worker and he wants Company A to be big as they are in Japan and Korea. He mentioned many things that the company can do to achieve this goal. He wants to see more team work, especially between Japanese management and American management, and more open communications. He went to work for the biggest manufacturer in the area which produces automobile parts. And he saw more team work there than in Company A.

Clarence:

Even though they are a young company, and coming into the city, they have the basics: They still work together; they have a team effort. They have teams. Here at Company A, we don't. It's more of an individual.

One of the barriers to more open communications is not the language barrier, but sometimes favoritism and brown-nosing:

Clarence:

Sometimes, there is favoritism. Sometimes there is favoritism. They favor those, and how does another worker feel when one is being favored and [they say to] the other one, Well, you're nothing. Or you try to do your best, but the fact is, you are not telling the supervisor everything that they want to know, or that they want to hear. [You are only telling them positive things to make them think everything is fine.] They call that brown-nosing here in America. But that is a big problem in many ways here.

### Discrimination

It seemed like there once was a preceding Japanese staff, who were prejudiced toward female workers when they started. However, the Japanese learned quickly that discrimination against women is

not acceptable here, and there is no such discrimination any more. More young, open minded Japanese staff are sent here, it seems like they purposefully choose them.

Kathy:

At first, sometimes, some of the Japanese men who worked up there. I don't know, but my impression, some times, I feel they don't want a woman in the higher, not higher positions, but back in the other positions. It's just my own personal feeling that I got that they would prefer the women to be away [from their offices] or out of there.

Robert:

Before, when the plant first opened up, women were in a certain area, and weren't able to come into a man's type of job (as it was classified).

But I think then they became Americanized a little bit, where they know that we have women that are running machines, and it's important for them to learn to communicate with women. And I think they learn that awful quickly. I think that the first time they got off the plane, their expectation of the woman worker would probably be a lower standard until they actually had to deal with them and find out that they are just the same.

Michele:

I've noticed the Japanese they are sending over here are more, they are younger. The attitude is different, it's like the company's picking certain Japanese to come over that they know well relate to us. They can speak very good English, and be open minded when we talked to them. Before, We felt sometimes they would not listen to our ideas as much because they seemed to be more from the old school. But younger people that are coming are more, I don't know, they listen better.

They all emphasized that now they are doing fine. As she confirmed it, Shirley who is a recent employee said;

Shirley:

I don't think they treat the men any differently than the women. I would never have thought about being male-dominated until you told me. They treat us equally. I feel, I was

amongst a lot of people who were chosen when they were getting ready to open our plant. Because our plant is fairly new. And it wasn't if you were male or if you were female [that mattered]; it was if you did the job.

They don't see discrimination by the Japanese, specifically, but there is a prejudice or discrimination in general.

Clarence:

As for racial, yes, there is a lot of racial problems in our country between blacks and whites and whatever. We have a lot of different cultures here. And there is a lot of racial problems. Here at [Company A]--sure there are some.

Jack observed that he had never been discriminated against at Company A. Rather he saw the Japanese being a minority in the U.S., and being discriminated against:

Jack:

If I did (be discriminated), I would be up [there] talking to somebody. Because that's happened all my life. That's happened to me most of my life. If I see it, I would definitely talk to somebody.

Another thing is, with me being a minority, and the Japanese being a minority here, I talk to them a lot, because, like I said, I've been through it all my life. They're just now starting to deal with it in work and outside of work. You probably notice it a lot, too. Yes, I know, I understand the situation, and if need be, I will sit and talk with them--some of the Japanese--to help them try and figure it out, or if they're having a problem, try to find a solution to it some way.

Robert commented that he had never seen the Japanese treating different ethnic groups differently. He thinks this is because of anti-discrimination regulations.

Robert:

I think that Americans are prejudiced. Japanese are a single culture though, and I think that the Americans are a [multi-] ethnic culture. Americans are a little bit more diverse.

I've never heard a Japanese say a bad thing about any other ethnic culture. Of course, probably if they were thinking bad about blacks or whites or another culture, they wouldn't express that feeling to me. They might say it to their own group. It's just like a lot of white people or black people will downsize [denigrate] each other. I'm sure the Japanese are the same. We have different varieties of people working here, and I think they treat them all equally. I've never seen them treat another ethnic group in a bad manner. I think that has to do maybe perhaps with the laws [prohibiting discrimination]. I think a lot of that has to do with the laws that are written up. I've never seen it where they are dissatisfied with [a person of] another culture.

None of them strongly express the need for an affirmative action plan. Kathy said this company has quite a mixture anyway and the management is trying to be fair to everybody regardless of one's background.

As long as one is comparing treatment of Japanese and Americans, Robert said the treatment is no different; however, the expectation maybe different: Japanese are thought to be more loyal, and Americans would be classified as lazy.

Robert:

When you ask if they treat you the same--Yes, they do because we have a same or similar job, but when it comes to them believing who's more loyal, they would probably assume that the Japanese are being more loyal than the American. Again, we are probably being classified as lazy or something.

#### Response to Media Coverage of Japanese Companies

At the end, I asked their responses to and their opinions about the media coverage of the Japanese companies in the U.S., especially, as being discriminatory. Since they didn't have those experiences here, they tried to find a cause in other areas other than



discrimination.

Kathy thinks it is not fair to label the Japanese.

I just don't know for sure. But I don't think it's fair when they say that about the Japanese people because to me, it's kind of like putting them all in one category, just like it would be putting all white people [in one category]. I don't see where they can generalize and say that one would act like all the rest. I don't think that's fair.

Shirley believe that this kind of negative coverage will be replaced with positive ones, as more people are starting to work with Japanese and have good experiences. And she thinks that if people want to write a negative story, they can do it, but often times it is not a fair story.

Shirley:

I kind of felt that they stepped on me, too, because I feel I'm a part of a Japanese company. You know, I produce the Japanese product.

I think that you are going to see that change because more and more people are beginning to work with the Japanese. And I think that most of these people who write these articles, if they want [the article] to be negative, they find someone who is negative to do [be] their resource for them. For instance, if you wanted something to say that was negative, and you had a friend, [you might say], Oh, I know somebody who works over there. And they [that friend] will give you all the [negative] information you want. But, for instance, what we are doing right now, you don't know any of us, so you really don't know what we are going to say. And I think that one on one, there is nothing negative here, and so there wouldn't be anything to write negative. I think that when they start expanding, the more people that work for the Japanese companies, [the more they will] realize that they [the Japanese] can be here and give us jobs, and treat us fairly, too.

Jack thinks Americans are scared of Japanese taking over the country. And he doesn't believe negative articles about the Japanese, since, he is having a positive experience in a Japanese com-

pany.

Jack:

I think it's because they are saying that the Japanese are going to try to take over, because the Japanese are building a lot of companies in the United States and especially in this region. But I don't see no problem in it. I really don't. I think they're just running scared. Running scared; I believe that. I read it, and I just pass it off as bad press, that's all. Because I like this company. I started working here, and I liked it, as a temporary. And I got hired in, and started meeting some of the people, especially some of the Japanese people, and then I really started liking it.

Glenn thinks nine out of ten are not discriminating. He explains there is always prejudice due to segregation in the U.S. Maybe the fact that people who have been in the U.S. for a long time, and wished to have a business, can't start their business, while a lot of foreign companies can with their support by the U.S. government is causing tension. And this is one possible cause of negative coverage.

Glenn:

Well, this is my opinion. Some people, they feel they can't have their way, and they dislike a worker, a boss, whatever. They go elsewhere and say, Well, they [the company] this; they did that. And I feel that nine times out of ten, it's not discrimination. I don't think so. It's like segregation, prejudice, a lot of that stuff. In the United States. Some people think that they are better than other people. But everybody is equal. Everybody's the same, even though my skin is a different color than yours, I don't feel no difference, of course.

When I was in Chicago, there was a feeling against people coming into the United States to start a business when the people in the United States can't. Seems like the government looked more toward the outside than inside. And my personal opinion about this is called, Take care of your home first, before you take care of somebody else's home. Seems like they neglect home and go outside home. And, see, in Chicago there's a lot of that. But anyone [outside the U.S.], they come into the

city, and the government gives them loans to start a business. I live there so many years, how come I can't? It's getting to be a big problem in there. The government will, support them, give them money to start a business. Now the people in the United States, maybe they been trying, but it's hard for them to get it. That cause a lot of tension. It's a possible cause of negative comments about Japanese companies.

Clarence said the problem is one's ego. Instead of cooperating with each other, people tend to think who is better. "We have to quit that and have to learn from each other."

Clarence:

Sometimes they don't always know how to get together and try to sit down and talk about it. And I think the biggest thing is one's ego: I think I'm better than you. And the other side, they think, No, I think we are better than you. You gotta quit thinking about who is better. But let's just say, Let's make our company better, whether you make toys, or whether you make food, or you make automobiles, whatever the case. Work together. Sit down. Talk about it. Get it out-- get the good and the bad out. But it still comes down to the problem between the American and the Japanese. I think it's because you invaded our country, and you've taken away some of our pride. But again, it all comes down to, why can't we learn from each other? Again, it all comes down to how much one is willing to learn each other's culture.

Robert offered a good analysis on a number of discrimination lawsuits in the U.S. He thinks it is, most of the time, not about discrimination, but about the lack of concern in work conditions. However, it is common to sue in the U.S., plus the legal system in the U.S. is structured in a way that they have to investigate the cases without reflecting on the problem in the system itself. So this allows people to take advantage of this system and sue. The Japanese are especially taken advantaged of because they are not familiar with U.S. customs and people know that the Japanese are giving.

Robert:

I think it's media hype. I think some ethnic cultures try to take advantage of another culture by yelling discrimination. They're trying to get special privileges for minority groups. Myself, I think everybody is equal, but I think they should get a job equally. There shouldn't be ethnic advantages. They like protesting and stuff like that. They give some ethnic people extra points for being an ethnic group. So, I think a person should get a job or whatever through his own merits, not through the color of skin, but through education and so forth.

The only thing I don't understand about media [being] against the Japanese companies is their concern with their fear of [the Japanese] taking over the country, buying up American [businesses], struggling with the economy, unfair trade [practices]. But in a work sense, and [regarding] work ethics, I never head of any troubles with Japanese companies treating ethnic groups differently. We have a factory down the road that's German-owned and -operated. And I've heard they are a lot rougher on their employees than a Japanese factory has ever been. I've heard nothing but good things coming from people that work for Japanese companies. Those that work for an American company, or even in another foreign company, like a German one, they spoke very badly about that. I don't think it was in a sense of discrimination, but I think it was in a sense of their work conditions, unconcern [lack of concern] for the workers, just looking for large profits. I'm trying to think of specifics, because every time I've heard about Japanese companies, I've heard only good things about them--how giving and how family oriented they are. But I never heard that [criticism of the Japanese] before I started working here. As more Japanese factories are increasing in this area, I've heard good things about them, so you kind of catch me by surprise. The only thing I can think about would be that, since Japanese are so giving, people see that as a weakness and go against them. I think Americans or some people in America try to take advantage of a group that is unknowledgeable [ignorant] about the way the United States is. I had a guy I work with, he was telling me about the time he went into a supermarket to purchase food, and the cashier took advantage of him, and he paid twice for his groceries. See that's what I mean by being taken advantage of. Being unknowledgeable about the American customs--people see it as a weakness, and take advantage of that situation. And I think that's what basically it is boiling down to--someone yelling discrimination, because the Japanese companies are so giving, that they see that as a weakness, and they say, O.K., I'm going to take advantage of that, and I am gonna start complaining about different situations, and the Japanese aren't gonna fight me back, because they are afraid of losing face, a fear of shame.

So instead of fighting back, they'll simply say, O.K., let's just get them what they want, and hopefully everything will be O.K., And it just keeps snowballing. And people see that, and say, O.K., if they can take advantage of them, I am going to try the same thing. And just creates a big problem. I don't know of anything that's happened here on discrimination. I think they did have a couple of discrimination questions here, but I don't think it was with the Japanese; I think it was with Americans, with supervision. And it had to do with racial differences. I don't think it even was that [racial discrimination]. I think it was just a ploy for one ethnic group to say, This is my way of getting back [getting revenge]. I didn't do my job or whatever, and they let me go, but I have this backing me up, saying that since I'm in an ethnic group, you have to hire a certain percentage [of us] in your factory, I am going to use that as a tool to advantage me.

I think there was a couple of things where he was a worker of a ethnic group that just wasn't doing his job. And so they let him go, or he was temporary even, I believe, and they let him go because his work was done. But he felt that the only reason that he was let go was because of his ethnic background. so he used a [legal] system that allows him to complain. [His case] went through some kind of probate or something like that. I don't know the logics of it. I just know the it's commonplace for some ethnic groups to use the legal system to continue their employment regardless if the company was right or wrong. The system is still set up that they have to investigate. Once somebody makes a complaint, they have to investigate to find out what's going on. And then once that [complaint] gets into the system, if you get that [kind of complaint] enough times, then they start questioning the company instead of the method, the system itself. I think there is a weakness in the system, and it is not just an employment problem. It also has to do with other legalities like the prison system that we have here in the United States. What do they call that? The right of prisoners. We want to keep those rights in there because they safeguard against misuse. But then you take advantage of that, and now it's being misused.

I've heard of a suit being brought up [in this company]. But I don't think it's just this company though. But I think it's a lot of companies. I don't [doubt] that something like that will ever come across. If it hasn't now, it will eventually come across because it always does.

Like I said, it's not an uncommon thing for any factory, I don't think. And I think just one employee that gets angry enough and says, well, I can use this system to try to advantage myself.

I don't think it was discrimination. I don't think his suit held any water. I just think that he used it because he had an opportunity to use it. I think a lot of Americans will do that. Just like the lawsuits that go around in this country. People get into auto accidents, suing each other for minor details. That's even getting worse these days. I think that people try to find an easy way out, an easy buck. The system was correct when it was set up to begin with, but then people find a loophole, an advantage in it, and take advantage of it. I think that's basically where all the rumors of the discrimination [come from]. But I have never even read anything about the Japanese factories being singled out, saying that they are the only ones that discriminate. I don't think I have ever actually seen myself, a Japanese showing any bad remorse against any other ethnic group that I am aware of.

#### Japanese Coordinator

He explained general profile of this company, however, since he was not here when they first open the plant, he didn't provide enough information as to the situation of the company at the time of start-up. As far as his personal career, he had training on his assignments here, since he is originally an engineer, and now he is doing trade, and accounting. The company supported his attendance at an English language school for three years. That is all the preparation he had before coming to the U.S.

According to him, the management of the company is done by Americans, and the number of Japanese staff is minimum. However, they keep Japanese style of quality control. This is because they export products to Japan, so they have to abide by the Japanese quality standard. He seems to be proud of their products.

### Differences

He mentioned some differences between Japanese and Americans: Japanese style of collective decision making is not carried out here, instead, the work is done more by individuals.

I think, here in the U.S., people work more individually. In Japan, meetings are held often and everything is decided in the meeting. It is very ambiguous as to who made a decision. The meeting itself is like a decision maker. But, here in the U.S., each individual works with his/her own responsibility.

Though workers at Company A seems to be accustomed to the Japanese culture, because they tend to stay in the company very long, he saw a difference between Japanese and American culture.

There are differences in the ways of thinking too. For example, however it is trivial, American people don't do anything unless they are told to do. I have to ask them like, do this in this way because this problem is there. In Japan, I only need to say, this problem is there. Then everything would go smooth without verbalizing everything. However workers in Company A seem to be used to the Japanese way of thinking. Since the quitting rate is very low here.

However, turnover rate in management positions is high, which is unimaginable in Japan where lifetime employment is commonly practiced.

Managers have been replaced often. I am not sure about the high turn over rate of manager. However, I guess, it's because of salary. If there are some position opening out there, and if they pay better than here, I think, American managers will go. For me, as a Japanese, and specially at this age, it is hard to imagine changing a job. Changing of managers affect the company's operation.

And another difference is that they don't have job rotation here.

In Japan, I think, though people have their own position, they rotate once in a while. They don't have rotation in the U.S.

For example, a person who makes gum base has been doing the same thing for ten years. In Japan, we rotate about every three years. This is not carried out here.

### Disadvantages

He mentioned that the communication gap is a disadvantage.

We still have a language problem. I am not good at English. We can't help to have a lack of communication. There are barriers, of course. I have experienced that my miscommunication caused a big problem. In Japan, we could chat in the cafeteria, and when a good idea cross my mind, I could talk there, and everything could go smooth. However this is impossible in here. We can't help a lack of communication.

### Lesson Learned

He is trying not to make it obvious that this is a Japanese owned company to the workers, because he thinks that it may hurt their pride of being American. On the contrary, they appeal that to the community since the expectation of their donations to the community is very high.

This is strictly my opinion, and I don't know how the American employees think about it, they may get angry, however, I try not to show this company as a Japanese-owned, and that the Japanese are superior. This is a subsidiary of the Japanese company, so listen to the Japanese whatever. This kind of attitude is totally unacceptable. They have a pride of being a citizen of a superpower. Though I am not sure, I think they have a frustration or a warped feeling because of working for a Japanese company.

To the community, we appeal that we are a Japanese company. And they expect that, too. I strongly feel their expectation for us to donate because we are making money. It's not that big amount to impact the company's financial status, but obviously, it is the amount larger than in Japan.



### Discrimination

When I asked about discrimination issue, he seemed to get defensive, and he was not willing to talk much. The following are his response to the question of discrimination against female workers, racial minorities, and American versus Japanese, respectively.

There is nothing special for treatment of female workers. I would be criticized being discriminatory if I say something special about female workers. I don't know about the treatment of racial minorities. Whites are majority in this company, too. I don't know well. I am not well informed. It would be a problem if I investigate that kind of things. Treatment of Japanese and American is same too. The only difference is that we will go back after several years.

### Response to Media Coverage About Japanese Companies

He thinks that the Japanese are accused of being discriminatory because they bring the secondary treatment of female workers to the U.S., though this is not true for this company.

I haven't read that kind of article before. But we don't have it here. In Japan women are disadvantaged still. For example, we see an absolute disparity between a male and a female who got hired in at the same time from the same university. I think the Japanese (being criticized) are doing the same kind of things here. I guess, they don't give a qualified female an important job, and in an extreme case, they have her serve tea, though I don't know about the other companies. The parent company in Japan is no special in Japanese standard. First of all, we don't hire many females, and usually they leave the company after several years. Treatment of women in the parent company in Japan is just as ordinary. We don't treat them preferably because they are women. But we quit this practice in the U.S.

## Company B

### Company Profile

Company B is a joint venture company which originated as a consequence of the merger of two previously autonomous enterprises. The company operates internationally with plants and subsidiaries throughout the world, including several facilities in Japan and six supporting plants located in the United States, Taiwan, Thailand and France.

Products produced by Company B range from automotive related to commercial business interior decorations. Customers include almost every major automobile manufacturer and a variety of large and small independent enterprises.

Currently (as of September 1994), they have about 600 full-time employees and about 130 temporary employees. Among these, 32 are Japanese. Its management is dominated by the Japanese. Among 12 management positions, only 3 are held by U.S. citizens in the plant and one in administration.

### Interview Setting

Interviews were conducted on September 14, 1994 in the conference room in the company. Each interview lasted about 20-50 minutes. It took six and a half hours, from 7:30 am to 2:00 pm to conduct seven interviews.

### Personnel

As far as the personnel administration, they have been using American managers since they started. The first person in management that they hired was a personnel manager. Since then, though the person has changed, they have always had an American-national as Personnel manager. It is because they believe that hiring people here is better handled by Americans, and that this position requires a person who is familiar with the legal system of the United States. However, the Japanese management has, and they think that they have to have, some control over the personnel. But they are willing to give the American personnel manager power to some extent.

### Affirmative Action Program

At the time of the interview, it was the end of their first year of implementing an affirmative action plan. Though they don't have a contract directly with the government, they supply automobile parts to major automobile companies, so they are required to have affirmative action plan as a government subcontractor. It was a decision made by on their own after analyzing their sales.

As a part of the plan, they have contacted several community organizations, and special interest groups such as women's organizations, and minority's organizations, veteran's organization, and so on. Also they have had several tour groups from different schools. They contacted all of the temporary agencies as well as all their suppliers and informed them of their Affirmative Action Program to

make sure that they are in compliance. They also incorporate the EEOC clause in all their purchase contracts. They indicate in their ads that they are an EEOC, AA employer. They include the equal employment opportunity clause in their handbook which every associate gets at orientation. And, it is also discussed at orientation. Further, it is posted by both of the associates' entrance.

They distribute the job voluntary forms to their associates at the beginning of the year for voluntary disclosure of handicaps or veteran status, and they also include that with their job applications.

They have tied their Affirmative Action Program to the job opportunity program which aims to help people achieve their goals internally. It is basically a job posting. They post the job if there is an open position, and individuals can apply for that job.

They have about 46% women and about 17-18% racial minorities. They are working on getting more women in the higher levels of management. Because this is their first year, it is difficult to evaluate the program, however, the management thinks it will be effective. They don't have any program whatsoever that is focusing on diversity. However they are working on that.

#### Communication and Associate Relations

They are working diligently on communications. They stress an open-door policy. Everyone in the company is accessible to anyone. And if someone has a problem, s/he can go to anyone, from the team

leader to their executive vice president. They have an open office that is one big room where they have their human resources, sales, and accounting. It is convenient and conducive to open communications.

They have Tuesday meeting every week. It is a stand-up meeting in their cafeteria, Harmony Hall. All the employees attend this meeting to let everybody know if there is a policy change or if there is something important occurring; to introduce new employees; to let everyone know how the plant is performing. They have round table meetings once a month which are attended by hourly associates who are randomly selected. However, all will eventually attend. It is a random selection process, but they keep track of who is coming to make sure everyone gets a turn. This meeting is with executives. They can ask any questions, raise any concerns they have and management will respond to those issues. They also take notes, and they distribute the notes to everyone so that even those who did not attend the meeting can know what happened.

They have a suggestion program that allows anyone in the company, if they see a problem in the company, to give Personnel a suggestion about how to make improvements. They are then reviewed and decisions are made on those suggestions. They just started an employee newsletters.

They have several activities throughout the year for all of their associates and their families such as a children's Christmas party, an adult Christmas party, a company picnic, and so on. They

have just about any kind of sports team we can think of. They are really trying to discuss associates' relationships to get everyone involved. Depending on what the event is, they generally have anywhere from 50 to 75% participation.

In the past, they had Japanese courses. Now they have workbooks and tapes available for those who want to learn the Japanese language.

#### American Workers

Table 3 shows the participant information from Company B.

Table 3

#### List of Participants From Company B

Participants*	Ethnicity
Susan	Caucasian
Tom	Caucasian
Steven	Caucasian
Nicole	African-American
Blair	Caucasian
*Participants' names are fictitious	

#### Overall Atmosphere

In contrast to Company A where I didn't hear real complaints, workers in Company B expressed complaints occasionally. And workers

also seemed to be stressed out because of too much work load. They feel the Japanese have higher expectation of workers and work in the Japanese company is demanding.

Susan:

I felt that the Japanese have a higher expectation of their associates. I think there is more of a seriousness in getting the job done, more of a seriousness in being attentive, being aware of what the priorities are.

Tom:

I think sometimes maybe the Japanese managers, they want something done, and they want it done now. Rather than, let's say, Hey, this might take a couple of days to fix. Well they want it done now. I think sometimes there is a misunderstanding between the two which causes frustration for everybody.

Steven:

There is a lot of turnover there and part of that is [because] in a Japanese company, you are made to have responsibilities far exceeding an American company. I am group leader. I hire; I fire; I schedule; I am maintenance; I am everything. (Laughter) Now, I have departments I can get help from, but sometimes you're being pulled so many ways, that when it comes to training associates, you have no more energy or time left. So instead of saying, You have done this wrong. Let me show you how to do this. This is how you properly do it. And this is the way I want you to do it. That's normal, but you think, I've been in a meeting all day; I've fixed two machines that were very hard for me to fix; I'm now being called and paged to go to another meeting, and an operator says, 'I have just ran 30 bad parts.' Now it's, Aaaaah! You are out of here! You are out of here! (Laughter)

Also, the Japanese work longer, and now, some of the American staff are beginning to work overtime. Maybe because there are some unspoken pressure to work more.

Blair:

They [the Japanese] work a lot hours. And I found myself my shift, my work day ends at 3:30. I can't remember the last time I went home at 3:30. I just tend to stay late also. And

that's something that's just developed since I came to [Company B]. I noticed that that has shifted the way even the Americans work. They work later, more hours. We could leave at 3:30. I don't know if that would be accepted in the Japanese management's eyes as O.K. I don't know. I am not gonna test it. There's never been any indication whatsoever from my immediate supervisor that there's anything wrong with leaving at 3:30. I just don't have my work done by 3:30, so I do end up sometimes, [working] a little overtime. But I think there is a little bit of pressure, even though it's not a spoken pressure. It's just kind of there. You feel like, Am I not doing right by leaving at 3:30? It's O.K. if you have an appointment or something. Sometimes I feel apologetic for leaving at 3:30--Well, I have to go to the bank. Is it O.K. if I leave now? So maybe there is some underlying pressure to work late like the Japanese do, but, maybe not as late as they work. They are here till 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. That, in my mind, is ridiculous. (laughter) But I think there is a little bit of cultural pressure, in that when you are reviewed at the end of year, I think that they probably will look at that. I think it's a part of maybe their review: Are you a person that leaves at 3:30 every day? Or are you going to stay and do what needs to be done before you leave? I think it might be part of their review process, at least they have it in their mind when they do that. So, I think maybe Americans do feel a little bit of pressure to work that extra time, even though maybe they don't have anything to do. They still feel leaving at 3:30 could be detrimental when it comes to the review. So that's my opinion. I don't know. I would say just about everyone to some degree, I think they feel it. They might not practice it, but to some degree, they feel, Should I stay late, or is it O.K. if I leave right at 3:30? So, yes, in that sense, I think maybe there is some Japanese culture creeping over and telling us, Your day is not done.

#### Advantages

They don't mention the advantages of working for the company as much as they mention the disadvantages. In sum, there are four advantages that they mentioned. These are; long-term focus, team work, mixed management style, and cleanliness. This company is obviously growing. This is happy situation for the workers in the sense that they don't have to worry about being laid off or the com-



pany closing. Company B offers stable jobs for its employees. This is an advantage for working for Company B. Also, this complies with the Japanese management style of long term focus. They are very concerned about quality for the company to grow which seems to turn out to be successful.

Tom:

I feel this company has a long future ahead of it here. I wonder sometimes. You know with automotive industries it's really kind of a rocky place to be. You never know when it's gonna end and when it's not. But I think this company is headed definitely in the right direction. I feel we put out a very quality product and, if you went out on the floor and looked, you'd notice that everyone is really busy; there's lots of work. Right there proves that this company is [going] in the right direction.

"This company's heading to the right direction" seems largely due to the Japanese management. They are very forward looking.

Blair:

They [Japanese] seems to anticipate problems, rather than be reactive to problems. They seems to be very forward-looking; they are not intent on fixing problems; they are more intent on forecasting what it needs, where it needs to go, and how to get there. They're all very future-thinking, and that's the kind of people I like to work with. You are not glued to this problem, and until it's solved, you can't go on to the next one. They're constantly looking forward for bigger and more and better. With that the company grows and the opportunity grows. Company B doesn't seems to be falling down at all.

Not only having Japanese management style, but being able to mix Japanese style and American style together is one unique advantage that this kind of multinational corporation has.

Blair:

Our Japanese staff advisors approach things from a different manner, but I think that the two together--American philosophy and then the different culture coming from Japanese manage-

ment--makes it work, so you see both angles. They look at the long term, and Americans tend to look more [at the] short term, and so, when you mix those two [types of] management together, you get real good overall management of the company. And I've seen that.

The team work concept seems to be welcomed by American workers.

Blair:

I enjoy the team concept. And I believe that Americans are moving very much toward that. They recognize the value in that team work. Rather than fighting to be independent, they are trying to be a team. And that is a very positive thing that has come from the Japanese culture--that Americans can now work together and realize they will be fruitful working together. It definitely works. I believe those Americans that are individualistic have now realized the value of team work. It has been proven that it works. I see now even the American Companies with a union are moving toward opening the job description [to team work]. Because now, job descriptions are very individualistic--You do this job, and you only do this job all day, if it falls over, it's not your job to pick it up; it's somebody else's job. Well, now they're leaning toward, Yes, you can pick it up and put it back. And I think they're slowly moving in that large, American corporation, [toward the idea that] you cannot be so narrow in your job that when the company is shut down because you have to wait for a maintenance person to pick this up, they're realizing that this is detrimental. There should be no hindrance for that person to pick it up. And that's teamwork starting to filter through. And you can see it when you read our contract negotiations with the union--the concessions that have been made to open these job spokes to eventually get them to where a team can work together. And I think they are moving that way, but it's gonna take a long time. but, they're seeing it happen. They're seeing the Japanese transplant companies coming in, and they're leaps and bounds ahead of the American companies, because the Americans are saddled with those union mentalities: I can only do this. I'll get in trouble if I do any more. Well, you can't count that violation when things like that are happening. And I think they are moving that way. Maybe the Japanese culture of team orientation is finally getting [through] to some of the larger American companies. And of course, those that work for those Japanese companies recognize it almost immediately--that you cannot be independent, you cannot work independently, because every job is dependent on another.

Keeping things clean is one big difference that Japanese think it is

important for production and Gary sees the advantage of it.

Steven:

Another thing, and this is very very big, and it's something I had to learn is, Keep things clean, very very clean. They [the Japanese] relate and equate clean to good production and money being made. I have had to stop producing, stop and clean for four hours--no money being made, no parts going out. They are paying us to clean, because it's important to them that it is clean. And I always thought myself as the areas where I've worked, I've kept my area what I considered clean. Not the Japanese; nothing's ever clean enough. (Laughter) So, we have to make sure we do our weekly, daily, shiftily, 3-month maintenance, 6-month maintenance, cleaning and keeping things up.

I think it's good in that I think there is a relationship to having a clean working environment and people having a good attitude. I mean if you work in a clean area, you like to work a little better than if it was [dirty]. In fact if we are running on a line and we have rejects, the operators put the rejects on a hold rack. Then I go through and make sure they are rejects, to make sure that the operator and myself are one in our quality check. What I've found is that if, as a leader, you let that rack fill up with parts the production will slow down and the operator will get frustrated. Whereas if I go every 15 minutes, sort, and remove [rejects from] the rack, and empty it, it [production] starts picking back up. So I think that has something to do with production, and the operator feels good [like he's] doing something right. Just the fact that there is a rejects there, and they see it every time they turn around. It's in their face all the time. Same thing if the floor is dirty. Every time you look around and it's just--You are your environment, and sooner or later you're just kind of not there.

Blair says the Japanese are most wonderful people to work with because they never make negative comments on people, and they never complain like Americans do.

Blair:

I must give credit to the Japanese for two things. I have never ever in four years heard a bad word about any person from any Japanese staff I work with. Never. They do not speak about other people. Period. I've never heard it, unless they do it in Japanese; they may. But I think you can

substantiate that with everybody in this plant. Japanese advisors do not speak about other people derogatorily. Never. And that's something the American managers should learn.

Our [Japanese managers] here are the most wonderful people. I think it's refreshing, because you don't see the complaining. It doesn't happen. If they have problems, they always present them, not as a complaints, but as a problem that needs to be resolved. Whereas I think in American culture, managers tend to complain: [It's] not [because] this needs a resolution. It's just that I need to get it off my chest. I need to tell somebody about it. Japanese don't seem to do that. Americans will complain and complain and complain and complain about the same problem, whereas Japanese say, This is a problem; we need an answer. And then solve it, and it's done. This is a wonderful climate to work in. You don't hear complaining from upper level management.

#### Disadvantages

Things mentioned above as advantages can be disadvantages when put in a different context. For example, it is good to have some Japanese management aspects, but sometime it is frustrating, especially when they encounter the hard-nosed Japanese.

Blair:

I've never run into that hard nose, No we are not going to do it this way. And I do see that in other areas, and it is very frustrating to those people that have to do it. It's like, why can't they bend a little bit to make this work? And it's very frustrating to some of the other American managers that deal with that very hard line, This is the Company B way of doing this, and we can't change it. And frustration levels there are extremely high. You can see it in the air. They will not bend. They will not recognize that there is a solution to the problem.

Brad observed that one of the differences between Japanese and American management is that the Japanese are less willing to change their mind:

Brad:

Once the Japanese set their mind to something, there is no changing it. I think sometimes that can work against us, in certain situations, not all. Americans tend to change their mind more.

Sometimes, they feel the Japanese are having too much control and they shouldn't.

Blair:

He [her Japanese boss], I think, realizes that he cannot control so many people. The pyramid of control is getting broader and broader, so he has to start relying on some of the lower management people to control those areas. And he doesn't have the expertise in all of the things he needs in order to grow. And I think maybe some of the other Japanese management have not recognized that. They still control every person in their whole department, even though there are way too many. They should really delegate some of that downward.

A communication gap creates some disadvantages such that it extends meeting time; it makes it slow for the problems to be recognized by the Japanese management; lack of direct communication and personalization; and as always things lost in translation.

Blair:

All meetings are held in both languages, which seems to take a very long time. It seems like many times I am spending a full hour for the meeting to be re-done in Japanese, so that those Japanese that didn't understand the English can ask their questions and be responded to. And that was very hard to get used to. It was like you have to give them time to digest it all in both languages. Because, vice versa, the Japanese converse, and then they relay that to the American people in the meeting. One that may be more fluent than another, rather than broken English from a new staff advisor that just arrived in the United States.

Steven:

There is no communication. I would like to see, maybe the president of the company come to the floor and talk to the people on the line--direct communication. Some presidents have done that. Some don't. And many times, I've been in my department, and here is the president walking through my

area. He will look, he will see something maybe he does like or doesn't like. He will turn. He will speak through the channel, and the engineer will come over and say, Mr. Ukei came over. He says your pumps are dirty. Please clean them. That is insulting to me. I am standing there. The man [the president] is there. If he wishes me to do something, I will do it. But, this communication is not there. I mean maybe he [the president] said, the pumps were clean, but the time it got to this person, the pumps were dirty. I don't know. Many things are lost in translation. [We need communication to be] more direct, person to person, but it's not there. It's like a very government system. This person speaks to this subcommittee who speaks to this subcommittee, and there's something lost. There is no personalization.

In addition to these problem, Japanese are replaced every five years because of their visa status. Not only do they have to go through all the English struggle, but also, they have to change focus and re-start every thing. Also, considering these minuses, Steven thinks it would be better if they were replaced by local, non-Japanese staff who had training.

Steven:

Every five years, we have someone new, and a totally different focus. Everything is upheaved. If we are growing to this point, a new person comes and phew! [gesture downward]. Here we go [starting all over] again. They felt, I think maybe that they do have Japanese helpers. Japanese helpers should also have engineers with them. They should train that engineer. By the end of that five years, that person should be promoted. No more Japanese. Because the company has to keep growing, and not keep stuttering, stuttering.

Maybe [in] five years, these engineers who are maybe Americans or whatever, maybe they see these things. Maybe by the time the Japanese get ready to leave, there's more re-uniting, and then when they leave, we can just continue to grow from there, instead of, Oh, new person. Fight cultural differences, fight communication all over again. It's like every thing that you have built up for five years is just erased. You go right back to square one.

Some aspects of the team work concept are not working to their

advantage. Japanese work as a team and sometimes there is no defined responsibility. It is good sometimes, because it loosens the strict job description which hinder the company from growing and allows flexibility in work like Carla mentioned earlier. But sometimes, they feel like they are responsible for everything and overwhelmed by the amount of work. Also, it is not clear as to who is one's direct boss. Sometimes it confuses Steven.

Steven:

One could tell you one thing, and the other tell you to do another. So you are like, Huhuh? (laugh) So sometimes you have those days where, because there is nothing spelled out-- What is your job?; What is your classification?; What do you do?; Where is your responsibility here?--you feel responsible for everything. And you can't do everything. I have seven people who, yes, they are classified above me, but who is my direct supervisor? Have all things channeled through that person, instead of two or three people saying, Move this cup here, no back here, no I said here and here, here. And you gotta go train someone. And you gotta be observant, slow, make a good decision, and you just came out of a whirlwind of stress, because there is nothing to define who is responsible.

Company B tries to promote the idea that everybody is equally important. They do this by imposing uniforms. And also they keep wage distinctions at minimum. Thus, pay for entry level is very high compared to competitors; however, pay for management positions is not so good and pay raises according to seniority is intangible, especially in the maintenance area. This is hard to understand for American workers who are used to being paid according to an individual's accomplishments. This system is discouraging for some American workers to produce more to get promoted and stay longer in the company.

Susan:

In the Japanese culture everybody when they go to school and all wear uniforms and everybody is the same. That way it makes no difference between people. From what I can see, this is the same way the Japanese run the work place. They want everybody to look the same, wear the same uniform. Nobody stands out. Nobody can be different. They do that with the pay scale also, which in the United States is a problem. I don't know how it works in Japan, but because people in the United States are used to getting paid more for higher skilled jobs and less for less skilled jobs, we have had a lot of problem in this area in our work place. Because we haven't been able to encourage our higher skilled employees or associates to stay with us because they've been having a problem trying to get an elevated pay scale.

Steven:

That and then maybe not on a personal level, but just over all the company, if you are working on the line you make a rate, and if you work in maintenance, or even myself (They created a position for me--shift leader--which was no increase [in pay], but I was a leader.), some jobs have higher skill levels and more responsibility. Therefore the pay should be commensurate, and it's not. In my area, my pay increase went up, because I went into a management level, whereas I can see in maintenance, they may not be so happy, due to the fact that maybe they have 17-15 years maintenance experience, and hey make as much as a line person. Now, the pay here for a line person is high or what the competition is paying, but low for skilled trades, and management position [is] not so high. In fact, in order to take a supervision position, you take a pay cut. Because a group leader, with the overtime I approve, they can make \$33,000 a year. Starting supervisor position is \$28,000. So instead of the carrot being in front of the rabbit, it's behind the rabbit. So, I don't understand sometimes the way they do things. That kind of confuses you when choosing what kind of direction you are going.

The idea that everyone is equal is not acceptable especially to a person in higher management position.

Blair:

I hate it [uniforms], absolutely hate it. They promote the uniform as equality, as a team--you are part of the team. They promote our uniform more as You are part of a team. So we all look the same, so we're all part o the team. But also, with



that comes, Everyone is equal. You each have an equal voice. To that I object firmly. I didn't work as hard as I worked, and I didn't go to school forever (it seems like) to be considered equal to someone with a high school education that can't spell his own name. I have a very difficult time with that--You wear the smock because you are equal with everyone else. I am not equal with anyone, and I'm sure for the president of the company, in his mind, he is not equal to me. I couldn't run this company. So, he is much further above me, intellectually, educationally, everything. He has worked very hard to get where he is. Yet you put a smock on him, telling him, You are all the same again. And that I do have a very difficult time with. A lot of people have a difficult time with, not the smock so much, but what it represents. It's [saying] You're equal, some people take objection to that, because they worked too hard to be not equal. You work very hard to get your master's degree. Now, I'm gonna tell you, You are the same as the person with a high school degree or a two year degree. Are you? No. You studied much longer. You are much farther advanced. Now you're coming to work for a company that says, No, you are the same; you are equal to them. And it's very, I don't know, deflating.

I don't wanna strive to be better, because they keep telling me I'm equal. So I think it could work in reverse of the way they want it to work. I can understand a team concept, but not equal. No two persons are ever equal. My input is not equal to a person that has a high school education and has only worked for one job for two years. My opinion and input is not equal to that person. So you put a smock on me and tell me I'm equal to that person. Then, do you want me and my input to be equal to that person? Because it's impossible for that person to be equal to me. The only way that can happen is, I have to be reduced to their level. Don't call me equal. I'm not equal.

Just the fact that he is working for the Japanese company makes Steven unhappy because he gets criticism from his family and people from outside. He also hears some negative comments about working for the Japanese inside the company too. And he has in the back of his mind the question of what it means to work for the Japanese.

Steven:

I have taken criticism at family gatherings, because I work for a Japanese company. My grandfather was in World War II,

who fought the Japanese. So, there are some conflicts. Sometimes you have a good report for your monthly performance and you think, Yeah, I did good. And then it sneaks in: Yeah, but I work for a Japanese company, so did you do good or did they do good? You tell me. (laugh)

I think, more than you think in this company, that eats away at people, more than I probably realized. In the maintenance, I hear a lot of that: Oh those Japanese, you know, we are working for them, and they're kind of unhappy. I am continually being asked from people outside the company--matter of fact friends of the family--about what it's like to work for the Japanese, or How can you work for Japanese? My feeling is: This is the country I live in. This is the working environment we have created for ourselves, and I have a family to feed, and I have bills to pay. And I will take a job from anyone--German, Japanese--as long as I can get that money to pay that to survive. So therefore I really have no problem with that. But, to be honest, every once in a while, you think about it. You always do have it in the back of your mind.

### Discrimination

They just started to implement the Affirmative action program. So they see more women promoted and more racial minorities hired and promoted. So in that sense, they are improving, because before they didn't have enough of that. But this change seems to be too sudden to some of the workers and they hear a lot of negative comments about that. That creates some conflicts between the groups. So racial and gender conflict does exist in this company, but no Japanese are involved in this situation. Rather, some feel Americans have more stereotypes, whereas the Japanese don't care about how people look.

Susan:

I see them trying to be very fair. in fact sometimes I think they bend over backwards trying to be more than fair to the some of the minority, because there are a few associates that

we had that, because they are minority, I feel like they got special, preferential treatment, a little bit extra allowed to the, because they are minority. I think that I've seen more reverse discrimination, but not with the Japanese, because we don't have Japanese associates that work on the floor that actually work running the jobs, doing the set-up. But we have black people, and Mexicans, things like that. And what I have seen is that with black people, [managers] have tended to bend over backward with some of them, maybe to ensure that they are not going to get sued if they do have to take corrective action with them, maybe. I don't know but it seems like that to a lot of people, Hey, what is it? Because they got a different color [skin], then he doesn't get written up for this [offense], and we do?

Here is another side of this story, which is expressed by an African American associate.

Nicole:

I think it's not fair in that respect. It's like the difficulties as far as the Mexicans, the African Americans--they are treated less. [or example,] [If you're one culture, they will overlook it [what you did wrong], but if the same thing happens to another person [of a different culture], then they [the company] are on them, or they come to a point where they might loose their job. It seems like it [all rules] should affect everybody the same, and it doesn't. This is before. Now, it has gotten better.

Their affirmative action program seems to have brought some good results; more women promoted, more African Americans and Mexicans hired and promoted, but they are starting to see a negative side effect of that too; complaints of reverse discrimination and preferential treatment. At the same time, some support the program.

Tom:

I think here there are a lot of women that have been promoted. And sometimes you can look around and say, Wow, look at all the women managers, supervisors. Where's all the guys? There is a lot of women team leaders. What happened to promoting guys?

Steven:

I have seen more women advancing. [Going up the rank] there is an operator, team leader, group leader, supervisor. Right now, we have one woman who was just promoted to supervisor. But some people saw that as moving too quickly. She was an operator when I was a team leader. And now she is supervisor, and I am her group leader. O.K. There are some people in the molding that have a problem with that. And the manager of our department, knowing that that was likely to be a problem, stood behind her and helped her. But I can see why they need to do that, because before it was all men, all white men, no black men, no Mexican men, just white men. We have started to see Afro-Americans [get promoted] some people. Now they earn their jobs. I don't see that as special treatment.

Blair:

I think it is necessary that someone monitor. Because it is the tendency of any company to go out and pick those of like nature before they pick those of unlike nature. I think that is just a natural tendency. if I interview five people, and four of them are women, and one is a man, my first choice probably be a woman, because I'm hiring a woman to work for me. And I think that's just natural. And the same thing, if I interview the five people, and four are white and one is black, will that black person have any equal chance? They should.

I'm a very firm believer in that. I'm not going to look at the color of that person; I'm going to look at the resume and the interview. But many people don't do that. And so that affirmative action plan must drive that to those managers that are doing favorably [favoritism], so that there is a fair chance for anyone out there of any color. I guess I am the advocate of non-prejudice. I try very very hard not to prejudice myself against their color or their race. it needs to be. And affirmative action is one way to at least guide it [fairness], if not direct it. At least it guides it. [With affirmative action] you must at least interview and explore different persons who qualify.

As far as the Japanese attitude toward racial minorities, they seems to be less prejudiced and more fair than American workers.

Steven:

We have such a [diverse work force]. We have a contingency of people from India. We have a contingency from America, Mexican, Caucasian--very, very mixed company. And I think sometimes maybe the different cultures within the company have problems with each other more than the Japanese do. Some-

body gets promoted. People ask, Why? Because they are white? Because they are Mexican? But the Japanese themselves, I've not heard one racial remark or joke or anything toward anybody. Maybe an American would be the type of person to see a black person and think, Oh, that person is lazy. Maybe a black person see a white person and says, Oh that person is very uptight, very rude. The Japanese are very emotionless. I am a very large person, and I've walked by Japanese helpers who are very very small, and they don't even acknowledge it. In fact, if I walked up to someone who was that much taller than me, I'd be like Wow! It's not important to them what you look like. It's just not. As long as you perform your job, that doesn't matter. That's how I feel this company is treating them--it doesn't matter what you look like. It doesn't seem to phase them. There is no judgement there. I don't feel it.

Interestingly enough, Blair, the only woman manager in the company, who works directly with Japanese everyday, said she never experienced second-level treatment by the Japanese staff. It was just the opposite from what she expected it to be like working in the Japanese company.

Blair:

When I first got here I didn't know anything really about Japanese culture, other than I knew that the women were and have been historically treated as secondary. They were always the servant too. And I believe even today the culture is still that way. And to some degree, the American culture is that way too. But, I totally expected to see that, in my work, and I didn't. Not at all. Not at all. My opinion was always accepted. It is always treated as fairly as men's opinion. I always felt validation from the Japanese to me. But there was never that subservient, second-level treatment, never, which went totally against what you would expect from the [Japanese] culture as a whole.

From her experience of working for five American companies in the pay roll area, she believes the glass ceiling for women is there.

Blair:

Even if they [women] were promoted to the position, they were never promoted to the dollar. They were always recognized as

less, even though they held the same position. And the only place you see that, really see it, is what their compensation is. And that [less pay for the same work] is very very prevalent in the American market, in the American company.

But, she doesn't see it at Company B. They try very hard to keep wage disparity as minimum as possible. And they are very fair in that respect.

Blair:

At Company B I don't see that. I see it's very level across the two genders. It's very very uniform. If a male and a female do the same thing, have basically same background, they [their paychecks] basically are pretty level. I mean they really strive, at Stanley especially, to maintain that parity between those--to keep them as level as they can. There is going to be a little bit of fluctuation because of background and training and education, all of that. That all can be substantiated. For the most part, I think Company B is very fair when you look at that.

### Union

Company B is also a non-union plant, like associates at Company A, Company B workers also seem to agree on no need of union.

Steven:

I was in a union shop before. And I think from the very minute you start to walk in the door to a union shop, the motive and the drive of the company is to beat the union, and the motivation of the employees in the union is to defeat the company. So, the very person that feeds you is fighting you all the time. And the very person that makes money for the company is trying to destroy it. Nobody is trying to make a product to make money. They are trying to hurt each other all the time. And that makes it very hard to work for them. That is one of the reasons I left. It's very hard to work in a situation like that.

Susan:

I'm not either way [pro-union or anti-union], really. I have went union and I have went non-union. The things that I am

against is management not listening to their associates. If a management system does not listen to their associates, then I think that we should maybe investigate grouping together and forcing them to listen. But as long as management seems like they've been trying to react to the problems that associates are having, then I think that the union system doesn't have any business being there. And [Company B] does do round table sessions where they give a different variety of people from different areas a chance to get in and ask questions, and let them know of complaints and add a voice. So I think at this point they are trying to listen.

### Response to Media Coverage of Japanese Companies

I asked their opinion about media coverage of Japanese companies. Especially these reports where Japanese companies are accused of being discriminatory.

Susan:

When you get out of a union plant and into a plant like this that is a non-union, where they expect everybody to do teamwork and do as much as they can do to help out the department, and you have people that came in from a union background, and you have a problem with getting them to work the same. So maybe the articles that they're doing [about] Japanese companies being prejudiced are from these people. They were dissatisfied because they didn't think that they should have to work as hard.

I think most of it is upper management people who are very ambitious, and in this country, you look at our culture, and those who are set apart and paid high money are athletes. They are paid to conquer; they are paid to defeat. And for some reason, we feel we must defeat the Japanese instead of work with the Japanese and make some money as we do it. They want to conquer and defeat all the time. And this transfers into our colleges. This transfers into how we train the business leaders. When you are hired in, and you make \$30,000 maybe, you are hired in, and your goal is to be president, to conquer. And if you don't get it, you feel discriminated against, especially in the Japanese company, because, let's say, when the Japanese company does come to the United States, they need help. They need someone who has local contacts with suppliers. They need these things. And maybe you have your degree from the University of Michigan, and you were president

of a small factory. And they have contacts to help the company, and now you feel you should be promoted. You think Why not? The Japanese are [saying], No, you must slow down. You cannot conquer everything in five years. And this is our company. We own this company and you must have our management philosophy, and you must go by this.

Blair:

I have not really truly have not heard that Japanese companies are discriminating. There may be some of that, but it's not the Japanese company, because I think if you actually poll the Japanese companies, those human resource people that are involved in hiring are not Japanese. But because of the practices in those human resource departments, it's putting a bad light on the Japanese company. It's upper management is Japanese, and it's a Japanese company. You must look at who is doing discrimination. And you'll probably find it is American. If you had a Japanese human resource recruiter, I don't know if that discrimination would show up. The American culture discriminates against minorities, but if you bring a Japanese person into the American culture, he has not learned that discrimination, that prejudice. He would probably be more apt to not discriminate. But because the American culture does teach that prejudice, it comes through. So then the Japanese company is blamed for discriminating, where it's really not. It's the American culture within the Japanese company that's discriminating.

### Other

Suggestion program and open door policy mentioned by a human resource personnel is not effective in the eyes of workers.

Susan:

They do encourage a suggestion program, but they also have a discouragement, in the fact that it seems that our man power level is not high enough to be able to adequately answer the suggestions and to act on them. So the associates get discouraged about putting the suggestions in. So I am not real sure that that works to our advantage.

Seven:

The open door policy does make you feel secure in that you do have someone to go to if something does happen. I have seen



though in other departments where it does not work, because supervisor level and up may be kind of controlling the situation to their advantage. And the person who has a complaint see this--no one's listening to him. And he feels as if people with a lot of power are keeping an eye on96Xhim. So therefore he does not feel like he can go the next step further without jeopardizing his job.

This company obviously hires a lot of temporary workers. Though he understands the company's situation that they have to hire temporary staff so that they can keep the promise of not laying off, hiring temporary staff is causing problems for especially those who are in the position of supervising them like Steven. The performance of temporary workers directly affects quality of their products. So how they get the commitment from temporary workers is a big problem for the company.

Steven:

Another thing is I really do not like temporary service. I am responsible for hiring and terminating; it's is part of my responsibility. [It's based on] our recommendation pretty much. It's very hard to get committed people when you want to use them for a year and half, and maybe never give them a job. Anybody who goes into a temporary service, is in there because local employment goes to that. They have no choice. They want a permanent position. They don't want a temporary position. At Stanley, I've seen them go a year and half and be turned away, and we need them. It's my job responsibility, and it's really hard to motivate temporary associates and to keep them interested in working here and doing a good job. After six months, they are very discouraged.

Common complaints expressed by workers is that they don't promote or transfer within, instead they hire from outside. This is one of the discouraging factors for people who have worked for a long time.

Steven:

Another thing is you have very little worth [assigned] to you for the length of service you put in. If you are an associate

at Company B for six years and for the last three years, you don't want to be on second; you want to be on first, there is no procedure to transfer you. You basically put it in writing, and wait and wait and wait. Sometimes they're very judicious and help you out, and other times, they are not, because there is no procedure involved for seniority to [be a benefit to you]. Let's say, like I've been in the second shift and I wish to go first. There is an opening at my level, on first [shift], and they hire a temporary. O.K.? The temporary stays on first, and I stay on second. See? Two days [work by the temporary worker], and they are the same as six years [that I've been working].

Tom:

I would like to see them promoting within more. And it seems to me that they do have a lot of management position open up. They go outside to get the people, and I feel that there is people here that can fill that position and move up. I think that if they promote more from within, for one thing, what you are gonna do is promote people that have been here for a while. And if you keep promoting this person, they're gonna stick around. Whereas the outside person might only stick around [for a short time]. They might say, I don't like this.

It's been here two months. I'm done. Now they are spending more money trying to train somebody, and then they quit on them.

### Japanese Manager

#### Start-up

He has been working here since the beginning, and he seemed to be very knowledgeable and opinionated about the issue. First he explained about the company generally, and then the reason for coming to the U.S.:

During 1987-89, lots of Japanese companies, especially, auto-automobile related companies came to the U.S. There were some patterns: (1) Having prepared enough and trying to develop new markets in the U.S., (2) since automobile manufacturers were going to the U.S., their suppliers, that is, automobile parts manufacturers came with them in order to avoid losing

customers, and market shares that they already had in Japan, and (3) similar to second case, automobile parts manufacturers being asked by Japanese automobile manufacturers to come with them, because they didn't want to take risks by getting new suppliers in the U.S. Our case is the second case. Since our biggest customer, Mazda, came to Flatrock, we came here to avoid losing market share and also to develop new customers in the U.S. We were not asked to come by Mazda, but we wanted to continue good relationship with them.

Because of the situation, they didn't have enough time to prepare before coming to the U.S., also they didn't have enough time to hire necessary American staff. So they had to have a large number of Japanese staff. In addition to around 40 regular Japanese staff, they had 50-80 Japanese who were sent here for a short period of time. However, they are hiring American staff for the positions that are ready. Their goal is to eventually hand over all the control to American staff, and Japanese will be here until this process is completed.

### Management

They are not trying to impose Japanese style of management in totality. They are trying to bring the good aspects of Japanese management, and also use the good aspects of American management. Since the background culture is different, he recognizes that Japanese management model should be adjusted so that it will be accepted by American workers. However, they are trying to maintain the basics of the Japanese philosophy. He showed me the company's calendar, and on the backside of it, they have their corporate objectives and "5S" philosophy listed. He considers these as an example of the basics

of Japanese management philosophy they want to maintain.

1. Observe CHOPS/"5S" rules in working areas so exceptions can be easily recognized:

2. Create a production control system that produces timely feedback and data.

3. Reduce operating costs in all areas of our operations.

4. Accelerate procurement from domestic suppliers by building good vendor relationships, and keeping costs low and quality high.

5. Achieve the targets established for this year's Monthly Performance Summary.

This "5S" is a concept widely used in Japanese manufacturing industry. Other aspects of Japanese management they strive to maintain are; non-union factory and no lay-offs.

#### C.H.O.P.S./"5S"

Cleanliness [Seiso]	Keep your work area clean.
Healthful [seiketsu]	Safety and care are important for being healthy.
Organize [Seiton]	Keep things in the proper place so they are ready to use when needed.
Prioritize [Seiri]	Discard the unnecessary. Determine what is needed and what isn't.
Structure [Sitsuke]	Follow all the company work rules.

As far as human resource management, they leave most of the

control to Americans. They are aware of the need for a person who is familiar with the legal system of the U.S.

We have had American personnel manager since the beginning. Because, we believe hiring can be done better by American here, and we should have a person who is well familiar with American legal system. So the personnel manager was the first American salary staff we hired. Since then Americans have been in charge of personnel matters. I think we should have some control over the personnel manager, however we are giving some power to them. For example, hiring of hourly staff is all done by American. President, vice president and I will only participate in the final interview of salary staff.

### Difference

He mentioned three factors that the Japanese companies coming to the U. S. have to consider; economic, political, institutional factors.

I think there are three ways of approaching to the issue: economic factors, political factors and, the most importantly, institutional factors. Examples of economic factors are fluctuation of exchange rate and interest rate. Examples of political factors are trade sanction being imposed due to the approval of article super 301, anti-dumping taxation, and status of Mexican workers affected by NAFTA. Examples of institutional factors are insurance system, rules of workers' compensation, and some regulations in the U.S. affecting the company's management.

He emphasized the importance of being aware of social difference for the company's operation. The differences which he considered to be important are; that the U. S. is a legalistic society, difference in health insurance system, and structure of work force which has high mobility.

There are a lots of law suits in the U.S. Companies get sued easily. Suing is not common in Japan. Here it is so common. For example, there are lawyers who encourage a person who is

fired for some reason. It's just an example, but, a lawyer waiting in employees parking talk to a fired person: You are fired, aren't you? Why? You must be unhappy. Yes. I'm not happy. What will you do from tomorrow? I don't know. I don't have any job offered. I will take care of you. I don't have any money for a lawyer's fee. I don't ask you any money. You don't ask any money? How would you do? You don't ask money, though you are a lawyer? From what I heard, we will win absolutely, if we sue the company. We will get \$100,000 from them, I will get \$70,000 and you will get \$30,000. It's a good amount of money for you, isn't it? \$70,000 is enough for me. It's a fee contingent on success. There are lawyers like that. I am working as a committee member of Mid-Western Japanese Automobile Parts Industry Association. We have meetings once or twice a month. We exchange information there. This kind of problem is often brought up there. They sue the company. We have a recognition among us that if the person who is appealing is a black or a woman, s/he will win definitely. Not win but settlement out of court. We have to pay for the settlement. We are not defeated, but we pay. It would take time and money to win, so we have to stop somewhere for the management of the company. If we continue, we will win absolutely, but it takes time and money. So our lawyer also suggests settlement out of court. So we can't help paying money. If it's a woman or black, s/he will get money absolutely. The U.S. society is structured in this way. I think this prevents the U.S. to excel in the world economy, though they recover somewhat. This is an absolute difference from Japan.

Another difference is about medical cost. Medical cost is a big problem in entire U.S. society. There are many people who don't have insurance. In Japan everybody is insured no matter what forms of insurance. However, in the U.S., as you know, there are many people who are on Medicare and Medicaid and don't have insurance. Doctors have to take care of them, however, they are not doing this for volunteer. It is their business. So money will be withdrawn from where money is, that is, withdraw from corporation is very common. We have unbelievable amount of insurance cost. I don't say that we can't make ends because of that, but this is one of the biggest factors of raising operation cost here. I think the corporation coming to the U.S. without this part of knowledge will fail.

I think this is an absolute difference between the U.S. and Japan, however, 99% of the employee here had worked for a different company before. This means two things. One is that they have experiences which new graduate employees in Japan don't have. Having experiences means having their own way. I have to respect their way while let them learn my way. It's difficult.

Another is that it is highly likely that they quit this company and go to different company, since they came to this company after quitting some company. We have to always consider this risk. For example, take good care of giving good benefit or making a manual for the job so new person can start the job immediately. It took two years to train the person, and when s/he quits, we can't wait for the new person to get training for two years again. It is different from Japan.

#### Accusation of the Company

He went into a great detail about the accusations against the company. Though he did not name an exact number, this company has been accused for 10-20 times, all of them were of work-related injury. He gave me an example of the cases, and argued that the U.S. is structured in a way that allows people to sue the company and get money from them. He thinks this is a barrier to the growth of the U.S. economy.

We use some flammable chemical, like thinner diluted 100 times. Six years before, smoke occurred where this chemical is stored for some reason. Several workers put it out with a fire extinguisher though it was not a big incident. Four years later of that incident, a person started to say his throat had been strange since he breathed fire extinguisher's smoke. We investigated and found out he was working the opposite corner of the room, very far from where the incident happened. He shouldn't have breathed the smoke at all. However, it is very difficult to prove that he didn't breathe the smoke. So people can take money, if they want to.

Most of the workers here repeats same operation. Bring something to here and tighten bolts, press some area, or lift up something. If they have pain in their wrists, foot, or back, they can say it's work related. For example, if someone had a car accident and injured back, and say s/he has pain because of doing the job, it is very difficult to prove that it's not work related. A doctor doesn't want to be sued, so s/he only say a safe thing. If s/he says it's not work related, s/he might get sued then. I think this is an ineffective aspect of the U.S. society.

If somebody sue me that s/he got nervous breakdown because of work, I am out with one shot. S/he got too much pressure from me. It hasn't happen yet, though. She was pressured to work everyday for two years, because of that her family life suffered, and she got divorced. It's all because she had pressure from Ouchi at [Company B]. It's absolutely all up with me if I was told that. There was a case similar to this, though it was not against me.

In order to avoid these accusations, they give good benefits to the employees to satisfy them. Giving good benefits also helps in preventing a union to come in. Also, when they have to lay off an employee for some reason, they consult with a lawyer before laying off to determine if they can lay off in the situation, and make it clear why she/he has to be laid off.

One big change they had made is that they are more willing to go to court instead of settling out of court.

We had about 10-20 cases that we got sued. Most of the cases were settled out of court, however we won last three cases. We decided to fight in the court though it takes time and money, because it is absolutely not good to have reputation that one can get money if one sue Stanley.

#### Discrimination and Dealing With Diverse Workers

Concerning the hiring of minorities, they follow the city's guideline that says to hire minority workers that matches the minority population of the city. They had some black persons who said they were laid off because of their skin color. However, they always made it clear that it was not the discrimination. And they have never lost a case or had to pay.

When he was asked about the treatment of female workers, he said he tried to be careful not to hurt their pride, though it is



same for male workers, and workers in Japan. But one difference is that Americans hate to be scolded in front of people.

I am careful about not to hurt their pride. I don't complain to a person who is under direct supervision of female manager. If I have some complaints about them, I will say that to the female manager. And I don't complain to or warn her in front of people. I will take her to the room when I need that. They hate to be scolded in front of people.

Treatment of Japanese and American looks different, however they try to let everybody understand that this is because of their status of being on overseas assignment and being top executive.

Treatment is different actually, however, it is not because we are Japanese, but because we are on trip. So American staff will get same treatment as what Japanese are getting here, if they go to Japan. We try to let them understand in this way. Also, Japanese executives have cars offered, however, it is same thing for American executive.

He thinks attitude of Japanese staff is important in preventing Americans from having a negative image of Japanese staff which may cause possible accusations of preferential treatment.

Japanese staff are destined to go back to Japan sooner or later, however, I think It is important for Japanese to identify themselves with local staff, Americans. We shouldn't care too much about Japan.

#### Response to Media Coverage

He thinks the way Japanese staff work here cause some frustration and hostile feelings to American workers. Unless they change their way, the negative complaints will never stop coming.

To be honest, I think there are too many Japanese companies who don't know how to act. There are many Japanese who don't know how to act in this company too. They don't know how to act and they just work as they do in Japan. They have this in their mind ; Anyway I am going back to Japan after 3-4 years.

Americans don't like that. Only Japanese get together and decide important things among themselves. If you are working very hard for an American company in Japan, and the president and the vice president came over from the U.S. and change what you had worked on suddenly. You would think For what reason I have worked so hard? It's natural feeling and it will lead to dissatisfaction. So we have to respect them, while we teach our way. Otherwise Americans will have complaints. It is important to enable them to think that they can be the president. Otherwise, they will have complaints constantly.

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS

#### Contrasting Company A and Company B

These two companies are different in many ways; size, products, nature of work, relationship among workers, satisfaction level of workers, percentage of temporary staff, and degree of Japanese presence.

Company A is a small company where people know each other, however Company B has more than 800 workers and there seems to be no personalization. Other differences in demography of the companies are that, at Company B, there are many Japanese, especially in upper management level. They try to enforce basic Japanese management philosophy. At Company A, there are four Japanese, and only one in upper management. The highest position in the plant is held by an American and their management is done by pretty much Americans. Japanese have authority in quality control area, and import and export business. Also, Company B hires a lot of temporary staff which comprise 18% of the total work force, whereas at Company A, number of temporary staff is very limited, and they tend to call in persons who have worked before. Company A makes confectionaries which is not heavy industrial work, whereas Company B produces automobile parts which demands high quality intense work. So Company A has a more relaxed atmosphere, whereas at Company B, they are con-

stantly under pressure to produce.

At Company A people seem to be very much satisfied with working conditions and even participating in outside activities; also with their pay and benefits. They feel they are fairly treated. Whereas at Company B people seems not to be satisfied with working there, because; first of all, the job is demanding, they don't feel their pay scale is fair. People tend to feel I deserve more compared to other workers.

At Company A workers seem to get along well together, but not at Company B. People often hear negative comments about specific person or specific groups. For example, Why is s/he promoted? or those Japanese something like this. Some see preferential treatment and feel the treatment of workers is not always fair. Because of this, plus dissatisfaction in their pay scale result in a lot of tension among workers. Just as people are opposed to the company's efforts on promoting teamwork and equality among workers, there is competitive environment at Company B. Workers at Company B seem to have difficulty in familiarizing themselves with the Japanese egalitarian ethos. They are socialized to the American values of individualism and competition.

These factors mentioned above as well as the differences in their hiring strategy makes a big difference in the nature of the work force in two companies. Company A keeps the number of temporary workers at minimum; and, when they call in temporaries, they prefer to have those who worked for them before. And when they have a open-

ing in the regular staff, they give first preference to experienced temporary staff. So the work force at Company A is kept relatively homogeneous without a lot of people who terminate their employment. They give seniority advantage in pay scale and in promotion, which seems very fair, so there is an encouragement to stay there for a long. Working long in the company allows American workers to familiarize themselves with the Japanese corporate culture. Through a lot of outside activity, workers have a sense of team, though their work is done pretty much individually. Above all, some identify their goals with the company's success to some degree. They are closer to the Japanese company's characteristic: Workers in a company are like family members.

On the other hand, at Company B they have a high rate of temporary staff and their promotion system seems not so fair to workers. So there is a discouragement to stay there for a long period of time. As long as they continue hiring temporary staff, the company seems to put itself into difficult situations. Their commitment to not firing regular staff and to give satisfactory benefits to regular staff makes the company unwilling to hire regular staff. Their work load may fluctuate and keeping too many regular staff raise their labor cost. So they need to have some temporary staff. Because of these factors, they have relatively high rate of terminating, and firing at the temporary level. Work force there is constantly changing, and it is detrimental in instilling a sense of unity among the workers and familiarizing workers with the Japanese management

philosophy. These conditions; forcing associates to wear uniforms and maintaining minimum wage dispersion, are not working to create harmony. Really, they're working against it.

However, there are some similarities between the two companies too; wide acceptance of non-union shops, high concerns for the quality of their products; recognition of the value of team work; and language barrier.

It seems like a lot of Americans have begun to realize the inefficiency and disadvantage of conventional labor-management relationship in the U.S., especially unionism. The companies and their employees have an adversarial relationship which hinders the growth of the company. Like one of the interviewees said, the company and employees are trying to beat each other. In this kind of condition, it is difficult to maintain work efficiency and quality of their products. Also it is difficult for the employer to listen and respond to the needs of the workers. Intervention by the union also inhibits the growth of the company, by restricting workers to do only what is in their job description. This is a great barrier for work efficiency. Allowing associates to have less compartmentalized assignments is a fundamental of the teamwork concept. The company can foster the employees' understanding of these advantages by being attentive to their needs and offering these incentives. In the long run, it is cost-effective for the company, since they can eliminate the cost arising from an adversarial relationship, such as the loss caused by strikes, costs for recruiting, and costs for law suits.

It seems like these ideas are widely accepted among workers in the two companies, and they are seeing the value of team work. With this understanding, employees can identify their personal growth with the company's growth, and at the same time, they can be proud of the quality of their products.

The language barrier is a common experience for the two companies. The burden seems to be on the Japanese side at first glance, since they are the ones who have to learn a foreign language. However, understanding by Americans is also important. They have to deal with the broken English spoken by Japanese and to make sure they understood correctly and to get the Japanese to understand what they meant. In order for that to happen, they need to take time and make a concentrated effort which requires a great amount of patience. Some American workers are tolerant enough not to feel this language barrier as a real disadvantage, but some are frustrated to some degree. Because of this language barrier, communications between the American staff and Japanese staff seems to be inhibited. However, it seems like both sides recognize that they have to work on it together. Also, it is true that not all workers have to interact with Japanese on a daily basis, since most of the Japanese are in upper management level. At Company A, there are Japanese technicians who work with assembly workers, however the nature of their task makes this language barrier somewhat minor. They can show skills such as how to operate machines with their body. Verbal communication is not so vital in this situation, since they can supple-

ment it with visual communication.

### Affirmative Action Plan

These two companies are comparable in the area of affirmative action also. Company A doesn't have an affirmative action plan, while Company B has a plan which was implemented a year ago. To have or not to have the plan is dependent on whether they are required to have by the law; executive order 11375, though it is suggested to have one as a countermeasure for accusation of discrimination (Sakai, 1991). Company B is required to have one as a subcontractor of the government. And Company A is not, so they don't have a written affirmative action plan, but the company personnel administrator interviewed thinks that they practice it.

At Company A, according to the interview, racial minorities compose around 15% of the labor force, and female workers compose more than 50%. At Company A there are ten management positions and they have one black male, two white females, one Japanese male, and the rest are white males.

At Company B, racial minorities constitute 17-18% of the labor force and females are 46%. The highest position held by a female is a section manager, and there is only one in that position.

Both seem to have problem in promoting racial minorities and females, not as much in hiring. Since Company A doesn't have an affirmative action plan, I can only discuss about the impact of the plan at Company B. Promoting of women and racial minorities is ob-



viously improving. The workers there can tell the difference before and after the implementation of the plan. At the same time they started to hear the negative comments about people of one group getting promoted. Some associate it with reverse discrimination and preferential treatment, and the other say they are just getting what they deserve.

### Discrimination

To have stereotypes and to make negative remarks toward specific racial or ethnic groups are common among American workers (Cole & Deskins, 1988). This exists in both companies, though at different degrees. Company B seems to have more of these. However, the Japanese are not involved in this at either of the two companies. Discrimination among ethnic groups seems to be a part of American culture.

At Company A, when they first opened up the plant, the old Japanese male seems to have treated women less. However, the Japanese learned really quick that this kind of attitude is not acceptable. The Japanese here may live male-dominated lives in their families; but not in their work place. For the Japanese, how they look like seems to be not important and the way Japanese treat people makes many Americans feel that the Japanese are very respectful people.

### Reaction to the Media Coverage

This was the one of the most intriguing questions to ask. Answers to this question varied a great deal. Interestingly enough, none of the Americans interviewed said that it is because Japanese companies are discriminating. It is no wonder because none of them have ever experienced being discriminated by a Japanese staff member. Some feel they are discriminated against in the company, but not by the Japanese. On the other hand, both of the Japanese managers interviewed admitted inappropriate acts by the Japanese, though their perspectives are different. The Japanese manager at Company A thinks that it may be because the Japanese are treating female workers as they would in Japan. In a way he admits that females are treated secondary in the Japanese labor market. The Japanese manager at Company B said it's because of the Japanese attitude toward working in the U.S., American workers are dissatisfied. There are many Japanese who work in the U.S. with their mind still in Japan. Important decisions are made through Japanese channels, and Americans are not able to feel that their work and opinions are valued in the Japanese company. He thinks this dissatisfaction by the American workers is the prime source of a lot of negative report on Japanese companies. The assumption he made is that discrimination itself is not a real problem, but to be able to satisfy workers is an important key.

The various opinions provided by the participants were very insightful for arriving at conclusions about this research. There

are many law suits filed against Japanese companies accusing them of discrimination. However, it is not fair to label a Japanese company. Actually there is no record available which classifies discrimination suits into the ownership of the country. Accusing the company of discrimination is common in the U.S. Whether it is a unique problem to Japanese companies is a question. Actually, Mr. Kemps, a Chairperson of EEOC stated that there is no evidence that shows Japanese companies are more discriminatory than American companies in the congressional hearing in 1991 (Kilberg, Tallent, & Agawa, 1993). If that's so, the media is responsible for creating a false image of Japanese companies.

However, it is also true that Japanese companies are accused of discrimination. There are several law suits actually filed. When these cases are reported by the media, is it clear as to who did the discriminating? A Japanese company was sued. But who in the company did the discrimination? Was it a Japanese? Or was it an American personnel? It is a fact that Japanese companies tend to have American personnel managers.

It may be a part of the over-exaggeration by the media on Japanese buying up America. According to the interviewees, this heightened media attention can be attributed to Americans jealousy or envy. Americans conquering attitude makes them feel that they must defeat the Japanese, and some long-term U.S. residents who cannot start businesses, while the Japanese can, feel unfavorably towards Japanese. The total value of Japan's foreign direct investment in the

U.S. became the largest of all nations in 1993 for the first time. Before that, Great Britain used to be the top for years, but we never heard about Great Britain buying up America. It can be reasonably assumed that this media bias represents anti-Japanese feelings held among U.S. society.

Another perspective is that discrimination is really not a problem, but workers negative experiences in working for a Japanese company is expressed in this form. As the Japanese managers indicated there is a legal system and culture in the U.S. that encourages people to accuse the company. These negative experiences do not have to be incidents of discrimination. The important thing is if people who worked or are working for the Japanese companies are overall satisfied with it, there would be less accusation. The real problem would be about working conditions, such as, as one of the interviewees said, workers who were in a union shop feel that they work too much in the Japanese company. So if this is the case, what the Japanese companies should learn are; first of all, how to satisfy workers, and second of all and more realistically, how to protect themselves from accusation. This includes both prevention and countermeasures. In some companies, an affirmative action program is implemented for this purpose.

Let's apply this idea to Company A and Company B. At Company A, satisfying workers has been successful, so the likelihood of this company being sued is low. So they may not need to prepare for the accusation. The attitude of the Japanese manager at Company A

proves this. He is not aware of how he should respond to when he is asked something about the status of racial minorities and female workers in his company. He just said "I don't know," and he seems to be defensive by saying, "If I say something about it, it would be a problem." It seems like that he knows discrimination is a controversial matter in the U.S., and he doesn't want to get involved in it, since he doesn't know how to react. There is a proverb in Japan: "Put a lid on the smelly stuff." This can be translated as an attitude like putting aside a problem, instead of investigating it. He has been in the situation where he didn't have to investigate, think, reflect about the discrimination problem. Though he commented that those Japanese companies who were accused of discrimination may be doing the same kind of practice as in Japan; that is, secondary treatment of female workers, and though he said they stopped that practice in the U.S., which means they still do it in Japan, a Japanese female worker served tea at the time of the interview.

I have to mention that I got to be a personal friend with that lady, and she doesn't have complaints about serving tea. Though I can imagine that a person who would replaced her in the future might have a problem doing that, and the Japanese manager might expect her to behave in the same way, which would be a real problem. Another thing is that when I asked him about the number of Japanese there, he didn't count her. Did he just forget about her? Or is he using a double standard? In either case, this reveals his lack of recognition of her as a equal participant in the company. This was

just the opposite of how the personnel manager and a lot of American workers appreciated her presence in the company. She has been a great help when something has to be communicated between Japanese and American workers. And she shows great concern toward employees families. I got the impression that a part of Company A's success is due to her presence and personality. Obviously, the Japanese manager overlooked the important role of the interpreter. The major disadvantageous factor of these Japanese companies was found to be the communication gap. At Company A, she helped to bridge the gap. Being fluent in both Japanese and English language, and being familiar with both Japanese and American culture, the person like her may loosen the possible tension in the company. Workers can feel free to express their concerns because of her neutral position, since she is not in management side.

On the other hand, at Company B, they are not doing good in satisfying employees, and they were accused 10-20 times. So they have been in a situation where they have to deal with the problem. The Japanese manager is well aware of the discrimination issue, though they have never had discrimination suits. Most of the cases were about work related injury. However, he attends a meeting at least once a month where Japanese automobile related companies in this Midwest area get together and share their problems. Discrimination is one of the biggest issues for them. They are learning how to deal with it. They are still in the learning process. For instance, Company B used to have settlements out of court by paying

money because fighting in the court requires a lot of time and money. But now, the Japanese manager in Company B thinks it is not a good idea because people would think that if they sue Company B, they can get money. So in order to eliminate this reputation they brought recently three cases into the court and won all of them. So the analysis by the interviewee makes complete sense in this context: People take advantage of Japanese unfamiliarity with U.S. culture or system, and of the Japanese giving/sharing characteristic by suing Japanese companies and trying to get money from them.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Based on previous chapters, the following vision emerged which tries to make sense about the acculturation process associated with Japanese companies coming to the U.S. There are three levels involved in this process; individual level, organizational level, and societal level, though they are interrelated among each other and unable to be distinguished exclusively.

Inside the company, American workers are exposed to Japanese corporate culture, and at the same time, Japanese managers establish contact with American workers. Acculturation is occurring in both ways, Americans take some Japanese ways, and Japanese adjust to American ways. This is due to daily interaction between cultures and exposure to another culture experienced by individuals.

For the company, some changes are observed in its organizational structure as a consequence of transferring to the U.S. This acculturation is driven by economic forces, since the objective of every company is to make money, and not to learn different cultures. The management may need to understand different cultures, but this is a secondary reason and the ultimate goal is to make profit. However, the lack of knowledge and lack of understanding about different cultures has been proven to cause serious threats to companies profitability.



And most importantly, there are social factors which influence the acculturation at the individual level and organizational level such as the American legal system and U.S. culture. For example, strict anti-discrimination regulations compel Japanese companies to follow certain criteria which don't exist in Japan. It is very unrealistic to expect change in this kind of social system to the Japanese's advantage, and the only choice would be to just take it as a given. Japanese seem to have learned very quickly that secondary treatment of female workers is not acceptable in the U.S. Females have strong legal support in the U.S., which they don't have in Japan.

In addition to this strict regulation, there are many cultural factors that affect the acculturation process. First of all, to have legal suits is common in the U.S. whereas it is not in Japan. If I reflect further on that problem, I can see the U.S. culture of adversarism. In the U.S., discussion is a matter of which side will win over. So they fight in the court till one side wins over another. The Japanese are more inclined to have consensus. As I mentioned already in Chapter II, one of the characteristics of Japanese corporate culture is consensus decision making. Japanese discuss not to decide who will win, but to reach an agreement which reflects both sides of opinions and still is agreeable to both sides. That is one of the reasons that they are slow to make changes, once they establish a policy, like one of the interviewee mentioned. However, in the U.S., they fight, they sue. It seems like it took time for

Company B to acculturate to this aspect of U.S. culture. They had been accused many times, but they were not willing to fight in the court. Like the Japanese manager in Company B said, the biggest reason was cost and time required to fight in the court. However, I see Japanese culture affecting this decision. They would rather compromise out of court than fight in the court. "If people who accused the company would be satisfied with the amount of money we are going to pay, let's do this. Considering the time, money, and energy to fight in the court, this may be a better choice." They just let it go without clarifying the black and white issue. Now they are just beginning to realize that they have to pay later anyway, as it is becoming common that people can get money if they accuse a Japanese company (Thompson, 1988). In a sense, they were taken advantage of due to their unfamiliarity with U.S. culture. Company B brought recently three cases to the court and they fought in the court and won. They are acculturating into the U.S. culture of adversarism, otherwise, they can't survive in the U.S.

Racial and ethnic diversity is another new cultural phenomenon for Japanese. From the interviews, Japanese are less likely to have stereotypes than Americans. This is, in part, due to the fact that the Japanese have never had contact with diverse people of the U.S. at first hand. To whatever the degrees, the Japanese companies in the U.S. have to have diverse people. This is always accompanied by some stereotypes held by American workers and sometimes conflict among groups. Sometimes it works against the companies goals.

Oftentimes conflict in the company inhibits efficient work. For example, assembly line workers who don't get along with a supervisor try to cause trouble for him by sabotaging and so on. In these cases, management has to work on the problem. Japanese companies are very concerned for quality of their products. They demand very high quality performance from every worker. Everybody's effort and contribution is indispensable to achieve the company's goal. That is why Company B thinks "everybody is equally important." This idea is at the heart of the "Total Quality Control (TQC) Management" nurtured in Japanese companies. Under this TQC management, conflicts among workers are not allowed, and everybody's opinion need to be valued. So this management style would be a good model for diversity management. Many American companies are now going toward this direction, however, the Japanese companies who are experienced with this TQC management have a high possibility that diversity management will be successful, because demand is also high there. Interestingly enough, the definition of the diversity management provided by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and Commerce Clearing House (CCH) matches the philosophy of TQC management; "the management of organization's systems and cultures to ensure that all people are given the opportunity to contribute" (Freeman, 1994, p. 52). Looking at this from another perspective, TQC is successful in Japan, maybe because Japanese workers have more homogeneous values, similar backgrounds, and they tend not to fight, but to seek consensus. They strive for harmonious relationships.

Anti-Japanese feeling in U.S. society is another force compelling Japanese companies to aggressively work on discrimination problems or any other problems. Compared to American companies, they tend to get more negative, critical views from the media or from the general public. It is true especially for Company B, because they are in the automobile industry which attracts the most attention from people in U.S.--Japan unbalanced trade issue.

Considering the above factors, the Japanese companies in the U.S. may be a good place for diverse people to work. Because of their background in Japan where women are treated inequitably and there is no strong legal system that protects female workers and where racial or ethnic minority issues are not recognized enough, they definitely have some disadvantages. They have to learn these things in the U.S., and it appears that they have learned a lot of things in the last decade. However, they have some advantages also, such as their management style that requires everybody's involvement. So they have an internal demand to successfully deal with a diverse work force in the company, and also they have external forces which compel them to hire and retain diverse workers, such as anti-discrimination regulations, and critical attention from the U.S. public.

We have seen a successful case in Company A where people are happy working for the company and everybody feels they are respected. At Company B they seemed to have some problems in this area. What makes this difference? My hypothesis is that at Company B they

have not been successful in promoting Japanese egalitarian philosophy, because they are so confronted with the U.S. value of individualism and competition. They have started to recognize the value of team work, but not to the extent that they act collectively as a company. The workers are still fighting inside the company; who is better. They don't identify their success with the success of the company. It is no wonder that turnover rate is high at Company B; people see no strong encouragement to stay there. Also, the U.S. labor market is structured in a way that allows people to change their job often. If they see a better opportunity elsewhere, there is no reason to stay. Though it is changing, in Japan, changing a job is viewed negatively, and there are few opportunities for those who are not new graduates. Workers in Japanese organizations are trained to be generalists, and they are well familiar with all areas of the company, but this inhibits one from being a specialist which limits the chance of employment at another company (Shenker & Pucik, 1988). Another possible factor that makes difference between worker's attitudes in the two companies is their reference group. That is, workers at Company B compare their status with other people who are in the automobile manufacturing industry. They get relatively high pay in the U.S. and the union of the industry, United Auto Workers (UAW), has an influential position in the U.S. Also, wearing the logo t-shirt is common among members. If workers in Company B compare themselves with those people in a situation where they encounter uncommon practices enforced by the Japanese management, the

stronger resistance we have seen in Company B's case is comprehensible.

So, for the Japanese companies in the U.S., they need to have stronger attractions or encouragement for the workers to stay longer to the extent that they see their future in the company as they do in Japan. It would be difficult, especially for skilled, experienced, and talented people since they can find a better position in other companies. So they may need to have an elevated, discriminatory pay scale for this purpose. However, I think, they can still keep their philosophy of equality with a little bit more of sophistication that can be accepted by American workers: Everybody is important, since everybody can make a unique contribution to the company, which is indispensable for the company's success. Some receive more pay and some receive less. But it doesn't mean their value to the company is more or less. It is not common for the Japanese companies to reward an individual who demonstrates initiative greater than employees of the same recruiting group. The idea is that it is not one individual who brings about good results, but everybody. Since for the company, if somebody's contribution is missing, the whole company will fail. So "we are dependent on each other," nobody can do what the whole company is doing by oneself. If you could do it, please say, "I did it." But if you can't, we don't accept any attitude that disgraces or degrades anybody in the company. This is a fair understanding of the company that you need to internalize. Actually, Japanese companies in the U.S. are re-

ported to be more selective in hiring, and one of the selection standards commonly used is if s/he is a team player (Murase, 1992). Competitive people are often considered as a negative force in Japanese companies since they disturb harmony (Pepper, 1990).

The presence of the Japanese companies in the U.S. may have some possibility of restructuring the U.S. labor market. This is an acculturation process occurring at the societal level, with the U.S. society accepting some aspects of the Japanese system and changing. Since Japanese companies are trying to avoid unions, and they seem to be successful in that. People working for Japanese companies have good experiences, and they are seeing disadvantages of the unions more. This will affect the local employment patterns where Japanese companies are located. Actually, the Japanese companies can choose the site where the union culture is not dominant (Rogers, 1993). And if those Japanese companies defeat their competitors in union shops, it may contribute to the unemployment of union workers. To avoid this, unions also need to make compromises and make some changes in their policy. In this way, the Japanese company's presence may contribute to restructuring the U.S. labor system, too (Rogers, 1993). This change is reported to be occurring in the automobile industry where unions have to negotiate their policy toward more cooperative relationship with management in order to be competitive against non-union plants (Rehder, 1990; Treece, 1989). The presence of Japanese companies may have long-term effects on the U.S. work force.

At the same time, union members who hold traditional values are becoming to lose their niches as more and more people are coming to appreciate the Japanese style of harmonious relations between labor and management. Unions are threatened with loss of support, and as a consequence of it, they are getting radical. Indeed, labor unions may covertly support racist, neo-Nazi-type anti-Japanese campaigns to win the support of the U.S. citizenry. So, Japanese companies presence coupled with other globalization trends may promote the idea of multiculturalism or diversity, however, at the same time, this may provoke the strong backlash of racist movement. I have reflected on the acculturation processes associated with the Japanese companies coming to the U.S. Acculturation is occurring at three levels; individual, organizational, and societal. There are various factors such as cultural, institutional, economic, social, organizational, and so on that impact this process. This process is not singular, nor linear. Various factors are intermingled, and the process is highly complex. In this research, I have tried to explore and uncover some of the processes occurring, and some of the factors affecting these processes. There are other processes and factors that are not mentioned in this paper. And this acculturation process will continue and some other forms will emerge as the time goes. However, I hope this research can provide some insights toward better understanding of world events in this era of the global economy.



## Appendix A

### Protocol Clearance From the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board



Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008-3899  
616 387-8293

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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Date: July 28, 1994

To: Jun Nagasawa

From: Kevin Hollenbeck, Chair

*for K. Hollenbeck*

Re: HSIRB Project Number 94-06-09

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Dealing with the U.S. - diverse workforce: case studies of two Japanese-owned companies in the U.S." has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

You must seek reapproval for any changes in this design. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: July 28, 1995

xc: Davidson, SOC

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