

FROM VICTIMS TO AGENTS:
A New Generation of Literature
on Women in Latin America*

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SEX AND SEXUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA. Edited by Daniel Balderston and Donna J. Guy. (New York: New York University Press, 1997. Pp. 288. \$55.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

WOMEN AND AGRIBUSINESS: WORKING MIRACLES IN THE CHILEAN FRUIT EXPORT SECTOR. By Stephanie Barrientos, Anna Bee, Ann Matear, and Isabel Vogel. (New York: St. Martin's, 1999. Pp. 231. \$72.00 cloth.)

WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS: DIVERSITY AND DYNAMICS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. By Sylvia Chant. (New York: St. Martin's, 1997. Pp. 338. \$69.95 cloth.)

THE GENDERED WORLDS OF LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN WORKERS: FROM HOUSEHOLD AND FACTORY TO THE UNION HALL AND BALLOT BOX. Edited by John D. French and Daniel James. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997. Pp. 320. \$54.95 cloth, \$17.95 paper.)

WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: RESTORING WOMEN TO HISTORY. By Marysa Navarro and Virginia Sánchez Korrol. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. Pp. 128. \$29.95 cloth, \$11.95 paper.)

FROM OUT OF THE SHADOWS: MEXICAN WOMEN IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA. By Vicki L. Ruiz. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. Pp. 240. \$30.00 cloth.)

THE MYTH OF THE MALE BREADWINNER: WOMEN AND INDUSTRIALIZATION IN THE CARIBBEAN. By Helen Safa. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995. Pp. 208. \$55.00 cloth, \$18.95 paper.)

In a 1986 review essay in this journal, I summarized the trends in what was then a fledgling body of literature on women in Latin America. It was a relatively straightforward exercise because the books reviewed, as typical expressions of the literature they represented, all explored a single overarching research question. And the answers to it could be classified in terms of the three theoretical paradigms prevailing at the time. The ques-

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tion that intrigued this first generation of women-in-development (WID) scholars was how “modernization” or “capitalist expansion” transformed women’s lives. Although first-generation WID researchers grounded their analyses empirically in historical or contemporary case studies or survey research, the theoretical lenses that focused their studies informed their answers to this question. Thus researchers within the modernization school claimed that modernization integrated women into the economic and political spheres of their society, thereby increasing their access to socially valued roles and resources. By contrast, feminist scholars representing the developmentalist perspective argued that development eroded women’s access to resources by limiting their agricultural contributions and isolating them within the household or confining them to informal-sector activities. The most negative accounts of the process emanated from socialist-feminist theorists, who held that capitalist expansion exacerbated preexisting gender inequalities by exploiting women in poorly paying and insecure jobs or in unpaid domestic tasks that supplemented male breadwinners’ inadequate wages.

These three perspectives—which I labeled the integration, marginalization, and exploitation theses—paralleled similar debates in the comparative literature. Modernization theorists stressed the benefits of socioeconomic development for Latin America and other developing regions, while Marxist, dependency, world-systems, and modes-of-production theorists emphasized the negative impact of capitalist expansion under dependent conditions. Although first-generation WID researchers did not ignore the historical and sociocultural factors that distinguished Latin American women from women in Asia and Africa, their analyses usually highlighted the consistencies in global and national processes that led to common experiences for non-Western women.

First-generation WID scholars played a valuable role in establishing a complex agenda for research on Latin American women. They shared a commitment to portray accurately women’s circumstances via well-designed studies; to develop and refine theoretical paradigms to explain gender dynamics; and to produce information relevant for social planning and public-policy formulation. Yet in their eagerness to advance cross-cultural conceptual frameworks, they often made theoretical generalizations that lacked sensitivity to women’s diverse circumstances. Similarly, in their attempt to explain how development affected gender relations and changed women’s lives, first-generation WID scholars often overlooked the many ways that gender dynamics transformed or reinforced national and international systems and processes. And in their quest to understand how patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism, racism, and other oppressive systems contributed to gender subordination, they often portrayed women as hapless victims with minimal latitude for resistance, agency, or creativity. Many first-generation analyses were confined to macro-level processes that shed little or no light

on the interpersonal relationships that give meaning to everyday life. Moreover, the exclusive focus on women prevented gender comparisons and obscured women's relationships to the men in their lives.

The seven books to be reviewed herein represent the second generation of scholarship in a field that has changed dramatically and become so complex as to defy ready categorization. Contemporary scholars have abandoned the term *women in development*, either replacing it with *gender and development* or eschewing labels entirely. The change in nomenclature represents an empirical expansion to encompass men as well as women as gendered beings along with a theoretical refocusing on gender as the key concept for understanding social life. Second-generation scholars depart from their predecessors' tendencies to examine how women's lives are played out in specific spheres, such as the home or the workplace, or within the parameters framed by singular structures, such as the state or the labor market. Instead, second-generation scholars challenge dichotomous concepts such as production-reproduction, male-female, and domination-subordination, preferring a more holistic approach that acknowledges the complex interactions that underlie gender dynamics. While second-generation literature continues to explore the political, economic, and social processes that intrigued first-generation researchers, these works also embrace sexuality, identity, and linguistic expressions as essential foci for investigation and analysis. Most significantly, perhaps, whereas many first-generation feminist scholars viewed women as passive victims of capitalist exploitation and patriarchal oppression, most contemporary gender scholars now emphasize women's agency in constructing their own identities and challenging oppressive hierarchies of race, class, or sexuality. These new images define women not as subordinated objects but as gendered subjects who creatively construct their social worlds and the cultural discourses that impart meaning to their lives.

One of the clearest statements of the difference between first- and second-generation gender scholarship comes from Helen Safa, an important contributor to the first generation of literature on Latin American and Caribbean women. In her preface to *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner*, she notes that over time, she "came to realize the importance of focusing on gender issues . . . rather than focusing exclusively on women, since a full comprehension of women's status can only be obtained through a comparison with men" (p. xiv). Her analysis, in which declining male wages and levels of labor-force participation were major stimuli to women's waged employment, resonates with similar arguments in the books under review that show the intimate links between men's and women's lives.

One reason for the contrast between the two generations of scholarship is that the world has changed dramatically in the intervening decades. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, when most first-generation studies were undertaken, Latin American and Caribbean countries have experienced profound economic, political, and cultural changes. These include a wrenching

economic crisis, a series of structural adjustment programs designed to alleviate it, a trend toward privatization that has replaced import substitution with export-led development strategies, and a resurgence of “neoliberal” ideologies that oppose state intervention in market economies. These economic changes have paralleled and sometimes contributed to democratic transitions in which authoritarian regimes have given way to more representative governments. At the same time, the revolution in computer-assisted communication technologies has stimulated an increasingly globalized culture in which Latin Americans contribute as producers and consumers. These trends, to which women have contributed centrally as wage earners, political agents, community organizers, social critics, and artists, have shattered the real or symbolic boundaries between *casa* and *calle*, thereby challenging scholars to reformulate concepts that minimized women’s agency.

Yet the divergence between first- and second-generation literature does not simply reflect changing empirical circumstances. It demonstrates instead more thoroughgoing theoretical transformations. The impetus for this conceptual reformulation has come from postmodern theory, which originates in Michel Foucault’s work on the political implications of knowledge and language. Contemporary gender scholars share the postmodern disdain for “essentializing” categories and concepts that treat social phenomena as universally fixed realities rather than fluid and often politically motivated sociocultural constructions. They eschew their predecessors’ tendency to make sweeping, “universalizing” generalizations that neglect the varied and often contradictory meanings and circumstances in which women’s and men’s lives are embedded. Contemporary gender scholars also reject concepts such as patriarchy, imperialism, capitalism, or even women and men as having a timeless reality apart from the historical and social contexts from which they emerge. Similarly, these scholars call attention to the role of social scientists and historians as powerful proponents of academic discourses in promoting modes of inquiry that they view as misleading at best and at worst politically disempowering for the groups they study.

Another way that postmodernism has influenced second-generation feminist scholarship is its disdain for “grand narratives”: overarching theoretical frameworks for deriving concepts, deducing hypotheses, and interpreting phenomena that pay inadequate attention to the diversity and complexity of the subject matter. In their attempt to take such criticism to heart, contemporary feminist scholars have abandoned or reformulated the theoretical paradigms developed by first-generation scholars to make them more consistent with postmodern conceptual contributions.

Many second-generation innovations reflect what John French and Daniel James describe as “engagement with the theoretical category of gender,” a fluid social process in a continual state of transformation (p. 4). Gender identities emerge and change as individuals construct and contest their meanings within historically specific social settings. The researcher’s task,

after grappling with her or his own gendered “subject position” and the ways it may shape the research, is to explore how women and men create and negotiate gendered identities, roles, and relationships within the overlapping contexts in which their lives unfold. Each of the books under review either implicitly or explicitly, sets out to accomplish this task.

Another common element among these diverse books is their commitment to exploring how race interacts with class and gender to influence women’s lives. In *From Out of the Shadows*, Vicki Ruiz gently chides social historians for making race, class, and gender into “familiar watchwords, maybe even a mantra” yet rarely getting “beneath the surface to explore their intersections in a manner that sheds light on power and powerlessness, boundaries and voice, hegemony and agency” (p. xiv). Her critique could as easily apply to first-generation WID scholars, who often noted the importance of the tripartite interaction but rarely moved beyond the relationships between gender and class. The commitment to theorizing race as a dimension of identity and difference imparts a unique cast to second-generation feminist scholarship. Aside from *Women and Agribusiness*, which includes little information on Chilean fruit pickers’ racial affiliations, the books under review exemplify this commitment. An exception to this tendency is Helen Safa, who admits that while an analysis of race would inform her analysis, she came to understand its importance too late to incorporate it into the data collection efforts underlying her book. Her honest admonition of the omission is noteworthy in reflecting her intellectual integrity and also in illustrating the difference between the two generations of scholarship.

The books under review all reflect the postmodern influence on second-generation scholarship. Although some, such as *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America*, explicitly embrace postmodern assumptions and concepts, others show its impact more obliquely in that their authors take pains to avoid the tendencies that subjected first-generation scholarship to postmodernist criticism. Thus in *Women-Headed Households*, Sylvia Chant is cautious about using her cross-cultural case-study data to make empirical generalizations, shunning universal claims in order to “explain (and represent) difference” (p. 262). Similarly, John French and Daniel James, in their introduction to *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers*, condemn dichotomous conceptual categories and use the term *gendered worlds* to emphasize that “women’s identities are not constituted apart from those of men” (p. 4). And Helen Safa and Vicki Ruiz both introduce their books by positioning themselves and their narrative voice vis-à-vis their subject matter. None of these books are written in terms of an explicit overarching theoretical framework. While some use postmodern concepts and others use concepts such as the gender division of labor that are rooted in socialist feminism, none of them employ the kinds of “grand narrative” for which postmodernists criticized the first generation of WID scholarship.

Three Forms of Second-Generation Gender Scholarship

The eclectic set of books under review represents various directions in second-generation scholarship on Latin American women. If these works, and contemporary gender scholarship generally, are not readily classifiable according to divergent theoretical frameworks, they can be categorized in terms of their epistemological aims. Some shed light on a previously ignored realm of reality, while others make cautious empirical generalizations as a basis for inductive theorization, and a third type challenges readers to jettison established concepts in order to think about phenomena in new ways. These aims might be labeled “illumination,” “induction,” and “iconoclasm,” respectively.

Illuminative scholarship portrays a hitherto neglected or inadequately researched aspect of women’s and men’s lives to increase understanding, appreciation, and insight. While the discussion is typically structured according to common themes that lend coherence to the analysis, the primary intent is to portray the diverse ways in which complex circumstances combine to produce distinctive experiential outcomes. Illumination-oriented works typically allow women and men to relate their experiences in their own voices, using their own words or means of expression. Illumination was a common epistemological aim of first-generation research, which often sought to redress women’s exclusion from academic scholarship or policy initiatives but typically depicted women as unfortunate victims of gender and class inequalities or as passive beneficiaries of gender-sensitive planning efforts. Contemporary research in this genre emphasizes women’s agency and includes race, sexuality, and other dimensions that interact with class and gender to influence a woman’s unique experiences and interpretations. Common methodologies used to accomplish this end include oral history, participant observation, and unstructured interviews.

Inductive scholarship compares a series of cases to ferret out commonalities and divergences in women’s and men’s experiences. These works use inductive reasoning to amass empirical generalizations that attend as much to the differences as to the consistencies across analytical units. Such generalizations provide a basis for formulating “grounded theory”—theories rooted in real-world contexts and developed with the conscious intent to avoid preconceived images, concepts, or assumptions. The urge to generalize was common among first-generation WID researchers, whose enthusiasm for illustrating cross-cultural similarities in women’s experience and explaining them via abstract, broad-ranging theories sometimes led to simplistic formulations that ignored women’s diverse experiences. Contemporary researchers seek to avoid this pitfall by advancing empirical generalizations cautiously, in ways that address contextual and historical specificity, and by purposefully confronting the value orientations that could bias their

interpretation and theorizing. Comparative case study is the most common methodology within this genre of scholarship.

Iconoclastic scholarship depicts its fictional or real-world subject matter in ways that shatter preconceived images and entice readers to think about it in radical new ways. These works often focus on taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life, which they represent through novel interpretations or unexpected concepts. Distrustful of established methods and paradigms, iconoclastic scholars use alternate terminology and analytical modes not easily encompassed within conventional conceptual frameworks. Many employ metaphor, allegory, and other literary devices to present their arguments. Iconoclastic works were virtually absent from first-generation WID scholarship. Their increasing popularity in contemporary Latin American gender literature reflects the influence of postmodernism. The most common methodologies used in this form of scholarship are linguistic analysis, discursive deconstruction, and ethnology.

Illumination: Bringing Gendered Lives into Focus

Historian Vicki Ruiz's *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* exemplifies the illumination genre of contemporary scholarship. As the title implies, Ruiz intends to shed needed light on an inadequately researched topic, the contributions of Mexican women to twentieth-century U.S. life. Ruiz draws on archival sources and oral histories to weave a compelling narrative, beginning with the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century migrations that stimulated cross-border movements and created enduring social networks that spanned the border. Women had always participated in the northward migration streams that augmented Spanish and Mexican settlements throughout the Southwest. After 1848, however, when the region's incorporation into the United States relegated Mexicans to residential segregation and social subordination, women migrants and the long-term residents whose communities they joined faced additional challenges. Ruiz describes these women's numerous contributions in generating needed household income through domestic service, farm labor, and factory jobs; in forging the social bonds and voluntary associations that maintained community solidarity; and in keeping the cultural traditions that supported collective identity. The narrative unfolds against a chilling backdrop of institutionalized racism and xenophobic sentiment that culminated during the Great Depression, when about a third of the nation's Mexican population—more than half a million persons, most of them U.S. citizens—were either deported or repatriated to Mexico.

In writing *From Out of the Shadows*, Ruiz used primary source materials from Houchen Settlement House, an El Paso-based social service provider, to portray attempts to "Americanize" the Mexican community and

to show that women availed themselves of the proffered resources and services while resisting assimilation on the whole. Instead, they engaged in “cultural coalescence,” through which they selectively appropriated, rejected, or contested various cultural elements to create “permeable cultures rooted in generation, gender, religion, class and personal experience” (p. 50). The themes of women’s resistance and agency permeate the narrative, which depicts teenagers’ clever attempts to thwart parental chaperonage, workers’ militant resistance to labor exploitation, and community organizers’ strategies for forcing recalcitrant municipal governments to provide needed services for Mexican-American neighborhoods. Ruiz documents women’s participation in the Chicano Student Movement to illustrate Chicana feminists’ challenges and achievements. When the movement emerged during the late 1960s, Chicanas struggled to develop empowering icons and leadership styles in a movement that viewed feminist claims as illegitimate. Today Chicana feminist scholars and activists work to incorporate competing identity claims reflecting sexuality, acculturation, and other potentially divisive forces. Ruiz’s account illuminates the tensions that have threatened to tear the Chicana movement apart as well as the soul-searching pleas for unity that have helped ensure its continued coherence.

The metaphor of movement from shadow to light represents appropriately Mexicanas’ emergence as a vibrant political force by century’s end, as well as Ruiz’s commitment to removing them from historical obscurity. Her cogent, meticulously documented treatise is an innovative work that greatly enhances understanding of Mexicanas’ lives. She has made an enduring contribution by conducting oral histories with an aging cohort of women whose experiences might otherwise be lost to future generations of historians. While the primary focus in *From Out of the Shadows* on the Southwest leaves unanswered questions about the parallels and divergences among different regional patterns, it sets a useful agenda for future research. And although the statistical data in the appendices could be better integrated into the discussion, the patterns revealed in the tables are clear-cut enough to require little interpretation on the author’s part. In short, in synthesizing a wealth of information on a relatively neglected topic into a stirring portrayal of women’s courage and agency, Ruiz’s book epitomizes illuminative scholarship.

A second example of illumination-oriented scholarship is *Women in Latin America and the Caribbean: Restoring Women to History*. One of four volumes in the series “Restoring Women to History,” this book addresses Latin American history’s frequent omission of gender issues. Initiated as a set of materials for classroom use, the project was expanded to incorporate the burgeoning literature of the 1990s. Authors Marysa Navarro and Virginia Sánchez Korrol share the task, with the former focusing on women in the precolonial and colonial periods and the latter summarizing women’s contributions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Redressing the conven-

tional tendency to focus exclusively on women's familial roles, the authors illuminate women's varied contributions to public life in their societies. Intent on depicting the complex interactions among race, class, and gender, Navarro and Sánchez Korrol demonstrate women's agency in contesting subordinating structures while expanding the creative space available for their economic, cultural, and political activities. Navarro's narrative proceeds chronologically, effectively using available sources to highlight women's typically unacknowledged contributions while providing insight into the regional and national trends that shaped their constraints and opportunities. Sánchez Korrol's contribution is structured more thematically, summarizing women's struggles and achievements in the educational, cultural, economic, and political arenas. The result is a coherent compendium that sheds light on women's common experiences while noting their divergent manifestations in specific settings.

Navarro and Sánchez Korrol have undertaken a formidable task in *Women in Latin America and the Caribbean* in attempting to distill five centuries of Latin American women's history into a concise narrative appropriate for undergraduate classroom use. To accomplish this goal, the authors had to find a comfortable equilibrium between macro-level trends and individual women's experiences. Navarro's account, in which several amazing women "come alive" for the reader, achieves a better balance than Sánchez Korrol's, which describes general trends rather than personal narratives and confines its account of women's voices to several quotes from female literary figures from a 1983 source. This omission is perplexing because the modern period offers abundant examples of individual women's courage and achievements, which might have been chronicled to present more compelling and personalized images for undergraduate readers. Yet while this omission might limit the book's audience appeal, it does not impair the scholarly quality. A graver problem involves the incorporation of current research, which proliferated during the 1990s. Most of the works cited are from the 1970s and 1980s, when the original classroom materials were produced, suggesting that the mission of revising these materials in light of the most recent trends in contemporary research may not have been fully accomplished. *Women in Latin America and the Caribbean* makes a useful contribution nonetheless in illuminating a complex subject in a coherent narrative.

Although historians' penchant for examining neglected subjects is yielding a profusion of illumination-oriented historical scholarship, the urge to bring a novel or misunderstood topic to academic light may also underlie social scientific explorations of contemporary phenomena. *Women and Agribusiness: Working Miracles in the Chilean Fruit Export Sector* contributes to a literature that contains only limited information on Latin American women's rapidly increasing participation in export-led agriculture. Given the copious contemporary research on women's work for transnational manufacturing firms, the omission of women agribusiness workers is notable. In

part it reflects the relative recency with which Latin American countries have begun to promote “nontraditional” agricultural exports—products like fruit, vegetables, and flowers that were once locally seasonal but are now available year-round to global consumers thanks to the innovations of transnational corporations. The lack of coverage also reflects a curious myopia stemming from Ester Boserup’s agenda-setting research, in which she documented African and Asian women’s agricultural contributions while labeling most of Latin America as a “male-farming region” in which women’s inputs into agricultural production were minimal.¹ Some first-generation WID researchers sought to correct this inaccuracy by documenting Latin American women’s unremunerated work within family farming systems or their low-wage seasonal labor on commercial farms, but women’s massive influx into the agricultural export sector during the 1980s remained largely unexplored. By illuminating Chilean women’s participation in the fruit export industry, Stephanie Barrientos, Anna Bee, Ann Matear, and Isabel Vogel help remedy this deficiency in the literature.

These authors’ interdisciplinary collaboration has produced a sophisticated analysis linking global, national, community, and household trends to explore gender relations within Chile’s fruit export sector. The “explosion” of Chilean fruit exports occurred under the regime of General Augusto Pinochet, which promoted a free-market model of export-led growth that took advantage of Chile’s “comparative advantage” in fruit production. With the ensuing commercialization of agriculture and subsequent growth of the landless wage labor force, many Chileans turned to the fruit industry for seasonal employment. Women, now about half of this temporary workforce, are concentrated in tasks such as sorting and packing. They often work long hours during the peak season but have limited means for generating income the rest of the year. Income earned through fruit production is typically so essential for household survival and the demand for experienced labor so intense when the fruit season peaks that most women find themselves returning to employment in the fruit sector year after year. The difficulty of supporting households on a year-round basis with seasonal incomes poses challenges for both men and women, although men have better options for earning money when fruit-sector jobs are unavailable.

This situation creates a paradox for women *temporeras*, most of whom have male partners and children. When fruit production is in full swing, they experience the potentially empowering effects of generating resources that can increase their household bargaining power and forming social networks at the workplace that can enhance self-esteem and promote collec-

1. A significant catalyst for women-in-development scholarship was Ester Boserup’s *Women’s Role in Economic Development* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1970). Boserup’s analysis of how economic development affected Asian, African, and Latin American women shaped the course of first-generation WID research.

tive solidarity. When the season ends and they revert back to their full-time domestic roles, women once again become embedded in traditional gender relationships that emphasize female passivity and male decision-making authority. Even at the height of the fruit season, when women spend long days in the fields or packing plants, their household responsibilities remain constant, and they must negotiate the terms of their dual roles with husbands who depend on their incomes but resent the intrusion on their wives' "domestic duties." Barrientos et al. present material from several case studies to illuminate women's strategies for confronting these contradictory circumstances. The authors also consider various initiatives at state and international levels to improve wages, working conditions, and support services for agribusiness workers in Chile and elsewhere.

A central thesis of *Women and Agribusiness* is that gender roles and relationships are an essential element of agribusiness. Gender dynamics intervene at almost every stage in the complex chain of production, distribution, and consumption that characterizes the global food industry. Food producers take advantage of gender-segregated labor markets that maintain women's status as available low-waged workers with supposedly feminine skills that suit them for specific tasks such as pruning delicate plants and packaging fruit attractively. Gender roles also intervene at the point of consumption, where many marketing and advertising efforts are directed toward the women who buy groceries and prepare meals for their households. Although the authors focus mainly on production, their attention to the international market dynamics driving the "consumer-led global supply chain" (p. 187) that incorporates Chilean fruit exports enhances their research. And their analysis of the ways that gender relations mediate outcomes all along the agribusiness chain makes their book essential reading for anyone wishing to understand agribusiness. Thus *Women and Agribusiness* represents illuminatory scholarship at its best. In bringing to light the essential connections between gender relations and agribusiness in the Chilean fruit export sector and elsewhere, the book contributes significantly to the globalization literature.

Induction: Distilling Common Themes from Diverse Experiences

While illumination-oriented scholarship on gender may promote theorization by highlighting relationships among interconnected processes, its primary purpose is to shed light on neglected or unexplored topics by amassing and interpreting empirical data. Inductive gender scholarship tackles the theorization process more directly by comparing empirical regularities and dissimilarities across different cases and by conceptualizing them in theoretically significant ways. In contrast to the generally unexplored topics that animate illuminatory scholarship, inductive works consider topics that have stimulated enough previous research to have generated unre-

solved debates or taken-for-granted assumptions that the author wishes to resolve, challenge, or elaborate in ways that can stimulate theoretical refinement and conceptual clarification.

Sylvia Chant's *Women-Headed Households: Diversity and Dynamics in the Developing World* exemplifies inductive second-generation gender scholarship. She uses her extensive fieldwork in Mexico, Costa Rica, and the Philippines to explore the complex issues surrounding female headship of households. Despite several decades of empirical research, the topic continues to be mired in controversy and misunderstanding. The dissension has developed partly from definitional inconsistencies reflecting the diversity and fluidity of household arrangements and the resulting conceptualization and measurement problems. Yet an equally important factor arises from the topic's ideological implications. Because these households depart from the normative ideal of the two-parent family, they inflame polemical debates among conservators of "family values" who demonize single mothers, exponents of alternative family forms who applaud them, and social reformers who view them as victimized by intergenerational cycles of poverty and social marginality. The common stereotype of the never-married mother often obscures the fact that single motherhood may also result from marital separation, divorce, migration, or the death of a spouse. The frequent tendency to equate single motherhood with female-household headship leads to further conceptual confusion. While not presuming to provide definitive information about female-headed households, Chant aims to cut through the confusion in light of her longitudinal and cross-cultural research.

Chant pays close attention to the diversity of female-headed households both within and among societies. She seeks to ferret out common patterns and explore their varied expressions in specific circumstances. Over the course of fifteen years, Chant conducted numerous studies of impoverished women in León, Querétaro, and Puerto Vallarta, Mexico; in Liberia, Cañas, and Santa Cruz, Costa Rica; and in Cebu City, Lapu-Lapu City, and Boracay in the Philippines. Subsequent visits to these sites enabled her to track women's changing experiences and to develop enduring friendships with many women who shared information about their lives that would not have emerged from more superficial encounters. Chant was also able to monitor their children's development to assess their impressions of growing up in fatherless households and their aspirations, attitudes, and achievements as young adults. The parallel information from three contexts in each of three countries permits comparisons within and across different regions. This sophisticated research design complements Chant's considerable interpretive skills and impressive insight into the literature to produce a superior work that exemplifies strong inductive scholarship.

Chant maintains in *Women-Headed Households* that women enter into female-headed households for various reasons, male desertion and neglect

being the most common. Yet while such circumstances are generally beyond women's control, they manifest considerable agency in their subsequent decisions by weighing the advantages of residing with a male partner against the freedom of heading their own households. For women to survive under such circumstances, they must have some means of supporting themselves and their children and must be able to cope with the social pressures to which single women are frequently subjected. Contextual factors affect women's choices about establishing their own households, including the availability of income-generating opportunities for women and cultural images about the importance of marriage, the acceptability of separation and divorce, and the stigma of bearing a child out of wedlock.

Most women in Chant's study preferred their current arrangements to previous ones in which they resided with a male partner. Even those women whose economic circumstances had deteriorated after the separation generally felt that they were better off because they had more control over the disposition of household income. Relative to the male-headed households in their communities, those headed by women were no more apt to be mired in poverty, and their children were as likely to achieve their occupational goals and to form stable unions as adults. Such conclusions contradict many popular stereotypes—and numerous empirical studies—emphasizing the economic and social pathologies connected to single motherhood and female-headed households.

Chant's methodological sophistication shines in her discussion of the benefits and potential pitfalls of comparative research and its relevance for theorization. She appreciates the postmodernists' injunction to avoid making universal theoretical claims based on empirical overgeneralization. She believes nevertheless that comparative case studies can yield useful insights if researchers attend as closely to the diverse expressions of recurring patterns as to the similarities themselves. These patterns can be a basis for meaningful, albeit cautious, theorization if researchers avoid interpreting them through preconceived images and assumptions. Developing grounded theory through inductive reasoning—what Chant refers to as “theorising from the ‘bottom-up’”—can help researchers counteract this tendency (p. 262).

Chant's work is the most comprehensive cross-cultural research to date on women-headed households. While her attention to detail, diversity, and difference may be frustrating to readers who desire a more straightforward account shorn of the complicating and sometimes confusing exceptions and nuances that pepper the narrative, most readers will appreciate her thoroughness. And although Chant's penchant for caveats leads at times to convoluted writing, the excellence of the content of *Women-Headed Households* outweighs any stylistic difficulties.

Like the women-headed households investigated by Chant, women industrial workers have been the focus of considerable research over the past two decades. Yet the copious empirical studies have not dispelled the

stereotypes and misinformation about women workers in transnational manufacturing firms. The common image of the single, childless young woman who works temporarily before becoming a full-time wife and mother and whose low wages are insufficient to contribute significantly to household income, continues to prevail in both journalistic and scholarly accounts. In the political debates over the North American Free Trade Agreement, opponents of NAFTA lamented the transfer of manufacturing jobs from (typically male) U.S. citizens who need them to support families to young Mexican women who earn supplemental income or spend their wages on blue jeans, makeup, and leisure activities. A surprising number of scholarly accounts have reiterated this ideologically useful stereotype despite growing evidence of its inaccuracy. The stereotype not only belies the empirical diversity within and across societies among women industrial workers but drastically understates the importance of women's wages for their families' economic well-being. While the stereotype may bear some relation to women industrial workers in countries that have only recently opened themselves to transnational corporate investment, it becomes increasingly less accurate as the manufacturing sector expands to augment labor demand and to draw a more diverse cross-section of women into its orbit. One reason for the stereotype's resilience, despite so much contradictory evidence, may be that few researchers have compared countries at differing levels of industrial development. Anthropologist Helen Safa compares findings from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba to help shatter the stereotype in *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner: Women and Industrialization in the Caribbean*.

Having spent over forty years living and conducting research in the Hispanic Caribbean, Safa has witnessed first hand the dramatic changes that have swept the region since Puerto Rico inaugurated Operation Bootstrap during the late 1940s. Its long-running experience with export-led industrialization provides a useful comparison with the Dominican Republic, where transnational manufacturing investment began during the 1960s and accelerated rapidly in the 1980s, when the economic crisis drastically lowered labor costs. In both countries, rising rates of women's participation in the labor force, particularly in the industrial sector, have accompanied declining levels of male employment. Cuba presents a third point of contrast with its socialist regime that emphasized agricultural exports and import-substitution industrialization rather than export-led manufacturing. Unlike the other two countries, Cuba used state policy to buttress male employment while stimulating women's economic activity until the 1990s, when trade relations with the former Soviet Union collapsed, throwing the Cuban economy into crisis. By considering how paid employment has affected women's lives in these three different contexts, Safa can detect any common patterns while exploring the divergent effects of contrasting economic arrangements and state policies.

As the title of *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner* implies, women are

essential wage earners in all three contexts and are sometimes the only economic contributors to their households. Most women in Safa's sample were partnered or single women with children. In Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, export-led industrial firms' preference for female labor has augmented women's employment opportunities while stagnation in other economic sectors has contributed to male unemployment and out-migration. Here women have increasingly become primary household providers. Their declining economic dependence on a male partner has generally increased their household bargaining power, enhanced their sense of self-worth, and provided the financial wherewithal to head their own households. Yet their economic circumstances have not caused a corresponding shift in gender roles. The image of the male breadwinner is so pervasive that even chronically unemployed men are considered household heads and key providers. And although women's incomes may give them greater leverage over household decisions, their jobs have not enhanced their legitimacy in the public sphere, where they continue to have little input into politics or labor unions. In the workplace, employers' persistent image of women as supplemental wage earners remains a justification for paying them low wages and ignoring their demands for improved working conditions.

In Puerto Rico, where industrial decline due to international competition is leading to plant shutdowns and worker layoffs, women are beginning to face the same specter of unemployment that has plagued men for decades. Yet access to transfer payments, public housing, and other governmental benefits insulates households to some extent from the declining industrial economy. In the Dominican Republic, by contrast, where households have borne the brunt of the economic crisis with minimal governmental support, men have entered into the informal sector to supplement women factory workers' low wages. Even though they may earn less than their wives, their informal incomes have helped them envision themselves as primary breadwinners and have reinforced women's subscription to traditional gender roles emphasizing male responsibility for heading households.

In Cuba the post-revolutionary state's attempts to legislate gender equality and to provide day care and other benefits to encourage women's employment have augmented women's financial independence. Yet while women's economic activity has generally increased their self-esteem and their household decision-making power, it has had little impact on male gender roles. Women continue to bear responsibility for household tasks and child rearing; and in most families, men continue to exert ultimate authority over household decisions. Gender segregation persists in many occupational sectors, confining women to jobs with lower pay and less prestige. Discrimination is pronounced in the manufacturing sector, where male workers prevent women from attaining administrative positions. Even though many women express strong job commitment, most subordinate their employment to their roles as wives and mothers, and most consider themselves

to be only supplemental household wage earners. Thus the myth of the male breadwinner has maintained its cultural tenacity despite several decades of socialist revolution.

Safa's insightful analysis in *The Myth of the Male Breadwinner* draws on information from the three contexts to offer insights into the uniformities and divergences in women's employment experiences and their implications for other aspects of women's lives. Her methodological strategy of developing empirical generalizations across several case studies and drawing out the theoretical implications of these patterns locates the work firmly within the inductive genre of second-generation scholarship. But unlike many second-generation scholars whose postmodern predilections make them reluctant to offer generalizations, Safa does not shy away from describing the common patterns she discerns among her case studies and interpreting them in light of theoretically relevant concepts. The result is a coherent portrayal that helps counteract many of the existing stereotypes in the literature and the popular media. One might question the legitimacy of including Cuba in a study of women's role in the "new international division of labor." Yet I am convinced by Safa's position that Cuba's unique features make it a useful point of comparison with the two countries that have followed the more conventional export-oriented manufacturing model. Her attention to the similarities and differences revealed by the Cuban case highlights the value of comparative research. The result is an extremely useful work that expands understanding of women's employment in the Hispanic Caribbean.

Noting Common Patterns across Time

Both Chant and Safa use comparative case studies to produce their inductive scholarship. Anthologies provide another means of discerning patterns of similarity and difference as a basis for empirically grounded theorization. By carefully selecting a cross-section of studies that explore similar topics, anthology editors can detect and theoretically interpret commonalities and divergences among the various cases. The success of the enterprise hinges on the editor's ability to pick relevant cases, to elucidate their common elements, and to interpret these "second-hand" empirical generalizations in theoretically meaningful ways. Historians John French and Daniel James demonstrate the utility of this approach in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box*. In their view, the comparative case studies that social scientists favor can yield valuable insights. Yet because comparative case studies typically permit spatial rather than temporal comparisons, they are not attuned to detecting patterns that emerge and change over time. By presenting and commenting on case studies from various eras, French and James are able to make empirical generalizations across both space and time.

Their volume focuses on Latin American women's industrial labor during the first half of the twentieth century. The essays include accounts of Argentine meatpackers, Brazilian, Colombian, and Guatemalan textile workers, and Chilean fruit producers as well as women whose husbands labored in Chilean copper mines. The accounts highlight women's contributions as union activists, community organizers, and political party leaders while emphasizing their equally courageous, if less public, attempts to gain power at home and in the workplace through flirting, fighting, gossiping, or defying spousal injunctions. The essays elaborate the varied ways in which women have confronted the contradiction between the cultural cliché that factory work threatened women's feminine virtues and an economic context in which working-class women's wages were essential for household survival. Like the industrial workers studied by Safa, these women typically resolved the dilemma by viewing wage work as a primary means of fulfilling their familial responsibilities. As Teresa Veccia explains in her excellent analysis of São Paulo textile workers, "they defined their work in a helping capacity, using maternalist terms to defend their transgression of prescribed gender norms" and "gave a tacit nod to the (ideal) masculine breadwinning role although it was one that in actuality found scant expression in their everyday lives" (pp. 137–38).

The essays highlight the intimate links between work and family, revealing how industrialists took advantage of men's and women's family commitments to gain leverage over their workforce. Some employers based adult workers' wages on the number of offspring working in the factory; others took advantage of women's domestic commitments to relegate them to temporary assignments that could be terminated when the demand for labor diminished; and some monitored men's cohabitation arrangements to find evidence of "moral infractions" that could justify firing militant workers. In these and other ways, the essays demonstrate the pervasive influence of gender roles and relationships on women's and men's objective conditions and subjective experiences.

Each of the essays in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers* stands alone as an insightful analysis of factory and family life during the initial stages of Latin American industrialization. Their value is multiplied considerably when the editors distill the essays' common elements to make meaningful empirical generalizations across time and place. And when the editors use a gendered theoretical lens to analyze these empirical patterns, the scholarship assumes even greater significance. French and James emphasize the processual nature of gender: it is reproduced within social institutions to sustain gender hierarchies and ideologies and is constructed and contested in specific historical contexts as men and women fashion their identities relative to one another. While gender plays an obvious role in constituting the family, it is equally integral to the organization of the workplace, the political sphere, and other "public sites." Moreover, a

gender perspective is just as essential for interpreting men's experiences as it is for understanding women's lives. These theoretical insights impart meaning to the empirical regularities that French and James derive from the case studies.

Most of the essays note the contradictions between women's gender expectations and their material circumstances and describe women workers' attempt to reconcile them by privileging their familial roles. Several essays describe how the common view that factory work jeopardized women's virtue led industrialists to defend themselves against social criticism by adopting paternalistic labor practices and promoting educational campaigns designed to reinforce traditional feminine roles and to impart domestic skills to their female workforce. A third theme is the frequency with which male workers' anger over sexual harassment in the workplace stimulated labor militancy. In this way, men expressed their masculinity by protecting "dependent women" who were thereby defined in feminine terms that obscured their roles as autonomous wage earners. The common denominator underlying these patterns is the resilience of traditional gender definitions despite their limited applicability to working-class women's actual circumstances. By elucidating these and other empirical trends via the theoretical concept of gender, French and James show in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers* that historical case studies are fertile ground for developing grounded theory.

Iconoclasm: Shattering Conventional Paradigms

In contrast to scholarship in the illumination and inductive genres, which uses conventional concepts to illustrate, generalize, or theorize, iconoclastic scholarship challenges established concepts and images to present novel and often radically different perspectives on the world. In *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America*, editors Daniel Balderston and Donna Guy question conventional conceptions of gender and sexuality in Anglo-American gender studies and suggest that they may be particularly inappropriate for the Latin American context. Balderston and Guy view their book as expressing and contributing to "a paradigm shift" within gender studies, through which established conceptions of gender and sexuality are being reconsidered to produce "a more pluralistic vision of what constitutes gender" (p. 3). They use the metaphor of "crossing over" into uncharted visual and mental territory to entice readers into thinking about gender and sexuality in new ways.

The volume's lead essay was written by anthropologist Roger Lancaster, whose work on male homosexuality in Nicaragua has contributed to the shifting conceptual terrain in contemporary gender studies. It employs the metaphor of crossing over to set an iconoclastic tone for the rest of the essays. Lancaster offers an account of Guto, a teenage Nicaraguan boy who dons his older sister's frilly new blouse to delight the assembled audience

with his “feminine persona,” to consider how sexual identities are constructed and contested through play and performance. Lancaster explores the multiple ambiguities surrounding the performance to show the inability of conventional ethnographic description, with its penchant for mutually exclusive analytical categories, to account adequately for Guto’s playful behavior. Although Lancaster’s thoughtful analysis of play, transvestic crossovers, gender identity, freedom, agency, and power raises more questions than it answers, it opens up new conceptual horizons for exploring gender and sexuality.

The remaining essays in *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America* are thematically organized around issues of identity and transgression, social control and state repression, and cultural and political resistance and agency. Like Lancaster’s essay, which challenges conventional explanations of transvestism as an all-or-nothing phenomenon, the essays cause readers to question dichotomous images of sexuality and society’s attempts to regulate it. Several essays highlight the ironic divergence between conventional morality and the ways in which cultural ideals are actually expressed in daily life. Donna Guy’s analysis of “multiple concepts of mothering” in Buenos Aires shows that conventional explanations of *marianismo* and its impact on women’s maternal identities fail to capture the complexity of women’s lives in turn-of-the-century Argentina. Other essays probe the conflicting motives behind governmental attempts to eliminate prostitution, homosexuality, and other affronts to “family values” in order to demonstrate the complex issues surrounding the regulation of sexuality. Sueann Caulfield’s insightful account of the “politics of prostitution” in Rio de Janeiro shows that official policies concerning prostitution had more to do with the state’s attempt to appear “modern” to the rest of the world than with its commitment to regulating the practice. Similarly, Peter Beattie challenges conventional notions about taboos on homosexuality by showing how the Brazilian military manipulated images of masculinity and honor to conceal a subterranean homosexual culture among conscripted men.

In stimulating readers to “think outside the box” of established academic notions of sexuality and gender, *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America* illustrates the sometimes mind-boggling mission of iconoclastic scholarship. The well-written essays are thought-provoking analyses on the cutting edge of gender scholarship. The editors explain that they intend the book to serve as “a springboard for discussion in basic courses in gender studies as well as Latin American studies” (p. 5). Instructors who wish to present tidy explanations to entry-level undergraduate students might do well to select a more conventional text. Those who want to challenge their students to grapple with complex issues will appreciate the range and depth of the volume.

Conclusion

Despite their contrasting epistemological aims, the seven books under review share several common traits. They illustrate and emphasize women's agency and potential for resistance; they typically incorporate an analysis of race; and their authors avoid framing the research in terms of overarching theoretical perspectives. Those who seek to make theoretical contributions use inductive strategies that ground theory in empirical generalizations.

A reviewer with a synthetic bent might discern common themes running throughout many of the books. The image of Latin American women as primarily wives and mothers may conceal the fact that women historically have contributed to public life in their societies and are doing so more than ever in the contemporary period. Yet the contradictions between traditional gender norms and women's actual behavior create role conflicts that many women reconcile by privileging their domestic roles and by viewing wage work as a way to perform their roles as wives and mothers more effectively. As a result, partnered women often see themselves as merely supplemental wage earners even when they are the sole support of their households. Thus while wage work can facilitate women's empowerment within the domestic sphere and sometimes the public sector, traditional gender roles have resisted the potentially transformative effect of women's employment.

When such thematic similarities are distilled from the illuminative and inductive works under review, they suggest the continuities between first- and second-generation gender scholarship. In exploring how waged employment affects women's lives, contemporary research builds on the foundations established by first-generation WID scholars, who sought to understand better the consequences of participation in the formal labor force and other aspects of life in modern capitalist contexts. The second generation's emphasis on agency, subjectivity, and male-female relationships enables contemporary scholars to refine and expand on the answers provided by their predecessors.

Although it is possible to discern consistencies between the two generations of gender scholarship, the differences between them by far outweigh the similarities, in my view. As noted throughout this review, second-generation scholars generally examine a broader range of empirical phenomena and research questions than their predecessors did, and they use an alternate set of concepts and assumptions to analyze their subject matter. The most salient divergence between the two generations reflects their differing approaches to theory and research. Many first-generation researchers' studies were guided by theoretical paradigms from which they deduced research questions for empirical exploration and evaluation, but contemporary gender scholars typically follow the postmodern directive to avoid formulating analyses in terms of general theoretical frameworks. Those seeking to link research to theory prefer an inductive approach through which the-

oretical inferences are based on observed empirical regularities. Deductive strategies for developing and exploring research questions derived from existing bodies of theory have fallen into disfavor with contemporary researchers. Similarly, they avoid the theoretical schools and common research agendas that structured first-generation scholarship.

While I am impressed by the innovative directions taken by contemporary gender scholars, my concern is that in their effort to eliminate the weaknesses of first-generation scholarship, they have sacrificed its strengths. The theoretical paradigms that guided the early research may have been overly general, excessively abstract, or incorrectly formulated, but they played a key role in focusing empirical investigations and providing conceptual tools for interpreting research findings. They also offered a common universe of discourse for scholars with similar or divergent theoretical orientations to maintain a dialogue in order to accumulate knowledge. The competing theoretical paradigms developed by first-generation scholars contributed to the coherence of their literature and stimulated their empirical advances. As the books under review evidence, second-generation gender scholarship offers a wealth of useful concepts and meaningful insights that could be developed into sophisticated theoretical formulations. But unless the inductive approach to formulating theory by amassing empirical generalizations is supplemented by other creative strategies, their theoretical paradigms will be slow to emerge. As philosopher of science Carl Hempel explained, "The transition from data to theory requires creative imagination. . . . Theories are not *derived* from observed facts but *invented* in order to account for them" (his emphasis).² It remains to be seen whether contemporary scholars will apply their collective creativity to construct a new generation of theoretical paradigms capable of encompassing the diversity of gender and sexuality in Latin America.

2. See Carl G. Hempel, *Philosophy of Natural Science* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 15. I thank George Huaco for calling this work to my attention.