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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Gender Conflicts on the Shopfloor: Barcelona Women at Chocolates Amatller, 1890–1914

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Abstract

The cry of "Get married women out of the factories!" echoed across the Spanish industrial landscape at the turn of the twentieth century, driven by two intertwined factors. From a societal perspective, women's place was at home, not in factories. On an economic note, concerns arose over women's lower wages displacing men from jobs. This research delves into a case study of a workers' claim aimed against women. It aims to illuminate the interplay of social demands and gender dynamics in labour history and business operations. Using as a case study a strike among male workers at the Amatller chocolate factory in May 1890, it seeks insights into gender complexities and women's challenges when joining the workforce. Male factory workers sought better conditions but directed their frustrations at women, influenced by prevailing social discourse. Women joined the factory, but portraying them as victors would be an oversimplification. Their presence was restricted, confined to manual tasks, with few opportunities for advancement.

Introduction

The cry "Get married women out of the factories!" echoed across the Spanish industrial context at the turn of the twentieth century due to the prevailing view that the place of married women was in the home and not in the factory, and amid economic concerns that lower-paid women were taking jobs from men.

The relevant historiography documents how these stereotypes created gender-based divisions of labour and distinct social roles for men and women, leading to inequality and the belief that women were not entitled to work, pay parity, or the same job opportunities as men. The implications of gender conflict and the position of women in industrial occupations have been thoroughly examined, particularly from a European perspective.[1] Country-specific studies from

[1]Katrina Honeyman and Jordan Goodman, "Women's Work, Gender Conflict, and Labour Markets in Europe, 1500–1900", *The Economic History Review*, 44:4 (1991), pp. 608–628; Sonya O. Rose, "Gender and Labor History: The Nineteenth-Century Legacy", *International Review of Social History*, 38 (1993), pp. 145–162; Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose (eds), *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (New York,

Great Britain, for instance, provide in-depth instances of male resistance to female integration into various manufacturing roles, such as cotton spinning,[2] chain-making,[3] pottery,[4] mining,[5] and postal services.[6] Broadening the perspective, complementary case studies from Germany,[7] France,[8] and the Netherlands[9] have enhanced our understanding of labour dynamics between male and female counterparts.

The consequences of gender conflicts have also been extensively studied in Spain from different research perspectives, such as domesticity and women's participation in the workplace,[10] the analysis of salary and gender gaps,[11] and the role played by

1996); Alexandra De Pleijt and Jan Luiten van Zanden, "Two Worlds of Female Labour: Gender Wage Inequality in Western Europe, 1300–1800", *The Economic History Review*, 74:3 (2021), pp. 611–638.

[2]Sonya O. Rose, "Gender Antagonism and Class Conflict: Exclusionary Strategies of Male Trade Unions in Nineteenth-Century Britan", *Social History*, 13:2 (1988), pp. 191–208; Joyce Burnette, *Work and Wages in Industrial Revolution Britain* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 221–273.

[3]Carol E. Morgan, "Gender Constructions and Gender Relations in Cotton and Chain-Making in England: A Contested and Varied Terrain", *Women's History Review*, 6:3 (1997), pp. 367–389; *idem*, *Women Workers and Gender Identities, 1835–1913: The Cotton and Metal Industries in England* (London, 2001).

[4]Hilary Land, "The Family Wage", *Feminist Review*, 6:1 (1980), pp. 55–77.

[5]Jane Humphries, "'… The Most Free from Objection …' The Sexual Division of Labor and Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century England", *The Journal of Economic History*, 47:4 (1987), pp. 929–949.

[6]Brian Harrison, "Class and Gender in Modern British Labour History", *Past and Present*, 124:1 (1989), pp. 121–158.

[7]Sheilagh Ogilvie, "Women and Labour Markets in Early Modern Germany", *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 45:2 (2004), pp. 25–60; Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850–1914* (Ithaca, NY, 1996).

[8]Patricia Hilden, "Class and Gender: Conflicting Components of Women's Behaviour in the Textile Mills of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, 1880–1914", *The Historical Journal*, 27:2 (1984), pp. 361–385; Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries, 1914–1939* (Ithaca, NY, 1995); Louise A. Tilly, "Gender and Jobs in Early Twentieth-Century French Industry", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 43 (1993), pp. 31–47.

[9]Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, "Segmentation in the Pre-Industrial Labour Market: Women's Work in the Dutch Textile Industry, 1581–1810", *International Review of Social History*, 51:2 (2006), pp. 189–216; *idem*, "Market Wage or Discrimination? The Remuneration of Male and Female Wool Spinners in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic", *The Economic History Review*, 63:1 (2010), pp. 165–186.

[10]Cristina Borderías and Lina Gálvez, "Desigualdades de género en España. Continuidades y cambios", *Áreas. Revista Internacional de Ciencias Sociales*, 33 (2014), pp. 7–15; José María Borrás Llop, "Tasas de Actividad Infantil y Género En La Cataluña de 1900", *Historia Contemporánea*, 44 (2012), pp. 73–108; Montserrat Jiménez Sureda, "La mujer en la esfera laboral a lo largo de la historia", *Manuscrits. Revista d'Història Moderna*, 27 (2009), pp. 21–49; Mary Nash, "Identidad Cultural de Género, Discurso de la Domesticidad y la Definición del Trabajo de Las Mujeres en La España del Siglo XIX", in Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (eds), *Historia de Las Mujeres en Occidente* (Madrid, 1991), pp. 585–598; Carmen Sarasúa and Lina Gálvez, "Mujeres y hombres en los mercados de trabajo", in Carmen Sarasúa and Lina Gálvez (eds), *Privilegios o eficiencia? Mujeres y hombres en los mercados de trabajo* (San Vicente del Raspeig, 2003), pp. 9–35.

[11]Pilar Beneito and José J. Garcia-Gómez, "Gender Gaps in Wages and Mortality Rates During Industrialization: The Case of Alcoy, Spain, 1860–1914", *Feminist Economics*, 28:1 (2022), pp. 114–141; Cristina Borderías, "Salarios y subsistencia de las trabajadoras y trabajadores de la España industrial, 1849–1868", *Barcelona Quaderns d'història*, 11 (2004), pp. 223–237; Cristina Borderías, "Budgets familiaux et salaires des ouvriers du textile de Barcelone (1856–1917)", *Mouvement Social*, 276:3 (2021), pp. 151–169; Manuela Martini and Cristina Borderías, "En las fronteras de la precariedad. Trabajo femenino y estrategias de subsistencia (XVIII–XXI)", *Historia Social*, 96 (2020), pp. 63–77; Margarita

regulatory institutions.[12] To gain a deeper understanding of what transpired in Spanish factories, scholars have delved into sector-specific analyses. While a significant number have focused on gender dynamics within the textile sector,[13] researchers have also explored the consumer goods sector, whether canned fish,[14] wine,[15] shoes,[16] or tobacco.[17] Additional investigations have extended into male-dominated domains, including Spain's metal,[18] glass,[19] and railway industries.[20]

Under the guise of domesticity, male workers in factories and workshops aimed to preserve their labour market monopoly. The societal expectation was built around the breadwinner family model, where men were viewed as the primary income earners and women confined to homemaker and caretaker roles.[21] This practice, resulting from the merging of patriarchy and the industrial capitalist system, aimed to displace female labour and reserve more jobs for men.[22]

Vilar Rodríguez, "Los diferenciales salariales entre mujeres y hombres en España (c. 1850–1975). Un análisis provisional", *Areas. Revista Internacional de Ciencias Sociales*, 33 (2014), pp. 63–85.

[12]Cristina Borderías, "El papel de las instituciones en la segmentación sexual del mercado de trabajo en España (1836–1936)", *Revista de Trabajo*, 6 (2008), pp. 15–35; José María Borrás Llop, "Los límites del primer intervencionismo estatal en el mercado laboral: la Inspección del Trabajo y el empleo de las mujeres (Cataluña, 1900–1930)", *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, 31 (2009), pp. 149–191; Gloria Nielfa Cristóbal, "Trabajo, Legislación y Género en la España Contemporánea", in Sarasúa and Gálvez, *Privilegios o eficiencia?*, pp. 39–56; Daniel Vallès Muñío, "La Aplicación de la Ley de Trabajo de Mujeres y Niños de 1900 en las Memorias de la Inspección de Trabajo (I)", *IUSLabor*, 3 (2018), pp. 301–350.

[13]Angel Smith, "Social Conflict and Trade-Union Organisation in the Catalan Cotton Textile Industry, 1890–1914", *International Review of Social History*, 36:3 (1991), pp. 331–376; *idem*, "La guerra de las continuas. Cambio tecnológico y estrategias sindicales en la industria algodonera Catalana, 1889–1914", *Sociología del Trabajo*, 24 (1995), pp. 121–151; Angel Smith and Margarita Díaz-Andreu, "Industria, oficio y género en la industria textil Catalana, 1833–1923", *Historia Social*, 45 (2003), pp. 79–100; Carles Enrech, "El sindicalismo textil. Entre la solidaridad y la exclusión", *Historia Social*, 68 (2010), pp. 89–113.

[14]Luisa Muñoz-Abeledo, "Hombres, mujeres y latas. La segmentación laboral en la industria de conservas de pescado", in Sarasúa and Gálvez, *Privilegios o eficiencia?*, pp. 279–306; *idem*, "Políticas patronales y sindicales en el sector de conservas de pescado (1890–1936)", in Cristina Borderías (ed.), *Género y políticas del trabajo en la España contemporánea, 1836–1936* (Barcelona, 2007), pp. 279–306.

[15]Ángel Pascual Martínez-Soto, "La voz silenciada. Sindicalismo jornalero femenino, negociación y dinámica salarial en el área vitícola del sureste Español (1914–1936)", in Sarasúa and Gálvez, *Privilegios o eficiencia?*, pp. 79–110.

[16]Joana Escartín, "Producción dispersa, mercado de trabajo y economía sumergida el calzado en Mallorca, 1830–1950", in Sarasúa and Gálvez, *Privilegios o eficiencia?*, pp. 307–334.

[17]Lina Gálvez, *Compañía arrendataria de tabacos 1887–1945. Cambio tecnológico y empleo femenino* (Madrid, 2000).

[18]Conchi Villar, "Estrategias excluyentes del sindicalismo en el sector del metal. Barcelona, 1900–1936", in Borderías, *Género y políticas*, pp. 163–189; Conchi Villar, "Treballar 'a les llaunes'. Polítiques de contractació, condicions laborals i gènere a la indústria metallúrgica de Barcelona, 1920–1978", *Recerques. Història, Economia i Cultura*, 80 (2022), pp. 55–82.

[19]Jordi Ibarz, "'Con gesto viril'. Política sindical y trabajo femenino en la industria del vidrio de Barcelona (1884–1930)", in Borderías, *Género y políticas*, pp. 191–226.

[20]Esmeralda Ballesteros, "La construcción del empleo ferroviario como una profesión masculina, 1857–1962", in Sarasúa and Gálvez, *Privilegios o eficiencia?*, pp. 335–354; Esmeralda Ballesteros, "Barreras de acceso a las mujeres en el empleo ferroviario", *Revista del Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social*, 121 (2016), pp. 119–138.

[21]Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, "Women's Labour Force Participation and the Transition to the Male-Breadwinner Family, 1790–1865", *The Economic History Review*, 48:1 (1995), pp. 89–117.

[22]Angélique Janssens, "The Rise and Decline of the Male Breadwinner Family? An Overview of the Debate", *International Review of Social History*, 42:S5 (1997), pp. 1–23, 1–3.

This article explores the mechanisms men employed to prevent women's integration into the factory workplace, highlighting a gender-based conflict on the shopfloor through the use of strikes. In Spain, this pushback gained momentum as male labour was increasingly replaced by female workers, a trend that intensified during the 1880s. This shift was particularly noticeable in the leading textile industry, where ring-frame machinery was adopted, replacing male-operated self-acting mules.[23] The appeal of the ring-frame lay in the simplicity of its mechanism and the economy of its operation, and its straightforward use allowed for the increased employment of women and girls.[24]

Contributing to the study of gender conflict on the shopfloor through a compelling case study, the present article focuses on a social claim targeted towards women during the feminization of the Spanish chocolate industry during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Based on the exploitation of contemporary sources, its primary objective is to shed light on the complex relationship between social claims and gender dynamics in the context of labour and business operations. Incorporating both primary and secondary materials addresses potential challenges arising from selective archival preservation and gaps in historical records associated with the selectivity and silence of the archives.[25] A sequential historical analysis approach, which involves delving into archival materials alongside supplementary secondary sources, proves particularly effective in identifying the key actors at the heart of the development of evolving industries.[26]

By utilizing the case-study methodology, this research aims to produce valuable insights into the complexities of gender dynamics and the challenges women have faced when joining the workforce. According to Alfred Chandler, only through case studies, with their original actors and intact narratives, can extremely complex problems be clearly depicted, allowing for the adequate presentation of their impact.[27] Concentrating on a singular case study provides a deeper exploration and a richer understanding[28] while also highlighting its specific historical circumstances and specificity.[29] Historical research has been instrumental in the formulation and empirical testing of theories within the fields of organizational and management

[23]Smith, "La guerra de las continuas", p. 123; Jordi Domenech, "Labour Market Adjustment a Hundred Years Ago: The Case of the Catalan Textile Industry, 1880–1913", *The Economic History Review*, 61:1 (2008), pp. 1–25, 2.

[24]Smith, "Social Conflict", p. 337.

[25]Stephanie Decker, "The Silence of the Archives: Business History, Post-Colonialism and Archival Ethnography", *Management & Organizational History*, 8:2 (2013), pp 155–173; Matthias Kipping, R. Daniel Wadhwani, and Marcelo Bucheli, "Analyzing and Interpreting Historical Sources: A Basic Methodology", in Marcelo Bucheli and R. Daniel Wadhwani (eds), *Organizations in Time* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 305–329.

[26]Daniel P. Forbes and David A. Kirsch, "The Study of Emerging Industries: Recognizing and Responding to Some Central Problems", *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26:5 (2011), pp. 589–602.

[27]Alfred D. Chandler, *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the American Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), p. 7.

[28]W. Gibb Dyer and Alan L. Wilkins, "Better Stories, Not Better Constructs, to Generate Better Theory: A Rejoinder to Eisenhardt", *The Academy of Management Review*, 16:3 (1991), pp. 613–619.

[29]Andrew Popp and Robin Holt, "The Presence of Entrepreneurial Opportunity", *Business History*, 55:1 (2013), pp. 9–28.

studies,[30] as well as in the domains of business strategy and practice.[31] In short, this study adopts a comprehensive historical methodology to examine the dynamics of social conflict within a workplace setting.

The central event – a strike at Chocolates Amatller – illuminates the causes behind the stereotype that women were meant for procreation and not production, thus expelling them from the productive sphere and relegating them to a domestic role as wives and mothers. While the presence of women as paid workers was accepted, it was generally limited to jobs men were either unwilling or disinclined to do.

The entry of women into factories was shaped by a multifaceted set of factors, including demographic changes, labour market conditions, and social attitudes towards women and work. In this context, an undocumented archival collection at Chocolates Amatller houses corporate records from two decades after the strike. Their discovery yielded two comprehensive lists of its sixty-five employees, featuring their names, gender, age, marital status, number of children, and the roles they held within the company. This discovery contributes to the research into labour practices, revealing a noteworthy development despite the 1890 strike: the company witnessed a significant increase in the number of women employees – over sixty per cent of factory employees were women by 1910. Young and old, maiden and married, sisters and flatmates made their way to Barcelona's most renowned chocolate factory, challenging traditional gender roles and paving the way for greater economic independence.

The historical significance of Chocolates Amatller's case lies in its portrayal of Spain's earliest documented gender conflicts on the shopfloor, where workers specifically aimed to obstruct the entry of female labour. Moreover, the unique archival discovery, which details vast information about its employees, serves as a valuable resource for studying labour and business history. The male strike and its aftermath offer a window into the intricate interplay between gender dynamics, social claims, and labour practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Gender Conflict in Spanish Factories, 1890–1914

The earliest evidence of gender conflict-based strikes emerged in the region of Catalonia, which was pivotal to Spain's industrial revolution. In 1891, Manlleu witnessed protests following attempts to replace male workers with women on ring-frames, leading factory owners to implement a lockout to disband trade unions and establish new work practices. This move incited a town-wide strike lasting twenty-three days, effectively countering the industrialists' agenda.[32] The Ter Valley, renowned for its strong tradition of unionized labour led by male spinners, who spearheaded the reorganization of unions and the relocation of the central committee of the Federación Téxtil de la Región Española (FTE) to their area,

[30]Matthias Kipping and Behlül Üsdiken, "History in Organization and Management Theory: More Than Meets the Eye", *Academy of Management Annals*, 8:1 (2014), pp. 535–588.

[31]Andrew Perchard *et al*., "Clio in the Business School: Historical Approaches in Strategy, International Business and Entrepreneurship", *Business History*, 59:6 (2017), pp. 904–927.

[32]Smith, "La guerra de las continuas", p. 130.

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played a key role in the 1899 general strike. This strike again saw male workers successfully counter attempts to replace them with women, culminating in an agreement with factory owners that ensured available spinning machines were reserved exclusively for men. This achievement underscores the influence and strategic capacity of the male-dominated unions in negotiating labour terms.[33] In 1901, when three textile industrialists attempted to replace male spinners with women, who subsequently refused the positions, a new lockout ensued, leading to eight days of unrest and violence, including an attack on a former mayor and factory owner's residence. The conflict only receded after local authorities intervened, promising to seek a resolution and reinstate the displaced workers.[34]

Sustained evidence highlights strikes in other industries, with male workers explicitly protesting against the employment of women. An illustrative example is the chocolatier industry. On 25 May 1890, the workers (presumably men, given the nature of their claim) at the Amatller chocolate factory[35] initiated a strike after certain positions previously occupied by men had been assigned to women (Figure 1). Local newspapers reported the story that same day, emphasizing the event's immediate significance: "The workers of the Amatller chocolate factory have gone on strike because several jobs previously assigned to men have been given to women. The affected workers seem to be trying to appeal to the authorities."[36]

More comprehensive evidence of Spanish strikes after 1905 is documented in the yearbook *Estadísticas de las Huelgas*, published by the Instituto de Reformas Sociales (IRS). This publication detailed records of all strikes in Spain, categorizing them by location, sector, start and end dates, number of participants, and workers' demands. For example, in 1907, the dock loaders in A Coruña initiated a strike to demand the removal of women from coal shovelling tasks, arguing that such labour should be exclusively undertaken by unionized men. The action involved 150 workers and lasted eleven days.[37] The employers eventually acceded to the workers' demands to exclude women from these positions, yet they retained the authority to hire men for these roles, irrespective of their union membership.

Male workers in pasta and vermicelli production declared a strike on 29 September 1915. The protest was driven by demands to dismiss women handling manual vermicelli tasks, replacing them exclusively with male, unionized workers. According to data from Barcelona's IRS board, the strike concluded after five days due to the civil governor's direct intervention. He convened representatives from the employers' and workers' societies, leading to new work agreements. These stipulated women's continued employment in vermicelli production, with the condition that factory owners raise male workers' salaries by one real and guarantee

[33]Smith and Díaz-Andreu, "Industria, oficio y género", p. 93.

[34]Smith, "Social Conflict", p. 359.

[35]Chocolates Amatller was established in 1797 and became a benchmark brand for the quality of its products during the nineteenth century. The family company became a model of technological innovation and advertising strategy in the Spanish market. Xavier Jou-Badal, "Chocolate Manufacturing in Spain, 1850–1925", *Food and History*, 22:1 (2024), p. 149.

[36]*La Vanguardia*, 25 May 1890.

[37]IRS, *Estadísticas de las Huelgas* (Madrid, 1908), pp. 30–31.

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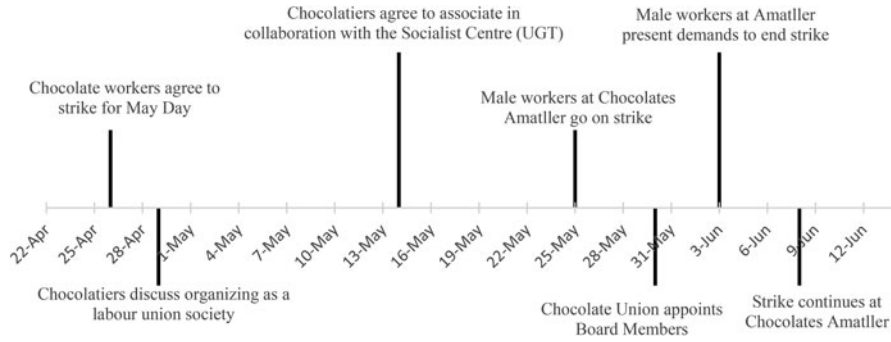

Figure 1. Timeline of events relating to the strike at Chocolates Amatller, 1890.
Source: *Compiled data from newspaper printed editions, 1890.*

no pre-strike employees would be dismissed or replaced by women. In terms of unpaid wages, the financial losses amounted to 16,605 pesetas.[38]

Since the inception of industrial trade unions in Spain during the latter half of the nineteenth century, robust solidarity mechanisms were devised to safeguard their members. Men established unions to secure employment and the continuity of apprenticeship systems, systematically excluding women.[39] Another tactic was linking worker recruitment to union job pools, requiring membership for access. This practice was prevalent in the textile sector but was also applied in complementary industries such as metal and glass production.[40] As a result, there were few women within unified workers' associations until the 1910s due to prevailing attitudes regarding masculine unionization and distrust.[41]

When unions' attempts to restrict hiring through their unionized pools failed, they often resorted to strikes (Table 1). Although these protests might have had multiple motives, such as exerting control over the workforce and demonstrating their strength, union practices clearly served as a strategy for curbing female employment. For instance, in 1905, 450 metal locksmiths went on strike, demanding that only union members be hired and non-members be dismissed. However, they failed to achieve their goals, and industrialists' freedom to shape employment practices continued. Similarly, in 1911, workers at Envases Sensat, a lamp manufacturer, undertook a five-day strike with comparable goals; yet, once again, the workers' objectives were not met.[42] IRS statistics from 1905 to 1915 reveal that strikes involving non-union workers fluctuated between two and ten per cent of the total number of strikes during that period, revealing the conflict between balancing union solidarity and preserving men's roles in the workforce.

An alternative strategy for marginalizing women involved gender-specific negotiation tactics, exemplified by the 1906 strike at the Oliveros cork factory in

[38]*Idem*, *Estadísticas de las Huelgas* (Madrid, 1918), p. 42.
[39]Enrech, "El sindicalismo textil", p. 111.
[40]Ibarz, "'Con gesto viril'", p. 226; Villar, "Estrategias excluyentes", p. 182.
[41]Smith, "Social Conflict", p. 361.
[42]Villar, "Estrategias excluyentes", p. 170.

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Table 1. Labour strikes in Spain to oppose women becoming factory workers, 1890–1915.

Year	Industry	Location	Motive / Workers' Justification	Duration (days)
1890	Chocolate	Barcelona	Several jobs previously performed by men had been given to women.	15
1891	Textile	Manlleu	After an attempt to replace men by women on the ring-frames, factory owners coordinated a lockout to dismantle trade-union organization and impose new working practices.	23
1899	Textile	Torello & Roda de Ter	The employment of a woman on a ring- frame led to the union requesting the reinstallation of weaving machinery and, when a position became available, the employment of men.	-
1901	Textile	Roda de Ter	Factory owners replaced three male spinners by women. The women refused to operate the ring-frame machinery, leading to a factory lockout and social violence.	8
1905	Locksmiths	Barcelona	Exclusive hiring of associated workers, and dismissal of non-associated workers.*	113
1906	Cork	Badajoz	After demands for higher wages, the employer offered an increase of 0.125 ptas, except for women, which the strikers accepted.	14
1907	Logistics	Coruña	150 male loaders demanded the exclusion of women from coal-shovelling operations.	11
1911	Lamps	Barcelona	Exclusive hiring from among the associated workers.*	1
1915	Soup Pasta	Barcelona	Claim against women doing manual labour at the noodle factory and insistence they be dismissed and replaced exclusively by associated male workers.	5

*While these were not direct rejections of women's employment, the exclusive hiring of associated workers was a tactic employed by trade unions to promote male hiring in factories.
Source: Compiled strike data from *La Vanguardia*, 25 May 1890; IRS, 1905–1915; Smith, "Social Conflict"; Villar, "Estrategias excluyentes".

Badajoz. The strikers – ninety-five men and twenty-five women – demanded higher wages and a guarantee of continued employment as long as cork was available in the factory. After work ceased for fourteen days, the intervention by the local IRS board at the behest of the workers led to an offer from the employer of a wage rise of 0.125 pesetas for daily workers, except for women – a condition that the strikers ultimately accepted.[43]

The shift from employing male to female workers, initially significant in the textile sector, expanded to other traditionally male-dominated industries like glass and metalworking. The pace and extent of this transition varied, influenced by male workers' concerted efforts to restrict women's access to these jobs. In some sectors, resistance to incorporating female labour persisted until the 1930s, illustrating the complex interplay between gender dynamics and work practices across different industries during this period of economic change.[44]

Women Shaping Chocolate Manufacturing

Throughout history, chocolate-making has been regarded as a bastion of male dominance. This feature dates back to at least pre-Columbian cultures, where men prepared the sacred drink to gain strength and go to war.[45] However, women have also been involved in chocolate preparation since its origins; in Mesoamerican culture, the ability to prepare food well and make good cacao was considered a desirable trait, and women who possessed these skills could be taken as wives by nobles.[46]

During the colonial era, European men were credited with introducing cocoa to Europe, monopolizing the production of chocolate and catering exclusively to the aristocracy.[47] This pattern continued with the manual grinding of cocoa nibs, a physically demanding task reserved for men. Shifting focus to Spain's chocolate industry, deep-rooted gender conflicts emerged as early as its manufacturing origins. From the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, chocolate production and sales were tightly regulated by guilds, a system especially pronounced in Catalonia. Control was monopolized by two Barcelona-based guilds: firstly, the shopkeepers' guilds, known as *adroguers* in Catalan, which held exclusive rights to commercialize colonial imports, thereby controlling access to raw materials for chocolate, such as cocoa, sugar, cinnamon, and pepper.[48] Secondly, the chocolate grinders' guild, comprised solely of artisans, specialized in making chocolate in their workshops and at clients' homes, a service favoured by wealthy families.[49]

[43]IRS, *Estadísticas de las Huelgas* (Madrid, 1918), p. 109.

[44]Villar, "Estrategias excluyentes", p. 166.

[45]Sophie Coe and Michael Coe, *The True History of Chocolate* (New York, 1996), pp. 75–79.

[46]Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca, NY, 2008), p. 16.

[47]Eline Poelmans and Johan Swinnen, "A Brief Economic History of Chocolate", in Mara P. Squicciarini and Johan Swinnen (eds), *The Economics of Chocolate* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 11–42.

[48]Pau Martí Rovellat, *Llibre de Confitures y de Drogues* (Barcelona, 1706), p. 1,395.

[49]Maria Antònia Martí, *El plaer de la xocolata. La història i la cultura de la xocolata a Catalunya* (Barcelona, 2004), p. 47.

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Entry systems into these traditional guilds were endogamous, typically restricting access to family relatives and explicitly excluding women.[50] These female exclusion policies were widespread as defence mechanisms, preserving the income of journeymen and the power of male masters within the institutions, not only in Spain but across Europe. This reinforced gender-based limitations on career advancement, which would lead to better compensation, improved benefits, and increased job security.[51]

The Royal Statute of 1834 marked a pivotal shift in the Spanish economy, proclaiming the freedom of industry and allowing anyone to manufacture chocolate, thus challenging the monopoly enjoyed by male chocolate workers. Yet, the industry's evolution was slow, as many leading manufacturers had roots in druggist and shopkeeper guilds.[52] This strong legacy influenced the sluggish pace of industrialization, with reports suggesting Spaniards continued to use traditional methods like grinding chocolate on their knees without modern equipment, yielding products of inferior quality compared to those of other European chocolatiers.[53]

Britain, France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands were at the forefront of chocolate industrialization, with significant contributions by male inventors such as Van Houten, Pelletier, and Lindt. The establishment of the first modern factories in Western Europe to leverage these innovations was predominantly driven by male entrepreneurs, including Cadbury, Menier, and Rowntree, underscoring the dominant role of men in the evolution of chocolate production.[54]

This onset of the First Industrial Revolution opened up opportunities for women to assume traditionally male-dominated roles, including factory work and certain industries previously closed to women.[55] Concurrently, the European chocolate industry witnessed a significant uptick in the employment of female and juvenile workers, notably for their dexterity in delicate tasks such as chocolate moulding and packing.

In the United Kingdom, the number of women employees at Cadbury exceeded that of men, with a ratio of two to one, resulting in a total of 3,310 employees.[56] Similarly, Rowntree experienced a continuous rise in female workers. In 1877, between fifty and sixty girls were working, but by 1894 this number had risen to 456. By 1904, women outnumbered men – with 1,107 women compared to only 520 men.[57] Meanwhile, in Germany, in the 1890s, the majority of chocolate workers were women, and by 1912 women accounted for two thirds of the 4,000 workers in

[50]Juanjo Romero, "Trabajo Femenino y Resistencia Artesana", in Borderías, *Género y políticas*, p. 59; S.R. Epstein, "Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe", *The Journal of Economic History*, 58:3 (1998), p. 687.

[51]Edward P. Lazear and Sherwin Rosen, "Male-Female Wage Differentials in Job Ladders", *Journal of Labor Economics*, 8:1 (Part 2) (1990), p. 106.

[52]Jou-Badal, "Chocolate Manufacturing in Spain", p. 139.

[53]William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Cocoa and Chocolate, 1765–1914* (London, 2000), p. 70.

[54]Coe and Coe, *The True History*, pp. 235–240.

[55]Claudia Goldin, "The Historical Evolution of Female Earnings Functions and Occupations", *Explorations in Economic History*, 21:1 (1984), pp. 24–25.

[56]Charles Dellheim, "The Creation of a Company Culture: Cadburys, 1861–1931", *The American Historical Review*, 92:1 (1987), p. 22.

[57]Robert Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution, 1862–1969* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 235–238.

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Dresden's chocolate factories.[58] As for Belgium, the number of female employees working in chocolate factories also increased significantly, from one twentieth of all workers in 1846 to half after 1918.[59]

In spite of these increasing numbers, certain restrictions remained. At Rowntree, a marriage bar was implemented, which prohibited married women from working in the factory. It was not until 1912 that this restriction was lifted, but even then, married women were allowed to work only as seasonal staff during the winter months. Cadbury maintained a similar policy, and its founder, George Cadbury, gave a flower, a Bible, and money to women who married and quit the company.[60] Likewise, Joseph Fry, who held the same Quaker beliefs, gave a copy of *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* – providing detailed instructions on cooking, household management, and etiquette – to every woman who left to get married.[61] A paternalistic concern for workers was a shared value among chocolatiers of the time, including non-religious businessmen, and the French company Menier was legendary for its guardian-like practices.[62]

This patriarchal approach also extended to the organization of tasks. Chocolate employers reserved physically demanding tasks for men while highlighting the manual dexterity of women workers in delicate operations. This benevolent plan not only reflected gendered assumptions about work, but may have also been motivated by a desire to reduce wage costs.[63] As a member of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Cadbury's founder's son Edward even argued that men deserved a higher wage than women since they had to support their families and perform physically and skill-demanding work.[64]

Factory lines were often segregated by gender, resulting in a dual labour market where men were assigned jobs that required greater physical strength or effort, conceived as primary jobs, while women were responsible for auxiliary and support tasks. This practice was also observed in renowned chocolatiers, such as Hershey, Cadbury, and Rowntree.[65] In 1896, Rowntree went a step further and established the Department of Lady Welfare Supervisor to oversee the lives of female workers both within the factory and at home. They also set up a domestic school in 1905 to address concerns that the industrial employment of women could undermine the family structure.[66] At Cadbury, there was also gender-based segregation, with a

[58]Clarence-Smith, *Cocoa and Chocolate*, p. 79.

[59]Peter Scholliers, "Van drank voor de elite naar een reep voor iedereen. Productie en consumptie van chocolade in België in de 19de en 20ste eeuw", in Bruno Bernaed, Jean Claude Bologne, and William Gervase Clarence-Smith (eds), *Chocolade. Van drank voor edelman tot reep voor alleman (16de–20ste eeuw)* (Brussels, 1996), pp. 161–184.

[60]Dellheim, "The Creation of a Company Culture", p. 30.

[61]Stefanie Diaper, "J.S. Fry and Sons: Growth and Decline in the Chocolate Industry, 1753–1918", in Charles Harvey and Jon Press (eds), *Studies in the Business History of Bristol* (Bristol, 1988), p. 47.

[62]Richard Jeandelle, "Noisiel, un nouveau destin pour la chocolaterie menier", *La Revue du Musée de Arts et Métiers*, 6 (1994), pp. 52–53.

[63]Emma Robertson, *Chocolate, Women and Empire* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 179–180.

[64]Dellheim, "The Creation of a Company Culture", p. 35.

[65]Clarence-Smith, *Cocoa and Chocolate*, p. 79.

[66]Robert Fitzgerald, "Products, Firms and Consumption: Cadbury and the Development of Marketing, 1900–1939", *Business History*, 47:4 (2005), p. 514.

designated men's and women's department at the Bournville factory. The female workers' department was staffed entirely by women, including management and supervision positions, which included family members such as Dorothy Cadbury.[67] Gender-based segregation also affected the hours worked: in 1911, women worked a total of 42.5 hours; men worked 48.[68]

During the Great War, women played a crucial role in maintaining the production of chocolate. To recognize their contribution, the industry publication *Cocoa Works Magazine* featured group photographs of all-female departments (with their male supervisors) at Rowntree, which were captioned "Helping us Carry On".[69]

Evidence for the feminization of the chocolate workforce in Spain is elusive due to the scarcity of corporate records from chocolatiers. However, government studies examining the working and living conditions of the working class can serve as an approximate means of analysis. From 1906 to 1923, the IRS conducted labour inspections and published annual reports titled *Memoria General de la Inspección del Trabajo*, detailing the results of their investigations with statistics and special mentions of any factories visited.

Within the scope of the reports, the presence of women in the workplace emerged as a recurring theme. An in-depth analysis in the 1908 yearbook reveals that chocolate manufacturing was experiencing a "moderate" degree of feminization, not as significant as in textile or tobacco manufacturing but on a par with the furniture and book factories and less prevalent than in the iron and paper industries.[70]

Although detailed statistics for the chocolate subsector were absent, a category for processed food factories was compiled in Catalonia, detailing the numbers of male and female employees along with their average salaries.[71] This data evidenced a gradual trend towards feminization; during the first five years leading up to 1911, women constituted an average of fourteen per cent of the specific factory workforce, a figure that increased to twenty-six per cent in the period from 1918 to 1923.[72] Additionally, wage data reveal a significant increase in women's wages, from 1.64 pesetas per day in 1910 to 3.33 pesetas in 1919 and then to 3.74 pesetas in 1920. Despite these increases, a persistent gender wage gap was evident throughout the second decade of the twentieth century, with an average gap of 0.51, meaning men earned, on average, twice as much as women.

The labour inspection yearbooks featured data from random visits conducted at various factories throughout the year. Documentation for a single evaluation at a chocolatier was registered: in 1907, a review of the Madrid-based Matías López's chocolatier factory recorded a workforce comprising 130 employees: ninety-eight

[67]Chris Smith, John Child, and Michael Rowlinson, *Reshaping Work: The Cadbury Experience* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 71.

[68]Dellheim, "The Creation of a Company Culture", p. 29.

[69]Robertson, *Chocolate, Women and Empire*, p. 181.

[70]IRS, *Memoria General de la Inspección de Trabajo* (Madrid, 1908), p. 192.

[71]*Idem*, *Memoria General de la Inspección de Trabajo* (Madrid, 1907–1924).

[72]In Spain, historical employment statistics treat women's waged labour as an anomaly, explaining the systematic under-recording of female activity and potential issues of underrepresentation. Jane Humphries and Carmen Sarasúa, "Off the Record: Reconstructing Women's Labor Force Participation in the European Past", *Feminist Economics*, 18:4 (2012), p. 43.

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men and thirty-two women. The report specified that all men were older than sixteen years, while the women's ages ranged from fourteen to twenty-three years.[73]

An 1882 article in *Escenas Contemporáneas* magazine furnishes additional evidence of female employment at La Colonial company.[74] The piece elaborated on the new company's Pinto facility, outfitted with a twenty-five horsepower engine designed to produce 20,000 pounds daily, and highlighted the employment of 150 men and eighty women. Nonetheless, it did not specify the tasks or age-related roles assigned by gender.

In the case study of Chocolates Amatller, which will be explored in subsequent sections, a notably more pronounced feminization process occurred compared to its competitors and the broader food industry. By 1910, women constituted over half of the workforce, a figure that rose to sixty per cent four years later. For Amatller, distinct vertical and horizontal segregation was evident, mirroring patterns observed in England: men were primarily responsible for machinery operations while women were relegated to manual post-production tasks, such as placing chocolates into moulds (Figure 2).

About Chocolates Amatller

Rooted in the historical context of strict guild regulation, Chocolates Amatller originated with Gabriel Amatller. Coming from a well-off peasant family in Molins de Rei, Amatller ventured into Barcelona in 1797, joining the chocolate grinders' guild. His daughter Mariana's marriage to a shopkeepers' guild member (*adroguer*) enabled the business to expand into trading products overseas, including coffee, tea, spices, and cocoa. During the Peninsula War, Amatller relocated his operations to Agramunt, using the Vilanova port for merchandise entry. Despite challenges, he swiftly began trading colonial goods in Barcelona, nearby towns, and major cities like Valencia and Zaragoza.

Upon Gabriel Amatller's death in 1830, his legacy was upheld by his sons, Antoni and Domingo Amatller Ràfols, who operated under the name Hermanos Amatller. This second generation pursued continuity, combining artisanal chocolate production in their Barcelona workshop with expanding colonial trade. Reflecting Spain's slow pace in the chocolate industry's advancement, in 1863 the company acquired grinding cylinders still powered by animal traction, indicative of the sector's gradual modernization. Company sizes remained modest, exemplified by Spain's premier chocolate producer, La Colonial in Madrid (sixty employees), and Malaga's La Riojana (twenty-five employees).[75] Focused on local markets in Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Islands, and Aragón, Hermanos Amatller gradually built brand recognition through participation in exhibitions like the General Catalan Exhibition of 1871 and the Barcelona Commercial Salon of 1873.

The advancement of Chocolates Amatller into the industrial age was markedly influenced by third-generation Antoni Amatller Costa's forward-thinking

[73]IRS, *Memoria General de la Inspección de Trabajo* (Madrid, 1908), p. 56.
[74]Manuel Ovilo y Otero, *Escenas contemporáneas*, 1 (Madrid, 1882), pp. 241–243.
[75]Jou-Badal, "Chocolate Manufacturing in Spain", p. 151.

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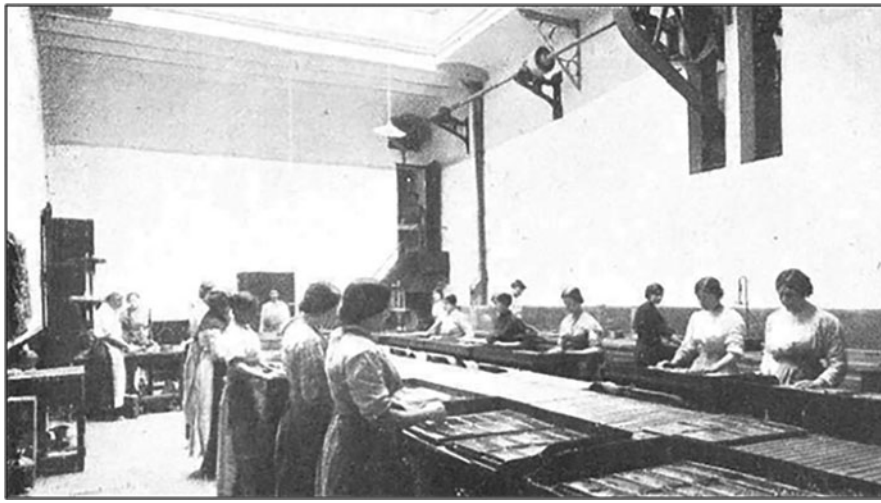

Figure 2. Female factory employees of Chocolates Amatller putting the chocolate in moulds, 1915.
Source: Mundo Gráfico, *1915.*

leadership. His dedication to modernizing production facilities and establishing a unique chocolate brand was crucial. This new phase began with the inauguration of a modern factory in 1874, located in the industrial zone of Sant Martí de Provençals, equipped with advanced machinery imported from France.[76] The transition facilitated opportunities for workers proficient in mechanical processes, especially with steam-powered engines, and the integration of specialized machinery, such as a chocolate mixer and an ice machine, essential for cooling chocolate in warmer months. By the end of the nineteenth century, Amatller had emerged as Barcelona's premier chocolate manufacturer, employing sixty-five workers and commanding the Catalan market. Although its workforce was above average for food factories, which had fifteen employees,[77] it was notably smaller than that of Madrid's leading chocolatiers – La Colonial with 245 employees[78] and Matías López with 130[79] – and more closely resembled Malaga's La Riojana, which employed eighty individuals.[80]

The third generation intensified brand promotion strategies by distributing posters and calendars, symbols that quickly became synonymous with the Amatller brand. Esteemed artists of the time, like Alphonse Mucha, contributed designs,

[76]Jordi Nadal and Xavier Tafunell, *Sant Martí de Provençals, Pulmó Industrial de Barcelona (1847–1992)* (Barcelona, 1992), p. 94.

[77]IRS, *Memoria General de la Inspección de Trabajo* (Madrid, 1907), p. 87.

[78]Mario Coronas, *150 años de aroma a chocolate en Pinto. De la colonial a Eureka* (Pinto, 2016).

[79]Antonio Blázquez, "Galerías Temáticas de Grandes empresarios: Matías López", *Archivo Histórico de la Oficina Española de Patentes y Marcas* (Madrid, 2018).

[80]Fernando Alonso, "La exitosa historia de la pionera fábrica de chocolate 'La Riojana' en Málaga", *Diario Sur*, 8 March 2020. Available at: https://www.diariosur.es/sur-historia/historia-fabrica-chocolate-20200305181717-nt.html?ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.diariosur.es%2Fsur-historia%2Fhistoria-fabrica-chocolate-20200305181717-nt.html; last accessed 3 June 2024.

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significantly enhancing the brand's visibility and allure. Antoni Amatller's noteworthy contribution included the architectural renovation of the family's residence on Passeig de Gràcia, reflecting the opulence of the Catalan bourgeoisie. Following his death in 1910, his daughter Teresa Amatller Cros assumed the leadership, persisting in the legacy of modernization. By the end of the decade, the factory grew from one to three floors, adding a steam generator that powered eight engines and accommodating a workforce that expanded to 150 employees. However, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 led to the collectivization of the company, forcing Teresa Amatller to flee to Italy. Upon her return, she regained control of the company, maintaining its leadership until her death in 1960. After several ownership changes, the business was acquired in 1972 by local chocolate maker Simon Coll, who has since preserved the original Amatller brand, continuing its legacy by marketing its premium chocolate range.

Methodology and Data

The narrative of the strike events is explored through an investigation into newspapers of the time. Published media provide an external perspective through the lens of journalists not directly involved in the conflict. Primary sources from both national and local newspapers have been meticulously examined, including *El País*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Noticiario Universal*, and *Diario de Barcelona*. The timeline spans two months before the strike (March and April), focusing on the background and events leading up to the strike in May, and continues for two months after (June and July) to observe the consequences and aftermath of the strike.

However, the uniqueness of this case lies in the archival collection of Chocolates Amatller. The collection comprises over 100,000 documents, including commercial correspondence and original accounting books, notably the daily ledger and general ledger for the period 1873–1899. While this primary source facilitates the possibility of contributing to the account of work in the factory, unfortunately there are no explicit references to employee details, such as payroll records or correspondence originating from personnel. According to local historian Vicens Vives, this was common practice in Barcelona during the period and may suggest the employers' reluctance to expose the conditions and social situation of their employees.[81]

Despite the absence of employee records in the corporate archive, a significant discovery has arisen from the family documentation, also archived at Casa Amatller, which has more limited records consisting mainly of official family files, such as wills and marriage certificates. Upon the death of the businessman Antoni Amatller in 1910, a document was registered along with his will that contained the amounts to be gifted to his closest associates, including family members, friends, charities, and a small sum to each employee of the company. It provides a comprehensive list of the sixty-five employees' names and surnames, along with their gender, work location (offices or factory), and the tasks they performed at the company.

This finding is complemented by an additional document located in the financial records of Teresa Amatller, Antoni's only daughter and the fourth-generation head of

[81]Jaume Vicens Vives, *Los Catalanes en el siglo XIX* (Madrid, 1986), p. 229.

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the company. Although she was the sole owner, she was not involved in the company's daily management. Her personal records included a list of the workers from 1914, including each worker's name, address, age, year of joining the company, marital status, and number of children, although this time the job position or task of each worker was not indicated.

Using the daily ledger, it is apparent that salaries were paid weekly to all workers every Saturday. The account was registered as "expenses", which encompassed various items such as salaries, transportation costs, and extraordinary expenses, making it difficult to ascertain the exact details of payroll activity. This expense account has been examined for the year in which the strike occurred, but no significant changes could be observed before and after the strike. Due to the broad range of expenses included in the account and the absence of clear indicators of change in value, no empirical payroll evidence can be derived to shed light on the specific practices of the company.

Although the company's accounting information does not allow for an analysis of the immediate impact of the strike or payroll activity (1890), the documents found in the family archive offer extensive insight into the long-term impact and the process of feminization within the company (1910–1914). These employee rosters enable the segmentation of employees by gender, marital status, address, whether they had children, years working in the company, and the tasks they performed at the factory.

The Male Factory Workers at Chocolates Amatller Go on Strike

The strike among male workers at Chocolates Amatller occurred during a critical period for the implementation and development of the workers' movement in the city of Barcelona and throughout the country. In 1889, the Second International was convened in Paris, establishing the revolutionary observance of May Day. The following year, this event was celebrated for the first time in Barcelona. It was a day of global protest aimed at securing the "three eights": eight hours of work; eight hours of leisure; and eight hours of rest.[82] Barcelona's workers recognized the conditions they shared with workers globally, driving them to embrace the general strike for a labour sector revolution. Violent clashes followed, leading to a state of war, mass arrests, and the closure of media outlets. The movement's failure and ensuing repression laid the groundwork for future anarchist terrorism.[83]

Trade unions were frowned upon by authorities and the powerful classes, who viewed them as bastions of social agitation due to their main tool – strikes, which disrupted the order and normal functioning of the productive sector. While anarchists predominated in worker organizations in southern Spain and would not see a resurgence in Barcelona until the early 1900s,[84] socialists were in the majority

[82]María Rodríguez Calleja, "1o de Mayo de 1890 a 1918. Entre el espacio propio y el espacio conquistado", in Santiago Castillo (ed.), *Mundo del trabajo y asociacionismo en España* (Madrid, 2013), pp. 1–3. Available at: http://asociacionhistoriasocial.org.es/download/VIII_Congreso/2_SESION/2._08_Rodriguez_Calleja_Maria_1_de_mayo_1890_1918.pdf; last accessed 16 June 2024.

[83]Manuel Pérez Ledesma, "El Primero de Mayo de 1890. Los orígenes de la celebración", *Revista Tiempo de Historia*, 18 (1976), pp. 13–16.

[84]Teresa Abelló, "L'anarquisme als països de parla catalana. Entre el sindicalisme i la propaganda (1868–1931)", *Catalan Historical Review*, 3 (2010), pp. 215–216.

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in Catalonia and the Basque Country.[85] Since the 1880s, the number of workers' organizations and their members increased: socialist federations went from seven in 1882 to fifteen only five years later. Among the notable trade unions was the Unión General de Trabajadores (General Union of Workers), also known as the UGT, which was founded in Barcelona prior to 1888 and remains in operation today.[86]

These early labour movements were also observed in the working-class community of chocolatiers. News articles appearing in the local press referred to the collective of chocolate workers in Barcelona rather than a specific factory. Local periodicals extensively discussed the celebration of May Day and expounded at length on the strikes, including their adherence and the repressive tactics of the authorities, while also noting the beginnings of worker associations in particular sectors, such as the case of chocolatiers.[87] The first articles from the weeks leading up to the strike indicate that chocolate workers across different levels of expertise, such as stone mill workers, grinders, and machinery workers, were gathering for the first time to form an organized labour movement supported by socialist movements and the UGT (the chocolatiers met at the trade union's headquarters in Barcelona).[88] Ultimately, on 25 May, the chocolate workers decided to unite and organize themselves as a labour union society – the first since the fall of the guild monopolies due to the Bill of Freedom of Industry in 1834.[89]

According to news reports published on the first day of the strike, 25 May 1890, workers clearly stated that their primary motivation was to protest female labour intrusion, and they expressed their opposition to the employment of women in jobs previously held by men. The workers also urged the authorities to hear their grievances and provide a resolution.[90] The following day, an additional article reported the solidarity of other chocolate factory workers in Barcelona, who offered their support and resources in the event an agreement could not be reached between the parties.[91] In the days to come, additional meetings were held by the chocolatiers, once again with the support of the Socialist Centre, culminating in the establishment of a specialized workers' association. A board of directors was nominated to lead the association (1 June), though no mention was made regarding their place of employment, nor can any connection be established between the members and the Amatller factory workers.[92]

Nine days after the proclamation, on 3 June, local newspapers included a detailed explanation of the three reasons for the strike and the workers' proposals for a resolution. Unlike the news articles released at the outset, which presented a single

[85]Henrike Fesefeldt, "Del mundo de los oficios a la lucha de intereses", *Ayer*, 54 (2004), pp. 71–73.
[86]Josep Termes, *Històries de la Catalunya treballadora* (Barcelona, 2000), p. 83.
[87]*El País*, 26 April 1890.
[88]*Diario de Barcelona*, 29 April 1890; *La Vanguardia*, 30 April and 14 May 1890.
[89]*Noticiero Universal*, 15 May 1890.
[90]*La Vanguardia*, 25 May 1890.
[91]*Ibid.*, 26 May 1890.
[92]As per the documentation of employees available at Chocolates Amatller from 1910 and 1914, these names were not on the list of employees. The board members in 1890 were: President, Adjutorio Velada; Vice President, Jaime Casals; Secretaries, José Pericar Partear and Tomás Maimó; Treasurer, Miguel Canals; Auditor, Lorenzo Fígols; and members, Agustín Puity, Juan Basora, and Jacinto Caminals. *El País*, 1 June 1890.

motivation for the work stoppage – the supposed "intrusion" of female labour – both incorporated two supplementary demands related to wages and the duration of the workday.

The first proposition centred around the alleged labour encroachment of women in the workplace. This demand was motivated by both sociological and economic factors. Sociologically, it was linked to the discourse on domesticity: "these jobs are detrimental to their health";[93] "because it is harmful to their health during monthly periods, gestation, and lactation, a human and moral measure".[94] From an economic perspective, they believed employing women would negatively impact their wages, claiming: "it is harmful to the salary of men",[95] "which, at the same time, causes the depreciation of men's salary".[96]

Secondly, workers demanded a fixed schedule of ten hours (instead of the current ten and a half hours), citing that other Barcelona factories had similar conditions but shorter hours.[97] In 1891, the textile industry's average work week amounted to 61.5 hours, equivalent to 10.25 hours per day, a figure similar to that of the Amatller factory.[98] The eight-hour workday would not become mandatory in Spain until the Royal Decree of 1919, which established a maximum work schedule of eight hours for all jobs, regardless of type, gender, and age.

The third demand concerned workers' wages: they requested a rise to 3.5 pesetas in the daily salary (from 13.50 to 14 reals), equivalent to a four per cent increase. The average daily income for factory workers in Barcelona was 3.3 pesetas, according to the official Barcelona Yearbook, showing that the Amatller workers' demand was slightly higher than the norm, even ten years later.[99] There are further series of salary data available for several textile firms in Barcelona at the time, but the notable disparities in wages – with some paying as little as 2.25 pesetas per day[100] and others paying nearly twice as much: 4.3 pesetas[101] – make it challenging to establish an empirical comparison.

On 7 June, four days after the workers' proposal and two weeks after the strike began, news media reported that no compromise had been reached and the walkout was ongoing.[102] The following day, a press editorial outlined conflicts between workers and employers in various local factories, including the Amatller chocolatiers, and expressed optimism about a peaceful resolution.[103] On that same day, the employees of the tram system went on strike and public transportation was

[93]*La Vanguardia*, 3 June 1890.
[94]*El Barcelonés*, 3 June 1890.
[95]*La Vanguardia*, 3 June 1890.
[96]*El Barcelonés*, 3 June 1890.
[97]*La Vanguardia*, 3 June 1890.
[98]Montserrat Llonch Casanovas, "Jornada, salarios y costes laborales en el sector textil catalán (1891–1936)", *Revista de historia industrial*, 26 (2004), p. 139.
[99]Roser Nicolau, *Trabajo asalariado, formación y constitución de la familia. La demanda de trabajo de la colonia textil Sedó y los comportamientos demográficos de su población 1850–1930* (Barcelona, 1983), p. 77.
[100]Llonch Casanovas, "Jornada, salaries y costes", p. 138.
[101]Raimon Soler, "Estratègies empresarials en la indústria cotonera Catalana. El cas de la fàbrica de la Rambla de Vilanova, 1833–1965", *Butlletí de la Societat Catalana d'Estudis Històrics*, 12 (2001), p. 179.
[102]*El Barcelonés*, 7 June 1890.
[103]*La Vanguardia*, 8 June 1890.

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suspended, garnering more attention and overshadowing other local strikes. Unfortunately, there is no additional evidence of the exact time the protest ended. However, it can be inferred that the strike lasted for at least fifteen days (from 25 May to 8 June).

In the context of the gender conflict under study, the voices of female workers remain silenced. The difficulty in accessing direct sources and the social environment of the time complicated finding a platform for the claims of female workers at Chocolates Amatller, as was the case for all working women of the era.

Potential avenues for amplifying working women's voices could be traced back to the embryonic stages of workers' associations in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The division within textile unionism, spurred by shifts in craftwork traditions, resulted in the creation of gender-specific unions. These female-only associations faced challenges due to limited membership and low affiliation rates, which constrained their capacity for significant representation or bargaining power until the late 1910s.[104] In sectors such as vineyard labour, metalworking, and glass manufacturing, the labour movement's emphasis on male exclusivity – reinforced by entrenched notions of masculinity and virility – further side-lined women's participation in advocating for social rights.[105]

In the pursuit of institutional representation, the state government established the Comisión para las Reformas Sociales (CRS) in 1883 as a consultative body dedicated to examining work habits, marking one of the earliest efforts to tackle social issues through legislative means. During parliamentary debates, over three hundred speakers were invited, encompassing stakeholders from across the industrial spectrum: entrepreneurs, lawyers, doctors, union leaders, and merchants. Among these contributors, only one presentation by a woman – who was associated with a Catholic organization – highlighted the severe implications of women's employment, particularly its impact on family obligations and the potential negative influence on dress codes and the decorum of single women.[106] Beginning in 1903, social reform efforts continued under the IRS, which devised numerous legislative proposals concerning women's labour. However, the IRS did not admit any female members until 1919.[107]

Women's presence in platforms for social advocacy was both anecdotal and exceptional: even in sectors where they constituted the majority of the workforce, they were represented by male union leaders. This exclusion from executive bodies resulted in the marginalization of proposals uniquely championed by women, subsuming them under the guise of "general interests" aimed at enhancing the living conditions of the broader working class.[108]

[104]Enrech, "El sindicalismo textil", pp. 98–106.

[105]Martínez Soto, "La voz silenciada", pp. 86–87; Villar, "Estrategias excluyentes", pp. 163–165; Ibarz, "'Con gesto viril'", pp. 191–194.

[106]Participation of Estefanía Orroz, President of Asociación de las Conferencias de señoras de San Vicente Paúl, 4 October 1884. CRS, *Reformas sociales. Información oral y escrita, 1889–1893* (Madrid, 1985), V, pp. 299–300.

[107]Nielfa, "Trabajo, legislación", p. 49.

[108]María Rosa Capel, *El Trabajo y la educación de la mujer en España (1900–1930)* (Madrid, 1980), pp. 239–242.

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Female Labour at Chocolates Amatller, 1910–1914

In 1910, Chocolates Amatller employed a total of sixty-five workers: sixty-two per cent men and thirty-eight per cent women (Table 2). However, when looking at the workforce breakdown by location, the results differ slightly. The company had two locations: the headquarters in Barcelona city centre and the factory in the industrial district. In the offices, there were only twenty male employees and no women.[109] However, a different situation prevailed in the factory, where arduous manual and machinery-operated tasks were performed. All of the women employed by Amatller worked in the factory and accounted for the majority – fifty-six per cent of the factory workforce.

During the following four years, the trend towards higher rates of female employment in the chocolate factory continued (Table 3). Although there were no changes at the headquarters, the company's success led to an increase in the number of factory employees from forty-five to fifty-six, most of them women. Female workers continued to be in the majority, increasing the gender ratio from fifty-six per cent to sixty-one per cent.

Amatller's workforce composition was in line with that of other chocolate factories across Europe, with women representing between half and two thirds of the workforce, a percentage that gradually increased over time.[110] This proportion surpassed that observed in Madrid's La Colonial and Matías López by thirty percentage points, a disparity that may be attributed to the differing years of observation, 1882 and 1907, respectively, possibly not capturing the full extent of the progressive feminization process. However, when compared to other industries in Barcelona during the same period, the process of feminization was more pronounced in the textile industry, where women accounted for as much as eighty per cent of factory employees.[111]

When analysing the breakdown of marital status among men and women, it is notable that a significantly higher percentage of female workers (eighty-two per cent) were single compared to male workers (thirty-six per cent in the factory and thirty-two per cent in office positions). This disparity can be attributed to the historical context: unmarried women were more likely to work in order to support their families, save money for their dowries, and leave their jobs once they got married due to the prevailing domesticity stereotype and their role in looking after the family.[112]

[109]This absence of women in office jobs was consistent with the situation in other chocolate manufacturers such as Rowntree and Cadbury (Fitzgerald, *Rowntree*, pp. 235–238; Clarence-Smith, *Cocoa and Chocolate*, pp. 69–71).

[110]Clarence-Smith, *Cocoa and Chocolate*, p. 52, 79; Peter Scholliers, "Van drank voor de elite", p. 172; Fitzgerald, *Rowntree*, p. 222.

[111]Albert Balcells, "Les dones treballadores a la fàbrica i al taller domèstic de la Catalunya del segle XIX i el primer terç del XX", *Catalan Historical Review*, 8 (2015), p. 171; Llorenç Ferrer Alòs, "Notas sobre la familia y el trabajo de la mujer en la Catalunya Central (siglos XVIII–XX)", *Revista de Demografía Histórica*, 12:2–3 (1994), p. 210; Soler, "Estratègies empresarials", p. 179.

[112]Enriqueta Camps, "Las transformaciones del mercado de trabajo en Cataluña (1850–1925). Migraciones, ciclo de vida y economía familiares", *Revista de Historia Industrial*, 11 (1997), p. 48.

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Table 2. Workers by gender and location at Chocolates Amatller, 1910–1914.

	1910		1914	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Headquarters/Office	20 (100%)	0 (-)	25 (100%)	0 (-)
Factory	20 (44%)	25 (56%)	22 (39%)	34 (61%)
Subtotal	40 (62%)	25 (38%)	47 (58%)	34 (42%)
Total Workforce	*65*		*81*	

Source: Compiled data from Archive Chocolates Amatller, 1910, 1914.

Table 3. Employment by gender, by industry, and geography, 1882–1924.

Chocolate factories	M	W	*Barcelona factories*	M	W
Amatller, 1914	39%	61%	Amatller, 1914	39%	61%
Spain – La Colonial, 1882	66%	34%	Average food industry, 1906–1923	82%	18%
Spain – Matías López, 1907	68%	32%	Average textile industry, 1905	24%	76%
UK – Rowntree, 1904	32%	68%	La Rambla – textile, 1919	22%	78%
UK – Cadbury, 1899	29%	71%	Industrias Jorba – textile, 1924	20%	80%
Germany – Dresden area, 1912	34%	66%			
Belgium average, 1918	50%	50%			

Source: Compiled data for Amatller (Archive Chocolates Amatller); Fitzgerald, *Rowntree*; Smith *et al*., *The Cadbury Experience*); Germany (Clarence-Smith, *Cocoa and Chocolate*; Belgium (Scholliers, "Van drank voor de elite"); Barcelona's textile industry (Balcells, "Les dones treballadores"); La Rambla (Soler, "Estratègies empresarials"); Industrias Jorba (Ferrer Alòs, "Notas sobre la familia y el trabajo").

On the other hand, a higher percentage of male workers were married, suggesting that they may have prioritized their role as the primary breadwinner and sought more stable, long-term positions. The figures confirm the theory that women's participation in the workforce was brief and that they were not expected to remain employed for long periods – if at all – after marriage. Additionally, the inclusion of widows in the register indicates that women who lost their husbands (breadwinners) may have sought employment to support themselves and their families. These statistics are consistent with trends in women's participation rates in Europe during the early twentieth century, whereby married women had the lowest rates of participation, widows had intermediate rates, and unmarried women had rates approaching those of men.[113]

Reflecting the prevailing social norms of the time, there was a clear correlation between the marital and parental status of the workers. No unmarried worker (male or female) was recorded as having children. A higher proportion of married male workers compared to female workers implied a higher proportion of male workers

[113]Humphries and Sarasúa, "Off the Record", p. 55.

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(forty-five per cent) versus women (twelve per cent) with children. Interestingly, despite a lower proportion of working mothers, those with children had the highest average number of children per worker (2.4). The data also highlights differences in family structures between factory workers, who had an average of over two children per household and tended to have larger families, and office workers, who usually held better positions, received higher pay, and had an average of 1.38 children per worker.[114] In terms of the gender of children, the data shows that there was an equal distribution of male and female children among workers, with both sexes accounting for fifty per cent of all children born to employees, albeit with a slight difference among office workers.

The information available from 1914 reveals that the age distribution of the workers at Chocolates Amatller was different for male and female employees (Figure 3). The majority of women (56 per cent) fell into the age group of 14–19 years, with a total of nineteen employees. No female employees were found in the age groups over forty-four years, with the eldest female worker being forty-one years old. This data aligns with the marital status analysis, which showed that the majority of female workers were single. Therefore, it was reasonable to assume that younger people were more likely to work in the factory. In contrast, male employees were more evenly distributed across different age groups, with the highest number of male employees falling into several disparate age groups, including 14–19, 25–29, 45–49, and 50–54 years.

A considerable age gap can also be observed between male and female employees. Men were, on average, eighteen years older than their female counterparts. The average age of male factory workers was thirty-nine years, while that of women was twenty-one. The age difference was even greater for male office (headquarters) employees, with an average age of forty-one. This could indicate that the company had a more established workforce of male employees in the factory and office positions, with potentially more opportunities for career advancement within the organization.

In 1914, male factory workers at Chocolates Amatller boasted an average seniority of nine years, indicating a relatively established and experienced workforce. Upon comparing both available employee rosters (1910 and 1914), the retention rate for male employees at the factory was fifty per cent over the four-year period. This trend of extensive male seniority was even more pronounced in office positions (only men worked at the headquarters) – they had worked an average of eleven years, and the retention rate increased to ninety per cent. These administrative positions were recognized as avenues for professional development, especially during the establishment of functional corporate structures. This shift increased the number of external management positions outside the family circle, a feature of managerial capitalism.[115]

[114]While there is no record of what salaries were paid at Chocolates Amatller, the 1910 document drawn up upon the death of Antoni Amatller (third generation) includes the full list of employees and the corresponding amounts left to each worker by the business owner. On average, factory workers received 300 pesetas each, while office workers received 50 pesetas.

[115]Alfred D. Chandler, "The Emergence of Managerial Capitalism", *Business History Review*, 58:4 (1984), pp. 473–503, 474.

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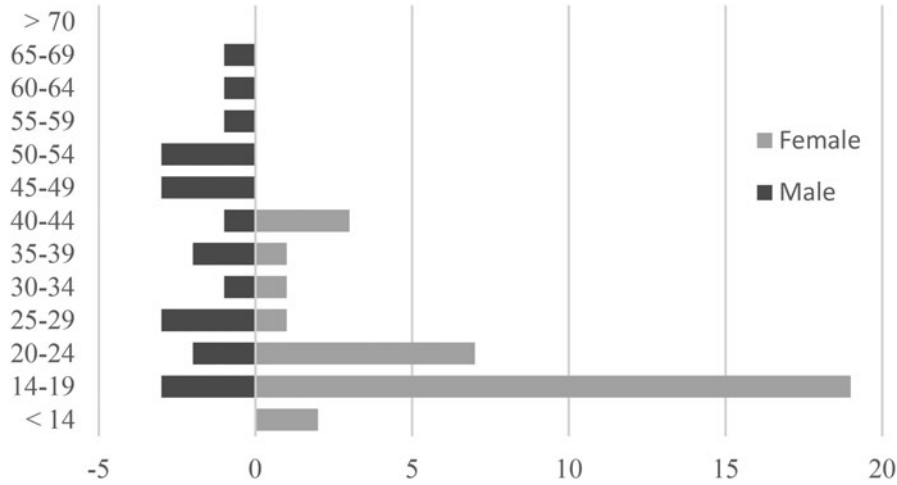

Figure 3. Age and gender distribution for factory workers at Chocolates Amatller, 1914.
Source: Compiled data from Archive Chocolates Amatller, 1914.

At variance with the men, the average seniority for female factory workers was only four and a half years in 1914. When comparing the female employees listed in the previous four rosters, the retention rate dropped to sixteen per cent, indicating a relatively shorter duration for women compared to their male counterparts. An exception to this brief presence was a select group of four women who had been working at the factory for over fifteen years, including two unmarried sisters who had been Amatller employees for more than twenty years. Excluding these outliers, the average seniority for female factory workers dropped significantly to 2.2 years, highlighting the lack of continuity of female employees in the company. Notably, there were no discernible differences in seniority among female workers based on their marital status. Overall, this indicates a gender disparity gap in terms of seniority and experience, with male employees holding a distinct advantage in job security and greater opportunities for long-term career growth.

The list of job tasks in 1910 provides additional evidence of the advancement of male workers' careers at the factory. Positions such as apprenticeships and assistants were exclusively assigned to men at Amatller, indicating that women were not given the opportunity to move into these learning-process positions. This trend was also observed in other Barcelona factories, highlighting one of the barriers to women's career progression in the workforce.[116] The historical division of tasks by gender, often based on physical or moral reasons, was prevalent in factories, leading to a dual labour market. Men were assigned physically demanding roles, conceived as primary jobs, while women were relegated to auxiliary and support tasks (Table 4).[117]

[116]Borrás Llop, "Tasas de actividad infantil y género", p. 95.
[117]Francine Blau and Lawrence Kahn, "The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations", *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55:3 (2017), pp. 789–865, 824.

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Table 4. Factory tasks and gender distribution at Chocolates Amatller, 1910.

Factory Foreman						M	
Pre-Production		Production		Post-Production		Accessory Jobs	
Paste Manager	M	Machinist*	M	Moulds Manager	M	Lithographer*	M
Paste Assistant	M	Steam Engine *	M	Moulds	W	Assistant Lith.*	M
Roaster*	M	Grinder*	M	Moulds	W	Trading Cards	W
Roaster*	M	Cylinders*	M	Moulds	W	Butler	M
		Cylinders*	M	Moulds	W	Watchman	M
		Cylinders*	M	Moulds	W		
		Apprentice	M	Moulds	W		
		Apprentice	M	Moulds	W		
		Mixer*	W	Chocolate Cigarettes	W		
		Mixer*	W	Shaped Chocolate	W		
		Mixer*	W	Cold-Ice Machine	W		
		Mixer*	W	Cold-Ice Machine	W		
		Mixer*	W	De-moulder	W		
		Weigher*	M	Packaging Manager	M		
		Weigher*	W	Packer	W		
				Packer	W		
				Packer	W		
				Packer	W		
				Packer	W		
				Warehouse	W		

*Task requiring machinery operation. M = Man / W = Woman
Source: Compiled data from Archive Chocolates Amatller, 1910.

This pattern was evident in multiple manufacturing sectors in Spain. For example, in the canned fish industry, men were responsible for fishing (primary task), and women handled cleaning and salting (auxiliary task).[118] In the textile sector, men took on arduous weaving tasks while women performed spinning duties.[119] Similarly, in glass factories, men engaged in glass blowing while women worked as crystal decorators.[120] A consistent gender-based division was also evident in chocolate

[118]Muñoz-Abeledo, "Hombres, mujeres y latas", pp. 303–305.
[119]Borderías, "El papel de las instituciones", pp. 16–20.
[120]Ibarz, "'Con gesto viril'", p. 223.

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production. Men were predominantly assigned to pre-production and early stages of chocolate manufacturing, which often involved operating machinery. In contrast, women were more prevalent in post-manufacturing roles, which required manual abilities and dexterity.

The initial phase of the chocolate-manufacturing process involved the transformation of cocoa beans, the primary raw material. To produce a paste from which cocoa was extracted, the beans were roasted and peeled. This fully mechanized process was exclusively performed by men who possessed the necessary skills in machinery operation and advanced chocolate-making knowledge acquired through years of apprenticeship and labour. The preparation of cocoa paste was an example of career advancement possibilities in the factory, where tasks were divided between a manager and an assistant. After the cocoa paste was prepared, the next stage was grinding. In the past, this involved rolling mills with either manual or animal traction stones to grind the nibs into smaller particles. However, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the industry underwent mechanization due to newly available technological innovations.

In 1876, Chocolates Amatller introduced steam-operated engines with the inauguration of their new factory. This significantly increased the company's production and productivity. The engines consisted of two units, one of thirty-five horsepower and the other of ten horsepower. All this machinery related to cylinders and steam engines was operated by male workers, as it was commonly believed that only men possessed the necessary strength and skills required for such tasks. In addition, the Spanish regulation of 28 January 1908 prohibited women under the age of twenty-three from handling machinery with certain materials, including iron, copper, and other chemicals, due to the risk of intoxication, injury, fire, or explosion.

Nonetheless, a select group of women played a significant role in manufacturing and operating machinery alongside male workers. Specifically, five women employees were involved in the mixing process, which involved blending ground cocoa with ingredients like sugar, cinnamon, and pepper to enhance the texture and flavour of the chocolate. The mixer mill used in the factory was imported from France and purchased in 1885 from Breyère Frères. The all-female team was solely responsible for this mechanized factory task, which was essential to the taste and reputation of the final chocolate product. It is worth noting that seniority was not a requirement for this role, as one of the employees who operated the mixing mill had been at the factory for over twenty-five years, while the other four female workers had been with the company for less than four years. Finally, the manufacturing process also included two weighers, who were responsible for accurately measuring out the ingredients to be put into the mixing mill.

The 1910 employee roster reveals an exceptional instance within the factory's tasks: one man and one woman jointly carried out the weighing task, marking a rare exception to gender-based horizontal segregation. However, due to limited data, it is challenging to explore the development of this role further or ascertain the presence of vertical segregation within it. The roles of mixers and weighers were pivotal in the 1890s strike, pitting male workers against the employment of female labour in the factory. The men's proposal explicitly demanded the exclusion of women from these specific factory tasks, arguing for their removal from machine operation and

weighing sections due to health concerns and to prevent the devaluation of men's wages. Despite these demands, the inclusion of women in such tasks highlights the industrialists' refusal to acquiesce to the men's requests.

Once the chocolate was produced, it needed to be poured into moulds to create the bars and shapes desired. This step demanded delicate and dexterous skills due to the small size of the moulds. As was the case in other industries that relied on such manual abilities, this job was included in the feminization process of the workforce.[121] At Amatller, this task was exclusively carried out by nine women, comprising the largest number of workers in the factory's process, all under the supervision of a male supervisor. Among these female employees were some who had worked in the factory for over twenty years without any evidence of opportunities for career advancement, performing tasks similar to those of their entry-level female colleagues.

In 1890, to maintain the manufactured chocolate at a low temperature, especially during warm weather, Amatller imported a refrigerated ice maker from the acclaimed inventor Raoul Pictet.[122] This process did not require specific machinery operation, strength, or dexterity, yet it was exclusively managed by women. After the cooling process (Figure 4), the packaging phase commenced, beginning with the de-moulding of the chocolate bars, a task that indeed required manual dexterity. This post-manufacturing task was executed by a team of five women under the supervision of a male manager, mirroring the arrangement in the moulding process. Once packaged, the final products were transferred to the company's warehouse, a role typically assigned to men due to the physical strength required for carrying and handling the goods. Surprisingly, this task was assigned to one woman only, challenging conventional beliefs about women's abilities in the workplace.

Promotional techniques for chocolate products included popular trading cards, which had been introduced during the late nineteenth century by several Spanish manufacturers.[123] For Chocolates Amatller, these cards were printed with an Italian lithographic printing press supplied by Gaffuri & Gatti and operated by the manager and his assistant – both were men.[124] This specific machinery task was banned for "underage" women (those under twenty-three years old) by law in 1902 due to the risk of intoxication. Nevertheless, a female employee was responsible for placing the trading cards in the packaged products.

The employee roster with tasks from 1910 illustrates the segregation of labour between men and women, which was common in chocolate factories and other industries at the time. Men held managerial and supervisory roles, while women were responsible for manual labour tasks such as chocolate moulding and packaging. The factory task list reflects the gendered work patterns, reflecting broader societal norms and expectations at the beginning of the twentieth century.

[121]Vilar Rodríguez, "Las diferenciales salariales", p. 76.

[122]The ice-machine represented a cost of 32,000 pesetas in 1890, a significant investment for the company at the time (Archive Amatller, Accounting General Ledger, 1890).

[123]Martí, *El plaer de la xocolata*, pp. 140–145.

[124]Archive Amatller, commercial letters and invoices from Bergamo's arts company (1886) and Accounting General Ledger (1894).

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Figure 4. Female factory employees of Chocolates Amatller at work during the cooling process, 1915. *Source:* Mundo Gráfico, *1915.*

Conclusions

Examining the history of women workers at Chocolates Amatller provides valuable insights into the intricate interplay between social claims and gender dynamics within the context of labour and business history. As a focused case study, this article offers a nuanced exploration and comprehensive understanding of the historical context, including workforce practices and operational strategies.

The outcome of the strike men staged in 1890 cannot be simply framed as a victory or defeat for either men or women. The male factory workers were expressing their demands for better working conditions, but unfortunately they chose to direct their frustrations towards women, influenced by the prevailing social discourse of the time. While it is true that women joined the factory as a result, it would be inaccurate to claim that they emerged as winners. Their presence in the factory remained limited, with restricted opportunities for career development and a segregation of tasks that predominantly confined them to manual labour. This gendered division of labour limited their progression up the job ladder, potentially leading to wage disparities and further marginalizing women in the workplace.

Under the guise of domesticity, the ideology justified the undermining of female wage labour. Male workers weaponized this belief to depict their female counterparts as disloyal rivals – a cheaper labour force that challenged men's privileged access to employment. Importantly, work itself held the potential for women's emancipation, challenging the patriarchal model that subordinated them to marital authority. Additionally, women faced the hostility of their male colleagues, who perceived them as intruders and a threat to male job security.

The case of Chocolates Amatller holds particular significance as it places the strike among the earliest documented gender conflicts in Spain, where workers sought to

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impede the introduction of female labour. The male strike highlighted the complex dynamics surrounding gender and factory work during that period and is clear evidence of male resistance to the employment of women in certain roles, which reflected deep-seated norms as a fear of job displacement.

Investigating the role of female workers in the factory twenty years after the strike demonstrates that women subsequently played a participative role in the chocolate factory. However, the prevailing societal norms and expectations of the time persisted, resulting in a distinct division of labour based on gender. Women were primarily assigned manual tasks and other supporting roles in the manufacturing process, while men occupied managerial and supervisory positions, overseeing operations and decision-making processes. Although there were exceptions, female employees lacked seniority and faced limited opportunities for career progression, highlighting the gender disparity and restricted professional growth.

Delving into the experiences of male and female workers, we can gain a deeper understanding of how social claims can manifest as gender conflicts in the workplace. Although limited by the available corporate records, this case study provides valuable insights into the feminization of workplaces in Barcelona at the dawn of the twentieth century. Further, we can better appreciate the significance of these narratives in illuminating the complexities surrounding social claims for better living conditions by male workers and the challenges faced by female labourers in their pursuit of employment opportunities in modern factories.

This article reveals possible avenues for future research to complement the exploration of female labour introduction in factories. These investigations might examine the balance between men and women, analysing the extent to which they were competitors or complementary figures. Such inquiries would enhance the comprehension of gender dynamics, power, skill distribution, and societal perceptions within industrial workplaces. Moreover, these future studies would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted transformations in the labour landscape and business practices.

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