

Patriarchy on the Line: Labor, Gender, and Ideology in the Mexican Maquila Industry. By SUSAN TIANO. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994. Tables. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. ix, 260 pp. Cloth, \$44.95. Paper, \$18.95.

Women in the Latin American Development Process. Edited by CHRISTINE E. BOSE and EDNA ACOSTA-BELÉN. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. x, 290 pp. Cloth, \$49.95. Paper, \$18.95.

Susan Tiano, Christine E. Bose, and Edna Acosta-Belén add to the studies analyzing the recent entrance of large numbers of women workers into the expanding global economy. Since 1960, the percentage of women in the Latin American labor force has grown twice as fast as in the world as a whole; and it is estimated that by the year 2000, women will compose one-fourth of the region's total wage earners. Tiano studies the impact of Mexican border-town maquiladoras on different groups of women in the 1980s; Bose and Acosta-Belén present individual essays in two sections, the first stressing the impact of industrial labor on wage-earning women, and the second, women's strategies in dealing with their situation. Both studies challenge such clichés as women's docility and men's removal from the labor force with women's employment in maquiladoras.

Tiano found that the majority of the women in her survey first entered the public labor force in service jobs (ranging from domestics to secretaries and accountants); later took jobs in the maquilas, assembling either machine parts or garments; and often returned to service occupations that offered better wages, opportunities for self-improvement, and job satisfaction. Dividing the women into groups related to their responsibility for child support, Tiano determined that employers at first hired educated, young, single, childless women; but when more plants opened, employers had to compete for workers. Rather than raise wages, they lowered the requirements. Undereducated, married, and single women with children desperately needed the money to survive, and were less likely to leave or complain of the rock-bottom wages.

Tiano concludes that working-class families do consider it acceptable for women to work outside the house; it gives them more input in family decisions, but men remain in the labor force in different occupations. The "outward appearance of docility" covers women's methods of adapting. Tiano suggests that in the future, these women may strike for higher wages or leave the assembly plants and seek other employment.

Bose and Acosta-Belén contend that European patriarchy and colonialism replaced the more egalitarian indigenous society. The Europeans' sexist policies made women the "last colony," supporting society with their unpaid labor and their ability to produce additions to the work force. Capitalism has forced the population to migrate from rural to urban settings and has moved the labor force from subsistence agriculture to commercial production, but women's economic position continues to deteriorate. The editors suggest that employers used the high turnover rate, brought about by poor working conditions, to keep unions from organizing.

Contributors Kathryn B. Ward and Jean Larson Pyle agree that women work in dead-end jobs with lower wages than men. The entrance of foreign capital, they add, has made gender's intersection with race and class more evident. White men supervise black women, Chinese men Taiwanese women; Jewish men in Miami own the garment factories, and Cuban men supervise the Cuban women who work in them. To maintain status and power, men devalue women's economic contributions or resort to domestic violence. Luz del Alba Acevedo, M. Patricia Fernández Kelly and Saskia Sassen, and Palmira N. Ríos analyze literature in the field, Hispanic women in the United States, and special conditions in Puerto Rico.

In the book's section on empowering women, both June Nash and Helen Icken Safa stress the need to rethink Marxist economic analyses of women's role in class struggles. Gender and the state should be considered in addition to class, and the capitalist employer along with the effects on the "lumpenproletariat" (many of them women) of job retraction, shrinking welfare, and export emphasis. Nash credits the state's emphasis on exports for the rapid decline in the subsistence economy, causing the working class to need a higher monetary income to survive and the economy to demand cheaper labor.

Industrial employers in Latin America apparently cannot offer enough jobs to men at an adequate wage. Women accordingly are forced to leave the house and add to the family income, although they retain responsibility for the home and the children. As a result, the number of women in the paid labor force increased by 10 percent in the last decade without a decrease in male employment. When the economic downturn struck, male workers accepted lower wages, and women earned even less. Women with an independent income do have a stronger role in family decisions, but they also have an even longer workday; it is still rare for men to help out in the home. It is hard for women to hold a permanent job, furthermore, because family responsibilities always come first.

Frances A. Rothstein, in her survey of San Cosme (ten miles from Puebla), presents the only favorable study of gender equality when she concludes that men do not dominate the area. Families moved in together; relatives aided in home care and helped start new businesses for women as well as men. On the other hand, Rae L. Blumberg, in her comparison of the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Swaziland, claims that the 1980s swept away the gains of the 1960s as states cut government services to promote exports. The International Monetary Fund programs resulted in increased unemployment and underemployment, eliminated state subsidies for basic foods, cut health care and education, and reduced protective employment regulations. Women ended up in labor-intensive processing and underground shops, or worked at home on machines they had to purchase while profits went to jobbers. Development loans from the IMF and other agencies gave preference to men who wanted more independence; women sought assistance out of basic need.

Unable to obtain help, many poor urban women and children have moved into

the expanding informal economy to survive. Safa notes that women have used the church as an umbrella under which to organize, and symbols of motherhood to legitimate protests, in order to make aggressive action more “feminine” and acceptable. In Chile, women organized almost four hundred workshops, either in production of goods or in service industries, such as barber shops and beauty salons. Peruvian women mobilized to provide the poor with more control over their health and started a domestic workers’ union to make employers obey labor laws.

Norma Chinchilla’s survey of Nicaraguan women stresses their political rather than labor roles. She notes that women who mobilized as a group in support of the Sandinistas did not receive the same consideration given to trade unions and peasants: when the fighting finished, the victorious leaders expected women to return home to prepare meals and clean house, leaving little time for politics. More young urban women wage earners voted for Ortega than the older rural women who had not left the home.

The basic goal of all three authors is to define an effective methodology, based on Latin American surveys, that can be used internationally to study the effect of gender changes in the labor force. Their extensive graphs, charts, and references to earlier works may tend to slow down the reader, but they provide valuable information for those interested in labor history. Tiano’s study is more specialized, but that of Bose and Acosta-Belén covers a wide enough range to make it useful in a course on Latin American women. Although the essays vary widely in the depth of their analysis, they disagree little on the significance of changes in society caused by the global economy and the participation of women in the public workplace.

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Emergences: Women’s Struggles for Livelihood in Latin America. Edited by JOHN FRIEDMANN, REBECCA ABERS, and LILIAN AUTLER. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1996. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xii, 207 pp. Paper. \$17.95.

This book originated in a conference titled “Learning from Latin America: Women’s Struggles for Livelihood,” held in Los Angeles February 27–29, 1992. The conference brought together women scholars from six Latin American countries and the United States.

As described in the editors’ introduction, the stimulus for this gathering was Latin American women’s emergence during the 1980s and 1990s “into an enlarged public sphere” through their activities related to self-provisioning of livelihoods, labor market participation, and political action. These activities arose in response to urbanization and political mobilization; growing impoverishment, partly caused by the social and economic impact of structural adjustments; weaker state powers; and the retreat of governments from the social sphere. The central themes addressed