As writers and readers, teachers and activists, we in the collective often find ourselves scrambling to keep abreast of the wealth of new publications in our fields. The lament is so familiar: “Why can’t there be more hours in the day?” This section aims to engage new scholarly exchanges on Latin America and to give our time-pressed colleagues a concise guide to major new works. Among the reviews scheduled to appear in it are reviews of new works on human rights, in particular the question of peace and judicial reform after terror, on the impact of decentralization on labor and welfare policies in Brazil, on the legacy of Nicaragua’s revolution in the post-Sandinista era, on the new indigenous politics, and on gender and capitalism. These new works reflect rapid shifts in politics and economy in the region and changes in our understanding of Latin America’s past. In addition to helping readers keep up-to-date on new works and ideas, the reviews will, where appropriate, assess how new works may enhance teaching. We encourage reviewers to consider whether the books under review will serve well in undergraduate or graduate settings or might usefully supplement classic texts. Finally, the reviews will locate new works within the larger debates that have long fueled the collective’s work. As a scholarly journal dealing with the political economy of capitalism, imperialism, and socialism in the Americas, *Latin American Perspectives* encourages reviewers to take up new ideas as they inform our basic understandings of power and struggles for social justice.

—Heather Williams

**Mexican Immigrants under Siege**

Commodified Labor and the Architecture of Exploitation

*by Tamar Diana Wilson*


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Repeated economic crises in Mexico during this century have continually augmented the numbers of contracted and undocumented workers seeking employment in the United States. Agricultural, manufacturing, and service enterprises have taken advantage of the low-cost labor of the undocumented and vulnerable workforce that assigns all working-class Mexican immigrants what Velázquez (1996) has called a “commodity identity,” involving an objectification of the alien “Other” (Kearney, 1997). The commodification and concomitant objectification of Mexican immigrants and the control over their presence and labor power are constituted in spatial, political, and ideological dynamics. The three books reviewed here focus on various aspects of this commodification and objectification through three different lenses, geography (Mitchell), political science (Calavita), and sociology (Dunn), and on a historical continuum.

In The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape, covering the period 1913 to 1942, Mitchell argues that labor history, with its power struggles and conflicts between growers and migrant laborers, has created and re-created the California landscape. Employing radical insights from geography, Mitchell contends that productive landscapes such as those of the California agricultural fields are founded, under capitalism, on class inequalities. Workers must be controlled, their embodied labor made available when and where it is needed, their revolts suppressed or minimized, their efforts to affect the spatial and material ordering of the landscape on their own behalf neutralized. Examining the organizational efforts of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the response of the social Darwinist and paternalistic Progressives, Mitchell focuses on farm workers’ strikes and rebellions and the attempts to co-opt them through state-initiated demands for more adequate housing facilities in the fields.

Minimally decent housing was proposed in order to enhance “worker contentment” through “tinkering” with the environment (1996: 55) and thus to undermine the unionizing efforts of “radicals” and deflect motivations to revolt against long hours, low wages, and difficult and unstable living and working conditions. Although some growers endorsed the provision of bunk houses and rudimentary sanitary facilities because it gave them more control over the workforce, others balked at such an investment in fixed capital, which merely represented a loss in profits. Growers avoided state laws such as the Labor Camp Sanitation Act by utilizing labor contractors, who were held exempt from legal provisions ensuring adequate housing facilities for the workers they employed. Growers enthusiastically greeted the increasing number of automobile and tent camps, new additions to the California landscape in the 1920s, which were run by third parties or simply permitted to exist by local law enforcement officials, as an externalization of mandated costs for workers’ daily reproduction. Resurgences of organizational activities in such camps were met by evictions, the sheriff’s departments aiding the growers in this effort.

In the 1920s (shortly after World War I and the Mexican Revolution), Mexican labor was increasingly recruited into California agriculture; its presence was
accompanied by a racialized view of Mexicans as a docile workforce naturally well-suited to field labor. In 1928, a Mexican workers’ strike against the cantaloupe growers of the Imperial Valley led to ideological attacks on foreign and domestic “communist agitators” but also to improvements in the conditions of farm labor camps located on growers’ property—a change in the landscape designed to neutralize worker militancy. Field laborers were, however, often enclosed in guarded compounds that they were forbidden to leave at night and to which suspected agitators and other outsiders were denied entry.

An oversupply of labor in the 1930s was followed by a shortage at the beginning of World War II. The Bracero Program (1942-1964) was a response to this shortage. Mitchell points out: “The Bracero Program reenacted the same issues that had governed California agriculture throughout the first half of the twentieth century: how could a ‘sufficient’ labor supply be made available when and where it was needed, and in such a manner that it was incapable of threatening the economic and political interests of growers?” (1996: 195). He underscores that the control elements incorporated into the Bracero Program were designed to counteract effective worker organization and action.

Calavita, in her Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the INS, takes up the issue of the worker control elements that evolved from the Bracero Program. She also examines in depth the contradictions of labor immigration policies under capitalism as illustrated by the cooperative/conflictive relationship of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Department of Labor (DOL), and the growers. Calling her theoretical approach to understanding the workings of the capitalist state “dialectical structuralism,” Calavita focuses on the contradictions and conflicts inherent in class society, especially those concerned with the costs and benefits of employing an immigrant labor force. Such contradictions may be temporarily plastered over by new laws and administrative procedures, but these eventually generate new contradictions and conflicts.

Using previously unexplored archival materials, Calavita shows that while INS policies tended to advance the interests of growers, the agency was not co-opted by them completely. Following its mandate to halt illegal immigration, it modified administrative procedures and generated unforeseen innovations in order to ensure that growers would employ braceros rather than the cheaper and more flexible undocumented immigrants. In the early stages of the Bracero Program, contrary to binational recruitment provisions, the INS legalized whatever undocumented workers were found working in the fields and contracted them to the growers as braceros. Later, in order to ensure the growers a sufficiently docile, reliable, and hardworking labor force, the INS introduced the I-100 card system. Under this system the growers evaluated each worker. A good evaluation meant that the worker could be recontracted by any grower at the border. Over the protests of the Mexican government, the Mexican recruitment system was thereby bypassed as the INS generated a distinction between contracting (forbidden by the Mexican government at the border) and re-contracting (not covered by the U.S-Mexico accords). Growing out of the I-100 system, under grower pressure, was the Special Program, which permitted growers to recontract designated workers over and over again. The I-100 card system was designed by the
INS not only to encourage the use of braceros over undocumented workers but also to reduce the time for inspection of braceros by its own overburdened personnel. The Department of Labor, authorized under the Bracero Program to certify labor shortages, successfully demanded an end to the I-100 cards, essentially converting temporary contract workers into a semipermanent labor force. In sum, according to Calavita, the solution to one contradiction—the economic utility of cheap immigrant labor versus the mandate to control the border and prohibit illegal entries—led to administrative innovations by the INS, but further contradictions arose in the wake of those innovations. Southwestern agriculture became even more heavily dependent on labor imported from Mexico, and the INS came into conflict with the DOL, whose mandate was to represent domestic workers and mediate class conflict between labor and capital.

Dunn, in *The Militarization of the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1978-1992: Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine Comes Home*, brings the reader up to the early 1990s on the subjects of border enforcement and the social/political/economic and military control of subordinated civilian populations seeking refuge and/or work in the United States. Dunn contends that the control apparatus in place since 1978, involving military rhetoric, military cooperation with the Border Patrol, and military equipment, technology, strategy, and tactics, is designed not to halt Mexican labor entirely but to regulate its flow (1996: 16). Deportations of Central Americans, in contrast, are a continuation of U.S. foreign policy. Looking at “low-intensity conflict doctrine” as it evolved in terms of combating guerrilla warfare and controlling civilian populations in the Third World, Dunn finds all of its constituent elements in place in the current policing of the U.S.-Mexico border. Examining Border Patrol funding and activities, its cooperation with military personnel, and equipment supply and technological innovations during the Carter, Reagan, and Bush administrations, he documents a progressive weakening of the Posse Comitatus statute of 1879, which prohibits military involvement in domestic law enforcement activities. The military has aided in brush removal and road and wall construction along the border aimed at keeping out drug smugglers (but also regulating the flow of undocumented workers), lent equipment such as helicopters and light aircraft to the Border Patrol, and trained members of the Border Patrol in the use of such military technology as night-vision equipment, electronic intrusion-detection ground sensors, and automatic and semiautomatic military-issue rifles to be used in combating the drug trade, conceived of as a national security issue. Dunn points out that while the Border Patrol’s mandate was widened under the Reagan administration to include drug control activities, the equipment and technology used to combat drug trafficking can also be used and is used against any illegal border crossing.

Dunn illustrates point by point how low-intensity conflict doctrine has been used along the U.S.-Mexico border to control the flow of Mexican workers and effect the deportation of Central American refugees. He concludes that the militarization of the border can be interpreted as having four main aims: (1) reinforcing the stratification of power between the U.S. and Mexico at a time of increasing U.S. investment in that country, (2) reinforcing the illegal status of Mexican undocumented workers and thus reinforcing their economic subordination, (3) extending U.S. foreign policy objectives in Central America by evicting Central American immigrants and refugees, and
(4) securing “a region that was increasingly strategic economically and also potentially vulnerable to instability” (1996: 163).

For what they attempt to explain—Mitchell the formation and reformation of the California landscape in the interests of migrant labor control, Calavita the contradictory proliferation of administrative innovations in the interest of immigration control, Dunn the influence of military rhetoric, strategy, tactics, and technology in the interests of border control—these three volumes cannot be faulted. All three contribute innovative perspectives on the crisis of Mexican wage-labor immigration to the United States, the commodification and objectification of Mexican labor and laborers, and the workings of state and national government agencies in reinforcing this commodification and objectification. Inherent and sometimes explicit in each volume is the argument that Mexican laborers are especially useful because the costs of their reproduction can be externalized through periodic deportations or threats of the same, through labor control systems such as the Bracero Program, and through militarized regulation of illegal entry. The economic importance of production and reproduction (especially in times of sickness, unemployment, and old age, when undocumented immigrants return to Mexico) for those Mexican laborers only intermittently in the United States—a separation that results in increasing profits for capitalist employers of that labor but little cost for providing basic security for workers and their families for the system as a whole—has long been noted (e.g., Burawoy, 1975; Gómez-Quíñones, 1981; Portes, 1978). The separation of production from reproduction is also the logical foundation of proposals to deny citizenship to the children of undocumented workers (Roberts, 1997), for the denial of social and medical services to undocumented women and children under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Individual Responsibility Act of 1996 and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Reconciliation Act (Welfare Reform Act) of the same year, for the proposal of a new H-2 temporary contract workers’ program (Chavez, 1997), and for Bush’s call for a new guest worker program.

That the elimination of the costs of reproduction of Mexican immigrant workers is a primary goal is confirmed by Mitchell’s documentation of growers’ reluctance to supply even minimally decent housing to migrant farm workers in the 1913-1942 period, Calavita’s analysis of the bracero program, designed to import only obedient workers who would eventually return to Mexico, and Dunn’s examination of the social control effects of the escalating low-intensity conflict on and near the U.S.-Mexico border. Taken together, these three volumes show that Mexican immigrant workers, especially but not exclusively farm workers, have always been under siege in the United States and are now increasingly so—a fact that can only complicate the effects of Mexico’s internal, though globally induced, economic crisis.

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Gender Struggles
The Undermining of Patriarchal Hegemony in Colonial Mexico
by Tamar Diana Wilson


Culture as contestation, contested patriarchal pacts, absolute versus contingent interpretations of patriarchal right, women’s weapons in a patriarchal society, the justification of the power of the elders over the young and of the elites and village authorities over the less affluent and the marginalized in terms of patriarchal templates on the societal level—these are some of the ideas Stern develops in his study of gender struggles in late colonial Mexico. Focusing on “subalterns” among the peasants of Morelos and Oaxaca and the “plebians” of Mexico City, Stern rests his analysis on the perusal of 708 violence and morality incidents registered in the criminal courts between 1760 and 1821. He shows how “patriarchal pacts” were continually contested and occasionally renegotiated by women. Whereas men generally sustained a view of absolute patriarchal right within their households (as the elders did within villages), women viewed their required submission and obedience as contingent upon the fulfillment of certain male obligations. The obligations included economic maintenance, avoidance of public flaunting of infidelities and of liaisons that diverted economic resources from the household, showing a modicum of respect to wives and daughters, and exercising restraint in domestic violence.

While subordinated within the patriarchal system, women nonetheless possessed certain weapons that they could use to resist a husband/father they considered unjust or noncompliant with his obligations as family patriarch. They could slow down on expected domestic services or tarry too long on extrahousehold chores. They could also stake claims in the public domain in at least four ways: pluralizing patriarchs, utilizing women’s networks, creating a public scandal, or resorting to magic—the last taken seriously in a society in which the belief in the efficacy of magic was pervasive. Pluralization of patriarchs involved seeking aid from consanguineal or affinal male kin, village elders, authorities, judges, or other men in positions of power, sometimes even lovers, to bring husbands into line. “Cross-overs” to a particular woman’s side, Stern argues, did not undermine patriarchal privilege but strengthened the power of the patriarchs called upon to sanction wayward men, who were often socially disruptive and relatively marginalized in any case.

That hierarchies of masculinity and power were characteristic of class-stratified peasant communities is a well-developed theme throughout Stern’s Secret History of

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Gender. Elite men “feminized” subaltern men through insults, public beatings, and preying on their women. Such behavior was characteristic of the “vertical dimension” of masculinity and power, as Stern puts it. The result was a reactive, “counter-hegemonic masculinity” that stressed courage in the face of humiliation but also led to interpersonal violence in horizontal as opposed to vertical contexts and the strict enforcement (I might call it exaggeration) of masculine right in family contexts. Here Stern closely approaches arguing for an association between “machismo” or “hypermasculinity” (Pyke, 1996)—terms he eschews—and relative social/economic powerlessness. His avoidance of such an interpretation is partly due to his empathy with the plight of subaltern men and his desire to underscore the positive aspects of their alternative construction of masculinity. It ignores, however, the full implications of some aspects of subaltern masculinities (see McCloskey, 1996; Harvey, 1994).

Stern subtly differentiates the peasant patriarchy of Morelos from that of Oaxaca, where elders’ power contained the worse offenses of younger married men and women’s locally permissible recourse to kin in time of trouble strengthened their negotiating position. Stern also differentiates peasant patriarchies in both states from the patriarchal privilege (or lack of it) among plebians in Mexico City. In the city women’s economic opportunities, however marginal, enhanced their physical mobility and thus permitted the more effective pluralization of patriarchs and formation of women’s networks, while other factors associated with urbanization moved patriarchal pacts from contention to crisis. In a later period, as Stern points out, the crisis of patriarchy would spread to the countryside.

Stern provides students of both women’s subordination under patriarchy and “multiple masculinities” (Brod and Kaufman, 1994; Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994) with innovative and thought-provoking ideas that should be seriously considered. Boyer’s Lives of the Bigamists, though undertheorized compared with Stern’s work, should be read in conjunction with it for an understanding of gender relations in colonial Mexico. Concentrating on the period between 1535 and 1789, Boyer analyzes 213 bigamy files collected during the Inquisition. Although most bigamists were men, women sometimes opted out of marriages in which they were subject to la mala vida (the sorry life) and sought other mates. This resonates with Stern’s idea of women’s contingent interpretations of patriarchal right and also illustrates the pluralization-of-patriarchs strategy carried to the extreme—marrying a second husband where Catholic law prohibited divorce from the first. Both Stern and Boyer use the example of physical punishment of wives, which, although accepted to a degree, was resisted as unjust if too violent or too recurrent; they also point out that wives rebelled in response to husbands’ blatant adultery, often out of fear of abandonment.

Boyer’s primary concern, like Stern’s, is with subaltern, relatively powerless, poor men and women. He makes the point that, rather than being deviants, the bigamists were attempting to conform to the pervasive ideal of adults ensconced in stable and legal marriages. Many, if not most, were men whose search for a livelihood often distanced them geographically from their first wives and children. In order to retain their labor, “masters” (employers) often encouraged laborers to marry relatives of theirs, even knowing of the existence of a previous spouse. Sometimes they provided laborers with their first wives, and there were often few emotional ties to hold men to these
arranged marriages when they moved on to new jobs. Indeed, masters sometimes refused to allow the wives provided to follow their husbands when they searched elsewhere for work.

Boyer’s account suggests the existence of large numbers of men roaming from place to place either as part of their work as muleteers, traveling vendors, and seamen or in their desperate search for work wherever they could find it as itinerant artisans, field hands, and laborers. Such widespread movement not only fomented bigamy—given a social order in which nonlegalized liaisons were under great social pressure to become legalized and single persons were under pressure to mate—but also led to the discovery of bigamists. Wives searched for their husbands through information networks spanning multiple locales, and people in towns gossiped with vendors and muleteers who traveled from one population center to another. Ultimately, many of the bigamists were brought to public attention.

Without developing the theoretical implications of his observations, Boyer documents that boys and young men often ran away from home to find work far away. One can only ask: Were they fleeing an unjust patriarch as many daughters in Stern’s account fled fathers who treated them like servants and similarly placing themselves in the service of a new patriarch? Unfortunately, little reference is made to ideas developed in the literature on patriarchy and gender relations, and there is no discussion of how the availability of wage labor opportunities changed family dynamics. Both omissions lead to a relative lack of conceptual sophistication in Lives of the Bigamists.

Although Stern’s analysis is elegantly theorized whereas Boyer’s monograph is far more descriptive than theoretical, both volumes offer insight into gender issues that should be absorbed not only by historians but also by sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists concerned with patriarchy in particular and with gender relations in general.

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Gender as a Category of Analysis
Moving Past Old Binaries

by Nichole Sanders


These three collections examine gender and its relationship to politics, class formation, and identity. All make important and fresh theoretical and methodological contributions to the study of gender in the Americas. They seek to move past certain binaries (public/private, Marxist/postmodernist) that have lost their analytical usefulness. They provide excellent historiographical background and serve as blueprints for future developments in feminist scholarship.

*Gender Politics in Latin America: Debates in Theory and Practice*, edited by Elizabeth Dore, is an attempt to bridge the seeming chasm between two major twentieth-century feminist traditions—Marxist feminism and postmodernist constructions of gender politics. It also examines the distinction between theory and practice, “highlighting innovative and often controversial aspects of the politics of gender in Latin American societies” (Dore, 1997: 9). Its nine essays take a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Latin American gender politics and challenge many assumptions (Dore, 1997: 10).

One of the most persistent myths about the Latin American family and its relationship to politics is the notion of public and private spheres. Scholars have long believed that women in Latin America were not politically active because of their subservient role in the private sphere, the home. Work and politics were considered strictly male domains. In contrast to those of the United States and Europe, in which women had a certain amount of authority, Latin American families were overtly patriarchal. These essays argue that public versus private is a false dichotomy. Tessa Cubitt and Helen Greenslade’s “Public and Private Spheres: The End of Dichotomy” and Anna M. Fernández Poncela’s “Nicaraguan Women: Legal, Political, and Social Spaces” show that women have been active politically even while they have been excluded from formal politics. Women’s political activism in Latin America has long exemplified the U.S. feminist assertion “The personal is the political.” The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, mentioned in Elizabeth Jelin’s “Engendering Human Rights,” show how women have been active politically in community organizations and in street demonstrations. Ann Matear’s “‘Desde la protesta a la propuesta’: The Institutionalization

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of the Women’s Movement in Chile” details how informal women’s groups and professional women’s organizations contributed to Chile’s redemocratization efforts. (Unfortunately, as Matear points out, democracy has served to co-opt official women’s groups and freeze out informal ones.)

These essays all effectively debunk a separate-sphere analysis, arguing that Latin American women have always been more active politically than such a dichotomy would suggest. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the public/private divide has historically been very important as a Latin American elite rhetorical device. Both Elizabeth Dore in “The Holy Family: Imagined Households in Latin American History” and Ricardo Cicerchia in “The Charm of Family Patterns: Historical and Contemporary Change in Latin America” point out that the myth of the patriarchal family has long allowed elites to promote policies that ignore the realities of family life in Latin America, serving to reinforce their own hegemony.

This collection also takes an important step in attempting to synthesize Marxist feminist scholarship and poststructuralist gender theory. Dore, in her introductory chapter, gives an excellent description of each paradigm. She suggests that it is no accident that postmodernism has become popular at the same time as neoliberal economic theory has gained ascendancy in Latin America, Britain, and the United States. She contends that both neoliberalism and postmodernist theory emphasize individual action and subjectivity while ignoring the material consequences of economic freedom for entire classes of people. With Jane Jaquette, she laments the fact that “class is disappearing as a category of analysis at the very moment when class differences are widening in Latin America” (Dore, 1997: 16). Indeed, while postmodernism provides scholars with many useful avenues of inquiry, it is dangerous to overlook material reality.

Both Dore’s introductory chapter and Nanneke Redclift’s “Post-Binary Bliss: Towards a New Materialist Synthesis?” point out possibilities for future scholars of gender and politics in Latin America. Dore suggests that we take the best of both paradigms. She argues that class should remain an important focus of scholars but that postmodernist theory’s emphasis on multifaceted subjectivities allows a more nuanced interpretation of women and politics. Marxist theory has tended to ignore gender and ethnic diversity, arguing that racism and sexism will disappear along with capitalism. But, as Redclift asserts, “Class, gender and race do not simply intersect, in many ways they are/stand for each other” (Dore, 1997: 227). Postmodernist theory allows us to understand class as gendered and racialized. Thus, it suggests that these categories are not mutually exclusive and that all must be examined for fuller understanding of politics and the economy.

This collection serves as an excellent introduction to feminist debates in Latin American scholarship. Both Dore’s introductory chapter and Redclift’s conclusion provide clear and concise definitions of theoretical and discussion of historical/and, and the essays contribute effectively to the ongoing theoretical debate. For example, Dore’s own chapter shows how elite discourse on the family in Latin America has masked material realities. By skillfully using both postmodernist and material analysis, Dore shows how power is deployed. Because the essays are multidisciplinary as well, one gets a sense of feminist scholarship across the disciplines.
The variety of approaches proves invaluable to the study of gender and politics in Latin America.

*The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and the Ballot Box*, edited by John French and Daniel James, also takes innovative approaches to the study of gender and politics in Latin America. It examines working-class women and their relationship to the home, work, and both formal and informal politics. It makes important contributions to the study of labor and gender history, engages in the debate between material and postmodernist paradigms, and offers fresh methodological strategies.

This collection is anchored by an introduction summarizing the historiography of Latin American labor history. The editors contend that women have been largely left out of the picture, as have questions of “non-class forms of working class identity and mobilization found among workers (be they based on gender, race or ethnicity, religion or community)” (French and James, 1997: 6). They see their collection as an attempt to correct this oversight and, indeed, to take the study of Latin American women workers one step farther.

French and James argue that while adding women to the traditional narrative has been important to scholars’ understanding of history, a more comprehensive theoretical underpinning is necessary for an understanding of working-class identity and consciousness. They assert that looking at gender as a category of analysis provides a more complex and nuanced picture. One’s identity as male or female is not constituted in a vacuum. Exploring the relationship between men and women and not just women in isolation allows us to see how power is wielded and how identities and class consciousness are formed.

By adopting this line of inquiry, the collection is able to provide a much fuller picture of the worlds of Latin American women workers. These essays go beyond the issues of traditional labor history, such as the shift to wage labor and workers’ relationship to the means of production, to explore how working-class identity is formed and how that identity is gendered. For example, both Thomas Klubock and Heidi Tinsman examine issues of domestic violence. While spouse abuse is certainly not restricted to the working class, examination of how male violence is directed toward women in this class sheds light on issues of power and control, as well as issues of masculinity and femininity.

Much of this approach is indebted to postmodernism. It has been postmodernism that has provided the tools necessary to get at these women’s voices—voices that are often drowned out by those of their male compatriots or by those in power. The contributors to this volume engage in the debate outlined by Dore in her collection. French and James agree with Dore’s analysis: a materialist interpretation must be rounded out by other theoretical approaches, but the material must remain a part of the focus. Latin American labor history must of course look at work and material conditions to see how these women’s worlds were constituted, but it is only with the tools provided by postmodernist theory, such as an emphasis on discourse analysis and theories of representation and language, that we begin to reach the hidden voices of Latin American women workers.
One of these innovative methodological/theoretical approaches is the emphasis on oral history. While oral history has always been a useful tool in corroborating empirical evidence, this collection views it as a valuable source in its own right. All of the essays in this collection use oral testimony to a greater or lesser extent. Indeed, in their conclusion the editors assert that oral sources occupy a “place of pride” (French and James, 1997: 297) in the collection. Oral sources are seen as just as legitimate as written ones, both requiring careful interpretation. The use of oral testimony allows these scholars to “document the lives of those doubly silenced by virtue of their class and gender” (French and James, 1997: 298), and often these stories are extremely powerful. Essays such as Daniel James’s “‘Tales Told Out on the Borderlands’: Doña María’s Story, Oral History, and Issues of Gender,” Theresa R. Vecchia’s “‘My Duty as Woman’: Gender Ideology, Work, and Working-Class Women’s Lives in São Paulo, Brazil, 1900-1950,” and Deborah Levenson-Estrada’s “The Loneliness of Working-Class Feminism: Women in the ‘Male World’ of Labor Unions, Guatemala City, 1970s,” all give voice to working women’s experiences and perceptions.

*Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, edited by Alma M. García, is an effort to give voice to U.S. women who, like Latin American working-class women, have often been overlooked not only by their compatriots but by the larger society as well. It is a collection of pieces—essays, editorials, speeches, and poems—written by Chicana feminist activists from the 1960s through the 1990s that serves to correct the mistaken perception of Chicana feminism as relatively new. Many of the articles were written in the 1960s and 1970s, as the Chicano movement gained force along with the black power movement, the civil rights movement, and the (second-wave) feminist movement, and address common themes. The Chicano movement shared with the black power movement its stress on cultural nationalism rather than just equality. Activists argued that difference should be a source of strength rather than shame. They maintained that the traditional patriarchal Chicano family, with the father in charge and the subservient wife at home, gave the community its moral superiority and served as a basis for resistance. Feminist demands challenged this base, and Chicana feminists were therefore labeled traitors to the cause. Many Chicanos believed that the real issues confronting the movement were racism and class inequities—that feminist issues were divisive and unimportant. Many of the articles in the collection deal with these issues. Male leaders reiterated “El problema es el gabacho, no el macho” (The problem is the white man, not the macho). Chicana feminists argued that only through eradication of machismo could the movement flourish.

Many Chicano activists considered the feminists white dupes and accused them of selling out their heritage. At the same time, many feminists, like other feminists of color, felt ill-at-ease with white middle-class feminists, whom they perceived as classist and racist,’ and did not see them as particularly sympathetic to their cause. In fact, at the first National Youth Liberation Conference held in 1969 in Denver, the Chicana workshop proclaimed that Chicanas did not want to be liberated. This statement highlights many of the contradictions Chicanas experienced within the movement. Some women agreed with many male leaders in seeing feminism as divisive to the movement, arguing that it was more important to remain focused on racism and
class exploitation. Other feminists saw “liberation” as a white woman’s demand and sought to distance themselves from what they saw as an exclusive white bourgeois movement.

Many of these issues persist today, even though Chicana feminists have achieved positions of power in the community as well as in academia. The movement itself, as it was articulated in the 1960s, no longer exists, and this gives Chicana feminists the distance needed to begin to analyze it and gain some perspective on its successes and failures. One group of feminists that has acquired a voice in the 1990s is Chicana lesbians, who feel they are oppressed not only by virtue of race, class, and gender but by their sexuality as well. They face many of the same issues as heterosexual Chicanas but argue that their lesbianism is often interpreted as an extreme rebuke to the Chicano community. Not only do lesbians have to contend with exclusion from the Chicano community as a whole but many lesbians feel that heterosexual Chicanas avoid them as well. This exclusion forces lesbian activists to the forefront of the Chicana feminist movement.

García’s work is an excellent addition to feminist scholarship. She succeeds in bringing together and empowering the work of an often neglected minority. She has organized her collection chronologically and thematically, with an introduction to each section. While at times the themes verge on the repetitive, the collection as a whole works very well. It would make a solid addition to any undergraduate or graduate course on the Chicano/a movement or on feminism in twentieth-century America.

These collections examine feminism and feminist scholarship 30 years after the second-wave feminist movement forced women’s issues into the academy. At first feminist scholarship focused on compensatory history—restoring women to the history from which they had been traditionally excluded. While this remains an important step, feminist scholars are enriching our understanding of traditional stories with an emphasis on gender as a category of analysis in studies of vital topics such as political economy and class formation. These collections challenge the notion that Marxism and postmodernism are mutually exclusive theoretical frameworks. Postmodernist theory suggests that subjectivity is created through more than just material conditions; materialists point out that the material still plays a vital role in shaping historical processes. Neither can be ignored. The editors of these volumes suggest that taking the best of both paradigms will allow a fruitful marriage of the two.

NOTES

1. A good example of elite manipulation of discourse is Susan Besse’s (1996) Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940.
2. For another examination of Latin American labor history, see Viotti da Costa (1989).
3. Other works that rely effectively on oral testimony include Winn (1986) and Becker (1995).
4. Historically this has been the case. For an examination of how white feminists have often deliberately excluded women of color in the United States see Cott (1987) and Bederman (1995).
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Indigenous Peoples in Resistance
History with an Anthropological Perspective

by Karl Reitz


In recent years, anthropologists have turned away from the traditional study of isolated “exotic” groups to examine the complexity of cultures in motion, interacting with others (Rosaldo, 1993). These three books are examples of the application of an anthropological perspective to history. Each deals significantly with the resistance to colonization of indigenous peoples in Latin America.

Only Colchester’s clearly advocates for the right of anthropologists’ subjects to determine their own future. He sees the destruction of indigenous cultures and their home, the rain forest, as a result of continued exploitation by dominant economic forces. In comparison, Dumond’s work is strictly historical, with an unspoken assumption of objectivity, but it is probably not coincidental that his research on indigenous resistance to colonialism coincides with a contemporary rebellion in a contiguous area. Abercrombie’s book is more postmodernist than the others even though this perspective does not add to the value of his presentation. His work is made interesting by relating oral and written tradition.

In Guyana, Fragile Frontier, Colchester places the contemporary plight of the indigenous peoples of Guyana and the rain forest they inhabit in a broad historical context. He considers it important for the people to be able to maintain their cultures, which in turn entails the preservation of the rain forest. He shows that the region’s indigenous peoples have been interacting with Europeans for a long time and sometimes coerced to oppress each other. He does not present a picture of the “noble savage,” but he does make it clear that the current oppression in the name of “structural adjustment” is nothing more than a continuation of the historical exploitation of indigenous peoples and their forests.

Dumond carefully documents the Mayan Campesino Rebellion, in which people who identified themselves as Mayan more or less successfully held off the Spanish, Mexican, and Yucatecan authorities for more than 60 years. His sources primarily take the point of view of the colonizers, and he does not editorialize on them. He does, however, lament the lack of written sources that might provide insight into the

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perspective of the rebels themselves. Because he does not attempt to supplement written documentation with oral tradition (which surely must exist), his book perpetuates the tradition of history written in terms of the conqueror rather than the conquered. Nevertheless, it is an important record of a significant period in the long and continuous struggle of indigenous people’s resistance to centralized, oligarchic authority in Mexico.

Abercrombie’s work uses secondary sources along with ethnographic research to document the history of the Aymara people in the Andean highlands. The juxtaposition of historical records with oral tradition is an interesting contrast. Abercrombie shows that the nonliterate Inca method of recording or remembering history continues even though the external trappings of the contemporary community seem to reflect primarily that of the Spanish conquerors. One point that he seems to be making is that although resistance to colonialism can be found in ordinary practices, it is not pervasive; some practices are enthusiastically borrowed from the colonizers. I know of no one who would argue with this point. Nor would anyone argue with another of his main points: that the concept of history itself differs from one culture to another. Although the book uses the jargon-laden language of postmodernism, it contains sufficient data to keep it interesting.

All three books show that indigenous people do transform imposed social conventions into their own ways of being (Scott, 1990) and that not all imposed social forms are rejected or radically transformed. Some indigenous groups were not at all resistant to assisting colonizers in subjugating other indigenous groups or adopting introduced weapons that would assist them in defeating their traditional enemies. Although Colchester accurately discusses some such instances, he tends to gloss over them, probably because of his sympathetic view of indigenous groups. Abercrombie similarly exhibits an uncritical view of indigenous collaboration with colonizers. Dumond is strictly factual in his discussions of this issue.

Many anthropologists have recognized their responsibility with respect to the debt they owe indigenous peoples for the many insights they have provided (Fixico, 1998). It is often argued that one cannot morally write about the exploitation of indigenous groups without taking action. Many have responded to this challenge by working actively on their subjects’ behalf (Campbell, 1993) in a range of support organizations such as Cultural Survival, the Rainforest Action Network, and Abya Yala. Some academics have affiliated themselves directly with indigenous-led activist organizations. Indigenous organizations, for their part, have recognized the value of aligning themselves with environmental organizations, since they see their cultural survival as linked to the survival of the ecosystems that they consider home (Brysk, 1994). Such attempts produced mixed results depending upon the degree to which internal divisions and outside dominance interfere (Varese, 1996). Colchester’s book is clearly within this movement. The other two books take no position with regard to action.

All three books have a great deal of merit. Only the Colchester book will be accessible for the average undergraduate. It is an excellent source of information on the interaction of indigenous people, a progressive government, the environment, and the effect of neoliberalism in Guyana. Dumond’s book, thorough and well written, is destined to be a standard reference on a part of the history of Mexico. Abercrombie’s
work is an addition to the literature challenging the idea that indigenous people maintain their cultural integrity by hiding it under a gloss of the oppressor’s culture (see Kearney, 1996).

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Mexico is happy that Biden has talked about a “pathway to citizenship” for millions of Mexicans living in the US — many illegally — as well as halted construction on the border wall begun by his predecessor Donald Trump and reversed Trump’s policies that kept tens of thousands of asylum-seekers in Mexico until their court hearings. Also on rt.com DHS to bring over 25,000 asylum-seekers from Mexico after revoking Trump policy. On the other hand, Mexican authorities are worried Biden is incentivizing the recent surge of migrants from places like Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, which is being Latino immigrants have historically faced many challenges living in the United States (U.S.). The economic crisis combined with new anti-immigration policies and harsh enforcement strategies may exacerbate the stress and anxiety Latino immigrant families already endure as a result of discrimination and financial hardships. The purpose of this study was to understand the current challenges Latino immigrant families encounter within an anti-immigrant social-political environment. Fifty-two first generation immigrants participated in focus group sessions, which lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. Migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border on Tuesday were photographed wearing T-shirts in support of President Biden at the San Ysidro crossing port in Tijuana, Baja California state. Texas border sectors see over 100 jump in unaccompanied minor apprehensions in 2021. Casey Stegall reports from Eagle Pass, Texas, with the latest on the situation at the U.S.-Mexico border. Migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border on Tuesday were photographed wearing T-shirts in support of President Biden at the San Ysidro crossing port in Tijuana, Baja California state. One apparent migrant held up a poster that read, "Biden, please let us in!" Migrants from Central America and elsewhere, hoping to cross and request asylum in the U.S., hold banners and shout slogans to President Bi However, the number of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the U.S. is on the decline. The number of Mexicans living in the U.S., without documentation has decreased by more than 1 million since 2007, according to Pew Research. In fiscal 2016, more than 190,000 Mexicans were apprehended at the border, a sharp drop from a peak of 1.6 million apprehensions in 2000, also according to Pew. Apprehensions at the border have increased over the past year but they still remain at historic lows. This hasn’t stopped Trump from tweeting earlier this year, “Our Southern border is under siege.” And he began The Siege of Mexico City was an 1867 military engagement in the Second French intervention in Mexico between Mexican Republican forces, aided by the United States, and Emperor Maximilian’s troops, aided by the French Empire and Austria-Hungary, encompassing in the siege of the city. It was the last armed conflict of the Second Mexican Empire and the fall of the city resulted in the transition of the Empire into the Republic led by Benito Juárez. :283.