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Women's Resistance in the Sun Belt: Anglos and Hispanas Respond to Managerial Control

LOUISE LAMPHERE
PATRICIA ZAVELLA

This chapter focuses on women's resistance to management control and its relation to ethnic difference in apparel and electronics firms in New Mexico. Anglo and Hispana women's acts of individual, collective, and minimal resistance at three different plants are examined. The analysis and findings are based on intensive interviews with 53 working mothers and their husbands. The authors found that resistance developed differently in each of the three work settings and that Hispana and Anglo women had more similarities on the jobs than differences. The findings also suggest that the extent to which women are responsible for providing for their families has no relationship to their level of resistance to managerial control.

Over the past 20 years, the composition of the industrial labor force in the United States has changed as more women have continued to work while rearing children, and semiskilled and skilled jobs have been

increasingly filled by people of color and immigrant workers, especially women. At the same time, U.S. manufacturing has experienced a radical restructuring, primarily characterized by the decline of heavy industry, the movement of light industry to the South and West as well as to the Third World, and the advent of Japanese management techniques as a way of shoring up U.S. productivity. In this climate, women have been seen as more docile workers than men, and managers have deliberately attempted to control women's labor through various strategies and practices. To understand the conditions under which women consent to or resist managerial control, we need a complex analysis of women's position as industrial workers, one that takes account of restructured and relocated industries, the new array of management practices, and the diversity among women workers.

This chapter focuses on women's resistance to management control and its relation to ethnic difference in apparel and electronics firms in Albuquerque, New Mexico. These factories were part of "Sun Belt industrialization," the building and expansion of manufacturing facilities in the West and South that began in the early 1980s. In Albuquerque, many of these new facilities were enthusiastic innovators in the growth of "participative policies" that were catching on in U.S. firms a decade ago. We examine women's resistance in three plants that illustrate the range of resistance strategies we found. These responses range from individual strategies of resistance at Leslie Pants, an apparel factory with hierarchical management; to collective resistance through a union drive at HealthTech, a plant that makes surgical sutures and has a participative structure; to minimal resistance and a climate of consent at Howard Electronics, a participative plant that manufactures electronic thermostats.

We look at the strategies and tactics for resisting management control that have been developed by both Anglo and Mexican American women.¹ The racial/ethnic affiliation of the workers is important in these workplaces, for the workforce is predominantly Hispana. We argue that women of different racial/ethnic backgrounds had similar work experiences and resistance strategies in particular workplaces, and that women's resistance was shaped by management policies, the labor process, and the wage structure rather than racial/ethnic differences per se. In this period when ethnicity/race is seen as a source of major divisions among workers, it is important to understand when women have common reactions to their work situations and to build models that illuminate the complexity and variability in women's perceptions and behavior on the job.

The heart of our project consisted of intensive interviews with working mothers and their husbands. In all, we interviewed 53 young mothers employed in electronics and apparel plants, including 37 Hispanics and 16 Anglos; of these, 38 were married and 15 were single mothers. We located our interviewees through a variety of sources: sympathetic plant managers who referred us to the personnel manager or plant nurse for names of potential interviewees, suggestions by union officers, contacts through friends or colleagues, and names of other working mothers through women we had already interviewed. Because we were unable to get access to plant records, and union membership lists did not indicate whether workers were mothers of small children, we relied on a "snowball sample" based on contacts with both workers and managers. Interviews were conducted separately with women and their spouses in their homes and involved two long, tape-recorded sessions for both the husband and the wife.² In writing this chapter, we have utilized the 31 interviews from three plants (Leslie Pants, HealthTech, and Howard Electronics) because these represent the range of management systems and worker strategies we found within the study.

All of the mothers we interviewed had children younger than school age, and most of them had entered the labor force during high school and continued to work after marriage. When their children were born, many returned to work after their 6-week maternity leaves expired. These Sun Belt mothers, then, were committed to remaining in the labor force and juggled the demands of work and family lives.

In Albuquerque these industrial workers occupy a relatively privileged place in the local economy. The electronics and apparel plants studied were built between 1972 and 1982; they were branch plants of larger multinational companies. The workforce was not an immigrant one, but consisted primarily of high school-educated workers. A handful of the women had some vocational training at the local community college or through the military. Our Hispana informants were predominantly third-generation U.S. citizens whose first language was English. Within the larger Albuquerque economy, predominantly male jobs in construction and service are much more vulnerable than predominantly female jobs. Most of the women were earning between \$5.00 and \$6.50 an hour in 1982, but the importance of their paychecks to their families varied depending on their husbands' wages and job status. Of the 38 couples we interviewed, in 30 (79%) the wives were coproviders or mainstay providers; that is, they earned almost as much as their hus-

bands or had the more stable job in the family—the one with the good benefits that was less likely to be lost during recessionary layoffs.³

BUILDING A FRAMEWORK TO STUDY RESISTANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Since 1975, the U.S. economy has undergone a structural transformation as many industrial plants have begun to close or to move their operations abroad. Women in these industries, such as apparel, textiles, electrical products, and shoes, have often been faced with layoffs and job loss (Rosen 1987). At the same time, working-class families have become more dependent on female wages, and wives have stayed in the labor force while their children are young, often going back to work after a 6-week maternity leave.

Managers have begun to transform the workplace in response to foreign competition, attempting to make U.S. companies more productive. Borrowing management techniques developed in Japan after the American occupation and building on the "quality of work life" (QWL) movement of the 1970s, corporations have turned to various forms of "participative management," instituting quality circles, team structures, and various forms of open-door management.

Following Perkins, Nieva, and Lawler (1983, pp. 5-15), we define participative management in terms of the wide range of personnel and management policies that characterize "high-involvement plants." Such firms have flat organizational structure, with few levels between the plant manager and shop-floor workers; a mini-enterprise or team work structure; and a strong emphasis on egalitarianism in the way work and leisure areas are designed. There is usually a commitment to employee stability, heavy emphasis on training, pay based on the attainment of "skill levels," and job enrichment whereby workers have some control over the organization of work. Our interviewees came from seven different plants: three with traditional hierarchical management structures and four that were of the high-involvement type. These latter four firms did not have strict assembly lines, allowed workers to rotate jobs, and did not enforce quotas or use piece-rate systems. Often there were equal benefits for blue-collar and white-collar employees, no time clocks, no special parking places for management, and a plantwide work

culture designed to build a loyal workforce. Two of these plants organized production in teams, with facilitators rather than supervisors.

Many commentators, particularly management consultants and business school professors, have been enthusiastic about the potential of participative management techniques to reform more hierarchical and traditional management structures and to revolutionize the U.S. workplace at all levels (see Peters 1987, pp. 282-89; Ouchi 1981). Others have seen the darker side of the QWL movement, naming line speedup, just-in-time inventory control, and manipulative team meetings a system of "management by stress" (Parker and Slaughter 1988, pp. 16-30).⁴

Robert Howard (1985) emphasizes the manipulative aspects of participative management where workers are led to "feel in control" but where power remains with management (pp. 127-29). Guillermo Grenier (1988) expands on this theme and emphasizes the ways in which teams are used to "debureaucratize control." Although power differences are de-emphasized in company rhetoric, a manager's authority is in fact widened and peer pressure is used to create a compliant workforce:

The trick is to make workers feel that their ideas count and their originality is valued while disguising the expansion of managerial prerogatives in the manipulative arena of pop psychology. By depending less on impersonal rules and more on personality characteristics, today's manager effectively de-bureaucratizes the control mechanism of the firm. (Grenier 1988, p. 131)

In this chapter, we take a position similar to Grenier's, as will become clear in our discussion of women's resistance at HealthTech. However, we also want to examine one of several workplaces we studied where resistance did not erupt into a struggle over a union drive, where management participative policies were less ambitious and global, and where women, on the surface at least, appreciate the positive aspects of nonhierarchical management. Our argument here is not that participative management has lost its manipulative character, or that there are not subtle pressures for workers to be loyal to the firm, but that women pick and choose from among the panoply of management practices, voicing favorable responses especially concerning those that help mediate the contradictions they face as workers *and* mothers. Indeed, they still may engage in individual tactics and strategies of resistance when it comes to gaining some control over the labor process.

Our approach to resistance owes much to a number of scholars who have analyzed the workplace and work culture. Susan Porter Benson

(1986), for example, implicitly includes the notion of resistance in her definition of work culture as "the ideology and practice with which workers stake out a relatively autonomous sphere of action on the job" (p. 228). Benson, who developed her ideas in collaboration with Barbara Melosh, sees work cultures as "a realm of informal, customary values and rules that mediates the formal authority structure of the workplace and distances workers from its impact." She argues that "work culture is created as workers confront the limitations or exploit the possibilities of their jobs. . . . Generated partly in response to specific working conditions, work culture includes both adaptation and resistance to these structural constraints" (p. 228; see also Melosh 1982).

Following Richard Edwards (1979), we see the labor process and management policies as systems of control. They involve the exercise of power and, as such, always promote resistance. As Michel Foucault (1980) suggests, "There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power" (p. 142). The exercise of power at the point of production also brings up issues of consent, accommodation, quiescence, and approval, issues that have been explored by Michael Burawoy (1979) and Nina Shapiro-Perl (1979). Resistance can include a number of individualistic tactics, the sorts of "everyday resistance" or "weapons of the weak" described by James Scott (1985) in his study of Malay peasants.

In examining resistance on the shop floor, we use the language of "tactics and strategies," emphasizing the simultaneously positive and reactive nature of resistance. Workers are both attempting to carve out a space where they can control the labor process and resisting management's system of control. It is important to note, as Dorrine Kondo (1990) reminds us, that individual actions may simultaneously include resistance and consent. In other words, these strategies may invoke subversion and the attempt to control the production process but simultaneously bind workers more firmly to management's control mechanisms and to compliance with the firm's policies (pp. 223-24).

For those researchers who have focused on particular workplaces where both White women and women of color are employed, women's tactics and strategies on the job have emerged as a central theme. Using individualized strategies, women have resisted the fragmentation of

their labor processes (Lamphere 1979; Sacks and Remy 1984) and have attempted to gain control and autonomy within particular work sites or in relationship to individual employers (Glenn 1986; Rollins 1985; Romero 1992). Some women have struggled to "bring the family to work" so as to "humanize the workplace" (Lamphere 1985, 1987), whereas others have consented to exploitative conditions in part because of their economic vulnerability and family constraints (Shapiro-Perl 1984).

Other researchers have demonstrated how women of color and White women have engaged in collective resistance, including joining labor organizations in service and clerical settings (Costello 1991; Milkman 1985; Sacks 1984), striking for union recognition in canneries and the garment industry (Ruiz 1987; Coyle, Hershatter, and Honig 1980), and successfully pursuing race and sex discrimination suits in canneries (Zavella 1987, 1988). These collective actions ultimately created significant changes in particular work sites or in large sectors of some industries. Only a few researchers, however, have examined how women of different racial groups in the same work site have engaged in individual or collective resistance (Ruiz 1987; Sacks 1988).

Our research, conducted in 1982 and 1983 during a period of national recession, focuses on Hispana and Anglo women who are electronics and apparel workers in the same factories. We describe below the women's resistance in the three firms (one hierarchical and two participative). Resistance ranges from individual strategies and tactics (those that attempt to preserve a woman worker's control over the labor process) to full-blown collective efforts to unionize. There is variability both among plants and among the women in each plant's labor force.

Thus we seek to situate resistance along a continuum and to recognize that resistance, consent, and unarticulated quiescence form a range of responses to new forms of management practice. In our study, the women themselves often made contradictory assessments of their work situations. On the one hand, they appreciated management policies that helped them mediate the tensions they experience being mothers and workers (policies such as flextime) or that promised a more egalitarian workplace (open-door management). On the other hand, the women had a sharp sense of the importance of wresting control over their work from management. These seemingly contradictory responses—both appreciation of the "positive" aspects of participative management and a practice of resistance—took various forms, depending on the firm's

organization of work, its pay system, its management policies, and the plant work culture that evolved.

In our study we found that, more than either her provider role or her racial/ethnic status *per se*, a woman's position in the labor process, her struggles with her job, and her particular relationship with supervisors and other management were important in the woman's development of work strategies. To illustrate the variety of environments in which resistance and accommodation emerge in a field of contradictory power relations, we will discuss three different plants: an apparel factory with hierarchical management, a health products plant with a new participatory management that experienced a very bitter union drive, and a thermostat factory where participative policies have been installed successfully.

INDIVIDUAL TACTICS IN AN APPAREL PLANT

At Leslie Pants, women workers confronted a system of hierarchical control. Like most apparel plants, Leslie was organized into several lines, where bundles of pants progressed from one sewer to the next. The small parts, such as pockets and belt loops, are assembled first, then the side pockets, fly, belt, and side seams are sewn later. Each section of the line is supervised by a "floor lady," and workers are paid a piece rate. The essence of the piece-rate system is that a worker's wages depend on the level of efficiency she reaches. Efficiency is defined as the number of hip pockets, belt loops, or the like sewn in a day to reach a base rate of 100% efficiency, which in 1982 was \$4.25 an hour. Achieving efficiency takes a great deal of hand/eye coordination and an ability to pace oneself throughout the day; a worker must always keep an eye on how many bundles need to be done in order to maintain or increase her level of production. Individuals develop their own sets of tactics and strategies for gaining a measure of control over their work.

Although these tactics can be seen as a measure of resistance—an attempt to keep from capitulating entirely to management's methods of extracting production from workers—they also ensnare women in the system itself, keeping them working to improve their percentages. As they do so, women are encouraged by the system of rewards held out by management and by the lively work culture created by managers, aimed at building a loyal workforce.

The cases of Dolores Baca, a Hispana, and Mary Pike, an Anglo, illustrate the ways that women can be more or less successful in developing tactics and strategies for dealing with the piece-rate system. For both, resistance never became a confrontation with management, but was part of a "mixed consciousness" illuminating the field of contradictory power relations, where a sharp sense of how to exercise some control over one's work was simultaneously placed alongside an appreciation for management incentives, health benefits, profit sharing, and company celebrations.

Dolores Baca, a coprovider, had worked in the plant for 8 years. Her husband, Albert, was a grocery store stocker, and Dolores's job at Leslie Pants was important in stabilizing their marriage. Both she and Albert preferred that he provide economic support while she remain at home to care for their infant daughter: "I wish I could stay home and take care of the baby. But we can't afford it, you know. So I got to work and my mother takes care of my baby." Albert agreed with her assessment: "I really wish that she could stay home, you know, instead of [the baby] having to stay with her grandma." In 1982, Dolores was working on belt loops, but had been trained to hem pants as well. She was making \$5.37 an hour and had recently reached 110%; she was trying to maintain a new level of 120%, so her wages would increase.

Similarly, Mary Pike, an Anglo coprovider, struggled to keep her piece-rate average up to 78% on the new job (elastic waist bands) she was assigned after returning from her pregnancy leave. Mary had been employed for only a year and returned 6 weeks after her baby was born because "I had to go back and start getting the paychecks." Her husband, Don, had lost his high-paying job in the New Mexico oil fields and had been fortunate to find a job at Leslie Pants in another city. But that factory closed and they both transferred to Albuquerque: "When they announced they were closing the plant, I was in tears. Here I was about 3 months pregnant, losing all the insurance, and both my husband and I were losing jobs. I was really scared. It was a hard blow just to go to Leslie Pants after he'd been working on the oil rig, making \$11 an hour, and we had bought this trailer." Mary made \$5.11 an hour, and her job at Leslie Pants was crucial for her family's survival.

During training or retraining, both Dolores and Mary developed tactics to deal with the piece-rate system, which pushes workers to produce as quickly as possible, but where work has to be accurate or it will be returned for repairs, resulting in lost time and wages. This begins first when a woman is introduced to "the method" or routine for doing

a job, which is written up in a manual called a "blue book." Dolores had worked out a way to bypass the method and developed her own tricks of the trade:

They do expect for you to go by "the method," that's what the instructor is for. To show you the method and how to do it in order to be faster. Sometimes you're doing that, but sometimes you think, "I can do it this other way, and it'll be faster for me." But they do come around and check you to see if you're on your [prescribed] method. Once I see her coming I right away go back to my [prescribed] method, you know. But to me doing it the way where I feel more comfortable and faster at it, I do it that way.⁵

Mary, in contrast, had problems mastering her new job of sewing on elastic waist bands. One of her biggest problems was dealing with cutting-room mistakes, in this case "shaded parts." She absorbed the mistakes herself, doing repairs when garments were returned to her. "If they're shaded, the parts, like say the bands are dark brown and the pants are a little beige or something, if you sew it on, you get it back. You get pretty quick at ripping out too. But it does take a long time to make repairs on the operation." Dolores, facing a similar problem, used the strategy of going to her supervisor: "Like now we've been having problems with our loops. They've been like overlapped. And we've been having trouble with that because they're too fat on the bottom and we can't fold them and they don't look right like that, you know, [so we] throw them away. So we've been having problems with that, but we do go straight to our supervisor or line manager." Here the supervisor was crucial in getting new loops, so that Dolores and other workers on the same operation would not lose pay.

Dolores's tactics, which included devising her own method and getting help from her supervisor, allowed her to maintain her piece-rate average, whereas Mary, trying to cope with some of the same problems, used similar individual strategies but was struggling rather than succeeding.

Dolores was typical of several women we interviewed who were experienced workers, employed at Leslie Pants for between three and nine years. They were in jobs they knew well and were not struggling with work difficulties. Mary was one of several workers who were having problems. These women tended to be relatively new workers who were also being retrained on new jobs while they were simultaneously experiencing machine difficulties or trouble with cutting-room mistakes.

The piece-rate system could potentially produce competition among workers where it is difficult even to meet the piece rates (Lamphere 1987), yet that did not seem to happen here. Instead, many women expressed an individualized ideology that "how much you earn is really up to you." Mary, for example, did not emphasize competition among workers, but acknowledged that cutting-room mistakes or machine problems got in the way of her producing more quickly.

The piece-rate system acts almost "automatically" to extract labor from workers as they push each day to increase their pay. At Leslie Pants, management's major intervention was to buttress the piece rate with a system of rewards and incentives, as well as with good benefits. Each trainee or worker who was being retrained graduated from the program when she reached 100% efficiency, but further recognition was given to those who reached 110% and 120%. Graduations were held on Thursdays; those being recognized were presented with diplomas and were given soft drinks or coffee and brownies during the morning break. As Dolores Baca described the system, "First they give you little flags, and then with 100% you get a pin that says Leslie Pants and then you get a flag that says 100% [which goes above the worker's machine]. And then your 110, you get another pin and your flag for 110." Dolores, who had just received her pin for reaching 100% on belt loops, said that the recognition made her feel "proud, happy, 'cause you're working so hard 'cause, you know, you want to make money, see. And you feel happy that you have already made it and you know you can make it every day and you can make some money, you know."

When a worker maintained 130% for 7 weeks, she joined the President's Club. An 8 × 10 color photo of each member of the club was posted on the wall in the front entryway to the shop floor. Members were taken out to lunch yearly by the plant manager and thanked for their efforts on behalf of the plant. Dolores, as well as other interviewees, was very positive about the President's Club: "I like it but you got to work, you got to work hard to get into it." Some women, like Tony Sena, emphasized how difficult it was to maintain high levels of production because of daily layoffs during the recession or disruptions in the production process. Tony was trying to achieve 110% on hang pockets, but had difficulty accruing the 32 hours per week for 2 weeks necessary to get the award, because she had been sent home early several days a week due a reduced number of orders. Nevertheless, reactions to the reward system were positive; some interviewees showed us their certificates and pins. Unlike the Rhode Island apparel plant studied by

Lamphere (1987), at Leslie there was no sense that the system was an unnecessary embarrassment that merely showcased management's goals. Instead, workers felt that the plant really depended on the 130% workers to keep production up.

In some apparel plants, a piece-rate system combined with strong supervisory control can create worker competition or disgruntlement with supervisors (Lamphere 1987). At Leslie Pants, preventing this divisiveness was crucial to management, which sought to keep up worker morale by creating a strong plantwide work culture. This included sponsorship of nonwork activities that ranged from picnics to raffles, as well as contests at Halloween and Christmas. By co-opting workers' organizational skills and cultivating worker participation in plant activities, the firm prevented the growth of a strong women's work culture of resistance. The plant manager was quite clear about this when he noted, "If a manager takes care of his people, then there are no problems." Otherwise one might "tap out" the available labor pool or encourage unionization.

Management was very successful at creating a labor force that contained a number of high producers (members of the President's Club). On the whole, tactics or strategies to control their own labor remained at an individual level, between a woman and her work, her machine, and her supervisor. The lack of a strong set of resistance strategies at a collective level was a result of management's ability to make the piece-rate system palatable through nonmonetary rewards, such as membership in the President's Club, and monetary incentives, such as good benefits and a profit-sharing plan. Morale and loyalty were further encouraged through a wide range of company-sponsored picnics, raffles, and other forms of entertainment. Resistance did not go very far, and co-optation was characteristic as the women came to see their goals as consonant with those of the company.

PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT, TEAMS, AND A UNION DRIVE

Our second example is HealthTech, the firm that in 1982 represented the most participative of the plants we studied and, at the same time, the plant that generated the most conflict over the nature of participative management. HealthTech produces surgical sutures, and most workers were engaged in swaging (pronounced "swedging"), attaching surgical

thread to curved needles and winding the thread to ready it for packaging. During the course of our interviews, the company was the site of a union drive. The drive met with a great deal of company resistance, and in May 1983, the union was defeated in an election by a two-to-one margin.

We focus here particularly on the experiences of three women we interviewed: Lucille Sanchez, an anti-union activist and Hispana mother of three; Bonnie Anderson, an Anglo mother of three who was a union supporter; and Annette Griego, a Hispana single parent and strong union supporter. We use these three cases to show how a woman's place in the production process, her relationship with "facilitators," and her family situation influenced her participation in the union drive as a form of resistance. In addition, we draw attention to the process of the drive itself and the dialectical relationship that evolved as workers responded to management tactics and vice versa.⁶

Coprovider Lucille Sanchez's husband was a truck driver for a local beverage company who earned slightly more than Lucille's hourly wage. She believed that her job paid well and had good security, which was very important to her. She first stated, "I like everything about that job." Then she recalled that she did not like the rotating shifts. "[My husband] doesn't like me to work but he knows that I have to. If it was up to him, he'd rather have me home, especially since we had the last baby." She agreed with her husband that it would be better if she remained at home, taking care of their three children, but she continued working mainly for economic reasons.

Unlike Lucille, Bonnie Anderson was a mainstay provider. Her husband, a cement truck driver, had been laid off for 8 months in 1982 because of the recession in the construction industry. Bonnie's wages and benefits were the main source of support for her spouse and three sons. She worked at HealthTech as a swager, using a machine to attach surgical thread to curved needles. She enjoyed her job because of good coworkers and the challenge of beating the clock, but did not like it that when her machine broke down, it was counted against her. She characterized her job as having relatively good job security, but not good pay, and the possibilities for promotion were difficult because whether "they liked me" would play a big role in her getting a better job. She was strongly committed to working. "It was hard for me to give it up," she said, but she also believed that "if [a woman] has got kids, I think it's important for her to stay home, if she enjoys it. [But] sometimes you can stay home with your kids and not be a good mother. But I think your

kids are important." Her husband "always backed me, whatever I wanted to do, he would back me. If I wanted to work, fine, if I didn't that was okay too." Once he was laid off, however, her job became crucial for family support.

Annette Griego, a young widow, was the sole provider for herself and her son, although she shared household expenses with her sister and sister's boyfriend. She had become pregnant at 16, married her son's father, and then began living with her divorced mother after her own marital separation and then her husband's suicide. Annette began living with her sister soon after the birth of her son in 1978; she started working at HealthTech in 1981.

At the time of our interview, Annette was part of a committee that had just become "above ground" and had passed out a union leaflet, which caused a lot of tension at work. Her facilitator quit holding team meetings because the team talked about pro-union issues. Annette was strongly committed to her job. She liked her coworkers, and the fact that "management isn't always on your back . . . cause we don't let them get on our back," indicating a strong sense of collective resistance. She did not like that workers were pressured to work fast (in order to attain 110% efficiency), yet if they made their quota or even went over, there was no reward. "I don't like that about the job—you can work your hardest and do twice as much as the person next to you and you can be getting the same pay." She appreciated the good benefits, that the plant was in a convenient location for her commute to work, and that the company "makeup policy" allowed workers to make up missed work. The disadvantages of the job were the low pay, the pressure to work faster, and the management's attempts to get workers to produce more than at their other plants that were unionized: "As it is, our [production] numbers are too high. They're comparing us to the other plant. But you backtrack and say if we compare them to the other plant, they are making 40-50% more. They only have to make 67% and then after that it's all bonus and incentive. Not only that, they have downtime—anytime you're not swaging, you get downtime. We don't get that."

Annette also had a difficult time coping with HealthTech's policy of rotating shifts—alternating between working first and second shifts every 2 weeks. Annette's sister also alternated three shifts as manager of a fast-food place. Annette divided child care with her live-in sister and her mother (who lived 20 miles from Albuquerque), and had a complicated system that sometimes meant that her son spent the night

at his grandmother's home. Characterizing this arrangement, she said, "Sometimes things get kind of hectic."

The "team concept" at HealthTech entailed a massive restructuring of management-worker relations. Each team had a "facilitator"—not a supervisor or "boss" who meted out rewards and punishments, but rather someone who focused on the interpersonal relationships within the team. In addition, the hiring prerogatives of management were shared with the team. Two team members interviewed prospective employees, and if the evaluation was negative, the person usually was not hired. Teams were also involved in evaluation for raises and even firing. Team meetings were supposed to be occasions when team members could discuss ways in which they could help each other meet the production targets that resulted in reaching 100% efficiency at the end of a 12- or 18-month period.

There was, however, a contradiction between management's participative ideology and its practice. It was this contradiction that brought about the union drive. Workers in channel and drill swaging (who were attaching surgical needles to thread) had difficulty meeting weekly efficiency levels as they were being trained. They were working on machines that had come from another plant and that often broke down. They were penalized for down time and couldn't "keep their numbers up." Team meetings for those under several of the facilitators became "just one big tattletale session." As Bonnie, one of the first workers hired in the new plant, who was assigned to channel swaging (Team A), explained, the facilitator "was always on us about numbers. It was always his job if our numbers didn't come up. And why did we do so poorly that week. We'd have to go around the table" (to explain why their numbers reached only 67% rather than 80% efficiency, for example). "I hated that. It was so embarrassing. It really was." Bonnie also found it difficult to participate in the firing of a teammate—for example, someone who was "a good worker and a good person" but whose numbers "weren't there" because he had some trouble with his machine.

The problem for Annette was that she was having machine difficulties and her numbers were low: "When they first started using gut in channel swaging, I was the first one to work with it. I had to learn. The facilitator had me trying different dyes to find out which dyes the needles worked best with and stuff like that. So my numbers dropped then too." These difficulties were probably related to Annette's view that as long as they were working under a learning curve, with higher rates expected as their training progressed, they should have been paid on a piece-rate or bonus

system. She also felt the numbers were too high: "They are always comparing us to the other plant. But their swagers have been there an average of 15-20 years and we've only been swaging a year or a year and a half."

Lucille's difficulties did not occur in the beginning; they only became noticeable when she needed to maintain 100% efficiency during her "demonstration period" of 13 weeks. She learned both the drill swaging technique and how to wind the sutures quickly; she was asked to train new employees in the drill department in March. She continued training until December 1981 and then began a period of 13 weeks' "demonstration" in winding:

Well, in the winding department it took several weeks and I was performing like at 97 or 98%. I couldn't get over that 98 or 99 hump. My last week in demonstration is when I went on a daily basis to 117, 124, and that averaged out to make up for the other weeks when I hadn't made the 100%. So, I took a big step without realizing what position I was putting myself into, and then not only that I was the first person to demonstrate. That made the pressure more severe. You know, there was lots of people behind you and lots of people against you. It was really hard.

Lucille felt that other team members were not supportive and that she was not given credit or praise for finishing her demonstration (and getting a raise). However, this did not dampen her overall enthusiasm for her job; she gave her work top ratings on all aspects, from pay to supervisor and job security.

Women in channel swaging and drill swaging responded to the labor process and pay system differently. Many, especially in the more demanding channel department, developed tactics to deal with the pressures of producing, but also came to feel that the numbers were too high, that it would be difficult to go through demonstration, and even that a piece-rate system that would reward faster production would be fairer. Women in drill swaging, like Lucille, had less difficulty learning the technique, but most felt pressure to work harder to attain 100% efficiency, working quickly while avoiding defects.

Within a year of when the plant opened, workers like Bonnie and Annette in the channel and drill swaging teams had come to feel that workers were unfairly treated and that the team concept was not really "participation." They had begun to see through company ideology and feel that their participation was really only on the surface and under the

control of management. They formed an organizing committee and contacted Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, with the goal of forming a union.

Management's response occurred at the levels of both ideology and tactics that sanctioned union activists, divided them from other workers, and prevented new workers from voting for the union. In terms of ideology, management used notions of participation and democracy to discredit unionism. They argued that a union would interfere with the effort to get everyone to participate and the company would "lose flexibility" in implementing the high-involvement design. One company document stated, "We give everyone a chance to represent themselves without a 'third party' such as a union."

Management responded swiftly to the campaign. Team meetings became the arena in which the facilitator could mold anti-union opinions, often calling on those who had already taken an anti-union stance to pressure their peers. For example, one facilitator at a team meeting provoked an anti-union discussion of the Coors strike in Colorado, using comments from a female personnel administrator whom he had invited to a meeting to voice pro-company sentiments. Lucille, a member of his team, became a vocal supporter of the company and helped organize an anti-union committee. At team meetings she was always available to chime in with her anti-union opinions. In another team, this same facilitator was effective in isolating one of the pro-union women and turning others against her. He allowed and even encouraged her best friend to demand this woman's resignation from the newly formed Compensation Committee because she was "untrustworthy" and unable to represent her coworkers' opinions because she was a union activist. At a larger meeting later that week, he asked her to stand up and be identified, further embarrassing her and singling her out as a "troublemaker." She felt she was "being harassed for her political opinion" and eventually resigned.

About 4 months after the campaign started, the management planned two firings and then later fired another two women—all members of the union organizing committee. The firings created a climate of fear that the union was never really able to overcome, even though activists filed unfair labor practice grievances for these firings and for another firing that took place later. Facilitators carefully screened new employees and hired only anti-union recruits. They continued to isolate union supporters, breaking up conversations between activists and other workers and

branding pro-union workers as "losers" and pro-company workers as "winners."

During the last two months of the campaign, management stepped up its efforts, sending anti-union memos home with paychecks, showing anti-union films, initiating a Union Strike Contest (asking employees to guess how many strikes the union had engaged in between 1975 and 1983), and pushing the campaign motto, "Be a Winner! Vote No." In such a climate, it is not surprising that the union lost, getting only 71 votes; 141 employees voted against the union.

Whereas men in the plant were evenly divided on the union issue (22 for and 23 against), women voted against the union 72% to 29%. Furthermore, only 24% of the Hispanics voted for the union, whereas 40% of the non-Mexican American women (Anglos, Blacks, and Asian Americans, about 22 altogether) did so. Many Hispanics and several Anglo and Black women who had earlier been supportive of the union backed away during the last few months of the campaign. (For example, 37 Hispanics and 7 Anglo and Black women had signed a petition sponsored by union supporters asking the company to investigate a bad smell that was pervading the plant; later, they did not vote for the union. Had they continued to support the union, the union would have won.)

Although the gap between participative philosophy and company practice, along with difficulties at the point of production, produced the union drive, company tactics created a climate of fear, making the company rhetoric about the team concept and not needing a "third party" seem a safer avenue. For many of the women, this was the best job they had ever had, and it was too important to risk.

PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT AND MAKING THERMOSTATS

At other plants in Albuquerque, managers have been able to implement participative management in ways that have pushed the contradictions between management ideology and shop-floor practice in a different direction. Women in these plants have not broken open the contradiction and revealed the gaps between "participation" and the power exercised by management. Instead, women have held in tension their critique of the demands placed on them and their sense of management's willingness to incorporate worker views on the production process and thus downplay the hierarchy of decision making. Interviewees expressed

appreciation for an open-door policy, job rotation, the chance to talk with the plant manager over coffee, and the ability to vote on a plantwide holiday schedule. Howard Electronics, which produces electronic thermostats, is an example of this kind of plant. By 1991, the plant had developed a team structure that went even further than the one at HealthTech. Rather than having two assembly lines, the plant now has a number of teams, one for each part of the assembly process. Each team has a facilitator and meets weekly, as do the teams at HealthTech; however, in addition, members of each team are cross-trained on all the jobs for which the team is responsible. Most important, the teams manage their own budgets, keep track of production, and conduct their own quality control. Teams have replaced supervisors, and indeed, many middle-level management positions have been eliminated.

Anita Alvarez was an electronics assembler at Howard in 1982. She had electronics training and had previously worked at two other electronics factories. When her husband became unemployed, she applied at Howard and for a while was a mainstay provider. At the time of our interview, her husband was employed as a custodian and she was a coprovider. She characterized her job as having good pay and job security, but found opportunities for promotions "pretty hard."

In 1982, women at Howard reported on the ways in which management incorporated their views and was flexible in enforcing quotas or absence regulations. Anita, who had faced an unrealistic quota of testing 200 liquid crystal displays an hour, talked to her supervisor, who told her, "That's all right, you just do the work, and if you can't put it out, you can't." It was not surprising that she felt "the advantage is probably that I can say whatever I feel like, and they'll listen to me. If I have changes I want to make, I'll go up there and I'll say it and they'll listen. . . . [The firm is] like one big family."

Linda Henry, an Anglo single parent and sole provider, worked at Howard Electronics as an assembly operator, inserting electronic components on the printed circuit boards ("stuffing boards") on the thermostats. She had worked previously for 14 years as a dental assistant, but left that occupation because the benefits were much better at Howard. To Linda, the most important aspects of a job were good pay, job security, and opportunities for promotion. She was satisfied with her pay and job security, but worried that she would not be able to advance at Howard because "it's hard without the basic training." She was committed to her job because "for the position I'm in [as a single parent]

with my two little children, I need the job security and I need the good pay. And I mainly need the free benefits which we have."

Linda delivered a cogent critique of the way in which management had raised the rates on stuffing boards four times over the previous year, thus making it impossible for her to make any incentive pay. Instead of being resentful, she emphasized the plant's participative policies: "They made it a point to come out and talk to you every day, and they made it a point to see how you like it and if you were happy. . . . They didn't segregate you like, say, they were the office and you were the factory."

Both Anita and Linda emphasized their supervisors' efforts to create a friendly and egalitarian atmosphere. As Anita said, "You don't find very many supervisors that come and sit down and eat lunch with you and act like he's not even a supervisor, you know." Even those we interviewed who were more critical of the plant emphasized the job security, good pay, and benefits the plant offered.

For English-speaking Hispanas and Anglos who are products of the U.S. public school system, participative management draws upon a number of notions inherent in American cultural descriptions of the self in a democratic society. Self-sufficiency, responsibility, "team spirit," and competition (for awards such as Team of the Week and Team of the Month), as well as quality, are all stressed in the pamphlet each Howard team has written for visitors who tour the plant. The ideology of participation and management's "listening to what I have to say" both evoke a sense of democracy and egalitarianism.⁷

In workplaces such as Howard, women come to see themselves as "individuals," "team members," employees who have "ownership of quality," and not as women who are being pushed to higher and higher levels of production. In a political economy such as that in Albuquerque, where there are few good jobs for women, this is a powerful and highly seductive system. Some of these jobs may disappear due to plant buyouts, declines in military spending, and future recessions in the electronics industry, but the few women who hold the jobs that remain will continue to appreciate the advantages of working in "new participatory plants."

CONCLUSION

In our research, we found that Mexican American and White women had similar reasons for entering the labor force to begin with, and they were

placed in comparable positions without regard to their ethnicity. All of these women were in the lowest but most numerous positions in each plant, working as sewing operators and electronics assemblers. Although the majority of the labor force was made up of Hispanas, these women had been raised and educated in the United States, much like their Anglo counterparts, had similar job training, and worked in departments that were not segregated by ethnicity or race. Thus all the women experienced the same features of their jobs—whether the wages and benefits were good, whether there was job security and possibilities for promotion—in similar terms.

Moreover, we found no neat relationship between a woman's provider role and her resistance to managerial control. One might expect that those women in the most dire economic circumstances, the sole and mainstay providers, would be the most conservative, the least likely to rock the boat at work. Instead, we found that some of the most vulnerable of our informants—those who had the most to lose, such as single-parent Annette Griego at HealthTech and mainstay provider Bonnie Anderson, were the most militant. In contrast to other single parents in their firms and to most of the Hispana married women—who could rely on their spouses' wages—Annette and Bonnie withstood management's harassment and were active union supporters. Anglo and Hispana women alike (including coprovider Lucille Sanchez) voted against unionization. Both of the married interviewees at Leslie Pants, one a Hispana coprovider and one an Anglo mainstay provider, felt ambivalent about their work, but both worked hard to try to increase their wages through partial acceptance of the company's piece-rate and reward culture. And at Howard Electronics, where participative management had been successfully introduced, where management allowed some worker say over the speed of the work and workers were treated with respect, both Anita Alvarez, the Hispana coprovider, and Linda Henry, the Anglo single parent, were relatively satisfied with their jobs, although they both realized there were few opportunities for advancement.

Resistance developed very differently in each of these three settings. At Leslie Pants, the hierarchical apparel plant, tactics and strategies used by workers to control their own work remained very much at the individual level, as women carved out their own approaches to the piece-rate system, at the same time accepting and becoming part of management's overall reward structure and plantwide work culture. In

contrast, at HealthTech, which operated through a similar set of learning curves but without piece rates, workers forged similar individual tactics but also came to resist at a group level the firm's new participative structure and ideology. And finally, at Howard, a more flexible production process and participative features again kept tactics to an individual level while pulling women into a system that drew successfully on American cultural notions of participation, self-sufficiency, and egalitarianism.

We have shown that women's work in each of these factories posed different constraints, depending on a woman's place in the production process, management's attempts to create a firm work culture, and management's degree of success in creating conditions in which women could gain some control over their labor. Although all of these women were confined to "women's jobs," each had originally sought work in factories that were regarded as places that offered good jobs, and each strategized in her everyday work to make the most of the opportunities provided. In this sense, Hispanas and Anglos had more similar experiences of work in Sun Belt factories than they had differences on the job.

NOTES

1. We use *Mexican American* and *Hispana* interchangeably. For a discussion of ethnic identity among our sample, see Lamphere, Zavella, Gonzáles, and Evans (1993) and Zavella (1993).

2. Louise Lamphere interviewed Anglo women, and Patricia Zavella and Jennifer Martinez interviewed Hispanas. Anglo husbands were interviewed by Felipe Gonzáles and Victor Mancha, and Gary Lemons talked with Anglo husbands.

3. In our sample, 11 Hispano and 8 Anglo couples were coproviders, 7 Hispano and 4 Anglo couples were mainstay providers, and 15 women were sole providers. In an additional 8 couples (7 Hispano and 1 Anglo), the women were secondary providers, but none of them are discussed here. The term *secondary provider* is derived from Hood (1983); it indicates that the woman's contribution to family income is significantly less (usually at least 30% less) than her spouse's income. We do not wish to imply that such a woman's wages are "pin money" or not important.

4. Others, particularly Rehder and Smith (1986) and Brown and Reich (1989), have been much more positive about the NUMMI plant, playing down issues of line speed and stress and emphasizing increased worker involvement (including the active presence of the union) and productivity.

5. As Jennie Garcia, an interviewee who had been an instructor for 4 years, noted, not all instructors insist that their trainees follow the blue book: "If you see that somebody's making their goal and is producing more . . . why do anything?"

6. See Lamphere and Grenier (1988) for a more detailed explanation of why the union drive failed.

7. In 1992, Leslie Pants broke with tradition in the apparel industry and converted its assembly-line organization to a team structure. Each team of 36 operators is organized into miniteams of 4 to 8 workers who each learn two or three operations and help one another maintain quality control. Management pays a flat hourly rate of \$7.30 an hour, plus a bonus of 30 cents an hour if the team produces fewer than 2.9 flaws in every 100 pairs of pants. The company instituted the new system to improve quality and boost worker morale. Perhaps Leslie Pants will be able to follow Howard Electronics in the successful implementation of a participative management style.

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Working "Without Papers" in the United States: Toward the Integration of Legal Status in Frameworks of Race, Class, and Gender

PIERRETTE HONDAGNEU-SOTELO

Although undocumented legal status joins with relations of race, class, and gender to block employment opportunities for immigrant women in the formal sector of the U.S. economy, it does not necessarily hinder these women's progression within the informal sector. Mexican undocumented immigrant women doing paid domestic work, over time, obtain jobs that offer more autonomy, greater flexibility, and higher pay. Although these women are still denied the right to reside or move within the nation-state legally and the legal rights of employment and social entitlements available to citizens and legal residents, the contrast between the work experiences of undocumented Mexican immigrant women in live-in positions and those in job work situations suggests that the effects of undocumented legal status are mitigated by time and the establishment of community ties.
