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GENDER IDENTIFICATION AND WORKING
CLASS SOLIDARITY AMONG MAQUILA
WORKERS IN CIUDAD JUAREZ:
STEREOTYPES AND REALITIES

By

Gay Young
Department of Sociology
University of Texas at El Paso

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Abstract: In recent years there has been considerable speculation on the part of both scholars and policy makers about the effects of maquila work on participants in the labor force of Mexico's Border Industrialization Program (BIP). Within that general context, the specific concerns of this paper are to examine (1) which work-related experiences enable maquila workers to expand the traditional female role and (2) which work-related experiences enhance the development of women's consciousness of their status as workers in the new international division of labor. This empirical investigation examines the larger theoretical issue of the interconnections between gender relations and class processes. Following an overview of the interrelations of gender, class, and export-oriented industrialization, and using Mexico's BIP as a case in point, the findings of a field experiment carried out among maquila workers in Ciudad Juarez are discussed. The data suggest caution in attributing characteristics such as passivity and submissiveness to these women workers, since they appear to be far from docile and unorganizable. The conclusions highlight issues for policy makers who are concerned with furthering women's treatment as equals in society and enhancing women's capacity to author their own development.

About the Author: Gay Young is assistant professor of sociology and recently appointed Coordinator of Women's Studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. Her major research interest is women, work, and families in Mexico and other developing countries. She has edited The Social Ecology and Economic Development of Ciudad Juarez, released summer 1987, Westview Press. Also, she is collaborating on a television documentary on the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez region as a microcosm of the relations between developing and advanced industrial nations in the world economy.

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GENDER IDENTIFICATION AND WORKING CLASS SOLIDARITY AMONG MAQUILA WORKERS IN CIUDAD JUAREZ: STEREOTYPES AND REALITIES

In recent years, there has been considerable speculation, on the part of both scholars and policy-makers¹ about the effects of maquila work on participants in the labor force of Mexico's Border Industrialization Program (BIP). Within that general context, the specific concerns of this paper are to examine (1) which work-related experiences enable maquila workers to expand the traditional female role and (2) which work-related experiences develop women's consciousness of their status as workers in the new international division of labor. The interconnections between gender relations and class processes constitute the larger theoretical issue of this empirical investigation. While class does structure the concrete meaning gender has for women, male-female relations also affect women's experience as workers. An overview of the interrelations of gender, class, and export-oriented industrialization, using Mexico's BIP as the case in point, is presented followed by a discussion of the findings of a field experiment carried out among maquila workers in Ciudad Juarez. The conclusions highlight issues for policy makers who are concerned with furthering women's treatment as equals in society and with enhancing women's capacity to author their own development.

GENDER, CLASS, AND EXPORT-ORIENTED INDUSTRIALIZATION

The theoretical foundation for the analysis of women in the BIP is Sokoloff's examination of women's position in the labor market in the United States (1980). She argues that the labor market is organized in the interest not only of capital but also of men and focuses on the interrelation of capitalism and patriarchy (systematic male power) in the whole of women's lives within advanced industrial society. That women "are recruited into low-status, low-waged, female-dominated occupations in industries with low capital, poor job mobility, limited job security, and little decision-making power" (1980:143) is a result of this dynamic interrelation of patriarchy and capitalism.

Sokoloff asserts that any "attempt to understand women's position in the (labor) market must relate that to her position in the home" (1980:xii); moreover, in her view, it is important to "investigate how patriarchal relations have been transformed and intensified within the labor market" (1980:xiii). For Sokoloff, then, patriarchy is not confined to the home; it is a feature of the labor market as well. It operates on two planes -- "private forms of individual male control over women within the family" and "collective forms of male domination in the larger public society" (1980:166). Thus, women's entry into wage labor both weakens and strengthens patriarchal relations.

Sokoloff emphasizes that patriarchy is an independent force, having a life of its own, but that it must be analyzed within the particular historical period of a society. For example, capitalism combined with patriarchy assigns home labor to women, and then uses it against women in the labor market to relegate them as "secondary" workers to sex-segregated

jobs for "pin-money" wages. Being mothers, they are viewed as "unreliable" workers who offer only "housekeeping" skills. Under the conditions of patriarchal capitalism, all women enter the labor market as former, actual, or potential "mothers," and, although they work because one income fails to support the family, the idea that only men support families remains unchallenged. Thus, women remain a powerful reserve labor force, or, when active in the labor market, they become somewhat bigger consumers by spending their wages. But they do not compete against men for higher-wage jobs. Moreover, women's market labor is used against them in the home where they are "punished" for not giving enough nurturance "to force them into their gender-assigned role . . . or at least to assume those home tasks as women's primary responsibility even if they are employed simultaneously" (1980:200).

Along with later Marxist Feminists, then, Sokoloff (1980:198) contends "that the sexual division of production between home and market and the sexual division of labor within the market . . . are the result of a synthesis of the social relations of the sexes (patriarchy) and the social relations of classes (capitalism)." Although her analysis is based on contemporary U.S. society, Sokoloff's argument extends beyond cultural region and degree of industrialization. Her thesis becomes a useful tool for examining the situation of women at work and at home in the developing societies which follow an export-oriented path of industrialization.

Like all women in regions of the Third World, large numbers of Latin American women have been drawn into the industrial labor force as assembly workers in multinational corporations. Mexico's Border Industrialization Program is a case in point. In response to the need to examine the interaction of gender relations and class formation, recent scholarship on Latin American women has focused on the situation of females in the "new international division of labor."² Some scholars have specifically turned their attention to the BIP (Carrillo 1980; Pena 1980; Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Tiano 1984).

Such work reflects the position that class analysis which ignores gender remains insensitive to the causes of women's subordination. To focus on the relations through which women are incorporated in development, specifically in export-oriented industrialization, underlines the way in which Latin American women's lives are "structured by a double set of determinations arising from relations of gender and relations deriving from the economic organization of society" (IDS Bulletin 1979:2). Examination of the interrelationship of gender subordination and capitalist industrialization is critical, for not only does a woman's class position structure the concrete meaning gender has for her, but the reverse is also true (Bergeria and Sen 1981). Indeed, it has been through the manipulation of patriarchal relations and the sexual division of labor that young women have been drawn into the industrial labor force in Latin America (Leacock 1981). That is, female workers' situation as workers in the new international division of labor -- for example, in the Border Industrialization Program in Mexico -- reflects their subordination at home (Arizpe and Aranda 1982). And the same conditions that operate, in general, to undermine Mexican women's status as

workers operate, as well, in Ciudad Juarez, (Tiano 1984). The aim of this paper is to uncover what, if any, work-related experiences enable maquila workers (1) to expand the traditional sex role of the Mexican woman as well as (2) to develop solidarity with other women workers in the BIP. A few illustrations of the dynamics of the interconnection of gender relations and class processes in the BIP will set the stage for that analysis.

Multinational corporations operating in the BIP did not themselves create the characteristics of the Mexican labor force, but there does exist some differentiation of that labor force to make it more profitable to employ females: the unit cost of production is lower with female labor because women are cheaper to employ or more productive or both (Elson and Pearson 1981). Given that assembly workers in the maquiladoras are paid the minimum wage, how can one argue that maquiladoras clearly prefer young, single females because they are cheaper to employ than men?

First of all, women's role in the family (or women's role in reproduction) "explains" how they are less expensive to hire. Maquiladora management holds strongly to the belief that women do not support families; they are secondary earners whose income is "optional." Thus, it is "appropriate" to offer women only dead-end assembly jobs, because they have limited financial responsibilities as well as limited career aspirations. Yet, it is the economic need of their families that prompts young women to enter the maquila work force (Fernandez-Kelly 1983). As members of households in which fathers, brothers, or husbands are sporadically employed or underemployed, women must provide more than supplementary income; however, the conviction on management's part that they do not justifies a pattern of cyclical layoffs.

Management also depends on women's traditional marginality to work and orientation to home as reasons to encourage them to leave the labor force, and, according to management, 80 percent of the female turnover is "voluntary" (Van Waas 1981). These high rates of turnover are in the maquiladoras' interest for at least three reasons (Fernandez-Kelly 1983). (1) Most obviously, high turnover enables plants to adjust to fluctuations in the business cycle; for example the maquiladoras commonly retrench their labor force in the winter. (2) High turnover means fewer benefits and compensations paid to workers as well as virtual elimination of claims for seniority wages. While some workers do leave the maquiladoras for marriage and motherhood (what the industry calls "natural wastage"), many others quit because they are physically or mentally exhausted. (3) Hence, the final reason is the infusion of fresh workers which high turnover brings.³ Because the learning curve for tasks in both electronic- and garment-assembly is short, workers reach peak productivity in a few weeks; however this does not mean that management does not manipulate output. In fact, the maquiladoras use a full battery of methods to control women who work in the plants in order to increase their productivity, a fact which leads to the second "explanation" for the preference for women in the maquiladoras.

That women possess "innate" capacities and personality traits making them more productive workers is truly an "article of faith" on the part of management in the maquiladoras as Ehrenreich and Fuentes (1981:55) put it.

Having "naturally" nimble fingers as well as greater patience and discipline, women are well suited to the tedious, monotonous routine of assembly work.

These "advantages," far from being natural, are cultural. Through social experiences women acquire the traits and characteristics that make them preferable. Moreover, male managers and female operators reproduce at work traditional patterns of male domination. The factory becomes family-like for young women workers -- with "big brothers" and a "father" as compelling images of patriarchy in the plant (Grossman 1979). Indeed, some plants have found that a "sprinkling" of men on the line makes women "better behaved" (Van Waas 1981) (read to mean "more productive"). In addition, to foster women's loyalty to the company, management has instituted a number of fringe benefits most of which are geared to "feminine" interests, such as fashion and make-up classes, singing, dancing, and sports and beauty contests.⁴

Maquiladoras, however, make use of not only traditional values of obedience to paternal authority and passive, ornamental femininity but also "modern" values of individual incentive and competition to increase productivity. Contests of all kinds pervade assembly work. "Productivity drives" pit workers in one plant against those in another, line against line, even the individual worker against all other workers in the plant. The prizes -- cosmetics or "trips for two" -- reveal management's "manipulation of 'feminine' habits and proclivities for higher productivity" (Lim 1978:41).

Thus, while maquila work (at the government-established minimum wage and in comparatively good conditions) does presents the means to free Mexican women from traditional economic, social, and cultural restrictions, that potential appears far from realized. First, nothing suggests that women's increased purchasing power brings significant alterations in ideas about the proper roles of men and women in Mexican society. For example, the issue of whether or not conditions in the family power constellation can be changed by women's participation in the labor force in the absence of equalitarian ideologies remains critical (Salaff 1976). It appears that the enhanced economic value of the daughter may lead to tighter control by males, and daughters seem to have no greater status or family decision-making power as a result of their financial contribution to the household. Furthermore, in the factory, management deliberately preserves and utilizes traditional paternal authority to prevent workers from realizing their potential as a class. Nevertheless, wages do confer some autonomy; the maquila worker's new economic role somewhat undermines traditional family patterns. In addition, maquila work provides an escape from early marriage and motherhood, but not without consequences.

Evidence indicates that integration of women into the development process through assembly work increases their vulnerability to exploitation, not only in the factor but in the larger society as well (Safa 1981). Male bosses at the factory have tremendous power over female workers' lives, but they do not provide the same "protection" as do male kin; factory work being not quite respectable, factory workers are vulnerable to sexual

exploitation. The factory is also a new site for sexual objectification, in the form of promoting feminine consumerism and under the guise of boosting morale. Furthermore, there is still social stigma attached to being a "factory girl" in Mexico, and concern about the morality of maquila workers is widespread. This is used as an instrument of control both in and out of the factory.

Women's struggle to participate as equals in Mexican society requires transformation of the traditional female role. This role change requires consciousness on the part of women themselves that they are significantly involved in the public world -- the world beyond the home -- as well as recognition by society that women's involvement is important and legitimate. Work in the assembly labor force provides an excellent foundation for this process.

Nevertheless, it would be easy to assume, as Van Waas suggests, that centuries of machismo make for passive, manipulable women workers (1981). On the other hand, perhaps "docility is the appearance women present to men under conditions of subordination as gender" (Elson and Pearson 1981:95 [emphasis added]). The collectivization of women in the maquiladoras and women's confrontation with a common authority in patriarchal capitalism can lead to solidarity among maquila workers in strike actions and/or in formation of networks of maquila workers sharing awareness of the larger structures that shape their lives.

For example, at times, individualistic responses -- "subconscious wild cat strikes" (Fernandez-Kelly 1983) -- are transformed into collective action. In the summer of 1983, 450 women in a garment factory in Ciudad Juarez, after experiencing a doubling of their quota, closed the plant and demanded a collective contract. The workers won the strike, and they now feel confident and powerful. But conversations with the two women leading the new union in the plant reveal how much they still struggle to be, in their own words, "treated as equal human beings."

Another rather different response on the part of women to their experience as workers in the maquiladoras can be found at the Women's Center in Ciudad Juarez. Established in the early seventies and staffed by women who themselves once worked in the maquiladoras, the Center offers educational programming to enhance maquila workers' ability to analyze their situation as women in the family, in society, and as workers, as well as to move women in the direction of working class solidarity. Although the Center has not totally escaped factions and hierarchy, it provides a "space" for the treatment of women as equals and for women's equal access to participation.

Going out on strike or attending consciousness-raising classes are examples of ways in which women workers are actively confronting patriarchal capitalism in the BIP. These examples also suggest possibilities for expanding the traditional female role and for developing solidarity with other workers. The extent to which such changes are actually occurring was examined by means of a field experiment carried out among maquila workers in

Ciudad Juarez -- the "shining success story" of the BIP with approximately 80,000 employees in the some 180 plants.⁵

THE FIELD EXPERIMENT

Sample

Between the fall of 1982 and the summer of 1983 a Mexican colleague and I collected data from three groups of women in Ciudad Juarez on their sex role identification and on their orientation toward work and workers in the maquila industry. The sample is essentially self-selected. That is, women who chose to participate in a twelve-week long consciousness-raising course (offered by an education and training organization that serves maquila workers in the city) make up the first group (N=102). From late September until mid-December these women met four nights a week from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. for lectures, discussions, workshops, and films. This course was followed, beginning in January, by a training course for alternative employment and, during the summer, a course in participatory action research. These courses comprised a curriculum strongly informed by Freire's philosophy of conscientization. The participants were surveyed at the onset, during the consciousness-raising course.

Volunteers from among women in a garment factory, (a subsidiary of a U.S.-based multinational corporation) who had recently participated in a successful strike against the company comprise the second group (N=32). In July 1983, the workers closed the plant for about two weeks until their demand for a collective contract was met. They protested management's doubling of their quota -- which had the effect of cutting wages as most of them were already producing double the quota. The two women who were elected to represent the newly unionized workers were among the strike leaders.

Finally, volunteers from the women working in an electronics plant (also a subsidiary of a U.S.-based multinational) who were not involved in consciousness raising activities or recent strike action, make up a third, "control" group (N=67).

Hypotheses

In the field experiment we wanted to test a number of hypotheses regarding the gender identification and working-class solidarity of these women. The expectations regarding women's identification with the traditional female sex role focus on the extent on which women in the various groups have begun to expand that role, by perceiving the significance and the legitimacy of their participation as equals in the world beyond home and family.

Thus, we hypothesized that (1) women in the consciousness-raising course would exhibit the greatest capacity to enlarge the traditional female sex role, since much of the course curriculum deals specifically with such issues; (2) women who had been on strike would also reveal, but to a lesser

degree, expanded sex role identification because of that experience -- which, although not explicitly "feminist," implies a larger role for women than the traditional one and certainly raises women's consciousness about their capabilities; and (3) women in the control group, who were in the assembly labor force but had neither of the other experiences, would report the most traditional sex role orientations of the three groups of women.

The expectations regarding solidarity with other workers focus on the degree to which these women recognize the interests they have in common with other workers, especially in the maquilas, over and against the interests of management. We expected this measure to vary depending on the types of experiences the different groups had undergone and on analyses of the conditions to which they had been exposed.

On this basis, we hypothesized that (1) women in the strike group would be the least competitive with other workers because of their recent experience of solidarity in the strike, while women in the consciousness-raising course, who were exposed to theoretical analyses of the need for worker solidarity in the face of international capital, would be less competitive than the controls; (2) women in the course would be the most discontent with worker-management relations as well as the most critical of dependent development in the BIP because of analyses developed in class; while women in the strike group, which had confronted management on an adversary basis and which was in the process of negotiating a contract with a multinational firm, would be more discontent and more critical than the controls; (3) women in the strike group would commit the most support to a (hypothetical) strike and would have the most positive view of unions -- having just fought for and won their strike demand for a collective contract; while the women taking a course offered by an organization that has come out publicly in solidarity with workers would be willing to commit more to a strike action than the controls and would have a more positive view of unions than the controls.

Measures

The survey instrument employed was composed of several scales and a number of individual items that measured gender identification and working-class solidarity. Although the response format was simply agree/disagree or of a Likert-type format (categories were later collapsed), all questions were closed-ended. The vast majority of questions were taken from research conducted on other Latin American populations, although, in some cases, they were developed uniquely for this study by researchers working in the United States.

To determine the degree of these women's identification with the traditional female role, they were asked: (1) how descriptive of themselves they believed each in a set of sex-typed characteristics to be (some traditionally viewed as feminine and some traditionally viewed as masculine); (2) to choose the option closest to their own beliefs from a series of paired-opposite value statements, concerning (a) assertiveness/docility and (b) self versus other directedness; and (3) whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about male-female equality.

To tap these women's orientation toward work and their solidarity with other maquila workers, they were asked: (1) how important certain job characteristics are to them; (2) whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the importance of competition as well as with a series of statements about the quality of relations between workers and managers; (3) their opinions about foreign investment in Ciudad Juarez and about for whose interests unions work in Ciudad Juarez; and (4) to choose from a list of possible actions, requiring ever increasing commitment of self, those which they would take in support of a hypothetical strike by other workers.

Findings

Before presenting the substantive findings of the survey, I will present some background information on the women in the three groups -- course, strike, and control. The range in age and the average age of the women in the three groups are essentially the same. Women in the course ranged in age from 15 to 40 years with a mean of 22 years; the strikers ranged in age from 18 to 35 with a mean of 24; the controls ranged in age from 16 to 38 with a mean of 21. The women in the course, however, are better educated than are those from the other two groups. Sixty-nine percent of them have more than primary education (6 years) compared to only 34 percent of the strikers and 27 percent of the controls. Less than one-fifth (17 percent) of the women in the course are married whereas one-half (50 percent) of the strikers and more than one-third (39 percent) of the controls are married or in a marriage-like relationship. A similar pattern holds for motherhood. Again, less than one-fifth (19 percent) of the women in the course have children, but one-half (50 percent) of the strikers and over one-half (55 percent) of the controls have at least one child.

The average length of time at the present job ranges from a low of 2.4 years for the women in the course to a high of 3.8 years for the strikers; the controls are in the middle with an average of 3.3 years on the job. Although there is some variation, the greatest proportion of women in each group report feeling more approval from their families since starting work -- 59 percent of the women in the course, 44 percent of the strikers, and 58 percent of the controls. In addition, the overwhelming majority of women in all three groups believe that marriage/family and work are of equal importance in their lives -- 76 percent of the women in the course, 75 percent of the strikers, and 90 percent of the controls. Only among women in the consciousness-raising course was there any commitment to work over marriage/family, and, although it was a very small proportion (6 percent), it is suggestive of differences which appear among the groups regarding sex role identification.

Sex role identification. Findings regarding traditional feminine characteristics (Table 1) suggest that the controls are indeed the most traditional of the three groups of women. While the vast majority of women in all three groups claim to be home-oriented (TFC #3), considerably more of the controls see themselves in that light. Adding the fact that the controls as a group are the least complaining (TFC#2, a "negative" feminine

characteristic) and the most principled (TFC#7) produces the image of the long-suffering, morally superior mother of Mexican tradition.

A different picture appears for the strikers. As a group, these women, who took part in the rational, systematic action (the strike) of serious potential consequences (loss of job/income, blacklisting), do not view themselves as emotional (TFC #5) or in much need of the approval of other people (TFC #4). The practical activity of the strike and the real risks involved in terms of repercussions from management figure strongly in these women's perceptions of themselves.

Upon first examination, the results regarding traditional femininity for the women in the course appear somewhat surprising; however, a partial explanation can be found in the course curriculum itself. For example, there is heavy emphasis in the curriculum on services to others, especially in the form of efforts to improve conditions in the community. Moreover, the statement on submissiveness (TFC #1) was elaborated in a way that implied "doing things for others." That more of these women claim to be submissive, then, is less unexpected when viewed in this light. This group's greater indecisiveness (TFC #6) may be connected to the course curriculum as well. That is, in the course, women are presented with a complex social structure based on the interrelations of class and gender; how to confront this reality is barely transparent. Thus, feelings of being overwhelmed and not knowing what to do may result from women's experience of the curriculum.

Turning next to the findings on traditional masculine characteristics, the data suggest that the women in the consciousness-raising course are beginning to develop a sense of individualism and agency that is traditionally more characteristic of men than of women. Specifically, larger proportions of this group see themselves as independent (TMC#2) and competent (TMC #4).

Interestingly, the strike group reveals the largest numbers of women who claim the "negative" masculine characteristics of arrogance (TMC #3) and cynicism (TMC #6). Whether such traits were necessary preconditions for these women to be able to organize the strike action in the first place or whether they are perceptions of themselves developed as a result of their behavior and experience on strike is beyond these data to answer. It does seem reasonable, though, to speculate that the relatively larger (although absolutely quite small) number of women in this group who have feelings of superiority (TMC #8) links directly to winning the strike because of a sense of potency engendered by success.

The controls claim to be the most ambitious of the three groups (TMC #5), but one must question how far this ambition can be carried when, as a group, the controls are the least aggressive (TMC #1) as well and least self-confident (TMC #7). The work experience alone, then, does not appear to enable women to take a proactive stance in the world; however, the self-confidence expressed by the majority of women who have experienced a consciousness-raising course or a successful strike translates into values that to promote women's capacity to act creatively in society.

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that assumptions about maquila workers' "feminine" docility and obedience to authority (or other-directedness) should be seriously questioned. The overwhelming majority of women in all three groups believe that a worker should be able to challenge her supervisor's orders (AV #1). Moreover, a somewhat smaller proportion of each group, although still the majority, deems it appropriate to point out the errors of their mothers (AV #2). In one of the two major differences regarding values among the groups, more of the women in the strike group -- perhaps out of confidence gleaned from that action -- value being in a position of authority above one of obedience (AV #3).

The data indicate further that virtually all of these women are highly self-directed or individualistic in certain ways, trusting their own judgement (SDV #2) and taking responsibility for their problems (SDV #3). Yet, in the other major difference on values, the women in the consciousness-raising course who place great value on promoting social change have the most confidence in their capacity actively to reshape the world (SDV #1. One requirement for the exercise of this capacity is women's participation as equals in society. Thus, it is also the women in the consciousness-raising course who are the most adamant about equality between the genders.

As expected, on a ten-item scale measuring attitudes regarding male-female equality (Table 3), women in both the course and the strike score significantly higher than the controls. (For course women compared to controls, $t=5.97$, $p<.001$, and for strike women compared to controls, $t=2.46$, $p<.01$.) On seven of the ten items, the largest proportion of women taking the feminist stance came from the course (Table 3). Their attitudes about equality take some very concrete forms. For example, in their view, swearing is no more objectionable on the part of women than on the part of men (A #1); educational, business, and professional opportunities should be open to women on the same basis as they are to men (A #8 and A #5). On more abstract issues even greater proportions of women in the consciousness-raising course call for equality. They desire to move beyond the ideal of the sheltered female who is a good wife and mother and to claim the freedom and the right to participate fully in social life (A #4, A #6, A #9). This indicates the importance of an organizing belief system (such as that developed through the course) within which to evaluate one's experiences at work, in the family, and in society.

On two issues the strike group leads in the proportion of feminist responses: slightly more of these women believe men should share housework (A #2) as well as receive no preference in hiring or promotion in the paid work-force (A #10). They appear to come by these attitudes from practical experience. Among the three groups, the largest proportion of strikers, one half, is married, and as full-time workers they feel the burden of the "double day" -- housework in addition to assembly work. Furthermore, having struggled and risked their jobs, jobs that are significant for the economic well-being of their households, the role of worker is highly salient to them. Thus, they balk at the idea of male preference for jobs.

All three groups of women are equally strong in their demand for opening apprenticeships to women (A #7), a major means for them to get ahead in the work world.

Finally, it is worth noting that, with only two exceptions, the control group shows the smallest proportion of women taking the feminist stance on issues of equality. On A #4 and A #5 their feminist responses surpass those of the strikers but not of the women in the course. Such a finding shows again that participation in the assembly labor force is not sufficient by itself for women to begin to enlarge their traditional role and participate fully in the development of their society. This issue will be taken up again in the conclusions after findings regarding orientations toward work in the maquila industry are presented.

Orientations toward work in the maquila industry.

Examining work values first, it appears that women in all three groups are about equally motivated at work by opportunities for advancement and good pay (JC #1 and #2). The data in Table 4 do indicate, however, that the women in the consciousness-raising course are somewhat less concerned about social recognition or prestige (JC #3) attached to a job than either of the other two groups of women. This suggests that the women in the former group have gleaned from the course some consciousness of the value of work for itself which may be a prerequisite for working-class consciousness.

There are no significant differences (measured by the t-test) among the groups on a seven-item scale measuring competitiveness. Yet, on individual items composing the scale, the expected tendency of controls are most competitive, where women in the consciousness-raising course are found to be less competitive and women in the strike group, least competitive. For example, regarding the statement, "It is important to me to do the best job possible even if that is not viewed positively by my workmates," the range of agreement was: control, 91 percent; course, 86 percent; and strike, 81 percent. Regarding the statement, "I believe it is important to win at games and sports and to be the best worker," the range of agreement was: control, 79 percent, course, 77 percent; and strike, 66 percent. The power of cooperative action aimed at a common good was instilled in at least some of the strikers as a result of their experience.

Anticipated variations emerge when the focus shifts to women's beliefs about worker-management relations in the maquilas (Table 5). On a ten-item scale measuring worker contentment both the strike women and the women in the course score significantly lower -- showing more discontent with the relations -- than the controls. (For the controls compared to the strikers, $t=-7.15$, and for the controls compared to the course women, $t=-8.68$; $p<.01$ for both. The controls, to a much greater degree than the other groups, believe that management and workers share common interests (WMR #1 through 6). They do not seem to be examining critically their situation at work; compared to the other two groups, the controls appear mystified rather than conscious regarding class. On the other hand, over half of both the strikers and the women in the course assert that they and their fellow

workers have the competence to run their plant (WM #8). The basis of this belief naturally differs according to the experience of each group. Although few in either group are demanding more "say" in decision making -- either at the company or national level (WM #7 and #10), over a third of the strikers do desire worker control of the company (WM #9) -- again rooted in their experience.

The women in the course are, as anticipated, the least enthusiastic about the Mexican government's facilitation of foreign capital investment in the BIP, and the strike women are not much more supportive (course, 57 percent; strike, 62 percent). The controls, 90 percent of whom support the policy, once again exhibit a lack of critical consciousness. When it comes to the question of how well unions represent workers' interests, the women in the course also appear to be the most skeptical. Less than two-thirds (60 percent) of these women believe unions negotiate for workers compared to more than three-fourths (78 percent) of the strike and control groups combined. The latter two groups are virtually one hundred percent unionized -- one of them quite recently -- and the organization offering the course has, in the past, made public statements about the non-responsiveness of unions to the needs of women workers. These facts help explain this finding.

Finally, women in the strike group and women in the consciousness-raising course identify more strongly with the interests of other workers than the controls as measured by willingness to carry out various activities in support of a hypothetical strike (See Table 6). On a nine-item Guttman scale of possible actions one can take during a strike, the strike group and the women in the course both score significantly higher than the controls, $t=7.26$, and for the course women compared to the controls, $t=10.38$; $p<.01$ for both.) These measures indicate their greater commitment to solidarity with other workers.

The majority of these women are willing not only to take food to and stand watch with other workers on strike (SSA #3 and #4) but also to demonstrate and sign petitions in support of the strike (SSA #5 and #6) and even promote the strike by distributing information or raising money (SSA #7 and #8). In addition, at least one-quarter of the women in the strike group say they are willing to go so far as to join in a hunger strike (SSA #9) to support their fellow workers' struggle. The majority of the controls, on the other hand, are at best willing to ask a few questions and discuss the strike informally (SSA #1 and #2) with other workers.

Taken together, these findings especially regarding unions and strike actions, raise the issue of the need and the possibilities for alternative organizational forms aimed at advancing women workers' interests and contribute significantly to the conclusions of this study.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the field experiment can be summarized as follows: (1) regarding maquila workers' identification with the traditional female role, the control group appears closest to the stereotypical ideal for Mexican

women, as expected, but the strikers, who have added certain stereotypically "masculine" characteristics to their role repertoires, and the women from the course, who are making demands for more male-female equality, seem to be enlarging their roles as women; (2) in terms of these women's solidarity with other workers, those who have undergone the practical experience of a strike or who have been exposed in a classroom setting to theoretical analyses of the situation of workers, reveal marked consciousness of class, as anticipated, while the controls remain rather mystified about their part in the new international division of labor.

These findings suggest caution when making generalizations about the docility and submissiveness of maquila workers as a group. Conventional wisdom among maquila managers identifies Mexican women as so passive that even when they begin to question their situation, by becoming less "obedient," they will not take action to promote change. To the contrary, the data indicate that some maquila workers not only depart from the female stereotype but also are far from unorganizable.

These findings also lead to two other issues -- one involving directions for future research, and the other revolving around development actions. Studies such as this one are beginning to uncover the nature of assembly work impact on the lives of women employed in the maquiladoras, but, to date, beyond scattered anecdotes, little information exists, regarding any changes the men are experiencing in their lives. If women's roles change, then surely men's will as well, and although this has been a topic of considerable concern in many quarters, no systematic studies have been undertaken to determine the quality of the alterations in the sex role of Mexican males.

As men's and women's roles change, the structure and dynamics of families are also recast. This phenomenon has provided a unique occasion for speculation; however, only highly limited, tentative analyses focusing on the Mexican family in the context of labor intensive industrialization have been carried out thus far. Both research questions are too important to the understanding of the overall social consequences of this facet of Mexico's development strategy to be abandoned in the realm of unexamined assumptions.

The second major issue raised by this investigation revolves around development actions as noted above. Policy makers who advocate the goal of enhancing women's participation as equals in society and of enabling them to author their own development must consider what organizational forms are best suited to that endeavor. The collectivization of women in factories, by itself, does not seem to move women toward that goal. As an extreme form of organizing activity, striking is not a strategy that can be adopted easily for altering day-to-day relations and situations confronting women workers in the factory and in society. The consciousness-raising course offered by the grassroots women's organization has been able to reach only a few thousand [of tens of thousands] maquila workers in the city and has been primarily analytical rather than practical in focus.

What other organizational forms exist -- or can be created -- to enlarge Mexican women's opportunities and capacities for full and valued participation in the development of their society? Organizing efforts which replace hierarchy with community and which maintain a woman-sensitive orientation recognize that women's needs are neither the same as nor germane to be subsumed under men's needs; unique in many ways, women's needs, though, are certainly preferred, but remain elusive in their exact form. Thus, this is a central question for all policymakers who have an interest in women in development. A concerted effort should be made to discover with maquila workers the organizational forms which are the most responsive to their situation in the workplace, in the family, and in society with the general aim of promoting their participation as equals in all spheres of life in Mexico.

NOTES

- 1 Grunwald 1983; Bustamante 1983; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Lim 1983; El-Sanabary 1983.
- 2 Grossman 1979; Lim 1978; Beneria and Sen 1982; Safa 1981; special issue of Signs: "Development and the Sexual Division of Labor" 1981 and Multinational Monitor: "By the Sweat of Her Brow: Women and Multinationals" 1983; El-Sanabary 1983; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983.
- 3 With the doubling of the maquila work force -- from about 40,000 employees in the early 1980s to about 80,000 in the mid-1980s -- management has become concerned about "high" turnover.
- 4 Some plants are now emphasizing traditional aspects of their benefits package such as savings plans and life insurance. Non-systematic observation suggests that growing numbers of men can be found in these plants. The connection between what management offers workers in the way of benefits and the gender of those workers is an interesting question for further study.
- 5 For a fuller discussion of the BIP in Ciudad Juarez, see Young 1986.

TABLE 1
SEX-TYPED CHARACTERISTICS

TRADITIONAL FEMININE CHARACTERISTICS (TFC)	Percent Who Claim TFCs and TMCs		
	COURSE (N=102)	STRIKE (N=32)	CONTROL (N=67)
1. Submissive	42	25	25
2. Complaining (-)	15	13	8
3. Home oriented	71	72	85
4. Need approval	39	22	31
5. Emotional	57	28	40
6. Indecisive (-)	38	16	16
7. Principled	62	53	78
Traditional Masculine Characteristics (TMC)			
1. Aggressive	14	19	8
2. Independent	23	13	16
3. Arrogant (-)	12	19	6
4. Competent	23	19	19
5. Ambitious	33	34	40
6. Cynical (-)	27	38	34
7. Self-confident	54	52	16
8. Superior	9	17	2

TABLE 2
 ASSERTIVENESS AND SELF-DIRECTEDNESS

ASSERTIVENESS VALUES (AV)	Percent Choosing Option		
	COURSE (N=102)	STRIKE (N=32)	CONTROL (N=67)
1. If one thinks the orders of a supervisor are unreasonable, one should feel free to question them.	74	72	72
2. If one's mother is in error, one should feel free to disagree with her.	58	56	63
3. It is better to be able to give orders than to have to obey them.	17	25	6
SELF-DIRECTEDNESS VALUES (SDV)			
1. One can change the world to suit one's needs.	77	56	45
2. I trust my judgment rather than that of others.	97	94	93
3. One makes the most of one's own problems.	96	92	96

TABLE 3
MALE-FEMALE EQUALITY

ATTITUDE (A)	Percent Giving Feminist Response*		
	COURSE (N=102)	STRIKE (N=32)	CONTROL (N=67)
* 1. Swearing and obscenities are more repulsive in women.	17	9	9
2. Men should share housework.	75	78	49
3. Either a man or a woman can propose marriage.	22	19	11
*4. Women should worry less about rights and more about being good wives and mothers.	49	28	9
5. Women should have the same business/professional opportunities.	89	63	84
*6. Women should not expect to go the same places and have the same freedom.	71	41	46
7. Apprenticeships should be open to women.	89	90	89
*8. A family should encourage a son's education more than a daughter's.	85	75	69
9. Economic and social freedom for women is more important than living up to the feminine ideal.	56	31	22
*10. Men should receive preference in hiring and promotion.	39	44	37

*Feminist response is "disagree"; these items were reverse coded for analysis.

TABLE 4
IMPORTANT JOB CHARACTERISTICS (JC)

IMPORTANT FOR A JOB TO HAVE:	Percent Agreeing		
	COURSE (N=102)	STRIKE (N=32)	CONTROL (N=67)
1. Opportunities for advancement	96	94	97
2. Good pay	93	94	90
3. Prestige and social recognition	64	72	87

TABLE 5
WORKER/MANAGEMENT RELATIONS (WM)

IMPORTANT FOR A JOB TO HAVE:	Percent Giving Contented Response*		
	COURSE (N=102)	STRIKE (N=32)	CONTROL (N=67)
1. Employers generally have concern for their workers' welfare.	26	28	49
2. Laborers generally receive a "fair" salary.	14	28	67
3. Labor and management have a high degree of common interest.	35	25	51
4. Employers and workers have benefited equally from recent border economic and industrial development.	20	25	82
5. Managers consult workers often enough in decision-making.	9	3	18
6. My fellow workers and I receive "fair treatment" from our employer.	36	28	84
*7. Workers in my company should be given a greater say in managerial decisions.	13	13	6
*8. My fellow workers and I are technically competent to manage our company.	53	56	24
*9. It would be desirable for workers to control my company.	25	38	19
*10. Labor should have a greater say than it now has in economic policy.	7	16	5

*Contented response is "disagree"; these items were reverse coded for analysis.

TABLE 6
GUTTMAN SCALE OF STRIKE SUPPORT ACTION (SSA)

	Percent Unwilling To		
	COURSE (N=102)	STRIKE (N=32)	CONTROL. (N=67)
1. Gather information	14	9	19
2. Talk with others	11	9	40
3. Take food	23	9	91
4. Stand watch	32	9	90
5. Join a demonstration	38	37	91
6. Sign a petition	37	34	95
7. Distribute information	34	47	97
8. Raise money	37	45	97
9. Join a hunger strike	67	75	91

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