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The Exploitation of Women In Mexico's Maquiladoras

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**The Exploitation of Women
In
Mexico's Maquiladoras**

A Thesis for the University Honors Program

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Abstract

Maquiladora factories, created in 1965 as part of Mexico's Border Industrialization Program, have become the backbone of economic progress along the United States/Mexico boundary. These factories, largely owned by foreign investors, have drawn thousands of women from Mexico's interiors to work in the area. As a result, globalization and increased foreign investment have created cultural, environmental, and occupational hardships and hazards for female Mexican laborers despite the monetary gains that have resulted from Mexican and United States government programs.

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Foreword

Ciudad Juarez Mayor Ramon Galindo and Ana Serratos, a maquiladora worker, see different sides of rapid industrialization in this Mexican border city, but they reach similar conclusions about the overall situation. Sometimes Ms. Serratos pauses outside a McDonald's restaurant in Ciudad Juarez, just across the border from El Paso, Texas; but she resists the temptation to stop in. Fast food is far beyond her means. A Big Mac, medium Coke, and fries cost \$3.05, and for Ms. Serratos this is nearly a full day's wages. She earns 45 cents an hour wrapping tape around bundles of electrical wires in one of Juarez's assembly plants.

"What people in your country make in an hour, we work a whole day for," says Ms. Serratos, 32. She lives with six siblings in a dirt-street suburb of Ciudad Juarez and commutes to work two hours each way on ramshackle buses. "These companies from the United States and Japan don't pay people what they ought to...But we have to recognize that they're important for Juarez."

The vast majority of wage earners in Juarez make little more than Ms. Serratos and are unfamiliar with labor unions, which are not yet allowed by the managers of the maquiladoras. Such low wage earners don't pay much in taxes; hence, as Mayor Galindo notes, the revenue of this city of 1.2 million is woefully small. Although drinking water has run out, there is no money for new wells, and it may be fifteen years before the streets are blacktopped. The mayor is keenly aware that the factories themselves also pay very low taxes. Although he is hoping to attract yet more factories, the mayor concludes that without change the maquiladora economy may only create "an enormous mass of wretchedly poor people." During the time of rapid maquiladora growth, despite a minimum wage hike of 14 percent, the consumer price index rose 18.6 percent. The effects on daily life are illustrated by the fact that in 1987 one worker had to work 8 hours to buy the weekly food for a family of four; by 1998 the same food supply required 34 hours of work. [Adapted from Sam Dillon, "Big Mac? Not for maquiladora workers," *New York Times News Service* (December 5, 1995); and *Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras, Annual Report* (1998), and *Newsletter* 9(1) (Spring 1999):13.] (Pulsipher and Pulsipher 161-62).

Ana Serratos provides a poignant example of the many thousands of women who endure the same living and working conditions along the border between the United

States and Mexico. She, like many other women laborers, works long, hard days in a factory full of occupational health hazards only to earn an income that barely supports herself and her family. Her life has been wrought and formed by the increased industrialization along the 2,000-mile border region that separates a world power from a third-world country.

Globalization and increased foreign investment have created cultural, environmental, and occupational hardships and hazards for female Mexican laborers despite the monetary gains that have resulted from Mexican and United States government programs. Two such programs, the Border Industrialization Program and the North American Free Trade Agreement, were designed to support foreign investment in Mexican industry and to increase domestic capital gains while alleviating the soaring unemployment rates. However, these industrialization efforts have not served their intended purposes of improving and strengthening the Mexican economy. In fact, they have complicated the economic and social lives of many Mexican people, particularly those female laborers residing along the border between the United States and Mexico.

An Overview of Mexican Culture

Scholars have attempted to define *culture* for years but have failed to agree on a single meaning for the multifaceted term. One definition postulated by Tylor (1) states that *culture* is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, and custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Ferraro (19) defines culture as “everything that people have, think, and do as members of their society.” And Hofstede (5) suggests that culture is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another...Culture is learned, not inherited.” Hofstede’s conclusion that culture is learned emphasizes the dynamism of culture: passed along through generations, it changes as the people change.

At the core of any culture are ideas embodied in the everyday lives and practices of the people. The culture of Mexico offers no exception. The Mexican people hold fast to beliefs, values, and attitudes that affect their relationships with one another and with their environment. These basic concepts and their contexts in Mexican society help one to understand the Mexican border region and its differences from more traditional, centralized areas of Mexico. Of significance are historical and religious backgrounds,

business practices, gender roles and the interaction of these combined influences to create the nexus of Mexican culture.

Like many other Latin American nations, Mexico was once a colony of Spain. The arrival of the Spanish brought language, religion, social class, and disease to the native Indian populations. Spanish influences were heavily integrated into the Mexican cultural system and are still evident today in a society where the past is very much a part of the present and future (Samovar and Porter 130; Pulsipher and Pulsipher 124-25). McKinnis and Natella state that “Mexicans tend to be very conscious of their past, to the extent of speaking of historical events as current issues” (Samovar and Porter 130). Silverman and Schneider continue this idea by noting, “Mexicans themselves believe that their history holds the key to their character” (Samovar and Porter 130). Relics of that time period include the Spanish language and the Roman Catholic religion. The latter institution provides an explanation for social structures present in Mexico today. For instance, Roman Catholicism is a religion that focuses on the family and a paternalistic, authoritarian hierarchy of power. These traditional values have been translated to the Mexican household and prevail in families where mothers bear many children and the father is the head of the family unit. Mexicans place much importance on families and include extended members into their familial systems. The nuclear family has traditionally been a rare occurrence (Pulsipher and Pulsipher 147).

Within traditional family systems men and women are expected to embody certain roles. The term *marianismo* is associated with Mexican women and is best described by Pulsipher and Pulsipher (147):

Throughout Middle and South America, the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, is held up as the model for women to follow. Through their adoration of the Virgin,

they absorb a set of values ... that puts a priority on chastity and service to the family. The ideal woman is the day-to-day manager of the family's well-being, training her sons to enter the wider world and her daughters to serve within the home.

Mexican men, on the other hand, are much freer in their roles as the heads of their families and have more contact with people outside of the biological unit. The term *machismo* defines the role of men in society and is also described in the text by Pulsipher and Pulsipher (147):

Males measure themselves by the model of **machismo**, which considers manliness to consist of honor, respectability, and the ability to father children and be attractive to women, to be an engaging raconteur in social situations, and to be the master of his own household.

Brake et al. describe machismo as

masculine power and courage aimed at attracting respect. A macho man will always display confidence; undertake tasks that test his capabilities; and express disdain for rules, regulations, policies, and procedures that constrict his maverick style (120).

Men also derive some of their power from the idea of God as "the Father" (Samovar and Porter 118). By engendering the highest power in their lives as male, Catholics portray men in the dominating role in society. Kras continues this idea in stating, "within the family unit the father is the undisputed authority figure. All major decisions are made by him, and he sets the disciplinary standards. His word is final and the rest of the family looks to him for guidance and strength" (Samovar and Porter 118). Hence, Mexican cultural standards in regard to family structures and individual roles within the family take root in the ideas conveyed through Catholicism.

Of particular interest to the understanding a woman's role is the idea that traditionally the Mexican woman's place is in the home caring for the children, preparing the food, and seeing to other household responsibilities. Men are the major providers of monetary needs, though the concept of monetary wealth has traditionally been considered secondary to other displays of machismo (Pulsipher and Pulsipher 147).

There are apparent role disparities among men and women in Mexico, and these differences are further defined and explored by Geert Hofstede in a cultural evaluation based on the four dimensions of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity and femininity, and individualism and collectivism. The four dimensions utilize data from Hofstede's IBM Study and provide generalizations of cultures across continuums. It is important to note that these generalizations are not the case for every individual or family or worker in every country examined, but that for the most part these ideas hold true and provide important insight into Mexican culture.

Hofstede's first cultural characteristic is uncertainty avoidance. The uncertainty-avoidance dimension of culture discusses the extent to which a culture accepts and tolerates the unpredictable. Hofstede's formal definition labels *uncertainty avoidance* as "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations," commonly shown in the members' need for rules and the expression of stress (113). Uncertainty avoidance is another part of the "mental programming" shared by the individuals that compose a culture (Hofstede 5). To combat uncertainty and the associated anxiety, cultures have relied upon technology, law, and religion. As with culture, the members of a society learn how to accept and deal with these feelings of uncertainty as dictated and passed on by other societal members. The family unit largely

influences the individual, teaching the individual how to act and react within society (Hofstede 118).

In his IBM studies, Hofstede devised indices to measure each of his proposed cultural dimensions and to compare one society with many others. The index for uncertainty avoidance rates Mexico as one of the strong uncertainty avoidance cultures along with other areas of the Hispanic Americas, Spanish Europe, and the Mediterranean. As a result, Mexicans can be characterized in terms of uncertainty avoidance as having a culture that observes rules and that places importance on the emotional need to reduce anxiety. Figure 1.1 from Hofstede (125) below further delineates the ideas typical of a strong uncertainty-avoidance culture as related to a weak uncertainty-avoidance culture.

FIGURE 1.1 Uncertainty Avoidance

<i>Weak uncertainty avoidance</i>	<i>Strong uncertainty avoidance</i>
Few and general laws and rules	Many and precise laws and rules
If rules cannot be respected, they should be changed	If rules cannot be respected, we are sinners and should repent
Citizen competence versus authorities	Citizen incompetence versus authorities
Citizen protest acceptable	Citizen protest should be repressed
Citizens positive towards institutions	Citizens negative towards institutions
Civil servants positive towards political process	Civil servants negative towards political process
Tolerance, moderation	Conservatism, extremism, law and order
Positive attitudes towards young people	Negative attitudes towards young people
Regionalism, internationalism, attempts at integration of minorities	Nationalism, xenophobia, repression of minorities
Belief in generalists and common sense	Belief in experts and specialization
Many nurses, few doctors	Many doctors, few nurses
One group's truth should not be imposed on others	There is only one Truth and we have it
Human rights: nobody should be persecuted for their beliefs	Religious, political, and ideological fundamentalism and intolerance
In philosophy and science, tendency towards relativism and empiricism	In philosophy and science, tendency towards grand theories
Scientific opponents can be personal friends	Scientific opponents cannot be personal friends

As stated earlier in this chapter, the Roman Catholic Church has had great influence upon Mexican cultural practices and beliefs. Religion can help to alleviate uncertainty by providing ways to accept and predict the unknown. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church postulates a life-after-death scenario for those who accept the religion's teachings. This belief helps to reduce the anxiety associated with death and the afterlife for the Mexican people. Another example of how the Roman Catholic religion correlates with uncertainty avoidance is through confession of sins. Mexican Roman Catholics, representing strong uncertainty avoidance, require rules. When these rules cannot be obeyed, the sinner is given the option of confessing the sin in order to place the burden of blame on the individual and maintain the rule and its certainty (Hofstede 132).

Uncertainty avoidance is also displayed in the workplace through the use of rules and regulations. Hofstede states that within "uncertainty avoiding societies there are many formal laws and/or informal rules controlling the rights and duties of employers and employees. There are also many internal rules and regulations controlling the work process..." (120-21). In Mexico, particularly in the industrial manufacturing sector, according to the uncertainty-avoidance dimension, workers submit to rules implemented by the management and enforced by superiors as well as fellow workers. Rules provide a structure for the individuals and guide them through daily routines and interactions (Hofstede 120).

The second cultural dimension as postulated by Hofstede is power distance.

Power distance refers to

the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. 'Institutions' are the basic elements of society like the family, school, and the community; 'organizations' are the places where people work (Hofstede 28).

As with the other three dimensions, power distance is learned and illustrated first in the family. In cultures where power distance is high, such as Mexico, the adults in a family expect respect and maintain control and influence over the other, usually younger members of the family unit. Children are treated with care and are not permitted to experiment on their own. The younger members of a family are expected to follow rules that are set and not deviate from the family standards. Even into adulthood when children can make decisions on their own, they are still expected to treat elders with respect and observe continuing influence on their adult lives as well. These ideas are translated into the school and community setting where teachers and civic leaders are held as higher powers than students and followers.

As children mature, they add the boss-subordinate power-distance relationship.

Hofstede (35) describes this dimension as related to a large power-distance culture:

In the large power distance situation superiors and subordinates consider each other as existentially unequal; the hierarchical system is felt to be based on this existential inequality. Organizations centralize power as much as possible in a few hands. Subordinates are expected to be told what to do.

In high power-distance societies the manager exerts control over his subordinates, who follow orders although they may disagree. The inequalities between boss and subordinate extend into salary ratios--the bosses earn substantially more than the subordinates. Workers are much less educated than their superiors and hold lower status, especially when manual labor is considered as opposed to office work.

Figure 1.2 below outlines the differences between small and large power-distance cultures.

FIGURE 1.2 Power Distance

<i>Small power distance</i>	<i>Large power distance</i>
Inequalities among people should be minimized	Inequalities among people are both expected and desired
There should be, and there is to some extent, interdependence between less and more powerful people	Less powerful people should be dependent on the more powerful; in practice, less powerful people are polarized between dependence and counterdependence
Parents treat children as equals	Parents teach children obedience
Children treat parents as equals	Children treat parents with respect
Teachers expect initiatives from students in class	Teachers are expected to take all initiatives in class
Teachers are experts who transfer impersonal truths	Teachers are gurus who transfer personal wisdom
Students treat teachers as equals	Students treat teachers with respect
More educated persons hold less authoritarian values than less educated persons	Both more and less educated persons show almost equally authoritarian values
Hierarchy in organizations means an inequality of roles, established for convenience	Hierarchy in organizations reflects the existential inequality between higher-ups and lower-downs
Decentralization is popular	Centralization is popular
Narrow salary range between top and bottom of organization	Wide salary range between top and bottom of organization
Subordinates expect to be consulted	Subordinates expect to be told what to do
The ideal boss is a resourceful democrat	The ideal boss is a benevolent autocrat or good father
Privileges and status symbols are frowned upon	Privileges and status symbols for managers are both expected and popular

Mexico's culture ranks extremely high on the power-distance scale in relation to the fifty other countries and regions measured in Hofstede's IBM study. Figure 1.3 (Hofstede 26) illustrates this position.

FIGURE 1.3 Power Distance Index

Score rank	Country or region	PDI score	Score rank	Country or region	PDI score
1	Malaysia	104	27/28	South Korea	60
2/3	Guatemala	95	29/30	Iran	58
2/3	Panama	95	29/30	Taiwan	58
4	Philippines	94	31	Spain	57
5/6	Mexico	81	32	Pakistan	55
5/6	Venezuela	81	33	Japan	54
7	Arab countries	80	34	Italy	50
8/9	Ecuador	78	35/36	Argentina	49
8/9	Indonesia	78	35/36	South Africa	49
10/11	India	77	37	Jamaica	45
10/11	West Africa	77	38	USA	40
12	Yugoslavia	76	39	Canada	39
13	Singapore	74	40	Netherlands	38
14	Brazil	69	41	Australia	36
15/16	France	68	42/44	Costa Rica	35
15/16	Hong Kong	68	42/44	Germany FR	35
17	Colombia	67	42/44	Great Britain	35
18/19	Salvador	66	45	Switzerland	34
18/19	Turkey	66	46	Finland	33
20	Belgium	65	47/48	Norway	31
21/23	East Africa	64	47/48	Sweden	31
21/23	Peru	64	49	Ireland (Republic of)	28
21/23	Thailand	64	50	New Zealand	22
24/25	Chile	63	51	Denmark	18
24/25	Portugal	63	52	Israel	13
26	Uruguay	61	53	Austria	11
27/28	Greece	60			

Hofstede's third cultural dimension is *masculinity* and *femininity*. This criterion explores the differences between the programming that men and women learn from their parents and fellow societal members. Masculinity and femininity acknowledges the basic biological and natural characteristics that differentiate women and men and further applies those to primitive and modern gender roles. In early societies men performed physical activities such as hunting and fighting whereas women, at least during the breast-feeding stages, were forced to remain close to the children. This closeness fostered the nurturing, tender characteristics associated with females in society, while men were encouraged because of their freeness to be assertive and strong (Hofstede 80-1).

Hofstede's definitions of *masculinity* and *femininity* explain that the dimension does not focus on the differences between men and women, but rather the similarities and differences in their roles across any given culture. Hofstede (82-3) states that

masculinity pertains to societies in which gender roles are clearly distinct (i.e., men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life); femininity pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap (i.e., both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life).

Feminine societies are those in which men and women are conditioned to be tender and nurturing. In masculine societies men and women are conditioned to assume different roles, and the women are the ones who are tender and nurturing.

Masculine and feminine cultures as a whole take on roles in the world economy that are suitable to their conditioning. Feminine cultures are those that promote modesty and problem solving to the benefit of all involved. For instance, the Netherlands is considered a feminine society and excels in offering services such as consulting.

Developed masculine societies concentrate on output—being the best, the fastest, and the most aggressive—and for these reasons excel in manufacturing. The Japanese electronics industry provides an example of a masculine society that is focused on production (Hofstede, 1991). Figure 1.4 shows the distinctions between masculine and feminine cultures.

FIGURE 1.4 Characteristics of Feminine and Masculine Cultures

<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Masculine</i>
Dominant values in society are caring for others and preservation	Dominant values in society are material success and progress
People and warm relationships are important	Money and things are important
Everybody is supposed to be modest	Men are supposed to be assertive, ambitious, and tough
Both men and women are allowed to be tender and to be concerned with relationships	Women are supposed to be tender and to take care of relationships
In the family, both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings	In the family, fathers deal with facts and mothers with feelings
Both boys and girls are allowed to cry but neither should fight	Girls cry, boys don't; boys should fight back when attacked, girls shouldn't fight
Sympathy for the weak	Sympathy for the strong
Average student is the norm	Best student is the norm
Failing in school is a minor accident	Failing in school is a disaster
Friendliness in teachers appreciated	Brilliance in teachers appreciated
Boys and girls study same subjects	Boys and girls study different subjects
Work in order to live	Live in order to work
Managers use intuition and strive for consensus	Managers expected to be decisive and assertive
Stress on equality, solidarity, and quality of work life	Stress on equity, competition among colleagues, and performance
Resolution of conflicts by compromise and negotiation	Resolution of conflicts by fighting them out

Mexico's case is similar to Japan's. Both cultures are considered masculine, and the manufacturing sectors excel accordingly. As a result, managers and leaders are more assertive and aggressive in their roles within factories and the nation-state. Production is the main focus of the manufacturing industry.

Hofstede's fourth and final dimension distinguishes between cultures that focus on the individual and cultures that focus on the group. He (51) identifies these two culture types as *individualist* and *collectivist* and defines them as follows

Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family.

Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

Individualist societies promote, among other things, autonomy and one's ability to survive and compete independently of other persons. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, stress the dependence of one individual upon others, fostering a mindset that begins primarily with the family but also extends into society as a whole¹. For example, collectivist societies are those that place considerable emphasis on the extended family and its importance in daily life for each individual. The individualist family usually consists of nothing more than the father, mother, and children. Extended family members are rarely seen and not incorporated into the daily lives of individuals (Hofstede 50).

Figure 1.5 shows the major distinctions between a collectivist and an individualist culture.

¹ A personal experience in China illustrates how individuals within collectivist societies consider themselves to be only part of a greater whole. Our tour guide constantly referred to himself as 'we' and hoped that I would help his country by spending money. Any portion of the funds that he was to receive was considered inconsequential when placed in the context of helping his country and his people as a whole.

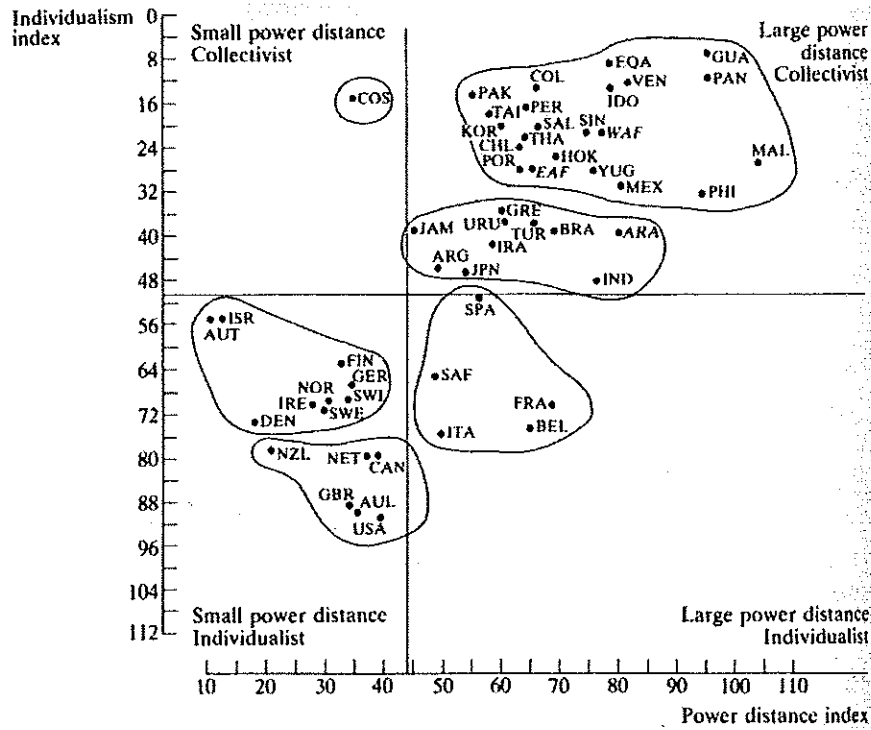
Figure 1.5 Collectivist and Individualist

Table 3.3 Key differences between collectivist and individualist societies.
I: general norm, family, school, and workplace

<i>Collectivist</i>	<i>Individualist</i>
People are born into extended families or other ingroups which continue to protect them in exchange for loyalty	Everyone grows up to look after him/herself and his/her immediate (nuclear) family only
Identity is based in the social network to which one belongs	Identity is based in the individual
Children learn to think in terms of 'we'	Children learn to think in terms of 'I'
Harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontations avoided	Speaking one's mind is a characteristic of an honest person
High-context communication	Low-context communication
Trespassing leads to shame and loss of face for self and group	Trespassing leads to guilt and loss of self-respect
Purpose of education is learning how to do	Purpose of education is learning how to learn
Diplomas provide entry to higher status groups	Diplomas increase economic worth and/or self-respect
Relationship employer-employee is perceived in moral terms, like a family link	Relationship employer-employee is a contract supposed to be based on mutual advantage
Hiring and promotion decisions take employees' ingroup into account	Hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on skills and rules only
Management is management of groups	Management is management of individuals
Relationship prevails over task	Task prevails over relationship

In a collectivist society, like Mexico's, the interests of the group as a whole are placed above those of the individual. Mexico's Gross Domestic Product is much lower than that of the individualist societies residing to the north, including the United States and Canada (Pulsipher & Pulsipher 154-55). Traditionally the Mexican family includes the extended family of aunts and uncles, cousins, and grandparents. In accordance with Mexico's cultural distinction as a high power-distance society, the father or grandfather assumes the role as head of this mini collective. Mexico, like many other countries and regions, displays a strong correlation between collectivism and power distance. Figure 1.6 illustrates this relationship.

FIGURE 1.6 Collectivism and Power Distance



Mexican culture is entrenched in religious and societal traditions that are long-standing and show no signs of changing in the future. The aspects of Mexico's culture that distinguish it from many other cultures in North America serve as explanations for the complexities that are found on the Mexican-United States border.

Industrialization and the Precursors to NAFTA

In an effort to relieve the labor shortages in the United States resulting from World War II, the Bracero Program was initiated on August 4, 1942. Mexican farmers and laborers left their rural homes and farms to come to the border with the hope of making better wages for their families' survival. The program required the Mexican workers to sign certification paperwork that was usually written in English in order for them to enter the United States and work legally. Many times the workers had no understanding of the provisions they had accepted (Marentes and Marentes 3).

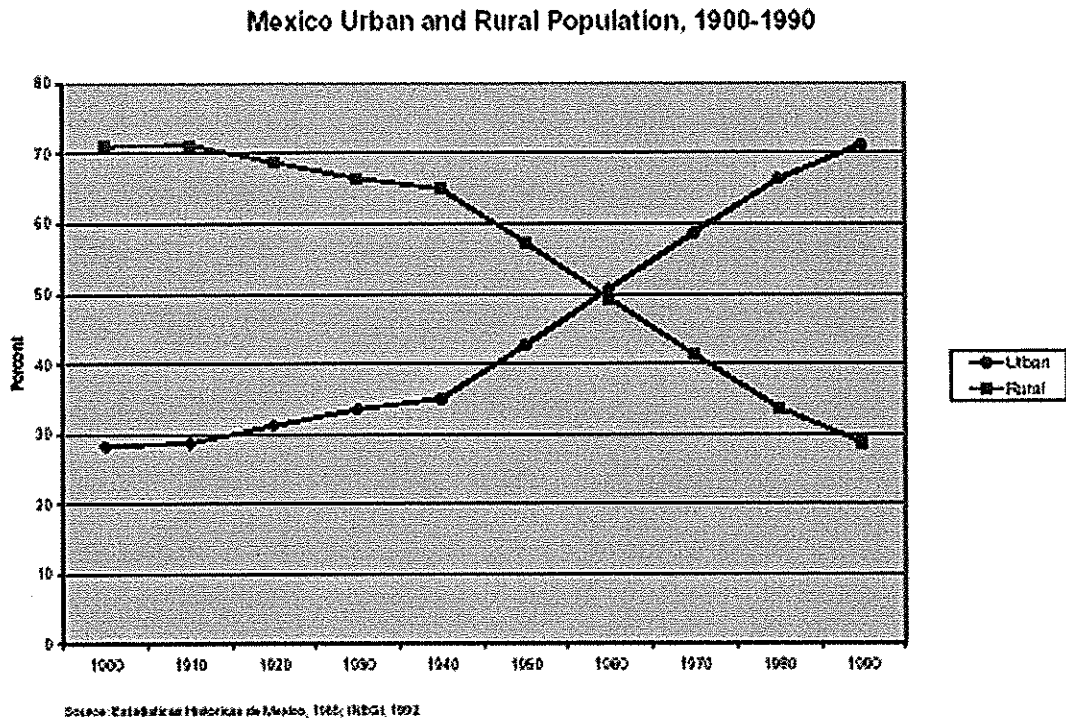
In theory, the Bracero Program served to support the United States and its war effort while the working force was away. But in practice the Bracero Program took on a very different form. Bracero laborers were forced to work for low wages and live in substandard dwellings. The United States government, under Public Law 45, apportioned funds to help feed and house the temporary workers while also paying their wages. Of the workers' wages, 10% was paid to the Mexican government with the promise that the individuals would be duly compensated upon their return to Mexico. Many Braceros never received this promised compensation (Martinez 1-2).

Even after the war was over, the United States government devised ways to utilize the Braceros and their skills as farm workers. However, as the mid 1960s approached,

many of the legal workers that were entering the United States caused problems by bringing along illegal immigrants. Also, the invention of cotton machines decreased the need for laborers on many farms in the United States (Marentes and Marentes 2). The Bracero program was formally terminated in 1964 (Edwards 46).

The Border Industrialization Program, also known as the Maquiladora Program, was initiated in 1965 as a means of relieving the labor shortages and large unemployment rates of Mexican workers. The purpose of the program was to absorb the remaining unemployed Bracero workers in order to stimulate economic growth, mainly in the border region, and reduce the influx of illegal Mexican migrants seeking employment in the United States (Rivera-Batiz 263). The Mexican government allowed duty-free, temporary importation of raw materials, supplies, machinery, and equipment into Mexican factories on the condition that the assembled or manufactured products would be exported. The factories quickly took on the label of *maquiladoras* from the Spanish word *maquilar*, meaning “to create a product through the use of machinery.” The region rapidly developed into an industrial zone with foreign-owned firms relocating their labor-intensive manufacturing and assembly plants to the area (Pelled & Hill 198). Raw materials and machinery were imported duty-free and under Mexican government bond to ensure that the materials brought into Mexico would all be exported. The U.S. firms could easily utilize the cheaper Mexican labor force and then import the finished products after only paying duty on the value-added by the Mexican labor (Rivera-Batiz 264). Labor was cheap and also readily available as Mexico’s population underwent geographic shift. Figure 2.1 below illustrates the dramatic reorganization of Mexico’s

population as citizens flooded into urban areas, leaving their farms and rural ways of life behind.



Maquiladora factories successfully created jobs for the many unemployed workers along the border. Between 1969 and 1985, the employment of Maquiladora workers in this region grew from 15,000 to 240,000 laborers. As part of the Maquiladora system, the factories were forced to pay the workers at least the minimum wage set by the Mexican Minimum Wage Commission, to which the factory owners complied, at times with wages at 5 to 30 percent higher than the minimum wages found in interior regions of Mexico. This increase in wages along the border, however, could not compete with wages in the United States for similar types of employment. Many Mexican men were still entering the United States to work for higher wages in better living conditions than those they were leaving behind in Mexico. Also, the typical Maquiladora worker was not a male Mexican from an interior rural area as had been the case with the Bracero

program. Women ages 16-24 that were native to the border regions were more often hired and made up 70 percent, and sometimes 90 percent, of the Maquiladora workforce. The Border Industrialization program was also not as successful as policy-makers had hoped in curbing the illegal migration of Mexicans into the United States (Rivera-Batiz, 264).

Another shortcoming of the Border Industrialization Program stemmed from the basic concepts surrounding the Maquiladora factory: that raw materials and equipment should be imported. Without the possibility of providing raw materials to increase revenues and investment in the core of the Mexican economy, benefits were earned mainly by the female laborers who worked along the border for menial wages compared to those established in the United States for similar jobs. Without direct investment into Mexico's economy and without a decrease in illegal migration, both the United States and Mexico were left wondering if the factories alone justified the Border Industrialization Program.

The North American Free Trade Agreement

The maquiladoras of the Border Industrialization Program were integrated into the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) in 1985, ending Mexico's closed economy period (Hanson 119). The Mexican government initialized decreases in trade tariffs to increase foreign direct investment. The GATT served as a precursor to additional decreases of trade barriers instituted by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) when it was signed in 1992 and enacted on January 1, 1994. By definition, NAFTA is a pact between the United States, Mexico, and Canada that

proposes the gradual disintegration of tariffs and trade barriers on most items produced or manufactured and sold throughout the North American Continent. NAFTA is the world's second largest free-trade zone economically and in terms of population (the European Union and European Free Trade Association are the largest), and encompasses a region from the Arctic to the Mexican border with Guatemala and Belize (Pulsipher and Pulsipher 74). The NAFTA free-trade market is comprised of 400 million consumers (Pulsipher and Pulsipher 140). The agreement was signed in 1992 by leaders of the three countries involved: George H. W. Bush of the United States, Brian Mulroney of Canada, and Carlos Salinas de Gortari of Mexico. NAFTA took effect on January 1, 1994, with immediate elimination of one half of the tariffs on U.S. goods and a fourteen-year plan during which the remaining tariffs on trade would phase out (Encarta 1).

As an answer to environmental groups that opposed the agreement, two supplemental agreements were signed in 1993 to address the issue of environmental policy. The border environment was a concern even before NAFTA was enacted. In their essay published in November of 1992, Brown et al. state, "in criticising a possible NAFTA and its relationship to the environment, environmentalists support their position by pointing out that pollution is already a severe problem in Mexico generally and particularly along the border in the maquiladoras. In addition, there is the theoretical possibility that each country will tend to specialise in the area in which government regulation is most lax" (1515). In response to growing environmental concerns of non-government organizations surrounding the passage of a free-trade agreement between the United States and Mexico, NAFTA offered an additional supplement, the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, making it the "greenest" trade

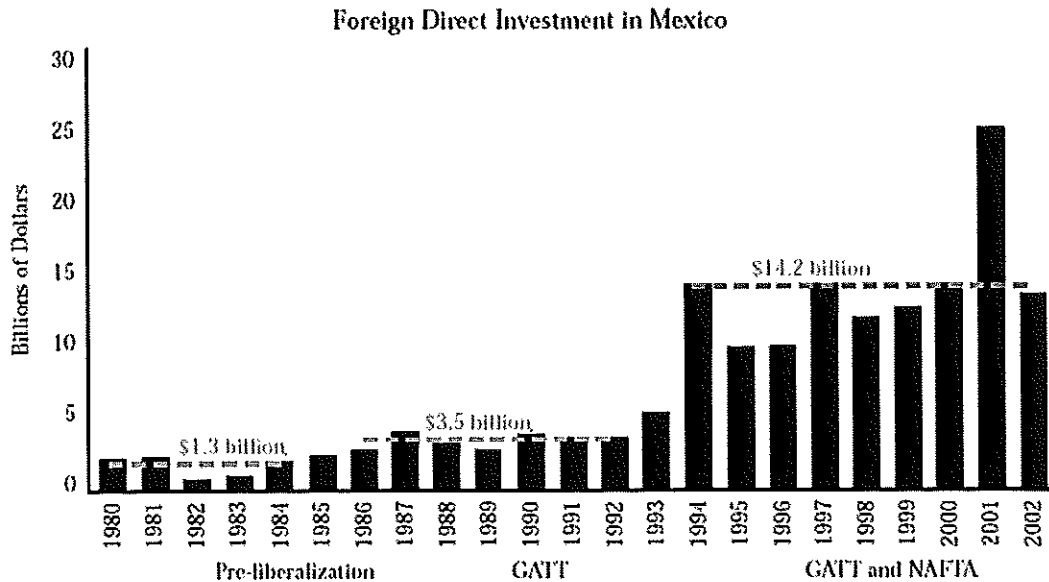
agreement ever (Strayhorn). From the environmental supplement, the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) and the North American Development Bank (NADBank) were initiated to aid in the creation of border infrastructure programs (Spalding 77). The main purpose of the free trade agreement was to lift barriers on trade and stimulate commerce, industrialization, and investments among the member countries. The goal was “regional commercial integration” (Castañeda 51).

NAFTA caused the United States and Mexico to re-evaluate their perceptions of one another; the U.S. viewed Mexico as an opportunity for business investment instead of a breeding ground for drugs and illegal immigration. Mexico also began to view its proximity to the United States as an opportunity for economic advancement instead of a threat (Castañeda 51).

Because NAFTA included three countries, one might wonder why major humanitarian and economic dilemmas have formed mainly in Mexico. In 1988 the United States and Canada, two first-world countries, signed CUFTA, a bilateral version of NAFTA. When it came time to institute NAFTA, the two countries already understood the implications of economic integration and the benefits and hardships that would ensue. This was not the case for Mexico. In addition to the agreement being Mexico’s first experience with trade integration at this level, Mexico was also struggling, and continues to struggle, with economic, political, and social systems that place the nation-state in the classification of a third-world or developing country (Castañeda 51).

Despite the hardships Mexico would experience with globalization and the many adjustments the country would have to make in order to comply with NAFTA regulations, the country stood to benefit the most from agreement (Castañeda 51).

Mexican economists hoped to increase foreign investments and boost their nearly non-existent export economy. Diagram 1 (Castañeda 52) illustrates the drastic increase in foreign investment in 1994 as compared to the pre-NAFTA years leading up to 1993.



Source: Economist Jaime Serra Puche, with data from the Mexican trade ministry

William Kehoe (3-4) proposed the following explanations of the main premises of the North American Free Trade Agreement as it related to the countries involved.

- Tariffs are either eliminated or phased out over periods of up to fifteen years. As much as 50% of U.S. exports to Mexico and 70% of Mexican exports to the U.S. became tariff/quota free on NAFTA's passage.
- Limits on investments are removed. Investors from any of the three countries are treated equally, currency is freely transferred at market rates, and performance requirements such as maintaining export levels and trade balancing are eliminated. Additionally, over the next seven to fifteen years, financial services institutions will be permitted to establish foreign-owned institutions and to invest in Mexican banks, insurance, and brokerage firms. Mexico will, however, continue to restrict certain land ownership by foreign nationals.
- Trade in services is liberalized and equal treatment is expected for service providers and professionals in each country. The countries are to facilitate the

licensing of professionals and, by 1996, to eliminate citizenship and permanent residency requirements for professionals.

- Transportation regulations are liberalized. By the end of the decade, truck and bus operators will have almost unlimited access to the NAFTA countries.
- Protection of intellectual properties is strengthened. This includes protection of literary works, recordings, computer programs, and product and process patents.

At the outset, many Americans were fearful of what might result from signing a free-trade agreement with Mexico. Factory owners required to comply with United States government-enforced environmental regulations were concerned that Mexican factories would operate under less stringent standards, giving border factories a competitive edge in terms of profitability. Factory workers were losing jobs to Mexico before NAFTA was even initiated and expected the trend to continue. Wage earners in the United States could not compete against the Mexican wage standards, which at the time ranged from 57 cents to \$3.80. Worker displacement, job losses, and industry losses were likely to be a fact of the future with the inception of NAFTA. According to a 1993 report by the Economic Policy Institute, the southwestern United States stood to gain the most from NAFTA, while states in the Midwest, South, and parts of the West would receive the most negative effects of the free-trade agreement. For example, the state of Ohio was estimated to lose some 400,000 jobs, nearly 10% of all jobs in the state, as a result of NAFTA (Kehoe 4).

While the industries related to skilled and unskilled labor stood to suffer in the United States, NAFTA also promised the generation of many thousands of jobs in other sectors of the U.S. economy. NAFTA also served to protect the nearly \$24 billion that U.S. firms had invested in Mexico between 1989 and 1993, with a promise of further investment protection to follow NAFTA's 1994 enactment (Kehoe 7). The monies that

private investment had already brought to Mexico served to fuel growth and encourage stability for the United States' neighbor to the south.

Women and the Issue of Industrialization in Mexico

As the 1970s and 1980s progressed, the number of maquiladora factories located in the border region increased. Multinational companies recognized and took advantage of the regions just south of the border for their proximity to consumer markets, reduced tariffs, lax environmental regulations, and cheap, abundant labor (Ong 282,283; Avery 288; Brown et al. 1508, 1515; Hanson 115, 117; Rodriguez-Clare 853; Corral 314). Legislators and country leaders hoped that the increase in foreign direct investment from these multinationals would alleviate the unemployment and underemployment of Mexico's male workforce while also discouraging illegal migration into the United States (Stevenson 2). To their dismay "foreign companies investing in the FTZs [foreign trade zones] sought young single women, thus creating a new female industrial force where none had been envisioned" (Ong, 281). This new labor force developed in the 1980s, with the help of GATT, and has become the major source of cheap labor in the Mexican border region (Cravey 111). Female workers account for 68 to 80 percent of the border maquiladora workforce (Wright 84).

Female laborers are favored over men for their superior dexterity, which increases productivity in the many fields that require intricate assembly work (Balli 109; Hofstede 80). Also, managers and company executives recognize that most females in the

Mexican border region, as well as other female migrants from Mexico's interior, have never participated in the traditional non-domestic workforce. These young women, usually aged 16-24, have no experience in the workplace. They do not recognize labor inequalities, nor are they aware of the oppressive forces at work within the factory walls. Female workers, as opposed to their male counterparts, are not educated about labor strikes or unions and are therefore easily exploited and abused by managers and factory officials. One maquiladora manager in Ciudad Juarez said that he prefers to hire female workers who are " 'unspoiled' –that is, young and inexperienced: 'Women such as these are easier to shape to our requirements' " (Ong 292).

The cultural conditioning of women in Mexican society also serves as an aid to production-oriented supervisors who manage by dominating their subordinates (Ong 291). In traditional Mexican society, a woman's place is in the home. This idea, brought on by the Spanish Inquisition, restricts the female to domestic work while the male labors in fields or factories (Townsend 75). Along the border women are finding that even though they have become the main source of income for their families, male and female roles do not easily reverse (Kourous 2). While men have been found in certain border areas caring for children and helping with the daily chores (Cravey 112), it is still apparent that most women are working a *double day*; they must maintain the household as well as their outside jobs (Pulsipher & Pulsipher 205). In addition, many families are not considered traditional in that the woman has become the head of the household in the absence of a husband, father, or brother. In such cases women band together creating multi-income households devoid of adult males (Cravey 14, 112).

Getting Hired

Hiring processes within maquiladoras do not necessitate a great deal of time or effort. Common requirements include an interview with the supervisor, proof of primary school attendance, and a medical exam (Prieto 39-40). The interview is considered the male managers' (and they are all male) formal opportunity to weed out any females that they see as possible menaces to the firm. In terms of education, managers are not looking to hire highly educated women because they can potentially become more of a burden than an asset to the factory, although education requirements have risen as more and more women fight for fewer positions in the factories along the border.

The medical exam represents one of the major factors of abuse found in maquiladoras. Managers administer contraceptives to their workers and use pregnancy tests to verify whether or not a woman is pregnant. If she is, the female is less likely to be hired because children only serve as a complication in opposition to the demanding requirements for overtime in the factory (Wright 85). A female who did give birth while employed at the factory would have to be paid for her twelve-week maternity leave as mandated by labor regulations and would therefore become a liability to the factory (O'Grady 6). In fact, "ancillary labor costs are greater in the maquiladora region where the social and economic infrastructure is thin" (O'Grady 6).

Maquiladora employment

Employment in the maquiladora is an extension of historical Mexican cultural beliefs that the female should be subservient to the male. Men are seen as dominant in any cross-gender relationships, which "has fostered a widespread attitude of docility and obedience among women" (Prieto 32). Cravey (7) notes that managers utilize cultural

conditioning of women to enforce discipline in the workplace. This enforcement further alienates female workers as they try to create and mold a position within the plant's culture. Hofstede's recognition of Mexican society as masculine emphasizes the traditional role disparities between men and women. Cravey continues by conveying "one technique, which takes advantage of existing gender hierarchies, is the use of male floor managers alongside female line workers" (7). Male managers also use sexual harassment as a means to control female employees in the maquiladora, using "positions of authority to coerce and demand sexual favours, sometimes in exchange for job security" (Wright 85). Workers who are open to sexual favoritism receive rewards, while those who are not are threatened with termination (Cravey 7). Sexual harassment can take the form of casual courting, but can lead to more serious forms such as rape, and in the case of Ciudad Juarez, the suspicion of murder.

Sexual harassment is an unremitting cycle in the plants because women do not have the means to rise against it. Labor unions continue to be restricted along the border, and even if they were not, these women do not have the knowledge or organizational capabilities to fight back. Prieto (45) extends this idea:

This lack of experience is one of the reasons female workers accept adverse working conditions. They have no frame of reference because they have not had the opportunity to gain experience that might enable them to better organize themselves and confront their situation. Few workers resist working under such conditions, and fewer still arise in organized opposition.

Male managers, who are usually also Mexican, capitalize on the ignorance of female maquiladora workers in order to boost productivity. Managers realize that since the women will not organize into labor unions, they can thus exploit their workers to increase profits.

The Border Environment at Work and at Home

Industrialization along the border has not been solely a result of cheap labor; firms have also found relocation incentive in the lax environmental regulations extended to border maquiladoras, inside and outside the factory walls. NAFTA stands as the United States' and Mexico's first attempt at truly addressing the environmental hazards caused by in surging industrialization along the border. Horror stories abound that describe the environmental damage maquiladoras inflict upon portions of Mexico's northern border zone and the resulting health hazards (Spalding 75). These impacts have greatly affected the female maquiladora worker as well as many other border inhabitants in terms of water availability and cleanliness, air pollution, and land-based pollution (Spalding 75; Cravey 96).

Of these issues, perhaps the most salient is the concern for contamination and depletion of water resources. In terms of depletion, the border region represents the most arid sections of both the United States and Mexico (Fernandez 45). Water is not an abundant resource. In addition to water shortages, the resource is in constant danger of contamination. Again, one of the motives for industrial growth along the border is the limited regulation of manufacturing waste products. Mexican border officials are concerned with making the appropriate environmental conditions available to attract investors, neglecting the environmental appropriations that make industry safe after it arrives (Kourous 3; Corliss 315). As a result some maquiladora managers, in their quest to minimize costs, ignore environmental regulations by dumping hazardous materials into water supplies or simply leaving them on site to seep into ground water sources (Kourous 3-4). NAFTA side agreements charge an entire council with the management of safe

environmental procedures, but contamination and depletion of this vital resource continues.

Cravey addresses the issue of the environmental dangers within factories and the associated dangers:

Hazards of the workplace include exposure to toxics as well as well as mutagenic and carcinogenic chemicals, the operation of dangerous and antiquated machinery that lacks safeguards to prevent injury, lack of protective equipment and clothing, stress or disease caused by long hours and repetitive motion, and a denial of information on chemicals in the workplace (96).

The female worker is “subjected to low wages, long hours, frequent overtime, little or no prospects for advancement, and generally uncertain employment” (Ong 287).

Maquiladora women are faced with harsh conditions in which to work, including poor ventilation, high production standards, and little or no safety equipment for handling toxic chemicals (Wright 85; Prieto 52). These conditions result in musculoskeletal and respiratory ailments, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, and birth defects such as low birth weight in children of female maquiladora workers (Cravey 97; Wright 85; Elliot 4). But they do not organize against such hazards or quit their jobs. According to Cravey (73), “maquiladora owners and managers share information and blacklist individuals who have filed grievances or initiated protests...to produce an environment of intimidation and insecurity that makes genuine collective action extremely difficult.” Maquiladora workers also rely heavily on the minimal income earned from the factory work as the only way to support themselves and their families.

Money is not the only motivation for these maquiladora women. For these workers, life in the maquiladora is their first opportunity for independence from authoritarian patriarchal rule by fathers, husbands, brothers, or sons. It also symbolizes

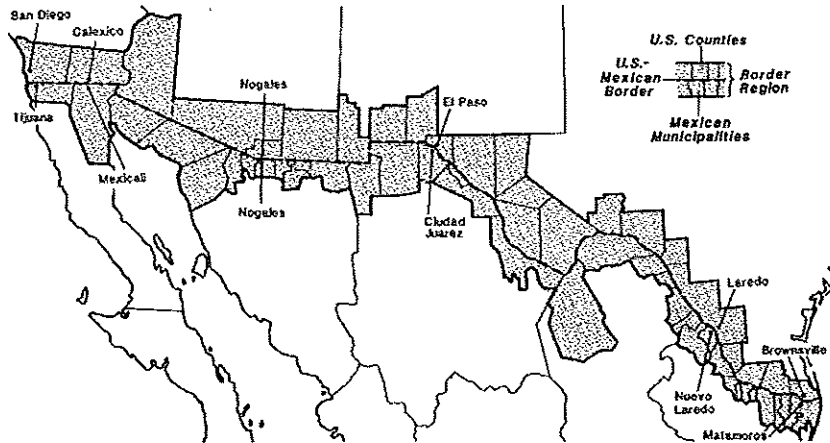
an exodus from the cultural oppression of being limited to work within the home (Cravey 71; Prieto 71; Tulchin and Selee 130). Women are empowered to go into the public sector and do for themselves and their families without a dependency on males for guidance and support. According to Wright (85) “[b]y maquiladora owners’ standards, everyone benefits; the female workforce is more suited, is predisposed, to higher maquiladora output and the women workers gain the freedom that comes with spending power.” Work within the maquiladora, although it requires long days, low pay, and dangerous conditions, signifies a woman’s autonomy and freedom from socially conditioned influences. One female maquiladora worker reflects on the complexities of her factory experience:

Factory work has its advantages and disadvantages. You work, have money, and can live better than back in the village, even though things keep getting worse. If I had stayed there I simply wouldn’t have had any paid work; my only occupation would be at home.... We earn this money by the sweat of our brow. Our work is exhausting. It endangers our health and after a while it makes us feel old. But ever and always, it’s work (Prieto 25).

Maquiladora Twin Cities

Maquiladoras are located in all six Mexican border states: Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas. Development in each state differs greatly and is highly affected by the major cities located therein and the proximity to sister cities across the border (Krooth 285). Cities that demonstrate a strong relationship across the border are known as twin cities, and twelve sets of these twin cities account for 86 percent of the total border population (Brandon 1). Figure 3.1 (Fernandez 38-9) depicts the locations of several major twin cities along the border.

Figure 3.1 Map of the Border Region



Two of these twin cities, Tijuana, Baja California-San Diego, California, and Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua-El Paso, Texas, respectively represent the highest population of Mexicans along the border, as well as the largest concentration of maquiladora factories (Brandon 1). It is to these cities that the majority of rural Mexicans flock in search of employment and escape from Mexico's traditional interiors. While the border cities provide opportunities for employment, the wages earned do not allow for the overly inflated costs of living along the border. The following chart, adapted from Sowinski (2), illustrates the inflation of food prices along the border.

“What can a female maquiladora worker buy?”

Food and Supplies	Hours of Work to Purchase
Beans, 1 kg.	4 hours
Rice, 1 kg.	1 hour, 26 min.
Corn Tortillas, 1 kg.	40 min.
Chile Peppers, 1/8 kg.	1 hour, 15 min.
Tomatoes, 1 kg.	1 hour, 35 min.
Beef, 1 kg.	8 hours
Chicken	3 hours
Eggs, 1 doz.	2 hours, 24 min.
Milk, 1 gallon	4 hours, 17 min.
Cooking gas, 1 tank	20 hours
Diapers, box of 30	11 hours, 30 min.
Elementary School Uniform	57-86 hours

Tijuana

Tijuana stands as the western most industrialized border city in Mexico. The city has been historically and economically linked to the United States since the early 1900s when U.S. tourists would flood the city in search of gambling and alcohol (Fernandez 36). Over the next century, Tijuana would rise as the western gate to the United States, a position fueled by the continuous growth of San Diego just north of the border.

Tijuana is very linked to its northern sister city. The state of California is the fifth largest economy in the world, and as such has a profound effect on imports from Mexico, mainly Tijuana, as well as the wages earned by Tijuana maquiladora workers (Kopinak 319). This relationship is formed mainly by the companies that contract labor to the south while maintaining headquarters just across the border in San Diego (Kopinak 319).

The characteristics of maquiladoras in Tijuana are no different from the generalizations already postulated. Tijuana residents deal with hazardous waste and sewage conditions that contaminate water sources. Female maquiladora workers labor in assembly plants, several of which are listed in a special report by the *San Diego Business Journal* (see Appendix D). Tijuana maquiladoras specialize in manufacturing of televisions for companies such as Sony, Sanyo, Samsung, JVC, Hitachi, and Matsushita. This sector of electronics assembly requires maquiladora workers to solder and use chemicals without proper safety equipment (Kopinak 323). Many of the companies listed above represent companies of non-U.S. investors, as is the case more so in Tijuana than any other border city, attributable to its proximity with Pacific regions of the world. Tijuana is known as the “TV capital of the world” because of the abundant Asian-owned

multinational companies. Asian electronics manufacturers attempt to infiltrate the U.S. consumer market from Mexico (Kopinak 326).

The U.S. economic recession of 2001 demonstrated the dependence of maquiladoras in border cities such as Tijuana. Prior to the recession, Tijuana was viewed as a lucrative foreign investment site for its low tariffs, cheap labor, and proximity to the U.S. consumer market. After the recession, and combined with increased security along the border as a result of the September 11 attacks and rising Mexican taxes, Tijuana suffered as manufacturing dwindled and the job market contracted. It is apparent that border cities such as Tijuana are reliant upon economic forces from the United States and twin cities.

The city of Tijuana itself is composed of an industrial center, a city center (el centro), and *colonias*—residential areas where many maquiladora workers dwell. Colonias are sometimes composed of formally constructed homes, but in Tijuana, as well as several other border cities, homes are generally “impoverished shanties” where families and workers crowd in without running water or proper sewage and trash systems (Elliot 4).

Ciudad Juarez

Ciudad Juarez is the largest city along the Rio Bravo border region with Texas. Juarez also embodies the environmental, social, and cultural stigmata heretofore discussed, but here those injustices have been rendered a step further. Someone is killing female maquiladora workers in Ciudad Juarez. Since 1993, at least 300 bodies of young Mexican female maquiladora workers have been located in areas surrounding the city, but local officials have yet to place the blame or prevent additional murders from

occurring (Sowinski 1; Tulchin and Selee 131). Díaz states that “[t]here have been dramatic arrests, allegations of law enforcement conspiracies and government cover-ups, botched forensic investigations, FBI involvement, serial killer profiles and death threats to lawyers working on the case” (14) but the brutalization of maquiladora women persists. As mentioned earlier, male managers subject maquiladora women to various forms of sexual harassment, but is that harassment leading to murder? Officials are uncertain, but what is clear is that maquiladoras in Ciudad Juarez and other border cities need to “clean up their act and take serious steps to provide for the safety of their workers” (Díaz 14).

Border Americanization

Mixed in with the traditional Mexican border restaurants are the bright golden arches of McDonald’s and even Taco Bell. Food is not the only thing that more and more residents on both sides of the border have in common. The term ‘americanization’ relates to the increasing influence of United States culture on Mexican border residents and their traditional attitudes and ways of life. In Spanish the term “entreguismo” is used to denote the possibility of “surrendering to foreign influence” (Valenzuela Arce 1). The cultural dominance of Mexico City is being replaced by that of Los Angeles and San Diego. American cities hold the promise for a new generation of Mexican people, people who are eager to enjoy the “rhythm of life” idealized by American television and movies (Thelen, 7).

For women, americanization signifies a shift from traditionally accepted cultural roles towards weaker and more democratic social regulations. For instance, in accordance with traditional views of marianismo, purity translated to Mexican women in

that they were expected to abstain from sexual intercourse until marriage. As a result of global influences, largely brought on by the United States, Mexicans “no longer have the idea that losing virginity is a family tragedy” (Thelen, 9). Also, the traditional family has become the minority, although Mexicans still place a great sense of the importance upon family. Families are composed of fewer children, many with only two, which was considered “blasphemy in the old day” because of Catholic influences on family structure and the associated “passion against birth control, legalization of abortion, condoms, women’s rights, and so forth” (Thelen, 9). The loss of traditional families, and the structure, protection and support they provide, has been positively correlated with the increased vulnerability and sexual exploitation of young women (Lindsay 13).

The Catholic Church, as a symbol of traditional Mexican culture, has proved the most resistant opponent to newer ways of life. Globalization and the increasing transformation of the family are key issues that the Catholic Church seeks to avoid and in some cases fight. The Church cites television programming such as *The Simpsons* as an example of traditional family structure degradation into one that more closely resembles a small and dysfunctional American family (Thelen 8).

Americanization also extends into the workplace where managers from the United States and Canada attempt to implement their own administrative human resources styles. Many times managers neglect Mexican cultural standards and expect that what works in the factories back home will also in the border maquiladoras. In many cases, this has been a great mistake for foreign managers. Two poignant examples are the attempts to implement Participative Management and Total Quality Management (TQM) strategies within the maquiladora factories. It is thought that the lowest worker is best able to

recognize problems in the most basic levels of the factory and, through Participative management or TQM, can then make appropriate improvements. Empowering the worker individually and in teams in such ways positively correlates with reduced turnover rates and greater worker satisfaction, which increases production (Pelled and Hill 198).

While Participative Management and TQM practices have been key strategies in the United States and Canada, they have failed in Mexico as a result of deep-seated culturally acceptable business practices. In Mexico, decision-making is centralized. Superiors and subordinates rely upon a hierarchically structured system to determine appropriate work relations—a hierarchy that is largely controlled by paternalistic concepts stemming from traditional familial systems. The good worker is submissive and respects the boss's demands. Additionally, as stated in an earlier section, Mexico is a collectivist society that places much emphasis on the family. At the same time “any loyalty outside of the family is transferred to the boss at work, although not to a work group or team” (O’Grady 2). According to research conducted by Eva Kras, workers expect their supervisors to take on all responsibility within the firm and to make all decisions for them (Pelled and Hill 200). This positively correlates with Mexico’s rating as a high power-distance country in which workers are far removed from management and decision-making. Participative Management and TQM strategies fail as a result of cultural conditioning by all involved parties.

The americanization of the border population is as dynamic as culture itself. Border residents enjoy the benefits of goods and services easily attainable from their northern neighbor. However, these residents also strive to maintain their own cultural

beliefs even in the face of inevitable dynamism and change. Along the border Mexican cultural identity “often reinforces collective action closely linked to the class situation” (Valenzuela Arce 3). Thus, as long as border residents live in poverty that is so radical from living conditions in the United States, americanization will not completely transform the border culture.

The Future of Maquiladoras

The case for women in Mexico's border maquiladoras is one of many complexities and disparities brought on by cultural standards, government policies, and humanitarian neglect. In order for the border region to develop in the future, the Mexican government must improve its efforts in creating an environmentally safe infrastructure of paved highways, water sewage and treatment facilities, and enforced factory environmental and safety regulations. In order to do so, Mexico should prompt capital investment in something other than its cheap labor force.

The maquiladora industry is currently declining as a result of the U.S. economic recession, increased Mexican taxes, and competition from China. It is the pressure caused by the latter aspect that may prove fatal to the maquiladora industry as we know it. Government-run Chinese factories increasingly attract U.S. investors in search of even cheaper labor. To combat this problem, maquiladoras must undergo changes to increase the number of skilled laborers, thus preserving jobs along the border while augmenting the education of Mexican workers. This tactic would serve to employ those male workers who possess industrial and engineering skills—detering them from entering the United States as illegal workers. It would also raise the wages of female and male

maquiladora workers alike, who would become more valuable for their knowledge and capabilities.

Wages increases would enhance the spending power of maquiladora workers, but they should also be in a position to purchase what they produce. Currently, Mexican consumers have access to only two percent of the products manufactured in the border maquiladoras. That same number also reflects the percentage of local inputs used among several major border manufacturing plants (Roett 172). The capital used in border maquiladoras comes from investing countries, not from Mexico; thus, the economy receives no direct benefits from the maquiladora industry. Granted, workers along the border boost consumer rates, but even they cross the border to spend their money in cities such as San Diego and El Paso. Linkages are made to the United States economy, but investment is not being made directly into the Mexican economy.

Improvements require money—money that Mexico will only garner by further developing its current globalization strategies. Mexico's export percentages may have risen drastically in the maquiladora years, but those numbers take into account capital that is brought into the country, assembled (through maquiladora labor), and then re-exported to benefit the U.S. economy, not Mexico's (Osio 2). Mexico needs capital investment, not just cheap labor, to improve its economic situation so that it might pass those benefits on to the border workers. The ongoing transition from socialism to democracy will aid government officials in continuing to privatize industries within Mexico. Focus should be on creating an infrastructure of skilled, educated laborers and solid government-supported communication and transportation systems. In doing so, Mexico can regain ground lost to Asian companies where labor is cheaper (Osio 2-3).

For Mexico, further developing its human resource and manufacturing capabilities will prove extremely beneficial to the economy and to the people.

Afterword

The women of Mexico's border maquiladoras endure harsh conditions that are largely ignored by American consumers—precisely the individuals who gain the most from labor inequalities and dangers. Legislation such as NAFTA may increase globalization while decreasing the costs of manufactured products, but is that really a good thing? Lower prices are considered a plus, but they are coming at a very high price to the people who live in misery to produce them. We can blame the U.S. government for ignoring the environmental side agreement to NAFTA. We can hold the Mexican government responsible for the corruption that has impeded investment of tax dollars into the border infrastructure. We can blame U.S. consumers for pushing lower prices, investors for shifting low-wage labor to the border, and Mexican factory managers for their oppressive ways. We can even charge the Mexican culture with degrading the role of women to the point of subservience. But the case for women will not change.

It will not change until Mexican congressional leaders set aside deep-seated party differences and work with President Fox in an effort to improve the border situation. Our own President Bush refused to hold talks of border development with Fox after Mexico declined to support the war in Iraq. Leaders and government officials should be working together in a concerted effort to safeguard the environment, improve women's labor

rights, and bring murderers to justice. Journalists, authors, and thesis writers must continue to publicize the dilemmas of the border region. Their work will serve to educate an ignorant, or inattentive, Mexican and American public regarding the plight of border maquiladora workers. Their work will serve to improve the lives of workers like Ana Serratos who come to border cities in search of a better existence only to discover poverty, inequities, harassment, and neglect.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Countries Studied By Hofstede

Appendix B: Excerpt from the North American Agreement on Environmental
Cooperation

Appendix C: Excerpt from the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation

Appendix D: Maquiladoras in Tijuana

Appendix A

Abbreviations for the countries studied by Hofstede (55)

ARA	Arab-speaking Countries (Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates)
ARG	Argentina
AUL	Australia
AUT	Austria
BEL	Belgium
BRA	Brazil
CAN	Canada
CHL	Chile
COL	Colombia
COS	Costa Rica
DEN	Denmark
EAF	East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia)
EQA	Ecuador
FIN	Finland
FRA	France
GBR	Great Britain
GER	Germany F. R.
GRE	Greece
GUA	Guatemala
HOK	Hong Kong
IDO	Indonesia
IRA	Iran
IRE	Ireland (Republic of)
ISR	Israel
ITA	Italy
JAM	Jamaica
JPN	Japan
KOR	South Korea
MAL	Malaysia
MEX	Mexico
NET	Netherlands
NOR	Norway
NZL	New Zealand
PAK	Pakistan
PAN	Panama
PER	Peru
PHI	Philippines
POR	Portugal

SAF South Africa
SAL Salvador
SIN Singapore
SPA Spain
SWE Sweden
SWI Switzerland
TAI Taiwan
THA Thailand
TUR Turkey
URU Uruguay
USA United States
VEN Venezuela
WAF West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone)
YUG Yugoslavia

Appendix B

An Excerpt from the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation

Article 1: Objectives

The objectives of this Agreement are to:

- (a) foster the protection and improvement of the environment in the territories of the Parties for the well-being of present and future generations;
- (b) promote sustainable development based on cooperation and mutually supportive environmental and economic policies;
- (c) increase cooperation between the Parties to better conserve, protect, and enhance the environment, including wild flora and fauna;
- (d) support the environmental goals and objectives of the NAFTA;
- (e) avoid creating trade distortions or new trade barriers;
- (f) strengthen cooperation on the development and improvement of environmental laws, regulations, procedures, policies and practices;
- (g) enhance compliance with, and enforcement of, environmental laws and regulations;
- (h) promote transparency and public participation in the development of environmental laws, regulations and policies;
- (i) promote economically efficient and effective environmental measures; and
- (j) promote pollution prevention policies and practices.

Article 3: Levels of Protection

Recognizing the right of each Party to establish its own levels of domestic environmental protection and environmental development policies and priorities, and to adopt or modify accordingly its environmental laws and regulations, each Party shall ensure that its laws and regulations provide for high levels of environmental protection and shall strive to continue to improve those laws and regulations.

(www.worldtradelaw.net)

Appendix C

An Excerpt from the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation

Article 1: Objectives

The objectives of this Agreement are to:

1. improve working conditions and living standards in each Party's territory;
2. promote, to the maximum extent possible, the labor principles set out in Annex 1;
3. encourage cooperation to promote innovation and rising levels of productivity and quality;
4. encourage publication and exchange of information, data development and coordination, and joint studies to enhance mutually beneficial understanding of the laws and institutions governing labor in each Party's territory;
5. pursue cooperative labor-related activities on the basis of mutual benefit;
6. promote compliance with, and effective enforcement by each Party of, its labor law; and
7. foster transparency in the administration of labor law.

Article 2: Levels of Protection

Affirming full respect for each Party's constitution, and recognizing the right of each Party to establish its own domestic labor standards, and to adopt or modify accordingly its labor laws and regulations, each Party shall ensure that its labor laws and regulations provide for high labor standards, consistent with high quality and productivity workplaces, and shall continue to strive to improve those standards in that light.

(www.worldtradelaw.net)

Appendix D

WWW.SDBJ.COM SPECIAL REPORT: Maquiladoras February 2, 2004 San Diego Business Journal v. 17

MAQUILADORAS IN TIJUANA*

Ranked alphabetically

Rank	Maquiladora Address	Employees	Total plant sq. ft. Number of buildings	Primary manufacturer	Foreign company headquarters	Address of U.S. headquarters (U.S. phone)	Local Tijuana contact Name
1	Arco Industrial Bienes Industriales de Mexico S.A. de CV Carretera Los Caminos 2501 Paseo del Estrella	400,000	20,000	Other products	Arco Industrial Co. USA	2502 25th St. Ste. 1000, Los Angeles, CA 90010 (310) 511-1000	Patricia Gomez 954-3100
2	Boeing Fabricas Mexicana, S. de R.L. de C.V. Carretera No. 118 Paseo Industrial de Baja Sur (Car)	350,000	400,000	Boeing and other Boeing	Boeing Research LLC USA	4000 Redwood Plaza, San Antonio, Texas, USA 78249 (214) 840-7000	Dr. Jose Prieto 954-1100
3	Compañía Mexicana de Alimentos S.A. de C.V. Carretera 598 No. 123 Carretera Tijuana (Carretera 100)	100,000	100,000	International food products including soups and dips	TYG International, USA USA	1000 International Parkway, San Diego, CA 92108-2100	Dr. Margarita Jimenez 954-1100
4	Deceuninck Plásticos Mexico, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic and plastic containers	Deceuninck Plastics USA	1000 Deceuninck Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
5	Orbital Desarrollo Plásticos de Mexico, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. Tijuana No. 1000, 1000 Carretera Tijuana (Carretera 100)	100,000	100,000	Plastic and plastic containers	Orbital Plastics USA	2000 South Park, Orange County, Calif. 92668 (714) 938-8200	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
6	Reynolds Plásticos de Mexico, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Aluminum products	Reynolds Plastics USA	1000 Reynolds Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
7	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
8	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
9	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
10	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
11	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
12	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
13	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
14	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
15	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
16	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
17	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
18	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
19	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
20	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
21	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100
22	Industria Mexicana de Plásticos, S.A. de C.V. Blvd. La Paz No. 13100 ext. 102 Paseo del Estrella	100,000	100,000	Plastic products	Industria Mexicana USA	1000 Industria Ave. Tulsa, Okla. USA 74111 (918) 421-1178	Dr. Jose Antonio C. 954-1100

*Ranked by plant size, information is subject to change. Data is for 2003.
 **Data is an estimated value of the maquiladora based on the original information.
 Source: Tijuana Economic Development Corp. with DENOM Database.
 E-mail: info@tedc.com for more information on Tijuana's economy. Contact: 954-1100

Researched by Patti Strickland