

# **Assembling Women**

THE FEMINIZATION OF  
GLOBAL MANUFACTURING

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## Introduction

One of the greatest social and economic transformations in industrializing parts of the world has been the dramatic entry of women into paid work in the formal sector. The influx of women into manufacturing work has been especially notable (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 1987; Heyzer 1988; Joekes 1987; Lim 1985; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Tomoda 1995; Ward 1990). During the last decades of the twentieth century, industrialization generated millions of new factory jobs in developing countries. Although men historically outnumbered women in formal-sector work in manufacturing, women reached parity or beyond in many countries in the short space of just one to two decades. Women now constitute a significant share of the working class in much of the developing world, especially in countries that have experienced dramatic industrial expansion. Yet despite this impressive wave of feminization in manufacturing, employers in numerous countries have eschewed female labor and continue to employ primarily men. Moreover, even in countries that did feminize, although some employers hired women with alacrity, others resisted. Their aversion to hiring women is puzzling, as scholars have enumerated an array of attributes that make women the ideal workforce in today's global capitalist economy: women are cheaper to employ than men, docile, and willing to work long hours in dead-end jobs. Most employers, not just those in traditionally female sectors of employment, should find these attributes exceedingly attractive. Explaining the varied topography and timing of women's entry into for-

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Amuzo's entry into workforce (man)

mal-sector employment in manufacturing is the empirical puzzle at the heart of this book.

The feminization of factory labor has consequences not only for women's access to work but also for gender inequality. Women's incorporation into manufacturing work has been highly selective, with women flowing primarily into low-paid jobs in a few industries. Even in countries that have undergone massive feminization, work in the highest-paying sectors of manufacturing continues to elude women. Men still work across a wider range of industries and hold the most remunerative jobs. Consequently, feminization has had only a modest impact on reducing gender inequalities in labor markets. Indeed, gender has proved to be a particularly resilient dividing line between workers. Massive inflows of women into the workforce result rarely in a seamless integration of women into men's jobs but rather in a redrawing or reconfiguration of the gender divisions of labor that separate men's work from women's work.

My fundamental contention is that understanding either feminization or the persistent gender inequalities in labor markets requires scholars to grapple with the tenacity of gender divisions in labor markets. Why do employers segregate men and women into distinct realms of work, and how are divisions between men and women perpetuated, redrawn, and reconfigured rather than overturned? And how do shop-floor practices of gender segregation cascade through economies and interact with the wider political economy to produce distinctly gendered patterns of manufacturing employment?

The answers to these questions are of vital importance. A necessary condition for improving women's social status is undoubtedly greater access to work, and feminization opens the door of job opportunity to women. A greater understanding of what prompts feminization thus helps to identify the constellation of forces that combine to kick open the door of opportunity. Yet if women flow into feminized ghettos of the workforce, new opportunities may not succeed in undermining gender inequalities in the labor market. Escaping this quandary requires a better understanding of the processes that collectively conspire to reproduce or reconfigure—rather than obliterate—gender divisions at work. Once we comprehend these processes, it becomes possible to change them.

The Argument in Brief

1 employment growth in labor intensive industries makes it to enter workforce

First, how are the doors of opportunity kicked open? How do women gain access to manufacturing work? I show that employment growth in labor-intensive industries is the primary stimulus for feminization. Employment growth has two effects. First it creates higher demand for labor, including female labor; second, it gives employers the opportunity to dismantle established gender divisions of labor without firing male workers. In contrast to scholars who have argued that export-oriented industrialization (EOI) compels employers to seek out the cheapest labor possible—women—in order to compete in international markets (Chapkis and Enloe 1983; Elson and Pearson 1981a; Fernandez-Kelly 1983a; Fox 1993; Fuentes and Ehrenreich 1983; Joekes 1987; Lim 1983; Safa 1986; Tiano 1994), I argue that EOI is important only insofar as it generates employment growth in labor-intensive industries, which it does only during its initial stages. Moreover, as shown in the analysis that follows, the shift of work from men to women which takes place during the early stages of EOI is far more contingent than is portrayed by most scholars, with some employers eagerly feminizing and others sticking with men. As EOI matures, moreover, manufacturing becomes more capital intensive; employment growth slows; and masculinization usually ensues. EOI's positive impact on women's integration into manufacturing work is thus temporary; as countries shift to the production of more highly value-added goods, women are expelled from industrial jobs. High value job = expelled ♀

argument  
EOI's positive impact on ♀ - temporary

In addition to employment growth in labor-intensive industries, two additional factors, the supply characteristics of female labor and mediating institutions, help to explain the differences between countries in women's share of manufacturing employment. Most existing analyses of feminization assume that women are available to work in factories, that women are attractive potential employees, and that employers can hire them. But an ensemble of political factors both determines women's availability for employment and facilitates or obstructs their entry into the workforce. 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. Likewise, institutions such as unions and protective legislation affect the capacity and willingness of employers to hire women. Perhaps the most controver-

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2 policies re: ♀

Unions/legisl.

sial finding of this book is that strong unions negatively affect women's share of employment in manufacturing. Strong unions allow male workers to oppose employer efforts to replace them with women, and centralized bargaining institutions that set wages throughout the economy prevent employers from cutting wages by hiring women. The repression of labor in Asia is therefore an inseparable part of the explanation for women's impressive presence in manufacturing work in the region. Docile unions, not supposedly docile women, have been key determinants of the gendered contours of industrialization.

Finally, why does feminization have such a limited impact on gender inequalities in labor markets? Both Marxist and neoclassical political economists would expect feminization, which represents an increase in demand for female labor, to erode gender inequalities (Blau and Ferber 1992; Lim 1983; Marx 1977). Initially, feminists believed that it was women's exclusion from formal-sector work that prevented them from enjoying the fruits of development (Boserup 1970). After feminization began to sweep across the globe and women's presence in manufacturing work expanded, however, feminists began to argue that access to work had disappointing results because women flowed into feminized ghettos in the labor market (Elson and Pearson 1981a; Joekes 1987). Continued segregation is an important piece of the puzzle in explaining the limited impact of feminization on reducing gender inequality, but the dynamics of segregation and how it is reconfigured during the course of feminization is still poorly understood. The book contributes to this debate by highlighting a range of unexplored processes that produce this outcome.

A crucial component of the explanation lies in the resistance of high-paying employers in capital-intensive sectors to the siren call of "cheap female labor." Some scholars have insinuated that this defiance is part of a patriarchal conspiracy to perpetuate women's subordination to men (Hartmann 1979), while others have simply noted that since wages are a smaller share of costs in less-competitive, capital-intensive sectors, these employers do not need to cut wages by hiring women (Cohn 2000; Joekes 1982). Dual labor market theorists have emphasized women's instability as workers, noting that capital-intensive firms that invest in training are loath to hire women because they have short work tenures (Doeringer and Piore 1971). I argue that patriarchal conspiracies, indifference to reducing wage costs, and the alleged instability of women workers are insufficient to ex-

argument insufficient

why does femin not have impact

next shows gendered discourses of work

plain the resistance of employers to hiring women. The continued closure of many lines of work to women is intimately related to gendered discourses of work—ideas that managers hold about the qualities of male and female labor. Feminization involves both the definition of new jobs as realms of women's activity and the redefinition as women's work of jobs previously held by men. Employers feminize their workforces only if they imagine that women will be more productive workers than men. Gendered discourses of work and the gendered logic of production in capital-intensive sectors have combined in a toxic mix that provides work opportunities for women but closes off most of the high-paying jobs to them. This outcome is not inevitable, but the workings of capitalism reproduce rather than undermine the processes that create it. Only political intervention in markets will undo it. Illuminating the forces that generate gendered outcomes relies on two crucial components that distinguish this book from other analyses of feminization: a gendered and multilevel methodology, and the use of gender as a category of political economic analysis.

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**A Gendered and Multilevel Methodology**

employers 1) hire men 2) hire women

What does it mean to say that a methodology is gendered? Perhaps the simplest statement comes from Terrell Carver (1996), who has noted that gender is not a synonym for women. A gendered methodology thus requires the selection of some employers that employ primarily men and others that prefer to hire women. Theorists of feminization and studies of women factory workers in developing countries unfortunately rarely examine men or male-dominated industries; rather, they focus almost exclusively on export-oriented, labor-intensive, and female-dominated industries.<sup>1</sup> By studying only export-oriented, labor-intensive, and female-dominated industries, scholars not only have selected on the dependent variable but have also eliminated variation on the independent variables. Consequently, it is impossible to assess whether labor intensity and export orientation are driving the tendency to use female labor. Making this assessment requires that male-dominated sectors be included in the analysis as well. In addition, since the sectors studied are not only female-intensive but also labor-intensive and export-oriented, current accounts cannot confidently make the claim that these factors are important, since they cannot show that capital-intensive and inward-oriented sectors gen-

most studies focus on women indust

erate different gendered outcomes. Thus, although such studies produce valuable insights, they are a weak foundation for formulating a theory of feminization.

In order to overcome these methodological problems, I have adopted a multisectoral approach in which both male- and female-intensive sectors are selected and in which market orientation varies. For the sectoral case studies in Indonesia, I selected four industries—garments, textiles, plywood, and automobiles—that vary in terms of female shares of employment, changes in female employment over time, market orientation, and labor intensity. All four were major employers in Indonesia, and all underwent significant growth between 1970 and 1997. I visited more than fifty factories in these four sectors and interviewed some two hundred managers between September 1998 and June 1999. I also utilized a firm-level database from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), which includes data from approximately 23,000 medium- and large-scale firms throughout Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis relies as well on two cross-national data sets, each of which covered a wide range of sectors of manufacturing. The first is the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's Industrial Statistics Database, which includes gendered employment and sectoral data for forty-nine countries from 1981 to the early 1990s. I also compiled a second data set comprising sectoral data gathered from the publications of national statistical offices in ten countries—Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand—and spanning the 1950s to the mid-1990s (see the Statistical Appendix for sources). These cross-national data sets contain data for most sectors of manufacturing, which allows for the inclusion of both male- and female-intensive sectors.

The research design for this study incorporates different levels of analysis. Mapping the varied gendered processes that produce feminization requires a multilevel analysis that demonstrates the links between local, national, and global outcomes. Although there are scores of books about the women who have entered factory work in developing countries, most are ethnographies that document the daily lives of women both at work and at home (Cravey 1998; Fernandes 1997; Fernandez-Kelly 1983a; Kim 1997; Kung 1994; Lee 1998; Ong 1987; Pun 2005; Safa 1995; Salaff 1981; Salzinger 2003; Wolf 1992; Yelvington 1995). This book endeavors to con-

*This book*  
nect different levels of analysis. It combines microlevel observations from the shop floor in a variety of sectors and an in-depth analysis of feminization in the one case of Indonesia with cross-national analyses of gendered patterns of industrialization. Each of these vantage points provides a different window on how gender shapes industrialization and each offers an empirical check on the claims advanced. The first component that guides the analysis in this book, a gendered methodology, is combined with the second, a gendered theoretical apparatus.

### A Gendered Theoretical Apparatus

Just as a gendered and comparative methodology is required to develop an explanation of feminization, so is moving beyond the dominant view of markets as gender-neutral institutions. Scholars agree that gender segregation is a pervasive phenomenon in labor markets (Anker 1998; Charles and Grusky 2004), but most scholars explain the existence and the persistence of these gender divisions through reference to nonmarket forces, in particular to women's role in reproduction and its consequences for their investment in education and their commitment to work. The prevailing view is that labor markets are in principle gender neutral, and premarket differences between men and women determine gender disparities in labor market outcomes (Humphrey 1987; Scott 1986).

The assumed gender neutrality of markets is perhaps most evident in the categories of analysis deployed to study them. On the surface, these categories are gender neutral, but since power relations based on gender are such a salient aspect of lived social relations, allegedly gender-neutral categories generally contain gender bias. In neoclassical political economy, for example, the individual acting in a world of scarcity is the bedrock of all analysis. This sexless individual appears to be free of gender bias, but theorists have shown that the individual in liberal theory, and hence in neoclassical economic theory, is not an abstract individual but conforms to characteristics of (white) men (Fraser 1989; Hanchard 1999; Mehta 1997; Pateman 1988). One of the crowning glories of neoclassical economics, human capital theory, therefore best explains labor market outcomes for white men and performs relatively poorly in accounting for the situations of African American men and of women, regardless of race (Tomaskovic-Devey 1993). Marxist political economy similarly treats the category of la-

*prevail  
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*white*

bor as a genderless entity that is "free" to sell its labor on the market, even though men and women are rarely equally free to sell their labor, since women bear the burdens of reproduction in most societies.

The theoretical consequence of the male bias in the categories that structure most political economic analysis is that features associated with women are treated as different from the norm. This difference then becomes the explanation for women's fate in labor markets. The labor market thus remains gender neutral and simply reacts to the different qualities that men and women bring to the labor market (e.g., commitment to the workforce; education; role in childbearing). Although women's greater role in reproduction and its effects on women's labor force participation are certainly important in understanding gender segregation and gender inequality in labor markets, attributing segregation to nonmarket factors does not grapple with the ways that gender is embedded in the market mechanism and thus structures the work opportunities of both men and women. Moreover, such a conceptualization does not explain the tenacity of such gender divisions in the face of dramatic declines in fertility, increases in women's education, and women's higher rates of labor force participation.

Marxists and neoclassical economists agree on little, but both, following the impeccable logic of their genderless analysis of labor markets, argue that gender divisions in labor markets should be evanescent. Marx (1977) believed that capital's drive to squeeze surplus value out of workers would lead ineluctably to the hiring of women, which would lead to the erosion of gender divisions in labor markets. For neoclassical political economists, the market mechanism should wear away gender divisions in labor markets over time. If some employers pay higher wages to men when women are equally capable of doing the work, other employers will drive them out of business by hiring cheaper female labor.<sup>3</sup> Both Marxist and liberal political economists expect gender to become less meaningful in labor markets over time. It is therefore puzzling that gender segregation remains a remarkably tenacious feature of labor markets.

Part of the "woman problem" in political economy is finding a theoretical language in which to address it. Marxist feminists have tried most fervently to gender political economy, and they have done so by expanding the analytic scope of Marx's critique of capitalism. The best-known approach in this vein of work is dual systems theory, which, deeply influ-

enced by the development of patriarchy as a feminist concept in the early 1970s, wedded a theory of patriarchy to Marx's theory of capitalism (Eisenstein 1979; Ferguson and Folbre 1981; Hartmann 1979; Walby 1986). Capitalism remained a realm of class oppression; patriarchy represented a system of gender domination; and the interaction of capitalism and patriarchy determined women's position in capitalist society.<sup>4</sup> In most Marxist-feminist accounts, patriarchy has two benefits for capitalism. First, it assures that female labor will be cheap, and second, women's uncompensated domestic labor produces use values, such as cooked meals, that allow capitalists to pay men lower wages as well. But they parted company with Marx regarding the consequences of waged work for women. Since women were channeled into low-paying jobs, they remained dependent on male wage earners, so their incorporation into wage labor did not threaten patriarchy (Armstrong and Armstrong 1987; Beechey 1987; Brenner and Ramas 1984; Coulson, Magas, and Wainwright 1975; Dalla Costa 1973; Gardiner 1975, 1976; Morton 1971; Secombe 1973, 1975; Vogel 1983).<sup>5</sup> Yet for all the talk about women, gender was brought in through the back door of patriarchy, so capitalism (and hence labor markets) remained a gender-blind system (Young 1981).

Most Marxist-feminist accounts fall into the trap of dualisms identified by Ava Baron (1991)—capitalism/patriarchy, public/private, production/reproduction, men's work/women's work—with class assumed to be integral to the first term of each pair and gender to the second. Such conceptualizations leave the gender-biased analytic apparatus of conventional approaches untouched. Of course, part of the reason for this analytical separation is that patriarchy undoubtedly preceded the development of capitalism. Yet treating gender as a residue of premarket (or nonmarket) relations is a dubious move. Gender is not merely "a hangover from pre-capitalist modes of production" (Connell 1987, 104). It was at the heart of labor markets from the beginning of capitalist development and remains a core feature of industrial organization today (Bradley 1989). As such, capitalism is historically gendered (Barrett 1988), and gender is embedded in capitalist labor markets (Mackintosh 1991). A capitalism unfettered by gender has thus never existed except in the minds of scholars. A gendered analysis of labor markets must bring gender into the heart of production and introduce gender as a category of analysis that affects all spheres of life.

The first step in developing a gendered political economy is to incorporate gender as a category of analysis. I adopt Joan Scott's definition of gender as "the social organization of sexual difference." It is not a synonym for women, so gender can be at work even when women are not present. Gender is a signifier of relationships of power, and gendered "meanings vary across cultures, social groups, and time" (Scott 1988a, 2). Gender positions women and men differently in society, structures their lived experiences in distinct ways, and refers not only to social positions and social relations but also to ideas (Rose 1992).

The second step is to integrate gender directly into the study of labor markets. Feminist labor historians have shown persuasively that gendered discourses of work shape the way that employers define their economic interests; in other words, employers' beliefs about gender partially constitute their ideas about rational economic practice (Downs 1995; Rose 1992). Employers have historically considered men and women to be qualitatively different types of labor and have therefore viewed productivity and labor control through a gendered lens. Consequently, they define jobs in gendered terms. On the basis of their assessments of the gendered character of work on the shop floor, employers use gender as a criterion for recruitment. Gendered hiring practices, in turn, produce the gender division of labor on the shop floor and perpetuate the deep occupational and sectoral segregation that exists all over the world. Once embedded in labor markets, gendered discourses of work shape gendered outcomes in labor markets independently of the nonmarket factors so often highlighted by scholars. Integrating gendered discourses of work into political economy brings gender into the heart of the market and allows for a truly gendered analysis of labor markets.

gender for recruitment → gender - of labor → cheap segs

### Research Findings and the Plan of the Book

Chapter 1 begins the analysis by attacking the twin pillars of current theorizing of feminization, EOI and cheap labor. That narrative contains grains of truth, but through an analysis of cross-national patterns of feminization and the process of feminization in Indonesia, I call into question the level of causal weight attributed to these two factors. The primary force driving feminization is not market orientation (export orientation versus inwardly directed industrialization) but the balance of employment be-

EOI starts w/ labor intensive (♀)  
then capital (♂)

INTRODUCTION 11

feminization due to

tween labor-intensive and capital-intensive sectors. Since the primary phase of EOI promotes employment growth in labor-intensive sectors, it is strongly associated with feminization. As EOI deepens, however, employment growth shifts to more capital-intensive sectors, and masculinization usually ensues. Moreover, even when controlling for the type of industrialization, women's share of employment varies, and I argue that two additional factors need to be introduced to account for these differences: the supply characteristics of women workers, and mediating institutions. Perhaps the most contentious finding is that women's lower average wages are only one reason—and perhaps not the most important one—that employers in labor-intensive sectors hire women. Gendered discourses of work help to explain why employers hire women, even when men and women earn the same wages, and why many employers are reluctant to cut costs by hiring "cheap" female labor.

Since labor intensity is such an important determinant of the location of women's employment, Chapter 2 explores the reasons behind this relationship. Scholars have argued that women are absorbed in labor-intensive lines of work because they are unskilled, unstable, and cheaper to employ than men. In fact, women's instability as workers is more a consequence than a cause of labor practices in labor-intensive industries, and women's relegation to labor-intensive work has little to do with low skill levels, as training times for jobs varied little between the labor-intensive and capital-intensive firms I surveyed. Wages, however, are an important determinant of women's concentration in labor-intensive sectors. Hiring women conveys wage savings to employers, including labor-intensive employers, but surprisingly it is capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive sectors that could cut wage costs the most by hiring women. In addition to wages, high rates of turnover—which allow labor-intensive industries to seamlessly cycle women on maternity leave in and out of the workforce—and gendered discourses of work account for women's concentration in labor-intensive lines of work.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 turn attention to an in-depth analysis of one case, Indonesia. Chapter 3 outlines the changes in supply and institutions that facilitated feminization in that country. Before and during the waves of feminization that swept through Indonesia, improvements in education, (reductions in fertility) and increased labor force participation rates made women both more available and more appealing as workers. The authori-

Chapter 3 - improvements in educ. & fert. - ♀ appealing as workers

need to look @

NOT unskilled, unstable, cheap! as reasons for labor market but wages

high rates of turnover



tarian state demobilized political organizations, such as unions and radical Islam, which could potentially have obstructed feminization, and the state virtually stopped enforcing protective legislation. The state played a large role in these developments, but the mobilization of female labor was an unintended consequence of policies designed to accomplish other developmental goals. This series of changes assured that an appealing supply of women existed and that mediating institutions facilitated rather than impeded the absorption of female labor into factory work. The stage was thus set for a wave of feminization, but it took a change in industrialization policy to set it in motion.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how EOI generated increased demand for female workers by promoting massive employment growth in labor-intensive sectors. From the early 1980s until the financial crisis of 1997, labor-intensive sectors created the bulk of new jobs in Indonesia, although feminization occurred not only in these industries but also in almost every sector of Indonesian manufacturing. Feminization unfolded in three waves, each corresponding to a different stage of Indonesian industrialization. Although the shift in industrialization policy can explain the broad contours of feminization in Indonesia, the feminization of manufacturing did not simply grow out of already female-intensive sectors but involved sectoral feminization as well. In other words, labor-intensive sectors that had previously hired few women began to employ higher proportions of women than they had done in the past. The chapter shows how employers in a number of sectors increased their reliance on women workers by shifting selected jobs from men to women, and it highlights certain dynamics that cut across the three waves of feminization and explain its spread and variability—stickiness, spillover, and snowballing.

Chapter 5 illustrates the dynamics of feminization at the factory level. Two conditions increase the probability that a factory will undergo feminization: competitive markets, and the presence of male and female production workers on the shop floor. Sectors and firms in highly competitive markets face constant pressure to increase efficiency and quality, so the pressure to find ways to squeeze more productivity from their workers is intense. Feminization is one device that employers use to raise productivity. Since less competitive (usually more capital-intensive) sectors do not face the same level of competitive pressure, they do not innovate at the margins to the same degree as the more competitive sectors. The presence

of women production workers also affects the likelihood of feminization. Gendered innovations in the labor process grow out of shop floor experiments, and the absence of women in many of the most capital-intensive sectors thus makes feminization less likely. Although these two variables help to explain variation between capital- and labor-intensive sectors, they cannot explain variations between labor-intensive sectors. The chapter thus also examines, through a series of intrasectoral comparisons of firms in the garment, plywood, and textile industries, how gendered discourses of work produce different gendered outcomes. It shows that feminization is never a foregone conclusion and that employers facing similar competitive situations adopt varying gendered practices. Feminization is thus a far more contingent process than it is portrayed to be in the literature.

Chapter 6 takes insights developed in the case study of Indonesia and applies them to a cross-regional comparison with nine other countries. Cross-national evidence supports the contention that shifts in industrialization are crucial components of generating feminization and shows that Latin American countries, which pursued a more capital-intensive route of industrialization, feminized less than countries in East and Southeast Asia.

This chapter also demonstrates that women's share of sectoral employment is higher in countries where labor has been excluded from political power. Labor-excluding authoritarian developmental states in Asia and inclusionary populist politics that created relatively strong unions in Latin America resulted in disparate gendered legacies that had profound consequences for women's incorporation into factory work. Latin America has lower levels of female employment in manufacturing not only because it pursued different industrialization policies but also because it had stronger unions. Supply variables, with the exception of fertility, explained little of the cross-national variation in women's share of employment, but as expected, lower fertility rates facilitated feminization, which suggests that demand-side factors and labor market institutions are more important determinants of women's employment opportunities than cultural factors.

The Indonesian experience with feminization demonstrates that there are features in addition to women's lower wages which make them appealing as workers. But it also shows that though capital absorbs female labor with great alacrity, the continued segregation of women into low-wage sectors mitigates the impact of their integration into factory labor. The conclusion focuses on the impact of feminization on gender inequality.

Conclusion

Shifts in indust.

excluded from polit. power

L.A. - lower levels of ♀

factor other than wages

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 hiring female labor

made women ideal

MNCs relocate EOI

EOI patriarchy