

3

Gender and employment in Moroccan textile industries

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I. Introduction

Within the urban labour market, gender discrimination tends to take the form of occupational segregation, with women concentrated in poorly-paid, unskilled jobs, and of disparity in earnings, with women earning less than men (Anker, 1997; Birdsall and Sabot, 1991). Studies on female employment in Morocco have demonstrated the existence of wage discrimination against women (Joekes, 1985; Belghazi, 1995; Belghazi and Baden, this volume). Labour market discrimination against women is legitimized by stereotypes and social discourse surrounding female work. Employers reflect social attitudes about women's work, for example, when they argue that "women are only working to buy lipstick" (Joekes, 1985). In other words, a woman's work is not considered to be an important source of revenue for the family.

However, social discourse surrounding women's employment stands in stark contrast to labour market trends. The increase in the rate of female employment in Morocco, especially in the textile sector, suggests that women's work is becoming more and more a necessity for family livelihood strategies. The overall rate of women's employment in all sectors is now 35.5 per cent, but it has reached 42 per cent in the carpet sector, 71 per cent in knitwear and 79 per cent in garment manufacturing (Belghazi, 1995). On the basis of estimates

of the level and correlates of pay discrimination in urban enterprises, Belghazi found that, while the urban labour market has been able to attract female workers, there is a marked gender wage gap (41.2 per cent) overall. The lowest level of wage discrimination (3 per cent) was found in the public sector (administration and public services) whereas the highest level was found in the domestic service (64 per cent) (Belghazi, 1995:25).

Another interesting finding emerging from Belghazi's study concerns the export textile sector. Overall, wage discrimination in this sector (21 per cent) is lower than in many other sectors, with respect to the rewards for education and experience for male and female workers. Belghazi's research also finds that there is little gender discrimination in the starting wage for men and women in the textile export sector, which contrasts strongly with the situation in other sectors. In the textile export sector, however, discriminatory features are expressed through gender differentiated treatment in the workplace (Joeques, 1995).

This finding is an important one and helps to justify the focus of this chapter. In principle, the lack of gender discrimination in the starting wage implies that the discriminatory features of employment in the textile sector can be identified by examining the employment practices of the textile factories. This chapter therefore seeks to explore how the process of discrimination actually works. What social factors and organizational patterns within the factory support discrimination?

In the neoclassical economic model, wage differentials are explained by women's lower educational qualifications. As women usually have less training than men, they are at a disadvantage in employment and they therefore accept low salaries. This view underpins an industrial model of competitiveness, based on low-wage female labour. But this explanation is mainly descriptive and does little to reveal the socio-cultural factors that affect the division of labour between men and women, both inside and outside the factory, and that directly or indirectly determine wage discrimination and other forms of gender differentiated treatment in the labour market (Humphrey, 1985).

A quite different approach holds that the basis of wage discrimination against women is to be found not in the factory, but in the division of labour within the family. The vulnerability of women is due to their lack of training and to the difficult situation of their family and hence their need to earn an income. This has contradictory effects: it is favourable to them as regards employment, as the rate of feminization in the textile sector is high, but it is unfavourable as far

as the level of wages is concerned. This approach also has its limits, as wage discrimination is explained only by the situation of women in their households, ignoring how gender differences are experienced in the factory and the impact this has on discrimination against women.

The present study looks at gender relations both in the household and in the factory and the way in which these determine gender discrimination in the labour market (Humphrey, 1987). In other words, it explores how gender relationships are experienced and perceived both in the family and at work. It hopes to demonstrate how gender hierarchies, which have been firmly established by society, are extended and maintained in the factory. Moreover, since factories themselves are not monolithic in terms of employment practices and production methods, the chapter also attempts to compare women's experiences in different sectors of the textile export industries.

The woman worker is caught up in power relationships which determine her position in the hierarchy of the factory and the negotiation of her wages. One could deduce from this a relationship of total exploitation and obedience, with the woman worker in a situation of total dependence, at the service of the factory and with no bargaining power. But this would be to simplify the complexity of the strategies used both by the factory and by the women workers to maximize their benefits and preserve their interests. In other words, it would underplay the role of human agency.

The scope of negotiation available to actors in organizational contexts has been explored by Crozier and Friedberg (1977). While acknowledging that power relationships operating within organizations favour some to the detriment of others and that the powerful obtain greater advantages for themselves, they argue that power can be exerted by the less powerful individuals through actions that are unpredictable (breaking established norms and rules) or by refusing to concede to demands. This model needs to be refined to grasp the reality of women workers in Moroccan factories, which are organized so as to restrict workers' scope for bargaining. It is the organization that makes the rules, establishes the division of work and fixes the wages. The use of individual strategies depends on the position of the actor in the system, her resources and constraints. The rationality and behaviour of women workers is shaped and, indeed, limited, by their position in society and in the factory.

This chapter argues that unequal gender relations within the family and the society are carried into the factory and reproduced there. Gender subordination functions throughout the employment

process, influencing the choice of sector, access to employment, recruitment, type of job, experience, and wage levels. Certain values and norms that underpin gender inequality, like the submission of women to authority, their lack of ambition, their humility and their willingness to accept manual tasks which require dexterity are, from the viewpoint of the factory, positive attributes for the productivity process. Indeed, as this chapter hopes to demonstrate, patriarchal forms of control are used by factory owners and managers to consolidate their power over women workers and to maximize production in their factories. These observations raise questions about the extent to which paid employment contributes to women's "emancipation". Is it not yet another terrain where the consequences of gender subordination are evident?

1. Methodology

This study is based on a series of interviews with workers and management in 16 Moroccan export-oriented enterprises, all located in the industrial zone Salé outside Rabat, which formed a representative sample of the three sectors of the textile industry: carpets, knitwear and garment-making. A questionnaire concerning socioeconomic conditions, training, access to employment and recruitment, division of tasks and factory hierarchy, attitudes towards innovation, penalties and rewards, and the interaction between work and family life, was addressed to 225 employees — 197 female workers and 28 male workers. Eight women workers were given in-depth interviews in order to obtain qualitative information about their lives, their recruitment into the factory and how they experienced both their employment and family life, in particular their perceptions of the discrimination to which they are subjected.

Table 1: Survey sample by sector

| Sector | Carpets | Knitwear | Garments | Total |
|-------------------------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| Number of factories | 5 | 5 | 6 | 16 |
| Number of women workers | 73 | 37 | 87 | 197 |
| Number of male workers | 5 | 15 | 8 | 28 |

In addition to the main questionnaire, a form addressed to the 16 heads of companies provided information about how their factories were organized, the style of management and the employees, with particular emphasis on gender differences in systems of rewards and

punishments; output and quality; and perceptions of gender differences in the production process.

In terms of production methods, it is worth noting that the garment and knitwear factories are based mainly on a Taylorian system, whereas the carpets factories are semi-artisanal (Belghazi and Bourqia, 1997). Especially in the latter case, there is a tendency to rely on a small corps of regular, semi-skilled or skilled workers, with the majority of workers being unskilled, casual labourers, who work either in the factory or in their own homes (Belghazi and Bourqia, 1997).

While a number of the factories are direct exporters, there are several, especially in the garment sector, that receive sub-contracts from foreign firms. Where factories are engaged in sub-contracting arrangements, they are likely to prefer a flexible labour force able to respond to orders as they are received, which may explain the use of casual labour observed in this survey.

Table 2: Distribution of the sample according to the position of the employees

| | Male | Female |
|------------------|------|--------|
| Workers | 24 | 176 |
| Head of team | 1 | 4 |
| Supervisor* | 0 | 14 |
| Head of workshop | 2 | 0 |
| Total | 27 | 194 |

*The supervisor (*contrôleur*) is the person who supervises and controls the quality of the items by a team.

This distribution shows that the major difference between men and women in terms of position they hold in the hierarchy of the factory is the position of head of workshop (*chef d'atelier*) which in most cases observed were men. Because this position implies the implementation of rules of discipline and the use of authority, the heads of factories believe it must be handled by men.

Because of the sensitivity of the issue of casual labourers for the heads of the factories (who were informed by the research team about the content the questionnaire), this question was not asked directly. However, we have taken registration in social security as an indicator of being casual or regular, because when an employee becomes regular he or she is registered by the head of the factory in social security. This fact thus provides information on the percentage of regular and casual employees.

Table 3: Regular and casual employees

| | Female | Male | % of male employees | % of female employees |
|-------------------------------|--------|------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Registered in social security | 70 | 11 | 39.3 | 35.5 |
| Non-registered | 96 | 14 | 50.0 | 48.7 |
| No response* | 31 | 3 | 10.7 | 15.7 |

* The category "no response" includes all the people who did not answer the question, presumably because they did not understand what social security means.

Social security status indicates that the majority of employees are casual. It is safe to assume that all heads of the teams, supervisors (*contrôleurs*), or heads of workshop are regular employees.

II. Social and family situation of women workers

Because women workers tend to belong to a disadvantaged social class, most of those who seek factory work live in precarious conditions, and their employment plays a very important role in their families' survival strategy. This precariousness forces all the adult members of a family and sometimes even the children to seek employment. It has resulted in the feminization of the labour force in various sectors of the economy, in general, and of the textile industry in particular.

1. An historical perspective on women's industrial employment

The feminization of the labour force in the textile industry is a historical fact, both internationally and nationally. While Moroccan industry has not undergone the same evolution of industry as in the West — from industrialization to Taylorism to automatization — it too required women workers right from its emergence during the protectorate period (1912-56) (Kergoat, 1982). In fact, women's employment started with colonization, when industrial plants were set up in Casablanca and needed women workers to supplement the male labour force. The entry of women into the urban labour market was a consequence of colonial industry as well as the women's need to find ways of contributing to their family income. Adam's study on Casablanca during the protectorate period indicates that the

disintegration of the traditional family and the frequency of repudiations forced women to look for work in the factories (Adam, 1972). These women had little education or training and were often illiterate. The lack of skills was characteristic of the first women to enter wage employment in significant numbers (a trend that has continued to the present day, as we see below). Although women were obliged to work for economic reasons, their aspirations appeared to lie elsewhere: the ideal was a position of economic and social security provided by a breadwinning husband. Even though they worked, these women would have gladly given up employment if their ideal could be met (Adam, 1972).

While there have been changes in the size and composition of the female workforce, its status and its aspirations since Moroccan independence, economic necessity still drives women into the job market, and their lack of skills still determines their tasks in the industrial textile sector. The feminization of the industry, for garments (79 per cent), knitwear (71 per cent) and carpets (42 per cent) (Belghazi, 1996), has determined the choice of our sample, which is composed of 87.6 per cent women. Because of the overwhelming presence of women in this industry, a straight comparison between men and women in the production process is difficult, as men and women do not always occupy the same jobs. Nonetheless, it is worth exploring gender differences apparent in management practices and authority structures as well as in attitudes about women and work.

2. Family livelihood strategies

The industrial zone of Rabat-Salé, where most of this survey was carried out, is near the poorer districts that receive constant inflows of rural migrants. Even though most of the men and women workers were born in Salé, more than a quarter of them originate from the rural areas. This zone began its urban expansion in the 1980s when it increasingly attracted the region's rural population, who came

Table 4: Place of birth by gender

| | Women | | Men | | Total | |
|------------|--------|-----|--------|-----|--------|-----|
| | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Town | 143 | 73 | 19 | 68 | 162 | 72 |
| Rural area | 54 | 27 | 9 | 32 | 63 | 28 |
| Total | 197 | 100 | 28 | 100 | 225 | 100 |

to look for work. It can be argued that the rural ethos of this labour force has an impact on their adaptation to an urban way of life and the development of an industrial consciousness.

As has already been indicated, the social stratum from which the women workers emerge suffers from precariousness of income. The head of the family is usually unable to take care of the needs of his household. While still very young, children start looking for work. Because of socialization, girls and young women invariably have affective ties to their families and are ready to make economic contributions to them. When a young woman works she tends to contribute much more than a young man to the family's expenses, sometimes becoming the chief income earner. Women's employment, however, does not necessarily free them from the social and cultural constraints of their status as women who belong to a poor social stratum. In other words, the experience of class and gender subordination intersect.

The survey showed that a third of the women workers do not reside with their parents. There is clearly some geographical mobility among the women workers, especially single women who leave their parents to look for a job in a different town. Some of them come from nearby towns like Kénitra, Tiflet and Maaziz, or from the rural areas, attracted to towns like Rabat-Salé, which offer greater opportunities of employment and better wages than they can find in their own towns.

However, most of the women workers in the textile factories are unmarried and live with their parents. They are thus subject to the control of their parents, even while they are giving material support to the family. For many of them, the importance of their incomes to the family's coping strategies is evident from the way that their own parents push them into seeking employment. According to the interviewees, the mother or father sometimes accompanies the daughter to the factory gates to ask for a job. This is confirmed by factory heads and it suggests that parents do not object to the employment of their daughters. On the contrary, they drive them into seeking employment in order to earn an income. At the same time, young women are rarely free from parental or marital tutelage. The majority of the women reported that they had to ask for the authorization of their father or husband in order to work.

As we see below, the way the girls are socialized limits their sense of responsibility and commitment to work. The paradox is that the families of the women workers, spurred by economic necessity, push them into the employment market, but with an education that

has instilled into them the notion that it is the man who should work and meet the needs of the family. Even the Moroccan Code of Personal Status, which governs the status of women and family relations, stipulates this. The Code is based on traditional Islamic law and on the Malékite rite. It places women under male tutelage throughout their lives — celibacy, marriage, divorce, widowhood — and institutionalizes a strict division of gender roles: the man is the head of the family and is responsible for maintaining his wife and children; the woman has duties only towards her spouse or, rather, her master (Naciri, 1998:16).

Table 5: Number of people in the family who are entirely dependent on the respondents, according to gender

| | None | One to three | Four to eight |
|--------|----------|--------------|---------------|
| Female | 67 (34%) | 83 (42%) | 46 (24%) |
| Male | 17 (61%) | 8 (29%) | 3 (11%) |
| Total | 84 (38%) | 91 (41%) | 49 (22%) |

The wages of young women workers are important in supplementing the household budget. Families follow various survival strategies to meet their material needs. In the same family, the father might be an occasional labourer, the mother a domestic servant, the sons, street vendors and the daughters, factory workers. The above table shows that most of the women workers have at least one person for whom they are economically responsible. According to the female interviewees, in most cases, their wages constitute the largest and most stable source of income for the family. Yet the socio-cultural constraints on a woman's status still make themselves felt. Even if a young woman is a source of revenue for her family she remains under the authority of her parents, who dictate her behaviour and control how her wages are spent. Nevertheless, the economic needs of families and the changes that the society is undergoing are putting a strain on this parental control. The young women who emigrate to the big towns to find work, and perhaps live on their own, are inevitably part of this change.

3. Women workers and domestic responsibilities

Domestic responsibilities are seen by society as inherently belonging to women, whatever paid employment they may have.

Obviously these responsibilities constitute a handicap for married women who work in a factory: in fact, marriage and all that it involves in terms of family obligations and responsibilities is seen both by the factory heads and the women workers themselves as being a hindrance to their work. To the question: "Do you know one or more women who have divorced because of their work?", the majority of workers (both male and female) replied in the affirmative. Evidently, the fact that she is contributing an income to the household does not spare a woman from the tensions caused by her dual obligations to her job and to her family. In many cases this leads to divorce. The case of Mbarka is a good example.

Two or three years after having moved to Hay Rahma, I got married to a young man. He had been following me in the street, then he came and asked my family for my hand in marriage. He came from Shoul originally. He followed me when I went to work. He was as badly off as I was: he worked in a sand quarry. He hadn't enough money to rent a house for me and he asked my family to live with us. So we set up house with my parents. Once we were married he would not let me go to work any more. He was jealous..." (Mbarka, carpet worker)

Although the household economy requires the woman to go out to work, a husband wanting to exercise his authority over his wife will sometimes not let her go to work, or demand that she leave her job. Even when he allows her to work, the woman is always in a vulnerable position because her husband can change his mind at any time. In the marital relationship, the wife's job becomes the subject of bargaining, and is used by the husband to demonstrate his authority.

Having children is another handicap for women workers. The majority of respondents (both men and women) replied in the affirmative to the question, "Is having children a hindrance for working women?". There was thus a general consensus that having children and domestic responsibilities were irreconcilable with having a job. This consensus is internalized by the women workers themselves who, in the interviews, often mentioned the tug between domestic obligations and factory work. Household duties, the husband's authority and demands he places on his wife are all limitations to the demands of the factory, such as diligence, regularity and the observance of fixed working hours. This suggests that, in addition to the "rural ethos" of the women workers, patriarchal structures impose constraints that make it difficult for women to conform to the factory culture.

Although single girls and young women do not have as many family obligations as married women, they still have considerable

domestic responsibilities. It is they who do the domestic chores such as cleaning, cooking and looking after small brothers and sisters. Young women see factory employment as “emancipatory”, enabling them to earn wages and freeing them from their family duties, as well as allowing them to escape the direct authority and control of their parents, at least during factory hours. Some small factories, when they have no orders, give one or two days’ leave to the women workers while waiting for new orders. When this happens, some young women leave home for the factory, pretending to their parents that they are going to do a day’s work there. But, instead, they spend the day walking about the streets in town. Clearly, the young single women see the work world as a way of escaping the household duties that the gender division of labour imposes upon them.

Table 6: Opinions of workers (men and women) on employment as source of power in the family

| | Women | Men |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|
| Employment gives some power | 69 % | 79 % |
| Employment does not give power | 31 % | 21% |
| Total | 100% | 100% |

Both men and women workers interviewed felt that employment gives them some power within the family. Although more men than women held this view, this can perhaps be explained by the fact that men’s self-esteem is linked more than women’s to employment (and a situation of unemployment lowers this self-esteem). Nevertheless, it is significant that most women feel that their job gives them a little power inside the family. Employment can raise the status of a woman and lessen the authority of her parents when she is single. However, the attitude to women’s work is still ambiguous in a society that is undergoing tremendous change. Wage work is more accepted and valued for young single women than for married women. A father appears to accept being supplanted as the income earner by his daughter more than the husband accepts being supplanted by his wife. The employment of single girls and young women is accepted, as it is seen as a temporary situation until they marry or until the family’s fortunes improve.

Thus, within the context of existing gender relations within the household, paid employment may constitute a means of emancipation for women by raising their status within the family and giving them

partial autonomy from parental/marital control. By becoming integrated into the world of work, however, women do not necessarily escape from relations of gender subordination, since the social relations and mechanisms that produce and maintain gender disadvantage follow them into the factory.

III. Recruitment and employment practices in textile factories

Available data, as well as field observation, show that discrimination against women within the workplace is not straightforward. Women, for example, are more likely than men to obtain employment in the textile sector. Nevertheless, as we explore below, women's experience of wage employment reflects their experience of disadvantage in the household and in society. The repercussions of gender disadvantage are evident at all levels in the organization of work and production. Here we shall examine the role that women workers play in the production process and the relations and mechanisms that replicate their position of disadvantage.

1. Recruitment/selection

Recruitment is a decisive moment when the strategies of the employers and their choice of criteria for recruitment become evident. Several factory heads state that they do not have clear criteria and that they do not make women workers take a test before they employ them. It is true that most firms do not make women workers pass tests that are based on physical attributes or on certain precise and predetermined criteria that are applied at recruitment time. However, a set of implicit criteria, used to select the women workers, surfaced during the interviews with employers.

Some factory heads consider it important to recruit women workers who live in the same district as the factory, as this limits problems created by being far away from the workplace, such as unpunctuality and absenteeism. Of the women workers in our sample, the majority go to work on foot. This proximity facilitates access to their work and at the same time protects employers from claims for transport expenses.

Age and marital status are the other two main factors that determine recruitment: there is a preference for women who are young and single. This fact was mentioned by many factory heads and

corroborated by our random sample, which showed that most of the women workers were under the age of 25 and unmarried.

Especially in the garment and knitwear sectors, married women are seen as having family responsibilities that limit their availability and usefulness to the factory. According to the picture that emerged from the interviews with factory heads, young, single girls and women offer several advantages:

- they have fewer family responsibilities and obligations, therefore more time to devote to the factory as they are not worried about children or their duty to their husbands;
- their youth makes them malleable and more disposed to accept authority structures. According to social norms, one can scold a young girl and thus control her, but not a mature woman;
- their lack of experience and qualifications put them in the apprenticeship category, justifying the low wages offered when recruited.

Table 7: Age of employees

| | Less than 20 years | 21-25 | 26-30 | 31-35 | 36 and over | Total |
|--------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| Female | 44 22.3% | 73 37.1% | 58 29.4% | 14 7.1% | 8 4.1% | 197 |
| Male | 4 4.3% | 8 8.6% | 10 35.7% | 3 10.7% | 3 10.7% | 28 |
| Total | 48 21.3% | 81 36% | 68 30.2% | 17 7.6% | 11 4.9% | 225 100% |

Table 8: Marital status

| | Single | Married | Widowed | Divorced | Separated | Total |
|--------|--------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Female | 142 72.1% | 40 20.3% | 1 0.5% | 12 6.1% | 2 1% | 197 |
| Male | 19 67.9% | 9 32.1% | 0 | 0 | 0 | 28 |
| Total | 161 71.6% | 49 21.8% | 1 0.4% | 12 5.3% | 2 0.9% | 225 100% |

As for recruitment procedures, it would seem that the intermediaries who are important in other industrial contexts (see Kibria, 1998; Afsar, 1998) do not play a great role in Morocco. The

majority of women workers are recruited directly: they present themselves at the gates of the factory looking for a job. Only a small number of workers reported having been recruited through a family member, although a significantly larger number reported having relatives working in the same factory. This was confirmed by one of the managers:

Our firm has a policy of not taking on girls from the same family. We avoid recruiting a girl if her sister works in the company as it creates problems. If one of them is unhappy she influences the other, or if the supervisor has problems with one, it has repercussions on the other. So, instead of having one problem, we could have two, and this upsets the work. (Head of factory)

It is important to note that it is only in the knitwear and garment sectors that the factory heads avoid recruiting workers from the same family: the work is individualized and family solidarity is seen by some of them as impeding production. But in the carpet sector, where recruitment is carried out in two stages, family solidarity is an asset. The factory head or foreman first recruits the *maalma* and then, in turn, she recruits the weavers from among her family. A more detailed discussion of this sector appears below.

2. Training, apprenticeship and probation

The female labour force in the sample factories had a low level of educational attainment: more than a third of the women workers had no schooling at all. Another third had only attended primary school and about one third had completed the first cycle of secondary schooling. Vocational training was rare.

The majority of girls and women who have no schooling are found in the carpet sector, where 75 per cent of those interviewed were illiterate. Producing carpets requires an artisanal training which does not need a specific education level. Indeed, this lack of education was never raised as a problem in the interviews with the heads of the carpet factories. Production is based on the artisanal know-how of the experienced women. Apprenticeship is carried out informally, with the *maalma* taking responsibility for teaching the craft to the girls that she takes on. This gives her freedom in controlling the apprentices that factory heads would not have.

The women workers with the highest levels of education are found in the garment-making sector: only 12.9 per cent of them are illiterate. Here the ability at least to read is an asset for the worker. All the factory heads emphasized the importance of the worker

knowing how to read figures and letters. The level of education of the workers determines the quality of their work. An illiterate worker gets the sizes muddled up and makes mistakes in putting numbered pieces of material together, which has a negative effect on production quality. It is interesting to note that while many factory heads expressed the wish to recruit employees with a rather higher level of education or with some vocational training (Table 9 indicates the virtual absence of higher qualifications amongst the sample group), they nevertheless hesitate to put such policies into practice. There are several reasons that may explain this pattern.

Table 9: Level of instruction for women workers by sector (percentage)

| Level of instruction | Carpets | Knitwear | Garments | Total |
|----------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|-------|
| None | 75.0 | 33.3 | 12.9 | 38.1 |
| Primary school | 22.1 | 30.6 | 32.3 | 28.4 |
| Secondary I cycle | 1.5 | 27.8 | 43.0 | 25.9 |
| Secondary II cycle | 1.5 | 8.3 | 11.8 | 7.6 |
| Professional or higher education | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Even if a girl has had some education, its value for the employer is questionable. In fact, even when she has finished the five grades of primary school, her education is insufficient: what she has learnt is not enough for the job market, not to mention the fact that when she leaves school her knowledge is soon forgotten and she becomes almost illiterate. Several factory heads confirmed that most of the women workers, even those with several years of primary education, cannot read French or make out figures properly.

In addition, firms want a labour force whose apprenticeship and qualifications they control. Comments made by one head of a garment factory about the more educated job-seekers are illustrative of the attitudes that prevail.

University graduates are no good. Unfortunately, when they are recruited they want to have a telephone, an office and a secretary, whereas they have to be working in production. They are spoiled, they don't want to work between 12 and 2. But in this job one has to sweat. University trains people for working in an office, which hinders them from getting jobs. (Head of a garment factory)

For most of the factory heads, training on the job is fundamental and should be done inside the factory. The apprenticeship period is thus also a period of "discipline". The young woman learns to follow the rules and regulations of the factory and, having learnt the craft, she becomes indebted to the firm. Apprenticeship and on-the-job training are also ways of delaying the moment when the employees have to be given the statutory minimum wage. This is seen by factory heads as being a probationary period which gives the firm an opportunity to select their employees at the same time as having them work for low wages. Even if a girl has a dress-making diploma, she is paid Dh 600 a month for a period that lasts from six months to two years.

According to some factory heads, in any one group of women workers recruited, half of them are dismissed after six months of training because they have not given satisfaction and have not adapted to the working conditions. By using probation as part of this selection procedure, the firms save money on wages. At the same time, this system means that the qualifications and diplomas obtained in the schools and training centres are devalued. The main reason given by factory heads is that the knowledge that comes with a diploma does not correspond to the needs of the firm. Experience is valued more highly than qualifications and is used as the basis of promotion.

This emphasis on experience rather than qualifications puts the factory head at an advantage in selecting workers and fixing their wages. Factory heads thereby gain the flexibility they need to organize the development of the women workers and to decide the level of skill (experience) they have acquired, as well as their wage level. It should be noted as well that the qualification given by a diploma can lead to collective bargaining to link qualifications to salary levels, whereas the criterion of experience and the capacity or incapacity of the worker to learn quickly results, at best, in individual bargaining where the factory head and his supervisors have the power to evaluate the experience of the women workers.

The low education levels and poor on-the-job training methods mean that the training period for women workers in the garment and knitwear sectors goes on for some time. During this period, their work is not officially recognized as it is not remunerated at the minimum wage level. Some factory heads take advantage of the low wages during the training period and try to prolong it for as long as possible.

Although the factory heads complain about the lack of education, in practice they seem to choose employees who have education but

no diplomas. Those with diplomas are seen as being pretentious, not prepared to carry out any job and rejecting authority. A contradictory position has thereby arisen wherein the factory heads decry the lack of skilled labour needed for industrial production while they profit from this unskilled labour force.

3. High labour turnover and instability of employment

Precariousness and instability in the employment of female workers can be explained both by their need to balance the demands of paid work with their domestic responsibilities, and by the factory production system based on a low-wage, occasional labour force. This is particularly true of the carpet sector where the informal nature of the production process and the organization of work means that the labour force is always unstable, as the factory work is not carried out on a contractual basis. A limited number of *maalmas* are recruited by the *cabran* according to the number and size of the orders and they in turn recruit the number of weavers required for the job. These weavers form the majority of the labour force which is constantly being renewed by the *maalmas*. The instability of the labour force is thus inherent in the way that the work is organized. When the orders fall off, some workers stay at home without earning, as they are paid for piece work.

In the garment and knitwear sector, employment instability is due to several factors:

- Surplus labour is readily available at the gates of the factories. These job seekers are always looking for work in the textile factories and they form a “reserve army of labour”, which within a broader context of weak labour contracts, accounts for the precarious employment of those inside.
- Women have a disadvantaged position in Morocco and are ambiguous about paid employment. The female worker, as a woman, internalizes the idea that her employment is dictated by temporary necessity and that the ideal situation is to have the economic protection a father or a husband. In this context, when a woman encounters difficulties at the factory, including low wages, she is more likely to leave her job.
- The length of the training period and the low wages discourage the workers from seeking stable employment.

Among the women workers, over a quarter have less than two years of seniority and more than half have been in their present employment less than three years. But whatever the seniority, stable

employment is never guaranteed. Almost half of the women workers of our survey had already worked in another factory and some of them are in their fourth or fifth factory. The reasons for “job hopping” are made apparent in the interview excerpt below:

The first time I got work it was with X firm which the vocational training centre had mentioned to me. But the working conditions were difficult and the wages low, so I left it pretty quickly. I was without work for several months and then I got a job with another firm at Kénitra. I stayed there three years. But I left it because the exploitation was too great and the wages too little. Low wages are typical in Kénitra. As my father died, I had to find a way of increasing my income. So I thought of going to Salé (30 kms from Kénitra) and to look for work there so I could help my family. I was sure that the working conditions in Rabat or Salé would be better than those at Kénitra. My family wasn't against the idea. I left for Salé and there I presented myself at a company which I had heard was the best in that industrial district. The owners were foreigners: they were known for their sympathy towards the workers and the wages were the best. They paid the statutory minimum wage (SMIG). I was accepted when they saw I had a dressmaking diploma and that I had worked with other firms. I liked the work in this factory but the problem was my supervisor: she was a very authoritarian woman who used to insult us, especially me. She was always against me. I left the firm because of this cheffa, even though I was better paid than where I am now. I got 7.30 dirham an hour, but I left. I went to this factory when I saw the girls lining up outside to ask for work. I was soon taken on, especially after I had done a practical test on the sewing machine. (Touria, worker in a garment factory)

For the employees who had already worked in another firm, the duration of the previous job varied from a few months to more than four years. More than half the women workers interviewed had stayed at their previous place of employment less than two years. Among the reasons given for leaving the previous job were: the low wages, the working conditions, authoritarian work practices and personal factors.

Instability of employment is not always a disadvantage to women workers. They can use the existing system to accumulate know-how, and when their jobs are in danger they too threaten to leave and go and sell their experience elsewhere. The women workers thus play on competition between the factories hoping to better their position. The factory heads also attempt to use this accumulation of skills to their own advantage:

The factory heads look for trained girls who have already worked in another factory and they are offered a wage that is a little higher than ours. The girl is ready to leave for a few more dirhams. Last year they pinched six trained and qualified workers from me. They were offered a little more and they left. (Head of a garment factory)

These findings suggest that the instability of employment in the textile industry is largely a structural characteristic of the way that the factories are organized. The employer favours a production system based on high turnover: a method of employment that keeps and stabilizes only a small part of the labour force. This limits the accumulation of skills and know-how for the firm and keeps the female labour force constantly rotating between the different factories. As we see below, this constant turn-over of labour acts as a constraint on the development of a process of collective bargaining for higher wages and better working conditions.

4. Women workers, production and performance

Women are generally seen as being more suitable than men for work in the textile industry. This perception is based on the gender division of labour: spinning, weaving and dress-making have traditionally been considered to be female activities and such attitudes have been largely responsible for the fact that these activities have emerged in the modern textile industry as “women’s work”. The justification given is that women have more of a bent for such activities and possess the necessary physical attributes. According to this reasoning, in carpet production, the dexterity of girls’ fingers enables them to handle the threads, while in garment-making and knitwear, their precision and nimbleness suit the needs of these crafts. Such attitudes were confirmed in interviews with factory heads, one of whom made the following observation:

Textile production is women’s work. If a foreign client sees a man on a machine he is shocked because even in France it is a woman’s job. Women have slimmer and more agile fingers. Historically women have always done this work. But for certain machines, strong muscles are required and we use men. (Head of a garment factory)

While the majority of women workers interviewed thought that women performed better than men in textile factories, the male workers were almost evenly divided between those who thought women performed better and those who thought men performed better. Nevertheless, how performance is measured depends on each firm’s criteria. Maximum performance is achieved differently in the

carpet sector than in the garment and knitwear sectors.

In the carpet sector, wages depend on performance (measured in terms of quantity). The *maalma* is paid by the square metre so her wages are linked to her capacity to produce and make others produce the quantity that the firm requires, using her apprentice weavers. Production is carried out in an artisanal manner. The *maalma* has every interest to achieve maximum production, giving as much as she can of herself and of "her girls" to produce as much as possible and thus to earn more wages.

In the garment and knitwear sectors, even though wages are linked to performance, most of the women workers are paid by the hour and efficiency is measured according to the rhythm of the orders received and it is thus not fixed very precisely. It depends on the work season and the orders, as well as on the deadlines, which are stipulated by the clients before production is started. Even though most women workers say that the standards are precise, in practice these are just the instructions that the women workers receive every day from the head of their workshop.

During the interviews, the workers mentioned variations in the efficiency criteria. And as these are not fixed this enables the factory head to pressure workers to produce more whenever the extra production is needed.

When the bosses want us to produce 30 items an hour, they ask us to produce 40, and when they see that, after making a big effort, the workers nevertheless produce 40, they ask for 50. If we produce 50, they ask for 60. Sometimes they ask us to produce 80 or 90 articles an hour and force us to do it, although it is impossible. For example, when we are making jackets it is difficult to do more than 30 or 35, but they insist on us producing 50 without arguing. (Touria, worker in a garment factory)

While most of the women workers say that it is generally not difficult to keep up with the pace of the assembly line, at times maximum productivity is demanded from them when the orders become urgent and the deadline approaches. Under these circumstances, the factory heads push women to their limits in order to maintain the rhythm of production. The women workers realize this. So they slow down production in order to keep within the scope of their actual capacity.

As for the carpet sector, maximum productivity is achieved by mobilizing young girls and girl children under the control and supervision of the *maalma*, who is responsible for the quality of the production. The work of the girl children in the making of carpets is

often justified by saying that this work inside the factory prevents delinquency.

The foreign clients request the producers to sign a contract stating that the work has not been done by children. We sign, but sometimes we have social problems. According to our tradition a boy is put in charge of a maalem (master artisan) and a girl with a maalma. Nowadays, of course, there is school but there are all those who have left school and have nowhere to go. What to do? Sometimes the mothers come and beg us to let their children work. We let them do so, as we are sorry for them. (Head of a carpet factory)

The heads of the carpet factories take a relative position on child labour and allow the socioeconomic context to determine their policies. While this does not conform to Western policy on child labour, it is accepted in Moroccan society where the rate of girls not enrolled in school is high and where poverty on the streets is prevalent. In the absence of obligatory schooling up to the age of 16 and of vocational training centres for youth, the factory heads claim to support the employment of children as a way of protecting them against the social evils of the street, such as cigarettes, drugs and vice.

5. Division of tasks and hierarchy

The division of tasks within a textile factory is determined by the different jobs to be done throughout the production process, which goes from spinning to packaging in the carpet and knitwear sectors, and from cutting to packaging in the garment-making sector. The organization of work varies. In the carpet sector, the firm's organization chart specifies the tasks of the employees. Some more modern carpet factories include, at the executive level, not only a manager but also a financial director and an artistic director. The foremen, whose number depends on the orders and the requirements of production, are responsible for the installation of the weaving looms, the supervision of the activities of the *maalmas* as well as of the general functioning of the work, and the distribution to the *maalmas* of the thread needed for the weaving.

The weavers form most of the female labour force of the carpet factories, their number varying constantly, according to labour needs. For example, in a carpet factory that employs between 800 and 1,100 workers, only 145 would be permanent. The female weaving labour on which the production depends is being renewed all the time by the *maalma*, who is responsible for the work of one weaving loom or more, under the authority of the foreman. The *maalma's* function is to

weave and to monitor the quality of the work of the other weavers.

The division of tasks, in addition to being hierarchical, also follows a pattern of occupational segregation observed in many other workplaces around the world (see Anker, 1997). Some jobs are considered suitable for women and others for men. For example, in a carpet factory visited during our survey, out of the 800 employees, 20 were men and their job was to repair the weaving looms and to do the cutting, brushing and finishing off of the carpets, as well as the packaging and transport. The tasks that need physical effort, such as transport and the use of heavy instruments (such as the shears), are entrusted to men, while the spinning, washing of the wool and weaving are women's jobs. Similarly, technical know-how tends to remain the purview of men, raising questions about prospects for women's employment and promotion as new technologies are adopted in textile factories.

In the garment sector, the division of tasks is based on the same principle, with the heavy jobs given to men and the light ones to women. There is another principle which distinguishes between the know-how of the men and that of the women. The stitchers are always women: it is rare to come across a male stitcher. Men workers sometimes have responsibilities at the executive level with regard to cutting, mechanics, packaging, transport and factory security. Secretarial work is usually done by women. Responsibilities for dealing with customers in export/import of textile products (transit) are given to both women and men.

In garment-making, production is carried out on an assembly line. After cutting, workers are responsible for placing the articles on the assembly line, monitoring, finishing off, ironing, inspecting, putting into plastic, packaging and transport. Knitwear undergoes the same process with an extra stage to produce the knitted material for the making of articles. It is the workshop head who is in charge of organizing the work in garment and knitwear and he is the immediate supervisor of the heads of the assembly line and the women workers. The team responsible for cutting is supervised by the head cutter, while each assembly line has a chief, a controller at the middle and end of the assembly line, and stitchers who carry out the bulk of the production. Once the articles come off the assembly line they go for finishing off, a last check, wrapping up in plastic and packaging. Only the packaging is sometimes done by men, the other tasks being carried out by women.

The general attitude of both men and women employees is in

favour of mixing the sexes on the assembly line in the garment and knitwear sectors. The factory heads do not take this view. This is because they perceive women as being docile and willing to accept the orders of the bosses more easily than men, who tend to contest commands. By mixing men with women the risk is that the men will influence the women.

Our firm has a policy not to mix men and women on the same assembly line, as this creates problems. Some factories that have done that have had difficulties. Men are more demanding and they often have bad manners. If a man has an affair with a girl on the same assembly line, he can influence her if there are problems with the supervisor and this makes good work difficult. This is why it is our firm's policy only to employ girls. They are nicer and they immediately understand what is required of them. (Head of a garment factory)

According to most of the factory heads, when men are mixed with women in the same assembly line, there is an interaction and dynamic in the relationship between them that results in the men wanting to demonstrate their superiority by contesting the authority of the supervisor. This wish to show off to the young women disturbs the production process. The interaction between men and women on the same assembly line does not create a positive rivalry that promotes production: it reproduces social gender relationships in which men exalt their authority as a symbol of their masculinity.

Overall, in dividing tasks between men and women, firms follow a logic of profitability which is grafted on to society's preconceived attitudes about the gender division of roles and abilities.

Women work hard, but when there are responsibilities men can cope better. I have put women in charge of assembly lines because they know how to talk to other women, they can communicate better. But when there is a technical problem, for example with measurements, the men will look for the cause of the problem, like the cutting of the garment and solve it, while the woman with the same responsibility will not do so. She asks for help from her boss, the technical director. Men behave in a different way when faced with problems and they show much more sense of responsibility. (Head of a garment factory)

The attitude of the factory head towards the capacities of women conforms with the education and socialization of young girls within society, as a result of which they are less prepared and equipped to shoulder responsibilities. Their education does not encourage them to have any confidence in themselves, or a sense of responsibility when

faced with some difficulty. Women learn to fear authority, which is often constructed as male authority — that of the father, husband or older brother. This situation is reproduced within the factory and is maintained and manipulated by the bosses in the production process.

The characteristic feature of the management style in all three types of factories is authoritarian. Indeed, human resources “management” emphasizes its controlling rather than its training role in the textile industry. In the garment and knitwear sectors, the hierarchy is organized so that women work directly under supervisors, who exercise their authority in a different way to the factory heads. The supervisors consist of the head of the workshop, who is usually a man, and the heads of the assembly lines, who can be men or women. The supervisors have the most direct authority over the women workers: through them the factory heads issue their orders to the labour force. It is the same situation in the carpet sector, except that it is the *maalma* who has the authority over the weavers. But she in turn, together with the weavers, has to submit to the authority of the workshop head.

The relationship between workers and their immediate supervisors tends to be a primarily coercive one, which is seen as the only way of ensuring maximum production. The interviews with factory heads suggest that management models where worker responsibility is enhanced (e.g. “responsibilization”) were deemed inappropriate for Morocco textile factories.

There must be authority, but it should not be abused as people are sensitive. You have to handle them properly. As we say, give them a slap with a velvet glove. Too much authority doesn't work, no authority and trying to make them responsible doesn't work either.

(Head of a garment factory)

While the supervisors exercise direct authority, it is the head of the firm who plays the role of arbiter when tensions explode between the women workers and the heads of the workshops or of the assembly lines. This sometimes improves the image of the factory owner among the women workers and diminishes that of the workshop heads. Generally, the authority of the factory head seems to be legitimate in the eyes of the women workers, whatever the sector. This legitimacy stems from the fact that he is the owner of the factory (*moul sharika* or *moul al maamal*) and is usually relatively well educated. The spatial distance from the workers also lends to the legitimacy of the factory head: his distance inspires fear and respect.

In all sectors the authority of the workshop head, as opposed to that of the factory head, is not readily accepted by the women workers

and weavers. Similarly, women workers distinguish between the authority of the assembly line heads and that of the workshop head. The former are closer to the women workers and they themselves work on the sewing machines, their authority being limited to checking the production process on the assembly line, whereas the workshop head, who is usually a man, is responsible for the production and behaviour of the workers. He is the confidential agent of the factory head whose power is relayed through him and he sometimes abuses it.

I don't like the head of the workshop, I can't describe him. The trouble is he is incompetent. He doesn't know the work, he doesn't know how to cut. He knows nothing. He only knows how to insult people for the slightest reason and sometimes for no reason at all. (Woman worker in a garment factory)

The foreman does what he wants. He treats certain women well and others badly. There are girls whom he considers serious and their work good and he treats them with respect. He goes after other ones and if they do not play the game he loses his temper with them (shad maaha dad). He looks after the one who is his girlfriend and gives her good work to do. (Woman worker in a carpet factory)

In the carpet sector, the *maalma* has more authority over the weavers than the heads of the assembly line have over the stitchers. She has the power of recruiting and is thus always able to keep the weavers indebted to her. Nevertheless she does not escape the authority of the workshop head, as he can, if the quality of production does not conform to fixed standards, destroy her whole day's production and make her start again.

Does the behaviour of the women workers justify such patterns of authority and control? On what is this system of management based? Authority is used to ensure discipline and the functioning of the production process. For example, it is sometimes used to control the chatting of the young women workers making garments, as this upsets production. This is an example of the tension between cultural norms and the exigencies of the factory. The workers want to gossip while they work. This is part of Moroccan culture, as attested by the popular saying "spinning talk and task" (*hdith wa moughzel*): one can both chat and spin wool. To counteract this behaviour, some workshop heads control chatting by transmitting music and putting up the volume when necessary.

The workplace authority systems were perceived by the workers as excessive. Women workers recount the insults that they have received from workshop heads because of some mistake they have

made. This coercion is justified, in the eyes of most of the factory heads, by the irresponsible behaviour of the women workers. Interestingly, such rationalizations sit in stark contrast to attitudes voiced by the same factory heads about the docility and compliance of women workers. According to factory heads, authority is exercised in order to ensure that the jobs are done and that the workers are diligent, that they respect the hours of work and do not cheat. Once again we see a social presupposition that attributes irresponsible behaviour to those in subordinate positions, in order to justify the domination and authority of the bosses.

The authority of the workshop heads is always present and direct and it puts the women workers in a permanent state of fear of authority. As soon as the immediate authority is removed it unleashes behaviour that is not always responsible. As we see below, authoritarian practices may trigger off defence mechanisms which take the form of cheating, sabotage or stealing, which may be interpreted as signs of agency and protest.

6. Penalties and rewards: Blocked professional mobility

In spite of the authoritarian factory regimes, a surprisingly small number of women workers reported having received sanctions or penalties. How can this information be interpreted? One explanation is that the workshop heads exercise direct control; therefore, women workers are prevented from committing errors and thus incurring penalties. At the same time, fear of punishment and deductions from the pay packet likely deter errors on the part of the women workers. In the carpet sector, work that is badly done is destroyed, which can cause the weaver to lose one or two days' work. In the garment and knitwear sectors, a mistake means a reduction in wages.

The most serious penalty is dismissal, which is used as an example to others to avoid mistakes and penalties in the future. All factory heads try, through their workshop heads, to establish a strict discipline that leaves little room for error.

It was difficult to establish a regular discipline at the beginning. But we took steps from the start to instill it. For the Eid celebration they were given two days' paid leave, but 25 women workers took an extra day and they were sacked. Since then no one has been absent as they know if they prolong their leave they will be dismissed. They are not allowed to be late either. If a worker is a few minutes late in the morning, she upsets the assembly line. If she is late once she is told off verbally, but if it happens again she is sacked. (Head of garment factory)

Given the plentiful supply of labour available outside the gates, there is little concern about sacking those who do not submit to the factory discipline.

As for the rewards and incentives, the majority of women workers say that they have not received any rewards. This contrasts with the male workers, more than half of whom said they had received rewards for their work. Clearly, there are few positive incentive structures to encourage the productivity of women workers. Only a small minority claimed to have received verbal encouragement. Although relatively costless — compliments tend to make people feel appreciated and raise their self-esteem — in an authoritarian management system, any verbal encouragement is considered a weakness that reduces the authority of the employer. The positive payoffs were, however, recognized by one factory head:

Sometimes the women workers receive words of encouragement to show them that they are appreciated. In other cases, when we see that a girl is productive and serious, we give her a bonus. Obviously that encourages her and it also encourages the others to behave like her. In yet other cases girls are promoted to be the assistant to the chief of an assembly line or to be the chief and will earn 300 dirham more. Those who are promoted like this must pass through all the stages of production on the assembly line... This creates a competitive spirit among the girls and encourages them to give a better performance. (Head of a garment factory)

Still, the survey indicated that rewards and promotions were the exception rather than the rule. A factory with 200 workers could have four assembly lines for which it would only need four heads. There are virtually no opportunities to promote weavers or stitchers upon whose work the production depends. Similarly, factories offer very few opportunities for professional mobility. The women workers who get stuck in their jobs and for whom employment offers few chances of promotion exhaust their potential and their output too. Motivation is limited, in spite of the fact that the future of the sector must to some extent depend on a labour force which has opportunities for upward mobility.

7. Wages and perceptions of work

The average present salary for women workers in the sample is Dh 1,037, whereas for men it was Dh 1,642. A comparison between the highest and lowest wages earned by men and women shows that men start with a slightly higher wage at the lower end and this

advantage grows as the wages increase. The average starting salary for women workers is Dh 703, whereas for men it is Dh 1,025. One explanation for these differentials can be found in the fact that women workers accept lower salaries, while men usually ask for a higher salary than women. The jobs reserved for women also put them at a disadvantage in terms of wages. Women for the most part work at the stitcher level, while men are employed at the technical and managerial levels. This occupational segregation operates as a form of discrimination against women.

Methods of wage payment in the textile factories differ from one sector to another, and from one firm to another. Wages in the carpet sector are paid by the piece. The *maalma* is paid Dh 50 to 60 for a square metre and she undertakes to pay the weavers whom she hires and supervises. Wages given to the weavers depend on their age and the agreement that she makes with them: they are usually paid around Dh 10 a day. Sometimes parents entrust their little girls to the *maalma* so they learn the craft, in which case they are not paid at all. In other cases the *maalma* gets her sisters or relatives to weave. This augments her production and therefore her income and thus increases the family revenue.

In the carpet sector, the weavers taken on by the *maalmas* constitute the overwhelming majority of the labour force. The conditions of employment suggest that weavers straddle formal and informal sectors. Since women workers come to the factories to work, they are not out-workers or home-workers in the standard sense. However, their status of occasional workers and their dependence on the goodwill and authority of the *maalma* mean that the wages are uncertain and not subject to any regulations, characteristics associated with the informal sector. The absence of any regulation of the wages for children leaves them particularly open to abuse and exploitation. Nevertheless, this informal structure, which is based on piece work, has a flexibility which, while enabling the firm to make a profit on wages, is also suited to the social background and needs of the weavers. The main observations from the research on this point are noted below:

- The *maalma* weavers prefer to do piece work because they can earn an income with the support of their daughters or sisters, thus enabling them to carry out their domestic responsibilities and sustain family networks. The women working on carpets are allowed to make their daughters or sisters work and even to bring their babies to the workplace. The piece work system also enables the little girls to become integrated into a work system

rather than being left to their own devices on the streets.

- Through the employment of members of the family, income is earned within a context of solidarity and mutual aid.

- Piece work involves a continual turnover in the carpet sector. The *maalmas* are constantly renewed and, in their turn, they renew the weavers they take on. The weavers generally work on an irregular basis, i.e. when they are called upon and when they go to seek “a task” at the factory. The piece work system and the flexibility of hours enable the women to manage their time: they can stop their work if they need to look after their home or their children.

Men workers also do piece work as cutters and finishers. They pointed to some of the same advantages as the women workers, one of the most important being the mutual aid of the family.

The cutters prefer piece work because they can bring in members of their family to help them. Some of them can produce up to 4,000 square metres a week, earning Dh 3.5 a square metre. There are several of them at work. One employee takes the order for piece work and recruits others to help him. Usually they are members of his family. (Head of a carpet factory)

Piece work enables the factory heads to economize on an organization of production based on the training of weavers. It integrates the traditional method of weaving into the factory. The weaver thus has her weaving work to do in the factory rather than at home. She does not own what she produces, as in the traditional system, but receives a wage based on production.

In spite of its perceived advantages, the flexibility of employment in the carpet sector has a number of negative implications. Employment is unstable and uncertain, depending on the orders and the goodwill of the employer. There is little continuity for the young girls and they do not accumulate experience. Moreover, the wages are lowest and the wage increases are smallest in the carpet sector. According to the findings of the survey, the average wage in the carpet sector is Dh 623, compared to Dh 784 and Dh 815 in the knitwear and garment sectors respectively. Wage increases reported by workers in the carpet sector were derisory, varying between 50 centimes and Dh 10 for a square metre of carpet production.

The best work is not what I am doing at the moment, but rather dress-making in a garment factory. If only I knew how to sew! Wages are better there than in carpet-making... If I had a good offer of marriage I would leave the carpet sector. I would leave this work if I could find a better one. For me, a good salary is 1,000 dirham a

month. If I could make that I would not ask for a rise. (Weaver in a carpet factory)

The fact that the carpet factory wages are low detracts from the reputation of the craft and creates a lack of confidence among the weavers about their know-how. The maintenance of a traditional structure means that the weavers do not consider it to be a field in which they would like to develop their skills. Sometimes they aspire to work in the garment sector, which is seen as offering better wages.

In the garment and knitwear sectors the method of payment of the workers varies. Their work is usually calculated by the hour and the wages paid each week, fortnight or month. The wages of women workers who are paid monthly vary between Dh 300 and 4,000, but most of them range between Dh 300 and 1,400. Those who are paid weekly or fortnightly often receive their pay irregularly, especially in the factories which have financial difficulties. In the knitwear sector, certain small firms farm out the work to be done at home and it is paid by the piece. The statutory minimum wage is only given to the woman worker after a period of at least one year. The mandatory increase is 5 per cent every two years and 10 per cent every five years but it is applied very rarely because of the constant turnover in the labour force.

The overall impact of low wages on women's labour turnover and commitment to their work is negative. The single woman worker enters the job market seeing her work as temporary, while she waits to get married. The low wages and lack of professional mobility reinforce this attitude and do little to foster a more positive attitude among women to factory work. Many women state that if their wages reached Dh 2,000 they would not leave their work.

I'd like to leave this work which I don't enjoy any more. From what I hear the statutory minimum wage is 7.50 dirham an hour but we are not paid at that rate. If we were, we would work harder. The ideal salary for me would be 2,000 dirham. If I could earn that I would never think of leaving work, even if I got married. (Woman worker in a garment factory)

The implication here is that the wage level is an important factor determining the stability of the women workers. Their income aspirations, especially in the garment and knitwear factories, are fixed around the minimum wage, or a little higher.

For the women workers, wages are the most important criterion for a good job and a great majority of those in our survey felt that the wages determine the status of a worker. They claim to be prepared to accept rigorous discipline in the factory when their work is well paid.

The women workers see their work from the viewpoint of society's attitude to employment, which usually corresponds to the level of remuneration. Thus work in a factory is seen as being better than that of a domestic servant.

Work in the garment factories was generally perceived to be of a greater value than that of the carpet factories, and not just for the higher salaries earned in the former. The young women workers distinguish between the work inside a carpet firm (*maamal*) and that of a garment or knitwear factory (*sharika*). Work in the garment and knitwear sectors is based on modern know-how in dress-making and knitting, whereas work in a carpet factory is based on traditional knowledge, on weaving, which is looked down on in society.

Low wages are not the only disincentive for women's work. In many cases, the wages of women workers are central for family survival strategies and this means that the women workers have very little control of how their earnings are spent. This may lead to even greater ambivalence about employment as their income fails to increase the independence of women workers in ways that have been documented in other regions (see Kibria, 1998).

At Salé, three quarters of the women workers live with their parents and are under their control. Their social conditions are very bad. Whatever the factory conditions are, their work environment is wonderful compared with the poverty of their home life. In spite of this, the labour force is not motivated because most of them do not receive their money. Many of their parents come to demand the wages of their daughters and ask how much they earn. The girls are under their authority and they are obliged to give the parents their pay. As a result the girls are not motivated to work. (Head of a garment factory)

I share my wages with the family. I don't earn much so I can't buy things like jewelry or plan to buy a house or a plot of land. Those things are far away. My situation and my wages don't allow me to aspire to them. I would like to dress well and take care of my appearance, but God is All-Powerful (Allah Ghaleb). (Woman worker in a garment factory)

Earning a wage certainly raises the status of a woman worker within the family, insofar as she becomes the provider of income and covers certain family expenses. But she is frustrated because her wages are low and she is not able to meet her own needs, especially for clothes. This is especially a problem for the young girls who are going through the phase of trying to emulate their peers through their dress. Interestingly, certain factory heads are aware of this problem and have

made the wearing of aprons obligatory during work.

Overall, the findings on wages and attitudes to work indicate that the “status” or “authority” that earning an income could potentially confer on a woman is diminished by the way gender relations are played out in the family and in society. The fact that her wages are low neither enables her to meet her family’s needs nor what she needs for her own well-being. Thus the emancipatory process of the woman worker remains blocked.

8. Unpunctuality and absenteeism

As observed in the sections above, the entry of women into industrial wage employment initiates a complex process whereby social norms, values and practices intersect with the demands of the factory. This can also be seen in patterns of unpunctuality and absenteeism, where the different production systems and management practices of the carpets and the knitwear/garment sectors create different sets of conditions for women workers.

While some carpet factories have fixed opening and closing hours, in others there are no fixed hours. The latter operate on a piece work basis and the *maalma* organizes the timetable to achieve her production. This organization of hours of work is in line with the perception that weavers have of work hours and it enables them to deal with their family obligations. If a mother has a sick child she knows that she can stop her work to look after the child, and make up for it later. Similarly, the breaks in the work are not fixed by the carpet factory. The weavers rest when they feel the need. For the weaver, working according to her capacities and needs, while having some flexibility in managing her time, is similar to the way she organizes her time and work in the home. In other words, at this level the organization of the factory coincides with the social norms and responsibilities of the workers. The weaver thus has continuity between her domestic space and her workplace so that she feels at ease, although she pays for this by her low wages.

In the garment and knitwear sectors, the hours are from 8 in the morning until 6 in the evening, with one hour, between 1 and 2 p.m., for the women workers to have their lunch. Some factories give the women workers 15-minute breaks for rest in the middle of the morning and in the middle of the afternoon, while others do not. According to the women workers, the breaks are not the same for all jobs. The stitchers who work on the assembly line work regularly for hours on end so they need more frequent pauses because of the intensity of

their work, whereas cutting and packaging do not require such concentration. The breaks can also vary according to sex because of the division of work between women and men. But the breaks, where they exist, are limited in time and never last more than one hour for the mid-day meal and from 10 to 15 minutes in the morning and afternoon.

These breaks enable the women workers not only to rest but also to socialize and communicate among themselves. The factories that do not allow the short breaks in the morning and afternoon deprive workers of a moment of much-needed socializing. A feeling of camaraderie is created among the young girls by the work they do together, their common age, the same problems and living conditions. So the break not only lightens the work burden but promotes interaction among the women workers.

Most of the women workers say that their working hours are convenient, as they are single and do not have the responsibilities of mothers or married women, for whom it is always a problem to respect working hours. However, while a majority of the women workers declare that the working hours are convenient, this is not always evident in daily practice in terms of punctuality and diligence. Absenteeism among the women workers is a problem that the factory heads attempt to tackle during the pre-recruitment period by the dismissal of some workers to give a lesson to the others.

Various reasons can be given for absenteeism. First, there is an absence of a culture of punctuality. The lack of respect for fixed hours is characteristic of the overall society (which, incidentally, has a strong impact on public administration). The only way to get people to submit to fixed hours is by training and by motivating them financially. Low wages justify absenteeism in the eyes of the women workers.

Second, socialization within the family does not reinforce the organizational norms and practices of the industrial workplace. For example, the parents of the women workers tend to be first generation rural migrants who have a different relationship with time than do people in an urban industrial culture. Thus the parents of the young women workers do not encourage their daughters to conform to the work patterns of the factory. Absenteeism is always rife when there are religious holidays and family occasions. Sometimes parents come to the factory to ask if their daughter can take leave because the family must all go to the village or visit a relation. (Although such requests are usually granted, if they are repeated they may result in dismissal.)

Third, their low wages put women workers in a precarious position. Although the work is important for them, it does not completely solve their material needs. The uncertainties of their employment reduces their motivation and this affects their diligence and punctuality.

9. Forms of solidarity and strategies of resistance

The factory is a system that brings together management (the head of the firm and his supervisory staff) and the women workers. They all have different interests, sometimes divergent ones, and they all use strategies to defend their interests. In industry, workers usually engage in collective action through trade unions to put forward their claims. However, there was little evidence of trade union activity in the factories studied. Only one (male) worker in the sample claimed union affiliation. While some workers (95) in the sample claimed that their non-membership was a personal choice, there was a significant number who responded that they had never been approached by a union (45) or that they had no knowledge about unions (45). Only a handful of respondents (five) said that they did not join a union for fear of sanctions. Nonetheless, workers' membership in and attitudes towards unions are clearly shaped by those of management, for which trade unions are an anathema.

Unions are an obstacle to our work. We prefer to have direct negotiations with the workers. I have some workers whom I recruited for lack of anyone better when we started up. I cannot dismiss them now even if they have learnt nothing and are not productive. I have inherited a labour force that is not qualified but I keep them on all the same. (Head of a carpet factory)

As a consequence, it may be that even if workers are members of a union they will not declare it. However, there was some evidence to suggest that women workers are distrustful of unions and their representatives. Various reasons were given by the women workers for their non-membership in unions. One common view is that unions are a prerogative of men. This view was echoed by the heads of the factories. Men are seen to have greater ambitions and more likely to resort to joint action to press their claims than women, who do not express their grievances formally and are more likely to attempt to use personal relations to settle their problems. In addition, the high turnover rate suggests that women workers will simply move to another factory or quit their jobs, rather than to try to overcome poor working conditions. The impact of traditional forms of solidarity

(within the family) was referred to by one garment factory head:

The girls are not responsible. A girl depends on her family. She is not supposed to work for her living but she does it through necessity. The family spirit is something of a hindrance as, at the last resort, it is the family who resolves her problems. (Head of a garment factory)

Still, there is some evidence that women workers do attempt to foster forms of solidarity within the workplace. When one of them enters the factory she often looks for someone to act as an intermediary to replace her sister or parent. However, mutual support in carrying out tasks or resolving problems goes against the rationality of the factory, which requires each worker to occupy his/her post or job and not to ask for help except from the immediate supervisor. Where there are work problems to be resolved, they appear to be dealt with on an individual basis with the head of the assembly line or the *maalma* in the carpet sector. According to the factory heads, the proper functioning of the factory is not reconcilable with the social solidarity that links the women workers together and strengthens their relationships with each other. As we see below, this solidarity and complicity among them are a force that can potentially be mobilized against the factory to disrupt the organization of work.

There is also a marginal form of solidarity between workers on a material level. Sometimes a group will organize contributions of money to create a fund on which they can draw in turn in order to meet an urgent family need. If someone has to buy a piece of furniture or repair their house, they can use the whole sum that has accumulated and the following month it will be someone else's turn to use it. However, this form of solidarity is not very widespread among the women workers.

The development of collective forms of solidarity among the workers suffers from two main constraints. First, the activism of trade unions is considered a political activity and is strongly discouraged within the factories. And second, as employment is precarious (with job-seekers lining up at the factory gates), it is important for women to keep their jobs, submitting to the regulations and the control of management, rather than participating in organized forms of solidarity. At the same time the absence of trade unionism signals a more general problem concerning the failure of women workers to assimilate a collective identity and "consciousness" as industrial workers.

Without any formal structures within which to put forward their claims, women workers fall back on culturally specific forms of

resistance. One example is the frequent crises of hysteria experienced by women workers. These were mentioned during the interviews by both women workers and factory heads. In the middle of her task, a woman will have an attack of hysterics, crying out and gesticulating. Sometimes she has to be taken to hospital and looked after until she is calm again. The hysteria is collective at times, with one woman's crisis setting off the others.

Some women often have fits of hysteria. The girl will fall down and cry out and everyone will gather around her. Once I had eight women all having a crisis at the same time: it was a collective hysteria. The women workers interpreted this as being caused by the jnoun of the factory. They suggested bringing a sheep and killing it in the courtyard. We did that. They also brought a taleb who read from the Koran. And since then there have been no more crises. (Head of a knitwear factory)

In this way, beliefs of the popular culture are brought inside the factory. For example, the notion that there are *djinns* who live in the workplace is strong, especially when the factory is badly ventilated or badly lit, or is located in a basement.

It often happens in the factory. When a girl has a crisis, we tell her to stay at home and get better. I decided this in 1986-87. We have an industrial doctor who comes each week and checks the workers. If the problem is not medical I send them away. Once the girls spread the voice that there were jnoun in the factory and there was a collective hysteria. Everyone was sent away, waiting for the jnoun to disappear. They found themselves without work and they came back. Before that hysterical fits were frequent in our factory but now they happen only rarely. (Head of a garment factory)

The intensity and long working day (nine hours), trigger off hysteria in some women workers, as a psychological defence mechanism to draw attention to themselves and to give them a respite from their work. Nonetheless, when they realize that they have to pay for these crises by stopping work and foregoing their pay or by being dismissed, they conform to factory regulations and repress their crises.

This phenomenon, considered "theatrics" by the factory heads, can however be interpreted as a form of protest of the women workers in response to the stress of their work. For these young single workers, who have a low opinion of themselves because of their disadvantaged social background and their position of gender subordination, with their work being depreciated by society, the hysterical crisis is a compensatory mechanism whereby they get attention, even if only momentary.

IV. Conclusion

According to theory, the more a firm develops its technological and organizational level and the more it rationalizes its management and its work standards, adopting regulations concerning jobs and demanding a skilled labour force, the more it will tend to inculcate a committed and disciplined workforce. This survey suggests that Moroccan textile enterprises appear to be moving only slowly in this direction. Instead, what we find is a sector that remains largely committed to an export strategy based on a low-wage, unskilled female labour force, working within factories that operate with authoritarian and, indeed, patriarchal, management practices.

The paper has shown that women workers within the textile factories are faced with two contradictory pressures. One is economic, dictated by the livelihood needs of the family which force a young woman into paid employment. The other is dictated by her education and socialization, reinforced by the law, which stipulates that a woman is under the responsibility and protection of her father or her husband. These contradictory pressures are experienced, perceived and acted on in contradictory ways. Indeed, women workers tend to oscillate between these two realities. The family provides moral support and an escape route in times of difficulty at work. In other words, the family is a safety valve for the woman worker in an industrial environment, the norms of which she has not completely internalized and which do not guarantee her material security and stable employment. Although her work is a necessity for her, when the factory does not meet her aspirations she abandons her job to take refuge in her family.

At the same time, the management culture and practices of the textile factories, which play upon gender hierarchies to control the workers, militates against the development of a committed workforce with a collective identity as workers. Significantly, the forms of resistance adopted by women workers are traditional ones, demonstrated by the example of collective hysteria. Women bring with them into the factory culturally constructed and assigned patterns of behaviour that impact on and are perpetuated by their experience in the industrial workplace. Indeed, their experience within the workplace does little to overcome women's ambivalence about work. This ambivalence is further reinforced by the relationships of authority and control within the factory as well as by the low wages. While the wages in the knitwear and garment sectors are higher than the carpet sector, the women workers appear to find the management

practices particularly abusive and arbitrary, making it very difficult to establish the “rules of the game”. Interestingly, those firms which are closest to the artisanal tradition, like the carpet factories, are more likely to give low wages but this is compensated by the flexibility of the working hours and an environment that is reminiscent of the family environment and which is acceptable to them.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that employment in itself helps to “emancipate” women, according to their own perception of emancipation: going out of the house, earning a salary and acquiring a certain importance that raises their status within the family. Nevertheless, the social relations and mechanisms which reproduce gender and class disadvantage within the factory are such that a genuine emancipation of the women workers does not take place: indeed, it is circumvented.

Endnotes

1. In the 1980s, Joeques (1985) found that women stitchers in the textile sector earned less than their male counterparts. Belghazi's findings are discussed throughout this chapter.
2. In other words, if one were to take the "average" male worker, and to change only one of his labour attributes, namely, his gender, this would lead to a 41.2 per cent reduction of his wage. Conversely, a typical woman worker would experience a wage increase of at least 41.2 per cent should her gender change to male.
3. One interpretation is that men who work in feminized industries receive lower pay compared to male workers in other industries, implying that in this highly feminized sector, the whole wage structure is dragged down (Joeques, 1996). Another interesting finding to emerge from Belghazi's study concerns rewards to education. Although overall returns to education are less for women than men in the urban industrial sector as a whole, with women with middle and higher level qualifications being most discriminated against, the situation is different in the textile sector. Since women without any education suffer less wage discrimination in the urban labour market, the degree of discrimination in the clothing sector is relatively low and corresponds to the low level of education among women workers in this sector (Belghazi, 1995 and 1996).
4. See Humphrey, 1987.
5. The formation of an "industrial consciousness" is, of course, an issue that has received wide treatment, especially in terms of the formation of an industrial "working class consciousness and identity".
6. The Malékite rite is a school of Muslim law. Malékism, founded in 795, is based on particular interpretation of the Koran and the tradition of the Prophet (*Sunna*). Applied throughout the Maghreb region, it is considered one of the most conservative interpretations because of certain dispositions related to the status of women and the family.
7. This concept of the "factory culture" helps us to understand the factory as a "social entity" with rules, norms, customs, patterns of behaviour and preferences, representations and beliefs that are "owned", insofar as they are "shared" by those who share the same workplace.
8. The first cycle of secondary school consists of the 7th, 8th and 9th years, while the second cycle comprises the 10th, 11th and 12th years of secondary education.
9. This is borne out in the chapter by Belghazi and Baden, which finds that women workers receive low returns to education, as well as low penalties for lack of education — women workers' experience is valued more than educational qualifications.
10. These expressed preferences of employers seem to be borne out in practice if one considers the findings of Belghazi and Baden suggesting that there is a marked discrimination against women with higher educational qualifications in the urban labour market. The low educational levels of women workers in the textile sectors may therefore reflect the preference of employers.
11. *Cabran* is a distorted version of the French word *caporal* and it means foreman. The term is used in the carpet sector, the other two sectors using the title of workshop head.

12. We noted, during our interviews with the women workers, that they know the names of all the factories in the area, as well as the names of their owners. They all evaluate the factories in terms of wages and human relations.
13. In many cases a woman worker will leave one factory to go and be recruited by another which does not necessarily offer her better wages.
14. In this connection Joeques (1995:12) observed that Moroccan clothing producers believe that the quality of women's work is superior to men's, while men's work rate is higher.
15. Here it is possible to see how competition between the sexes in the production process is hindered by gender relationships. This is particularly the case for factories in which the girls are unskilled, with low levels of education.
16. The same discourse occurs among certain women vis-a-vis their domestic servants: that they cheat, steal and are irresponsible.
17. The trade union movement in Morocco was traditionally linked to the independence movement. Once independence was achieved, there was a fragmentation of the movement due to social and political forces. The trade union movement in Morocco remains subject to discriminatory pressures, collective bargaining mechanisms are dysfunctional and the legal infrastructure protecting workers' organizations is weak. Nonetheless, there is some evidence of activity around the factories. One woman garment factory worker explained that because there are no trade union delegates within the factory, they sometimes take their troubles to trade union members outside the factory. How far trade unions are able to respond to the needs of women workers is unclear, though studies on women and trade unions in other countries raise questions on this account (see Mitter, 1994; Khan, this volume).

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