

ity in labor markets in Indonesia. In particular, by highlighting how and why women are drawn into the industrial workforce, it sheds light on how feminization brought limited, although not insignificant, benefits for women. The pattern and process through which women entered the manufacturing workforce was crucial. Feminization increased women's access to work in the formal sector, but most of the higher-paying sectors remained closed to them. Although women often earned wages equal to men's in the low-pay sectors, after more than a decade of feminization, men's average wages in manufacturing were still much higher than women's. These inequalities persist because markets reproduce and redraw rather than erase the gendered boundaries in production which perpetuate gender inequalities in the labor market. Diverting the market from this path requires disrupting the gendered processes within labor markets which reconfigure rather than undermine these gender inequalities.

impact of femin. on gender inequality in labor markets

limited benefits for women

pattern/process of entering manuf. workforce

- femin. increased women's access yet higher paying jobs remained closed off

- men's wages higher in same sector

- markets reproduce/redraw rather than erase boundaries

From Cheap Labor and Export-Oriented Industrialization to the Gendered Political Economy Approach

Industrialization in the post-war period has been as much female led as export led.

SUSAN P. JOEKES, 1987

2 factors in creating feminization

Theorists unfailingly highlight two factors as crucial in generating the waves of feminization that swept through much of the developing world after World War II: changes in the global organization of production, and women's low wages. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, multinational corporations began to relocate labor-intensive assembly operations from developed countries to cheaper production sites overseas. At the same time, export-oriented industrialization (EOI) became the favored development policy in many developing countries. These twin occurrences generated higher demand for cheap and easily exploitable labor to fuel export drives (Frobel, Heinrichs, and Kreye 1980; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983). Since exporters competed in global markets, they were extremely sensitive to labor costs, with immense gendered consequences. Exporters were especially keen to hire women, because their subordination to men meant that they could be paid low wages.¹ Those that eschewed cheap female labor in favor of more expensive male labor would therefore find themselves at a competitive disadvantage in the cutthroat global economy. EOI and patriarchy thus combined to make women the ideal workforce in countries that relied on exports to propel industrialization drives (Elson and Pearson 1981a; Fox 1993; Joekes 1987; Lim 1983, 1990; Safa 1986).

The purpose of this chapter is to unpack the arguments that underlie the

Exporters
men & women

male
w/ina
ideal

conventional wisdom and to cast some doubt on their persuasiveness. Although they contain a grain of truth, a closer look at both the manner in which feminization unfolds and the cross-national patterns of feminization calls into question the level of causal weight attributed to them. I argue that it is not market orientation (export orientation versus inwardly directed industrialization) that matters but rather the balance of employment between labor-intensive and capital-intensive sectors. Moreover, I argue that two additional factors need to be introduced to analyses of feminization in order to account for cross-national variations in women's share of manufacturing employment: the supply characteristics of women workers, and mediating institutions. I suggest that low wages are only a partial explanation why employers in labor-intensive sectors hire women. Gendered discourses of work—ideas about men and women as distinct types of labor—are necessary to explain not only feminization but also why many employers are reluctant to cut costs by hiring "cheap" female labor.

Industrialization Paths and Feminization

The feminist literature on women's work in export-processing zones has long emphasized the importance of export orientation and labor intensity in determining the propensity of particular sectors of manufacturing to employ women (Elson and Pearson 1981a; Joeekes 1987; Lim 1983).² According to these authors, export and labor intensity compel factories to reduce labor costs as much as possible in order to compete. The pioneering works written in the early 1980s, before masculinization occurred in export-oriented countries such as South Korea and Taiwan, gave exporting and labor intensity equal weight. Yet labor intensity is the more important factor. Labor-intensive industries, regardless of whether they export, face competitive markets because entry costs are low.

Labor intensity and capital intensity are usually measured as value-added per capita. Sectors with high value-added per capita are capital intensive; those with low value-added per capita are labor intensive. The Industrial Statistics Database of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which includes sectoral female employment data from 1981 to 1995 as well as sectoral data on output, value-added, total employment, and wages, allows for an assessment of the importance of labor intensity in promoting women's employment.³ I ran an ordinary

Table 1.1. Regression equation with log of percent female as dependent variable

Capital intensity	-0.244*** (0.011)
(Constant)	0.390** (0.179)
R-squared = 0.522	
Adjusted R-squared = 0.519	
N = 8,238	

Source: UNIDO Industrial Statistics Database.

Note: Unstandardized regression coefficients with standard error in parentheses; *p* values indicated by *, **, and *** for values less than 0.1, 0.05, 0.01.

least squares (OLS) regression analysis with the natural log of *Percent Female* as the dependent variable and the natural log of *Capital Intensity*, measured as value-added per worker, and forty-eight country dummy variables to control for a host of national factors that could affect the level of female employment. The model explains 52 percent of the variance in female employment, and the coefficient for capital intensity is statistically significant and has a substantive impact in the expected direction—a 1 percent increase in capital intensity leads to a 0.244 decrease in percent female (see Table 1.1). In other words, as capital intensity increases, women's share of employment decreases.

Shifts in employment between labor- and capital-intensive sectors will therefore have gendered consequences. The type of industrialization that a country pursues has dramatic effects on the balance of employment in labor- and capital-intensive sectors of manufacturing and thus has predictable effects on men's and women's shares of employment. Political economists have identified two main forms of industrialization: import-substitution industrialization (ISI) and EOI. ISI is based on production for the local market and involves high levels of protection for domestic producers; it also tends to promote the growth of capital-intensive sectors. Scholars distinguish between two phases of ISI, primary and secondary (Gereffi 1990; Haggard 1990). Although primary ISI entails the production of some labor-intensive goods such as textiles, it is usually more capital intensive than primary EOI. As primary ISI progresses to secondary ISI, industry becomes even more capital intensive, which strengthens the masculine tendency of this type of industrialization. ISI is likely to lead to

the employment of men because it promotes capital-intensive industries—although primary ISI has led to feminization in some cases: in Indonesia during the 1970s, for example, impressive employment growth in an inward-oriented labor-intensive industry, textiles, generated some feminization.

EOI is a mirror image of ISI. Whereas ISI emphasizes production for the domestic market, EOI promotes manufactured exports. Its first stage, primary EOI, is highly labor intensive. Since job growth occurs overwhelmingly in labor-intensive sectors during the primary phase of EOI, demand for female labor rises. Like ISI, EOI becomes more capital intensive with the shift from the primary to the secondary stage, although employment in labor-intensive sectors remains large (Gereffi 1990). EOI is therefore more likely to result in feminization than ISI, but since the move to secondary EOI results in increased capital intensity, the reliance on female labor usually diminishes over time. Most existing studies of feminization concentrated on the primary rather than the secondary phase of EOI, which led them to associate EOI erroneously with feminization. It is the primary phase of EOI that is most strongly linked to an increased presence of women in manufacturing work.

In practice, countries often combine EOI and ISI, and when they do, it is necessary to look closely at the net impact on job creation of capital- versus labor-intensive sectors. When employment in labor-intensive sectors grows more quickly than that in capital-intensive sectors, feminization is likely to ensue. The crucial point, then, is not market orientation but how the type of industrialization affects the balance of sectoral employment.

Waves of Feminization

Historically, primary EOI led to waves of feminization across the globe because it generated enormous job growth in labor-intensive industries. Although East Asia's dynamic "tiger" economies—Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan—and Mexico's *maquiladoras* are at the forefront of thinking about the export-led model of industrial development and its impact on women workers, the precursors of export-driven growth in the contemporary era were actually Puerto Rico and Ireland. Puerto Rico embarked on its export drive, Operation Bootstrap, in the 1950s (Rios 1990); Ireland began to promote exports in 1960, with the establishment of

the first export-processing zone in the world at Shannon Airport (Pyle 1990). It soon became apparent that many multinational companies that invested in both countries preferred to hire women. About 60 percent of the newly created jobs in Puerto Rico went to women (Rios 1990). In Ireland, companies responding to the export-promotion scheme employed more women than the average for manufacturing as a whole—about 40 percent versus 31.8 percent (Pyle 1990).

Ironically, policymakers in both places formulated the new industrialization programs to reduce male unemployment, and each later took measures to rein in the tendency of export factories to employ women. Puerto Rico responded by promoting a more capital-intensive form of export-oriented industrialization (Rios 1990). The Irish government passed new incentives in 1969 that explicitly stated a minimum goal of 75 percent male employment in new investments (Pyle 1990). Ireland, more successful than Puerto Rico, managed to hold down female employment in sectors that were highly feminized internationally, allocating 74 percent of jobs in newly approved projects in the early 1970s to men. By the late 1970s, however, the commitment to this goal flagged, and in 1975 the government dropped the "predominantly male" provision of investment laws, and the state investment board stopped reporting jobs by sex. In 1978 the government gave up discouraging the employment of women and lobbied for the repeal of the protective legislation that prevented women from working at night.

Mexico was another early promoter of exports as a path to reducing male unemployment. The government initiated the Border Industrialization Program (BIP) in 1965 in order to offset male unemployment in northern Mexico in the aftermath of the bracero program, which had allowed Mexicans to enter the United States as agricultural workers. The BIP led to the establishment of the *maquiladoras*—factories on the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexico border which produce for export, primarily to the United States (Fernandez-Kelly 1983). In spite of the government's desire to promote male employment, the *maquilas* were keen employers of women, especially during the first fifteen years of operation. In 1975, about 85 percent of all *maquila* workers in Ciudad Juarez were women (Fernandez-Kelly 1983), and in 1980 women composed 77 percent of the workforce in all *maquiladoras* (Geografia e Informatica Instituto Nacional de Estadistica 1983).

* The political economy of the post-World War II era pushed many countries onto this labor- and female-intensive path. Few incentives existed for capital-intensive firms to relocate to poor countries solely because of lower labor costs, as wages were a smaller component of their total costs than in labor-intensive sectors. Capital-intensive investments were more appealing as import-substituting investments, where large capital outlays could be justified by privileged access to local markets. An export strategy of development thus required governments to accept that they would attract labor-intensive industries, which would unfailingly desire to hire many women.

Following on the heels of Ireland, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, feminization swept through many Caribbean nations and East Asian newly industrializing countries (NICs): South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Likewise, the "tiger cubs" in Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia), as well as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius, followed a similar pattern as they expanded export promotion. In recent years a number of Central American countries, China, and Vietnam have also followed this path. Unlike the early exporters, these countries were fully conscious that the chosen development strategy would create many jobs for women and rarely interfered with the mobilization of female labor; in fact, government officials often facilitated and even encouraged factories to employ women by repealing protective legislation (Lim 1978), helping with the recruitment of female workers (Arrigo 1980; Ong 1987; Rosa 1989; Wolf 1992), advertising in investment brochures (Grossman 1978), pleading outright for the hiring of women in "lighter" jobs (Lim 1978), and even subsidizing child care (Phongpaichit 1988).

In all the East Asian NICs except Singapore, as well as in the *maquiladoras* in Mexico, the female share of employment peaked between 1975 and 1980 and subsequently declined. The masculinization in many of the countries that had begun export promotion policies in the 1960s and early 1970s is an interesting twist in the story, as manufacturing in these countries remained export intensive. In the East Asian NICs a large part of the explanation is that employment growth in labor-intensive sectors shrank, relative to capital-intensive sectors. The main cause was the relocation of labor-intensive industries to other countries, especially to Southeast Asia, but employment in relatively capital- and male-intensive sectors also expanded. In Mexico, masculinization in the *maquiladoras* accompanied fem-

inization at the national level. The increasing prominence of male workers in the *maquiladoras* was a result of the masculinization of historically feminine industries (i.e., garments, electronics), the growth of relatively masculine sectors such as transport and furniture, and an increase in the share of technical workers relative to operators (Catanzarite and Strober 1993; Sklair 1993; Tiano 1994). In all these countries, masculinization occurred during the second phase of EOI and coincided with shifts in employment from labor-intensive to more capital-intensive sectors of manufacturing. ✓

Thickening the Plot: Mediating Institutions and Labor Supply

The type of industrialization affects gendered trends in employment in the manufacturing sector as a whole through its effects on the expansion and contraction of sectoral employment. Yet this is only part of the story. If it is only capital or labor intensity that matters, then there should be little cross-national variation in gendered shares of sectoral employment. Yet as can be seen in Table 1.2, marked cross-national sectoral variations exist. For example, although the textiles industry is labor intensive and relatively feminine in all the countries in the table, the *share* of female employment in the sector varies by country. The difference between the maximum and the minimum percent female for each sector is calculated in the column farthest to the right, and these differences range from 11 to 72 percent. Even when we control for export orientation, the differences are dramatic. Moreover, the disparity between Latin America and Asia is stunning. In Table 1.2, the maximum percent female for a sector is enclosed by a light border and the minimum with a dark border; the count of maximums and minimums is then calculated for each country at the bottom of its column. Almost all the minimums are in Latin America, while all the maximums are in Asia. An explanation focusing solely on labor intensity cannot explain these cross-national variations. Labor intensity is crucial for understanding changes over time within countries in women's share of manufacturing employment, and it can also predict in a probabilistic fashion which sectors are likely to be the most feminine in any given country, but cross-national variation in women's share of sectoral employment suggests that labor-intensity is only part of the story. ✓

I believe it is necessary to supplement the argument based on labor intensity with other features of the domestic political economy, in particular

Table 1.2. Female share (%) of employment by country and sector

Sector	Argentina 1985	Brazil 1985	Mexico 1985	Indonesia 1994	Malaysia 1985	Philippines 1988	Singapore 1985	Thailand 1985	ROK 1985	Taiwan 1985	Max. - Min.
Food	23	27	22	46	33	27	38	31	43	47	25
Beverages	10	10	3	38	30	10	31	24	24	30	35
Tobacco	16	40	26	88	47	58	40	53	65	47	72
Textiles	35	39	25	56	64	47	65	78	75	65	53
Garments	74	67	77	79	89	80	89	97	61	79	30
Footwear	37		30	78	56	51	43		24	65	48
Wood Processing	6	10	6	39	24	11	40	27	24	40	34
Paper	14	19	12	23	39	22	42	45	24	30	33
Industrial chemicals	8	7	5	22	16	15	18	28	19	28	23
Other chemicals	29	44	33	58	42	29	38	52	36	44	29
Iron and steel	3	7	3	2	13	7	10	8	6	13	11
Non-ferrous metals	5		7	7	16	8	33	9	9	20	28
Non-electrical machinery	7	4	18	8	17	10	21	14	12	18	17
Electronics	22	34	50	60	74	64	72	41	51	59	52
Transport	6	6	8	11	20	8	10	17	9	18	14
Professional & scientific	22	36	50	57	71	68	69	60	46	55	49
Total Minimums	7	3	7	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Total Maximums	0	0	0	4	4	0	3	4	0	3	

Sources: See the Statistical Appendix.

with factors that shape the *supply* of appealing and available women for work in factories and the *mediating institutions* that affect employer access to this labor. The assumptions of most existing analyses of feminization—that women are available to work in factories, that women are attractive potential employees, and that employers can hire them—are wildly unrealistic. An ensemble of political factors both determines women's availability for employment and facilitates or obstructs their entry into the workforce, and these factors vary cross-nationally.

Among factors that shape the supply characteristics of female labor, government policy—through its effects on women's fertility, education levels, and labor force participation rates—affects the availability of women to work in factories and their attractiveness as potential employees. Lower fertility levels make women more appealing to employers, especially in countries where employers have to pay for maternity leave: if women begin having children later in life, employers that hire young women can be relatively assured that it will be years before they claim maternity leave or leave the workforce to concentrate on family duties. Basic education, especially literacy and numeracy, also affect employer demand for women's labor: if a country's educational system produces fewer women than men with the basic skills needed in the workplace, many employers will be reluctant to hire women. The organization of reproduction in the family and norms about women's participation in waged work outside the home not only affect the supply of women available for work but also the demand for their labor by employers (Stichter 1990).

Likewise mediating institutions affect the capacity of employers to hire women and thus have an important impact on patterns of female employment. Labor market institutions such as unions, the structure of collective bargaining, and protective legislation all mediate between the supply of female labor and capital's demand for it, limiting or facilitating employer access to female workers. Unions can prevent the replacement of male workers with female workers. Centralized bargaining that sets wages throughout an industry prevents employers from undercutting male wages by hiring women. Protective legislation, if enforced, can prevent women from working night shifts, which in turn limits the capacity of factories that use shift work to employ women. In some advanced industrialized countries, certain industries rely on vocational education to produce workers with the requisite skill sets (Hall and Soskice 2001). If

gov? state

union

women have difficulty gaining entry into vocational education systems, they will be excluded from the areas of employment that rely on the skills imparted through these training programs. In addition, conservative political parties and religious organizations can potentially lay roadblocks in the path of employers that seek to employ women. Thus, rather than assuming that employers can readily hire a supply of women workers, careful attention must be given to the mediating institutions that intervene between the supply of gendered workers and employer demand for gendered workers. As with supply factors, these mediating institutional features vary from country to country and across time within particular countries.

Insights from Indonesia

A common problem in many studies of feminization is that they focus solely on labor-intensive and export-oriented industries that employ women. This biased sample assures that scholars will conclude that export-oriented and labor-intensive industries do employ women. Without examining the manufacturing sector as a whole, however, it is impossible to assess which factors carry the most causal weight. Moreover, few studies take a longer historical perspective; most examine developments that take place over just a few years.

A holistic and historical view of gendered patterns of industrialization in one country can offer insights that previous studies have missed. When Indonesia embarked on its industrialization drive in the early 1970s, men held the majority of jobs in medium and large firms, but by the mid-1990s men and women each composed about half of the production workforce. In 1971, only three of twenty-five sectors employed more women than men (tobacco, garments, and "other"). Over the next twenty-five years, women's share of the production workforce increased in nineteen of twenty-four sectors, and women became the majority in six additional sectors (textiles, footwear, other chemicals, plastic, electronics, and professional and scientific equipment). As feminization theorists have argued, an important aspect of this transformation was the rise of EOI. Whereas ISI concentrated investment in relatively capital-intensive sectors and generated little employment growth, EOI favored labor-intensive industries and created enormous job growth. In the early 1980s, Indonesia began to make

tentative moves into EOI and by the late 1980s was fully engaged in an export promotion strategy. The labor-intensive sectors that were the major success stories of EOI generated much of the new employment for women. Feminization of the greatest magnitude occurred in sectors with high and medium-high levels of labor intensity, particularly in those that were major exporters.

Yet the transformation was both much deeper and more varied than the EOI narrative suggests. First, many but by no means all export sectors were female intensive. For example, wood industries were overwhelmingly export oriented and labor intensive, yet men remained the majority of that sector's workforce. Even more surprising, the most female-intensive industry in Indonesia was an inward-oriented and relatively capital-intensive sector, tobacco. Second, even among labor-intensive export industries, the degree of feminization that took place varied dramatically: although significant feminization occurred in both textiles and wood-processing industries, the change in women's share of employment was greater in wood products (38 percent) than in textiles (20 percent). Third, even when controlling for exporting and labor intensity, I found that women's actual share of employment varied widely: for instance, women were a higher proportion of the workforce in footwear than in wood products even though both industries were extremely labor and export intensive. Fourth, the scope of feminization extended far beyond export industries and affected almost every sector of manufacturing. And finally, the extent of feminization within sectors was uneven, some firms feminizing and others sticking with men. In sum, even when controlling for labor intensity and exporting, one finds that the degree of feminization and women's share of employment varied both between sectors and between firms within sectors, and that even sectors relatively unexposed to international competition were feminized.

The variability in gendered practices holds even when we control for wages and labor intensity. Figure 1.1 breaks down wages and capital intensity into four categories each—low, medium-low, medium-high, and high—and places capital intensity on one axis and wages on another.⁴ Each sector is then placed in the box that corresponds to its level of capital intensity and wages. The figure shows that the most labor-intensive sectors employ the highest share of women—58 percent—and that the sectors that pay the lowest wages, regardless of the level of capital intensity, employ

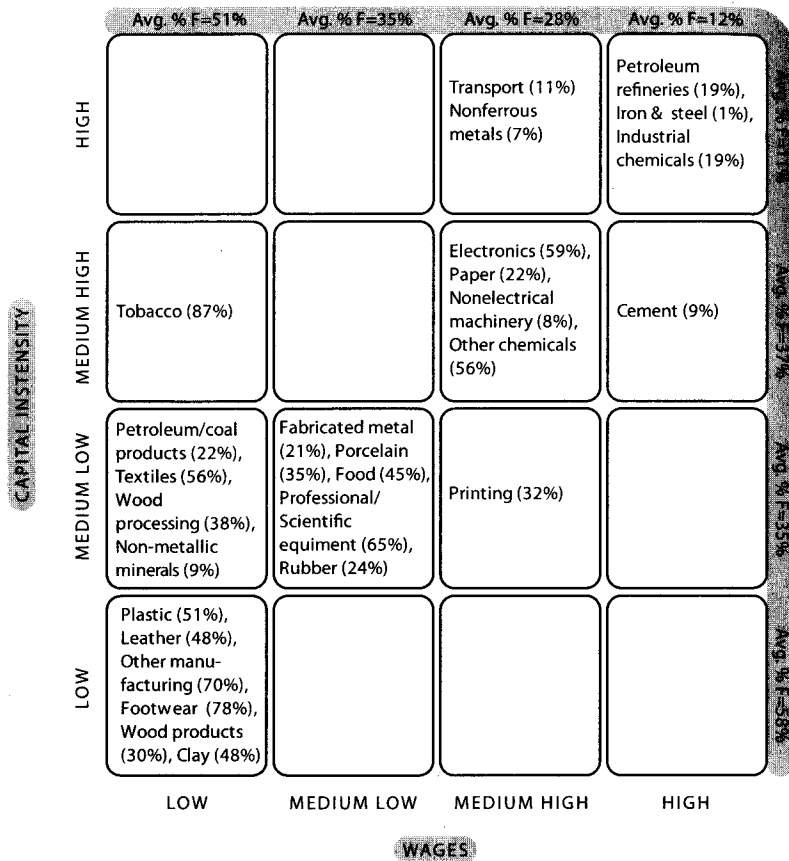


Figure 1.1. Women's employment by wages and capital intensity, Indonesia, 1996.
Source: Biro Pusat Statistik, *Statistik Industri Besar dan Sedang 1996* (1997).

more women. The general relationship between labor intensity, wages, and female employment is confirmed, but many labor-intensive sectors employ a lot of men, and some capital-intensive sectors employ many women. The large differences in the level of female employment between the sectors inside each box indicate that sectors with similar wages and levels of capital intensity have substantial leeway in selecting a gendered work force. For example, in the low/low box, wood products employ only 30 percent women, whereas garments and footwear employ 78 percent; in the medium-high/medium-high box, nonelectrical machinery has only 8 percent women, whereas electronics has 59 percent. Significantly, the disparities in women's

employment are lowest for the highly capital-intensive sectors, but all other boxes with at least two sectors show wide dispersions in the percentage of female workers employed.

Given the capacity of some relatively labor-intensive sectors to rely on male labor and the choice of some capital-intensive sectors to employ women, a structural account that explains sectoral proclivities (labor intensity versus capital intensity) must be complemented by a more interpretive and historical explication of the gendered development of sectoral and firm-level labor practices. The sharp disparities between sectors with similar levels of wages and capital intensity indicate that gender exerts an impact on employer choice, independent of wages.

Cheap Labor?

Scholarship on feminization underestimates the power of gender in labor markets by framing it primarily as an issue of lower wages. Authors are correct to note that competitiveness in export sectors forces employers to reduce production costs. Hiring women, however, is not necessarily the obvious tactic for doing so. Many employers opt to hire women when faced with extremely competitive markets, but others continue to employ men and still manage to compete effectively. Wages, of course, are important, and my aim is not to dismiss the wage argument in its entirety but to complicate it.

The wage advantages that employers can secure by hiring women instead of men vary from country to country. Southeast Asia, for example, exhibits a different pattern of gender inequality in wages from East Asia (Bai and Cho 1995). Guy Standing (1996) compared wages in the Philippines and Malaysia and found that wage disparities between men and women for similar classifications of workers were small. In contrast, the wage inequalities between men and women in South Korea were found to be among the widest in the world (Amsden 1989; Standing 1999). Yet women constitute a larger share of the manufacturing workforce in Southeast Asia, where gender wage differences are smaller.

In Indonesia, although women's average wages are indeed lower than men's average wages, this figure is less useful, since it is partly a reflection of men's higher shares of employment in the higher-paying capital-intensive sectors. In the early 1990s the Indonesian government systematized a

minimum wage policy, and minimum wages set by sector and by region became the standard for pay in many industrial sectors (Manning 1998). Consequently, gender differences in pay in low-wage industries diminished, and I found no wage discrimination between men and women at the factory level by 1997–98.⁵ I collected gender-differentiated wage data at fourteen factories, and the ratio of the average female to the average male wage ranged from 0.96 to 1.06, with the average being 1.0.⁶ There are significant gender inequalities in labor markets in Indonesia (see Chapter 2), but the relative equality of wages between men and women at the factory level is not a trivial point. It contradicts the assertions by some scholars that employing a woman as opposed to a man *automatically* results in wage savings.

Hiring women can in fact incur costs that make their labor more expensive than male labor, especially in contexts where the gender wage gap is relatively small. In Indonesia, women received more generous overtime bonuses for night shifts than men.⁷ For employers that paid taxes for workers, women cost more, being taxed at a higher rate than married men. By law, women were entitled to two days of paid menstruation leave every month and three months of maternity leave, with full wages paid by the employer rather than by the state. Many employers evaded payment of maternity and menstruation leave, of course, but many did pay them. Those that did so often devised elaborate tactics for reducing the impact on production. Some employers offered incentive pay to women who worked during their two days of monthly menstruation leave, which often amounted to receiving four days' pay for two days' work. Employers hired young unmarried women, provided family planning services at factory clinics, and encouraged rapid turnover through a regime of forced overtime, which caused many young women to resign after marriage. Despite the costs associated with these benefits and practices, employer interest in hiring women remained keen. Understanding both why employers hire women when men's labor can be obtained at the same wage rate and why employers in capital-intensive industries often shun female labor requires the consideration of gendered discourses of work.

Gendered Discourses of Work

A virtually omnipresent fact of industrial life is the categorization of jobs in a factory as "men's work" and "women's work." Men and women sel-

dom do the same jobs on the shop floor, and the profound gender segregation is hard to miss when one enters a factory. A constant theme in the literature on women factory workers is that employers associate a number of positive features with female labor that are not reducible to lower wages. I use the concept of gendered discourses of work to capture these ideas that employers hold about men and women workers.

Many scholars who have studied the massive flow of women into factory work in developing countries since 1970 address the attributes that I refer to as gendered discourses of work, but they integrate them differently into their analyses.⁸ The scholarship that gives gendered discourses of work a causal role in shaping shop-floor divisions of labor usually focuses on a small number of factories and rarely offers theoretical explanations for broader gendered trends in employment. Further, they seldom trace change over time in gender divisions of labor, even when they pay careful attention to other dynamics on the shop floor. The varying impact of gendered discourses of work on actual divisions of labor is therefore usually overlooked. Those offering theories of feminization, in contrast, rarely incorporate examinations of shop-floor job allocation into their analyses. Although they acknowledge the existence of managerial beliefs about the characteristics of women workers (e.g., docility, dexterity, tolerance for monotony), they place the main causal weight on low wages. Since the causal force of gendered discourses of work are seen as pushing in the same direction as wages, they are usually subsumed under the wage argument, and the independent causal impact of gendered discourses of work is lost.

Authors also vacillate between treating gendered discourses of work as managerial subterfuge or as traits that women actually possess (Elson and Pearson 1981a; Fernandez-Kelly 1983). For example, at one point Elson and Pearson (1981a, 92) argue: "It might seem to follow that the labor force of world market factories is predominantly female because the jobs to be done are regarded as 'women's work.' But to note that jobs are sex-stereotyped is not to explain why this is so. After all, capitalist firms are compelled by competitive forces to select their labor force and constitute their division of labor on the basis of profitability, not ideology." On the following page, however, the authors note that women's "nimble fingers" are the result of training, and they specifically mention that industrial sewing is similar to sewing in the home on domestic sewing machines. Elson and Pearson shift from calling these traits "ideological" to agreeing that women have them and to showing how they obtain them.

I argue that whether women possess these traits is irrelevant; the crucial point is that employers believe that they do. As elegantly stated by Salzinger (2003, 9), these images are important not because they reflect reality but because they produce it. In other contexts, feminist labor historians and sociologists have shown persuasively how gender shapes the way that employers put their economic interests into practice (Downs 1995; Humphrey 1987; Milkman 1987; Rose 1992). These scholars demonstrate that rational economic practice is partially constituted by gender and that employers view productivity and labor control through a gendered lens. Gendered discourses of work are therefore integral to understanding the gendered dynamics of hiring practices.

I adopt a synthetic conceptualization of gendered discourses of work, combining Foucault's (1990) notion of discourse, Connell's (1987) praxis-oriented perspective, and poststructuralist feminist approaches (Riley 1988; Scott 1988a). I take from Foucault the notion that discourse produces subjects. In this case, the gendered worker on the shop floor is created in part through the discourses produced by management about gendered workers. From a Foucauldian perspective the issue is not whether women are patient, disciplined, and diligent but that the subject of the woman worker as a patient, disciplined, and diligent worker is produced through discourse. Poststructuralist feminists have shown the utility of paying attention to how gendered subjects are constructed relationally through discourse: male and female workers are produced relationally through a series of binary oppositions—for example, careless/careful, lazy/diligent, undisciplined/disciplined, strong/weak, heavy/light. Connell's praxis-oriented approach calls attention to how these discourses, once produced, become embedded in institutions and gain materiality, becoming part of the structure of everyday life and shaping relations within it. The importance of binary oppositions and their embeddedness in everyday practice is most evident in the separation of men and women into different job categories in the factory. Combining these varied approaches to discourse acknowledges the contingency of these discourses (they do not represent "truth"), and integrates into the analysis their operation in everyday factory practice. Discourse both structures how and forms a lens through which subjects in the factory view the labor process; discourse is both created and re-created—and possibly changed—by practice on the shop floor.

In Indonesia, management generally presented the distinctions between

men and women in dichotomous terms: women were more careful, diligent, disciplined, patient, easier to manage or control, and better suited for light and monotonous work; men, in contrast, worked quickly but often carelessly, did not follow orders as well as women, were naughty, and complained more, but they were better than women at heavy work.⁹ Supervisors seldom mixed men and women in the same jobs because they believed that if men were put in women's jobs (or vice versa), productivity would fall. For certain jobs some managers were neutral, observing that either men or women would do. In these cases, the main obstacle to introducing women into men's jobs was wariness of male resistance to an influx of women.

Gendered discourses of work not only include factors that help managers decide on the best-gendered worker for a given job but also encompass broader features of interest to employers, such as labor control. Some managers regarded women as being less likely to go on strike, but most focused less on the propensity to strike and stressed that women were easier to control. They emphasized women's willingness to follow instructions without delay and without talking back, flexibility about doing work outside their job classifications, willingness to stay at work stations, and punctuality. The number of strikes rose precipitously in Indonesia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and many of these strikes occurred in sectors in which women made up the majority of the production workforce (Kammen 1997), so it is unsurprising that many managers did not mention a lower propensity to strike as a reason to hire women. Managers' perceptions about gender-differentiated rates of absenteeism were also important.¹⁰ For example, if management had problems with too many women taking maternity leave, then job classifications perceived as being relatively androgynous might be directed toward men.

So why do gendered discourses of work matter for explaining feminization? Feminization involves either a gendered redefinition of work—jobs that men previously claimed become redefined as women's work—or the assignment of new job categories to women rather than to men. But what leads employers to establish or change a particular gender division of labor? I argue that hiring women is one solution that employers deploy to enhance productivity and labor control. Since gender is a key organizing principle in the factory, managers believe that placing the wrong-gendered workers in a job will negatively affect productivity. Consequently, when

productivity is suboptimal, employers often attribute it to having wrong-gendered workers in the job, and replacing male workers with female workers is one solution for rectifying the situation.

The structural imperative to remain competitive, however, does not result automatically in specific gendered changes in the labor process. A process of *translation* must occur whereby managers assess, given the resources at their disposal, how best to deal with the competitive situation that they face. Labor-intensive and export-oriented industries are more

likely to feminize because they feel the forces of competition most acutely and are therefore more likely to tinker with the labor process in order to squeeze more productivity from their workers. Consequently, rates of feminization are higher in these industries than in more capital-intensive and protected industries. Gendered discourses of work broaden the scope of factors to be considered in assessing how employers weigh the relative costs and benefits of hiring men versus women. Wages are one, but not the only, consideration. Employers facing similar competitive constraints come to different gendered decisions about hiring, some opting to employ men and yet others, women.

The critique of the conventional wisdom regarding feminization has highlighted four key areas that a theory of feminization must incorporate: labor/capital intensity, labor supply, mediating institutions, and gendered discourses of work. These four components combined constitute the theoretical framework of this book, the gendered political economy approach.

The Gendered Political Economy Approach

The gendered political economy approach comprises three nodal points—labor supply, mediating institutions, and capital/demand—each of which incorporates gender as a category of analysis. Gender is therefore at work not only in the family, the culture, and the state but in markets as well. It is also a comparative framework that highlights differences between countries which affect women's share of employment.

The nodal point capital/demand breaks down into two components: gendered sectors, and gendered discourses of work. Each of these components captures, in a different way, the gendered nature of production and how it affects capital's demand for women workers. The two components combine to form an approach that incorporates gender into the political

economy rather than treating it as a residue from nonmarket spheres of activity. The first component, gendered sectors, simply reflects an important empirical regularity of gendered employment in manufacturing: labor-intensive sectors are far more likely to hire women than capital-intensive sectors; capital-intensive sectors are more likely to employ men. Once sectors become gendered male or female, the stamp of femininity or masculinity, though not indelible, has enormous staying power. Gendered sectors constitute the structural component and help to explain why some countries have employed more women than others over the course of industrialization. In other words, it explains broad regularities in women's absorption into factory work across national and historical contexts.

The second component of the capital/demand nodal point, gendered discourses of work, captures the effect on hiring decisions of employer perceptions about women workers. The most obvious evidence of the role of gender in organizing production is the pervasive but variant gender division of labor present on the shop floor. One consequence of this stubborn fact of industrial life is that feminization often entails a redrawing rather than an erasure of the line between men's and women's work. Employers do not randomly replace women with men; rather, they carefully choose specific job categories to feminize while leaving others untouched. Over time, gendered discourses of work can transform the way a sector is gendered. For example, electronics is a highly feminine industry in many countries, even though it is relatively capital intensive. Feminization in electronics has largely been a result of employers' defining many of the jobs within electronics assembly as suitable for women. Thus, although labor intensity has a gendered logic—labor-intensive sectors are more likely to hire women than capital-intensive sectors—gendered sectors to some extent reflect long-term processes through which gendered discourses of work are embedded in production processes. Gendered discourses of work are essential for explaining why employers facing similar competitive constraints make differently gendered hiring choices.

Gendered sectors and gendered discourses of work thus determine capital's demand for female labor. But just because capital wishes to hire women does not mean that it can, which brings us to the second nodal point, labor supply. This point focuses attention on the characteristics of gendered workers before they enter the labor market and on the availability of gendered workers. Do state policies and cultural practices facilitate

or obstruct the mobilization of a female workforce? Assuming that features of the labor supply nodal point facilitate capital's access to female labor, one more hurdle, labor market institutions, must still be cleared before significant feminization can occur.

The third nodal point, mediating institutions, identifies institutions that intervene between the supply of gendered labor on the market and capital's demand for gendered labor. Mediating institutions that regulate employer access to labor need to be scrutinized carefully for their gendered impact—do they facilitate or hinder employer access to female labor? The labor supply and mediating institutions nodal points both highlight factors that explain cross-national variations in women's sectoral share of employment.

Figure 1.2 pulls together the three nodal points and illustrates how they interact to produce gendered outcomes in industrialization. Significant feminization occurs only when demand for female labor increases, when women's labor is available and appealing, and when mediating institutions facilitate the channeling of women to the factories. Feminization may also take place if demand for female labor remains constant when significant changes occur at the labor supply and mediating institutions nodal points, but the magnitude would be modest. Differences in the degree of feminization between countries can be attributed to variations at all three nodal

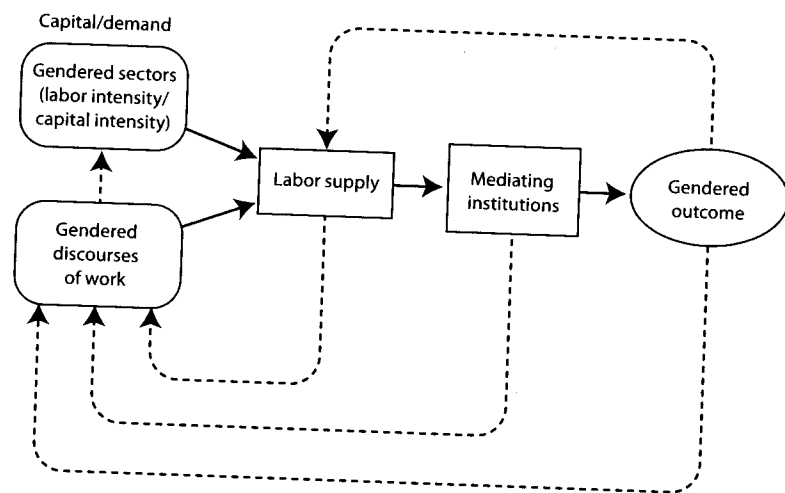


Figure 1.2. The gendered political economy approach.

points, whereas sectoral variations between countries (i.e., why the textiles sector employs fewer women in Mexico than in Thailand) are largely attributable to variations in labor supply and mediating institutions.

The dark arrows in Figure 1.2 portray the initial causal chain, but over time there are long-term interactions between the nodal points, and these interconnections are denoted by the dashed arrows. For example, if women become more appealing workers as a result of significant reductions in fertility, this result can have a feedback effect on employer demand for women workers. Changes in mediating institutions can produce similar feedback effects. The very process of feminization itself can have feedback effects on gendered discourses of work and on the labor-supply nodal point. If capital's demand for women workers is high, for example, parents are likely to invest more in their daughter's education; likewise, more employers hiring women can have spillover effects on other employers and hence create yet more demand for women workers. When positive feedback loops such as this are created, feminization can continue for many years, which is precisely what happened in Indonesia.

Before I embark on an analysis of the Indonesian case, it is necessary to probe more deeply into the reasons why women tend to be concentrated in labor-intensive sectors; otherwise, a core causal pattern identified in the book remains somewhat mysterious—although empirically validated, the underlying logic is unclear. Moreover, understanding the reasons behind women's concentration in low-paid, labor-intensive sectors is a crucial first step to devising ways of changing this fact. Uncovering the reasons for the link between labor intensity and women's employment is the task of the next chapter.