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## Assembling Women: The Feminization of Global Manufacturing.

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*Assembling Women: The Feminization of Global Manufacturing.* By Teri L. Caraway. Ithaca, N.Y., and London: ILR Press (an imprint of Cornell University Press), 2007. 208 pp. ISBN 978-0-8014-4548-4, \$57.95 (cloth); 978-0-8014-7365-4, \$1895 (paper).

In her thought-provoking book, *Assembling Women*, Teri Caraway bucks much of the literature to argue that the feminization of the work force is a temporary phenomenon among some employers: female employment gradually declines as labor-intensive production, prevalent in the early stages of EOI policy implementation, gives place to capital-intensive production. Thus it is not market orientation that matters—export-oriented versus inward-substitution industrialization—but rather capital- versus labor-intensive industry. Culture-based theories for why more women are employed have less explanatory power than demand-based factors and labor institutions.

Caraway's findings are a significant contribution to the literature on women's work under EOI policies, and are based on a finely layered multi-sectoral approach that draws on different feminist and other political-economy theories of feminization and its effects. After examining garments, textiles, plywood, and automobiles in Indonesia, the author presents a cross-country analysis spanning Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Her data are from more than 200 interviews with managers, data bases from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics, and two cross-national data sets. Although some of the chapters were originally published as journal articles, the book's persuasive argument unfolds organically. Its main contribution, as Caraway herself states, is to provide an "empirical check" on the claims made in ethnographies of female workers in garment factories.

Chapter 1 provides a framework Caraway terms the "Gendered Political Economy" approach to the feminization of global manufacturing. A common view is that feminization of EOI labor forces is inevitable; the labor supply for it is guaranteed, and its emergence follows essentially the same pattern across different country contexts. In contrast, Caraway finds that feminization occurs only when the demand for female labor increases and its supply is adequate. Institutions such as government policy and trade unions mediate between labor supply and demand. Demand in turn is influenced by broad structural patterns across different economic sectors, with labor-intensive sectors hiring more women than capital-intensive structures.

At the workplace level, demand is tempered by gendered discourses of work that shape hiring decisions, labor processes, gendered divisions of labor on the shop floor, and the definition of jobs as men's or women's. Caraway argues that variations in these three factors—labor supply, mediating institutions, and capital/demand—can explain inter-country differences. Labor supply and mediating institutions can also help explain sectoral variation.

Chapter 2 examines the assumption that labor intensity is automatically linked to the employment of women. The orthodox argument is that female workers are low-cost, unstable, skill-deficient, and more likely than men to be absent or to leave because of maternity needs. In Indonesia, Caraway finds that women's employment patterns are influenced less by the women's own characteristics than by actions of employers: paying women lower average wages, for example; fostering gendered discourses at work; and actively inducing labor turnover in certain sectors by, for example, rotating women on maternity leave in and out of the work force.

Chapter 3 examines labor supply changes and the mediating labor institutions that made women more attractive as employees in Indonesia. On the supply side, the author argues that changes in educational opportunities, the prevalence of fertility drugs, and landlessness and economic crisis pushed more women into the labor market. In this case, I would have liked to have more information about the women themselves. Caraway points out that employment of women in both the 15–19 and 20–24 age groups increased in later years of EOI (p. 67). Why the preference for young women? I would have liked more discussion of whether, as has been found by other studies, factors such as marital status, age, or Indonesia's vast ethnic and cultural diversity (p. 105) played a role in hiring decisions along with gender. What percentages of women were married or single? Did this vary by sector? In other words, how representative are the general statistics about Indonesian women that the author uses, in relation to the workers in the study?

Most interestingly, Caraway outlines how mediating institutions such as the state and the trade union movement can inadvertently encourage feminization. In Indonesia, the government "emasculated" the union movement, and this demobilization led to the removal of political opposition to female labor; as has been documented elsewhere, trade unions are gendered institutions. Similarly, Islamist organizations that may have been a source of opposition were also repressed, while protectionist legislation was

loosening. Combined, the supply-side factors and the removal of sources of opposition made women more attractive.

Chapter 4 explores regional and sectoral variations. Preferences for women and men changed over time, in “waves” that corresponded to different phases of industrialization in Indonesia. The three phases are linked through the dynamics of stickiness, spillovers, and snowballing. “Stickiness” was the result of factories’ gendered division of labor: existing factories had to defer hiring women, whereas new factories could hire them straight away. Caraway finds evidence that in the 1990s, factories in sectors set up prior to EOI primarily hired men (although even they had more female than male employees). In contrast, “spillovers” and “snowballing” helped accelerate feminization. Late entrants were influenced by the example set by earlier firms that had profited from the use of female workers. Work in these sectors became known as women’s work, even though men had performed it earlier. Snowballing involved the growth of employment in sectors such as garments that already employed a large number of women.

Chapter 5 examines gendered discourses within factories. These discourses, which are tied to broader Indonesian gender discourses, are largely uniform, but their effects vary. The discourse itself had no or little predictive value. In many respects, this is a familiar story in the literature on women and work, although Caraway places emphasis on the competitive pressures in labor-intensive sectors. Her aim in this chapter is to show how the field of international political economy can gain from a gendered analysis of work.

Caraway finds corroborative evidence in other countries. Examining the experience of EOI across several country contexts in Chapter 6, she argues for examining the “balance of employment between labor-intensive and capital-intensive sectors, employment growth, the strength of labor unions, and fertility.” In the early stages of EOI, labor-intensive industries are set up, and therefore more women are employed. As EOI matures, employment expands rapidly in capital-intensive sectors, and masculinization ensues. In contrast, ISI does not always bring masculinization.

In the conclusions, Caraway touches on the issue of inequality and the ambiguous effects of EOI on women. Although women gained employment opportunities in EOI economies, Caraway echoes earlier studies of women and EOI to argue that these have been dead-end jobs; men’s wages continued to be higher; and women continued to be barred from high-paying jobs.

Caraway presents an important, nuanced, and

timely account of feminization and de-feminization of labor markets. Her findings leave us with questions about prospects for women’s employment and employment conditions in countries like Indonesia.

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## History

*On the Global Waterfront: The Fight to Free the Charleston 5.* By Suzan Erem and Paul Durrenberger. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008. 200 pp. ISBN 1-583-6716-41, \$60.00 (cloth); 1-583-6716-33, \$17.95 (paper).

This book is about events set off when a small Danish shipping company, needing to cut costs, signed a contract involving non-union longshoremen at the port of Charleston, South Carolina. Prior to 1999, this work was reserved for members of the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA). The same is true today. What happened in-between is both fascinating and complex.

The authors first introduce us to the world of global shipping. Shipping has become concentrated in the hands of a few large lines whose size guarantees a degree of market power. In addition to concentration, the industry has seen massive downsizing due both to containerization (the same containers that are on ships can be transferred to semi-tractor trailers for land shipping) and to the mechanization if not automation of much of the work involved in transferring containers.

The work of transferring goods to and from ships is that of longshoremen, a roughhewn, generally poorly educated group with the power to cause tens or hundreds of millions of dollars of losses with even a brief slowdown or strike at any significant port. The flip side of that dynamic is that longshoremen can save a company millions of dollars by quickly, efficiently, and safely moving cargo. The resulting historical strength of the longshoremen in the United States has taken diverse expression, from the progressive activism of a Harry Bridges to New York City “mob” links.

To bring a ship into a U.S. port, a company needs to make arrangements with the local port authority and hire a stevedoring firm. The latter hires the longshoremen. On the East Coast of the United States, the longshoremen work under an agreement between a shippers’ association and the ILA. That agreement stipulates uniform wages