

Introduction: Researching and Rethinking the Labors of Love

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For decades, feminist scholarship in fields ranging from philosophy and legal theory to political science and sociology has challenged conceptual divisions between the public and the private, production and reproduction, and labor and affect.¹ These distinctions persist in scholarly literature, public policy, and the popular imaginary: domestic violence and domestic labor are considered apart from violence and labor more generally, “working mothers” still refers to women who work in the labor market and put in a “second shift” of motherhood, and the popular press has made a hand-wringing Mothers Day ritual of calculating the value of unpaid household labor, thereby both marking it as women’s labor (or at least mothers’) and reducing its consideration to a semi-ironic editorial wink.² Twenty years of pragmatic and intellectual developments—including a critical mass of full-time academics who also assume reproductive-labor responsibilities, and a particularly dynamic period in feminist theorizing—have revi-

In addition to receiving insightful commentary from the contributors to this issue, this essay has benefited tremendously from comments and criticism by readers who demonstrated remarkable generosity with their time and labor: Carolyn Eastman, Julie Greene, Temma Kaplan, Rebecca Plant, Lara Putnam, David Sartorius, Pete Sigal, Heidi Tinsman, and two anonymous readers for the *HAHR*.

1. See for example Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989); Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988); Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2003); Heidi I. Hartmann, ed., *Gendering Politics and Policy: Recent Developments in Europe, Latin America, and the United States* (New York: Haworth Political Press, 2005); Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Are Women Human? And Other International Dialogues* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2006).

2. “A Mother’s Pay? \$117,000,” *Wall Street Journal*, 12 May 2008. The Web site salary.com offers an estimate every Mother’s Day. On the sex-based division of household labor, see Makiko Fuwa, “Macro-level Gender Inequality and the Division of Household Labor in 22 Countries,” *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 6 (2004): 751–67.

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talized this field, generating studies with both materialist and poststructuralist DNA. Recently reissued classic texts on reproductive labor—the unpaid “caring” work of child care, housekeeping, food provision, and the maintenance of critical community networks—and a new crop of both scholarly and trade books consider not only the structural conditions of this labor but also the cultural influences that cast certain tasks as “women’s work.”³ The articles included in this special issue of the *Hispanic American Historical Review* historicize the interplay between public and private in shaping Latin America’s uneven and often ambivalent experience of commodifying reproductive labor.

Latin Americanists will appreciate that several recent interventions draw lessons from dependency theory. Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Hochschild, for example, introduce their volume about nannies, domestic workers, and sex workers in the global economy with an argument about the “care deficit” between the industrialized and developing worlds. Inverting the expectation of poorer economies depending on richer ones, they “explore . . . a dependency that works in the other direction, and it is a dependency of a particularly intimate kind. Increasingly often, as affluent and middle-class families in the First World come to depend on migrants from poorer regions to provide child care, homemaking, and sexual services, a global relationship arises that in some ways mirrors the traditional relationship between the sexes.”⁴ Just as Latin American dependency theory demystified the discourse of comparative advantage, revealing its ideological underpinnings and material implications, studies of reproductive labor explore the historical contingencies of its naturalized and biologized practices.

3. Republished texts include Mary Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.* (1992; New York: Routledge, 2002); Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (1982; New York: Henry Holt, 2000); Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts’ Advice to Women* (1978; New York: Anchor Books, 2005); Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (1983; Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2003); Arlie Russell Hochschild with Anne Machung, *The Second Shift* (1989; New York: Penguin Books, 2003). The Association for Research on Motherhood, founded at York University in 1998, launched a journal the following year. Recent trade books include Joan Blades and Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, *The Motherhood Manifesto: What America’s Moms Want and What to Do about It* (New York: Nation Books, 2006); and Ann Crittenden, *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World Is Still the Least Valued* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001), reissued in paperback in November 2010. The divide between “work” and “motherhood” is reinscribed in the best-selling (in May 2010) Kristin Van Ogtrop, *Just Let Me Lie Down: Necessary Terms for the Half-Insane Working Mom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2010).

4. Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds., *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 11.

The articles included here, and the larger projects from which they draw, enter into this arena of debate and exemplify analytical approaches that animate the study of reproductive labor both as a distinct area of inquiry and as a field with links to labor, economic, family, cultural, women's, gender, and political history. Focusing on Santiago's Casa de Huérfanos, Nara Milanich demonstrates how the Chilean state mediated domestic employment relationships in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, informing the allocation of reproductive labor not only within households and between individuals but also across social groups. Ann Blum's investigation, like Milanich's, decisively brings children into our understanding, showing how concepts of *alimentos* and reciprocity shaped family and labor relationships in postrevolutionary Mexican household economies. Rebekah Pite examines a similarly complex and ambiguous relationship in her study of Doña Petrona and her assistant Juanita in the 1960s Argentine television program, *Buenas Tardes, Mucho Gusto*. Finally, Elizabeth Hutchison considers the 1960s and '70s, reexamining conventional political periodizations to demonstrate how the mobilization of paid Chilean domestic workers reflected changing attitudes within the Catholic Church as much as the dramatic political events of that era, galvanizing *empleadas* to challenge traditional notions of servitude and labor rights.

These articles address the conceptual and methodological challenges of historicizing reproductive labor, beginning with the problem of defining their subject. As Milanich discusses, the terms "domestic labor" and "reproductive labor" often appear interchangeably in the literature, although they have somewhat different connotations. While domestic labor centers on household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and child rearing (as well as supervising those tasks, *ama de llaves* Juanita Bordoy's "real" work, as we learn from Pite's essay), reproductive labor includes a more heterogeneous array of duties connected with socializing and maintaining the workforce, including biological reproduction (such as childbearing, surrogacy, wet nursing), social reproduction (such as socialization and education), and maintaining forms of public respectability within communities (such as hospitality, charitable work, and performance of rites). Sexuality and sex work fall somewhere in the interstices of these practices articulating love and labor and certainly merit greater consideration as part of reproductive-labor history. The research in this issue reveals that even this distinction between domestic and reproductive labor requires further elaboration as they often spill over into one another.

These articles have a long and diverse intellectual genealogy. Readers will notice the influence of feminist scholars, from Gayle Rubin and Heidi Hartmann to Joan Scott and Judith Butler. In addition to drawing on feminist his-

torians' long-standing insights about language and periodization, these articles taken together engage two important bodies of literature: the scholarship on labor history and studies exploring fragmented subjectivities.⁵ In the former field, we see the particularly powerful influences of the new labor history in Latin America.⁶ Just as including slavery studies under the rubric of labor history fostered fruitful reconsiderations in both fields, placing reproductive-labor studies in dialogue with labor historians promises to generate a fuller understanding of the factors that animate historical experience. By considering not only the more transparently worklike tasks of changing diapers, preparing meals, and tending illnesses but also the more leisurelike, but nonetheless criti-

5. For the classic feminist intervention on the reconsideration of periodization and other historical analytics, see Joan Kelly-Gadol, "The Social Relation of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History," *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 809–23. On the critical role of language, see Joan Wallach Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 773–97. For a reconsideration of feminism's impact on historical analysis, see Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

6. See especially Sylvia M. Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City, 1790–1857* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1985); Susan K. Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914–1940* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1996); Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men, and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2000); John D. French and Daniel James, eds., *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers: From Household and Factory to the Union Hall and Ballot Box* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1997); Asunción Lavrin, ed., *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1989); Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Introducción a la historia de la vida cotidiana* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2006); Thomas Miller Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904–1951* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1998); Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, *Household Economy and Urban Development: São Paulo, 1765 to 1836* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986); Susie S. Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City: Public Discourses and Material Conditions, 1879–1931* (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 2003); Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870–1960* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2002); Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias, *Power and Everyday Life: The Lives of Working Women in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1995); Barbara Weinstein, *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in São Paulo, 1920–1964* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1996); Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950–1973* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2002); Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex: Gender, Labor, and Politics in Urban Chile, 1900–1930* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2001); Karin Alejandra Roseblat, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920–1950* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2000).

cal, tasks of paying attention, offering affection, and cultivating socialization, the articles here contribute to a more complete understanding of both waged and unwaged labor.⁷ In the latter field, regarding fragmented subjectivities, we see most prominently the influences of borderlands theorists, particularly those influenced by queer-studies critiques.⁸ As debates within feminist theory have questioned the “commonsense” ideologies about women’s roles and public-private divides, queer-studies scholarship has reexamined assumptions about normative behavior, particularly with regard to family structures and practices.⁹ These insights have drawn the authors included here to investigate how historical actors develop multiple subjectivities and harbor contradictions between how they imagine their lives (for example, conforming to bourgeois domestic ideals) and how they experience them (often by the seats of their pants, with ad hoc solutions to daily challenges).

The contributors here weave threads from these two fields to explore the hybridities and ambiguities within reproductive labor. Historians Eileen Boris and S. J. Kleinberg have pointed out that scholars have tended to categorize many aspects of reproductive labor as “love rather than labor.”¹⁰ The presumption that we must choose between seeing reproductive labor as either love or labor forces us either to ignore vast amounts of quotidian labor performed or to commodify every aspect of reproductive labor to shoehorn it into conventional conceptions of labor.¹¹ “The specter of women’s labor haunts capitalism,” muses

7. On the importance of these latter tasks in producing the “human capital” that sustains economies and societies, see Hochschild and Machung, *The Second Shift*; Crittenden, *The Price of Motherhood*.

8. For a review of this literature, see José David Saldívar, “Border Thinking, Minoritized Studies, and Realist Interpellations: The Coloniality of Power from Gloria Anzaldúa to Arundhati Roy,” in *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, ed. Linda Martín Alcoff (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 152–70.

9. See for example Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999). Lee Edelman critiques the “politics of reproductive futurity” that rests on a “cult of the Child” and deflects a presentist politics in favor of a constantly deferred politics to benefit—through mystified reproductive labor—an imagined future generation. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2004).

10. Eileen Boris and S. J. Kleinberg, “Mothers and Other Workers: (Re)Conceiving Labor, Maternalism, and the State,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15, no. 3 (2003): 90.

11. For a review of these debates by a political theorist, see Kathi Weeks, “Life Within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics,” *Ephemera* 7, no. 1 (2007): 233–49. For a more historical perspective, see Reva B. Siegel, “Valuing Housework: Nineteenth-Century Anxieties about the Commodification of Domestic Labor,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 41, no. 10 (1998): 1437–51.

David Staples in an essay considering reproductive labor as affective labor.¹² New studies of reproductive labor illuminate a vast and understudied realm of human experience to investigate the intermingling of occupational and social lives, those areas in which gender roles or cultural mores create expectations that obfuscate the lines between love and labor.

The articles here highlight the importance of continuing to interrogate such dichotomies. Milanich and Blum, for example, explore how children both produced and consumed reproductive labor within working-class households. Pite closely examines both a relationship that intertwined love and labor and viewers' response to the relationship's public manifestation. The activities that historical actors associated with both love and labor varied widely, depending on factors including economic structures, political climates, migratory patterns, racial ideologies, labor and management cultures, market integration, union militancy, trends in popular culture, and the strength of Catholic organizations. Ultimately, as the following studies demonstrate, we gain the greatest understanding about human experience not by separating out love from labor, or life from work, but rather by understanding them as a dyad. This introduction begins by tracing the intellectual genealogy of this special issue and proceeds to consider three areas of inquiry that have particular salience for Latin American historians of reproductive labor: the contingency of its social relations, the impact of modernization and industrialization, and the role of policy makers and state agencies. The introduction concludes with a brief delineation of the articles' methodological contributions and some of the most conspicuous lacunae in the study of reproductive-labor history.

Redefining Reproduction

This special issue emerged from discussions during the meetings of the Conference on Latin American History / American Historical Association, the Berkshires Conference on Women's History, the Latin American Studies Association, and the Duke University Latin American Labor History Conference. These conversations across disciplines and subfields revealed the need for further research to historicize reproductive labor in Latin America, given its immense importance not only to everyday life but also to contemporary debates about neoliberalism. As the sociologist Esther Ngan-ling Chow explains in her

12. David Staples, "Women's Work and the Ambivalent Gift of Entropy" in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, ed. Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean O'Malley Halley (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2007), 119.

introduction to a special issue addressing gender and globalization, “The tendency to convert public issues (e.g. public responsibility for the care of young and old) into private ones transfers the costs of globalization into a burden for individuals. The austerity of [structural adjustment programs], originally designed to aid countries’ economic growth, produces similar privatized effects, shifting the public responsibilities of the state to the domestic sphere in which women shoulder disproportional costs and burdens of care for the young and old.”¹³ This trajectory toward privatization and commodification, combined with labor history’s conspicuous impact on Latin Americanist historiography, has led the contributors here to engage with more conventional labor history questions—such as defining shifts, expertise, what marks labor as “skilled,” and the impact of migration and technological changes—as well as those arising from family, urban, and cultural history that have informed recent labor histories, including questions of honor and respectability, social relations of labor, and the roles of institutions we do not conventionally associate with labor, such as orphanages and church groups. The authors here push even further to investigate the interconnectedness of productive (mostly paid) and reproductive (mostly subsistence) labors.

Although several Latin America–based scholars participated in the conversations that generated this issue, all the authors included here trained and currently teach at US universities. For this reason, our primary historiographical comparison outside of Latin America lies with scholarship on the United States, and this introduction draws on both US and Latin American historiographies to elaborate some of the critical conceptual questions surrounding reproductive-labor history: defining its terms, establishing its central actors and institutions, and describing its parameters.¹⁴ Both the US and Latin American literatures have important debts to social science disciplines other than history, and both have focused either on women’s efforts to balance wage labor with domestic demands or on the intersections between households and wage

13. Esther Ngan-ling Chow, “Gender Matters: Studying Globalization and Social Change in the 21st Century,” *International Sociology* 18, no. 3 (2003): 443–60. For a review of the relationship between neoliberal policies and reproductive labor, see Sylvia Chant, “Researching Gender, Families and Households in Latin America: From the 20th into the 21st Century,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 21, no. 4 (2002): 545–75.

14. For reviews of the historiography, see Marie Eileen Francois, “The Products of Consumption: Housework in Latin American Political Economies and Cultures,” *History Compass* 6, no. 1 (2008): 207–42; Boris and Kleinberg, “Mothers and Other Workers”; Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 389–92.

labor through industrial homework or through paid domestic work.¹⁵ The US and Latin American literatures have followed somewhat different trajectories, however. As the historian Marie Francois notes, although US historiography includes a small handful of books that concentrate solely on domestic labor, the Latin American historiography has tended to integrate these discussions into larger studies of labor history and women's history.¹⁶

The first generation of reproductive-labor studies emerged amid the heyday of 1970s feminism. Confronting those who viewed reproductive labor as at best a distraction and at worst an impediment to class consciousness, these scholars wove Marxist perspectives about reproductive labor's role in capital accumulation together with feminist observations that patriarchal ideologies naturalized the distribution and mystification of reproductive labor.¹⁷ Navigat-

15. For Latin America, see for example Lourdes Benería and Martha Roldán, *The Crossroads of Class and Gender: Industrial Homework, Subcontracting, and Household Dynamics in Mexico City* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987); June C. Nash and Helen Icken Safa, eds., *Sex and Class in Latin America: Women's Perspectives on Politics, Economics, and the Family in the Third World* (Brooklyn: J. F. Bergin Publishers, 1980); June Nash, Helen Safa, et al., *Women and Change in Latin America* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1986); David E. Hojman, "Land Reform, Female Migration and the Market for Domestic Service in Chile," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 21, no. 1 (1989): 105–32; Elizabeth Jelin, *Family, Household and Gender Relations in Latin America* (London: Kegan Paul International / Paris: UNESCO, 1991); Orlandina de Oliveira, ed., *Trabajo, poder y sexualidad* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1989). On the United States, see Sarah Fenstermaker Berk, *The Gender Factory: The Apportionment of Work in American Households* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985); Nancy Folbre and Michael Bittman, eds., *Family Time: The Social Organization of Care* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Jane Lou Collins and Martha Gimenez, eds., *Work without Wages: Comparative Studies of Domestic Labor and Self-Employment* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1990); Hochschild, *The Commercialization of Intimate Life*; Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*; Katharyne Mitchell, Sallie A. Marston, and Cindi Katz, "Life's Work: An Introduction, Review and Critique," in *Life's Work: Geographies of Social Reproduction*, ed. Katharyne Mitchell, Sallie A. Marston, and Cindi Katz (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 1–26; Harriet Fraad, Stephen A. Resnick, and Richard D. Wolff, *Bringing It All Back Home: Class, Gender, and Power in the Modern Household* (London: Pluto Press, 1994); Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001); Cindi Katz, "Vagabond Capitalism and the Necessity of Social Reproduction," *Antipode* 33, no. 1 (2001): 709–28.

16. Francois, "The Products of Consumption," 208.

17. The socialist-feminist literature is substantial, but see especially Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973); Heidi I. Hartmann, "The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework," *Signs* 6, no. 3 (1981): 366–94; Christine Delphy, *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*, ed. and trans. Diana Leonard (Amherst: Univ. of

ing between feminist assumptions about the liberatory promise of paid labor and Marxist views of wage labor as fundamentally exploitative, feminist social scientists formulated structural analyses to explain the social and economic functions of reproductive labor across time and cultures. The following articles bear the imprint of this scholarship and its attention to the relationship between structures and ideologies. By juxtaposing, for example, 1870s Santiago and 1960s Buenos Aires, this special issue demonstrates the contingencies not only of the interplay between structures and ideologies but also of reproductive labor's conceptions and practices.

Historians have recently begun to examine consumption as one of reproductive labor's contingent aspects. Using an impressive combination of social historians' quantitative tools and cultural historians' interpretive approaches, Marie Francois's meticulous study of private pawnbrokers and Mexico City's Monte de Piedad has demonstrated the central role of women's consumption strategies for maintaining and advancing class status.¹⁸ Pite takes up a similar question in a very different context, showing us a public and mediated representation in which an emergent consumer culture informs an idealized and contingent domesticity. As Milanich notes, the ambiguous etymology of the term *criado*, meaning both "servant" and "reared" or "raised," highlights the fluidity of the relationship between a *patrón*, also ambiguously both protector and employer, and the children often performing and consuming household labor.¹⁹

Considering consumption as household labor contests the use of the gross national product (GNP) as the metric of usefulness, relegating unpaid reproductive labor to the realm of consumption or, by some estimates, "leisure."

Massachusetts Press, 1984); Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1973); Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*, trans. Hilary Creek (1981; Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1995).

18. Marie Eileen Francois, *A Culture of Everyday Credit: Housekeeping, Pawnbroking, and Governance in Mexico City, 1750–1920* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2006).

19. As Milanich and Blum both point out, the history of childhood in Latin America has also burgeoned as a field. See for example Ondina E. González and Bianca Premo, eds., *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2007); Bianca Premo, *Children of the Father King: Youth, Authority, and Legal Minority in Colonial Lima* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2005); Kathryn A. Sloan, "Disobedient Daughters and the Liberal State: Generational Conflicts over Marriage Choice in Working Class Families in Nineteenth-Century Oaxaca, Mexico," *The Americas* 63, no. 4 (2007): 615–50.

Debates within economic development literature have shown that, in most of the world's economies, including those of Latin America, the production/consumption distinction ignores common practice.²⁰ Blum documents the ways that consumption and reciprocity figured into a working-class moral economy based around families rather than the individuals. Reminding us of the indissoluble connection between labor and love, she concludes, "In families subsisting on the economic margins of Mexico's capital, every member contributed to the work of social reproduction out of necessity. But parents and children also worked to express their intimate relationships, which in turn gave meaning to their work. When confronting public authorities, parents and children invoked those meanings to assert that they were respectable and responsible and that even in the face of separation they sustained meaningful family ties." The historian Susan Porter Benson's recent study of working-class families in interwar United States demonstrates that the consumption/production dichotomy did not necessarily hold in industrialized economies either.²¹

Relationships of Reproduction

As such findings underscore, the social relations of reproductive labor—the practices and ideologies informing who performs what types of reproductive labor and under what conditions—turn out to be as complicated and contingent as its definitions.²² Women's history has provided the intellectual home for most histories of reproductive labor, and the field originally blossomed amid the growth of women's studies programs and mounting feminist challenges to disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. As a result, most early studies of reproductive labor have examined it as women's work, if only to unmask the sexism that often essentializes it as such.

Recent scholarship challenges this conflation, however, by offering a

20. For a review of this literature, see María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2003); Catherine V. Scott, *Gender and Development: Rethinking Modernization and Dependency Theory* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1995); Suzanne Bergeron, *Fragments of Development: Nation, Gender, and the Space of Modernity* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2004).

21. Susan Porter Benson, *Household Accounts: Working-Class Family Economies in the Interwar United States* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2007).

22. For the Marxist formulation of the "social relations maintained towards one another by the individuals in the process of producing life's requirements," see Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, pt. 2 (1867; New York: Cosimo Books, 2007), 953.

broader and longer historical perspective. The anthropologist Richard Trexler offers evidence that the “third sex” berdache figure performed domestic labor in indigenous American cultures.²³ Just as Blum and Milanich show us the critical role children have played in reproductive labor, Francois has demonstrated that, during Latin America’s colonial period and early nineteenth century, male servants and slaves often performed a considerable portion of the domestic labor that by the twentieth century would fall almost exclusively to women.²⁴ This trend squares not only with Elizabeth Dore’s observations about the more general narrowing of women’s opportunities during the nineteenth century but also with José Moya’s argument that while Latin America witnessed the earliest and most complete feminization of domestic labor, there is a long history of male-dominated household service that changed in conjunction with (although not necessarily as a result of) industrialization.²⁵ While Matthew Gutmann’s ethnography of Mexican men’s participation in reproductive labor in 1980s Mexico City indicates that men remain nearly absent from domestic service but do perform some child-rearing duties in their own households, Brígida García and Orlandina de Oliveira’s research demonstrates that Mexico City men remain conspicuously resistant to undertaking domestic tasks such as cleaning.²⁶ These observations underscore the need for historical rather than biological or ahistorically cultural explanations of how commodified and uncommodified reproductive labor came to be performed almost exclusively by women over the late

23. Richard C. Trexler, *Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995), chap. 4.

24. Francois, “The Products of Consumption,” 209.

25. Elizabeth Dore, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Gender and the State in the Long Nineteenth Century,” in *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2000), 3–32; José Moya, “Domestic Service in a Global Perspective: Gender, Migration and Ethnic Niches,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 4 (2007): 562. In the US historiography, Jeanne Boydston’s exemplary study of reproductive labor from the early colonial period links the gendering of reproductive labor with the emergence of commodification and markets. Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), xix. Susan Porter Benson’s study of the Depression-era United States found a “much less intense gendering” of reproductive labor than we have assumed, demonstrating working-class families’ “gender transgressions” in household roles, with families devising survival strategies with apparent disregard for bourgeois conventions. Benson, *Household Accounts*, 17.

26. Matthew C. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1996). Brígida García and Orlandina de Oliveira, “Fatherhood in Urban Mexico,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 36, no. 2 (2005): 305–27.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even as patterns in female employment changed, especially among the emerging middle class, over the second half of the twentieth century.

Reproductive labor became not only more noticeably sex-specific but also reflected other social inequalities, fostering accusations that middle-class feminists achieved their liberation at the expense of poorer, often darker women who performed “their” work under exploitative conditions.²⁷ Latin American scholars have argued that the region’s widespread employment of domestic servants has meant that feminists, who generally hailed from the more educated middle classes, did not prioritize domestic-labor issues because they performed little such labor themselves.²⁸ The paid domestic workers that Hutchison studies, who often performed the same tasks for their employers as they performed for free at home, took careful notice of labeling domestic labor as “women’s work.” A feminist addressing an early 1980s conference on Chilean domestic service

27. For a particularly cogent review of the arguments surrounding this question, see Heidi Tinsman, “The Indispensable Services of Sisters: Considering Domestic Service in the United States and Latin American Studies,” *Journal of Women’s History* 4, no. 1 (1992): 37–59. The US historiography makes similar charges. David Katzman concludes that middle-class US women secured their liberty at the expense of working-class women, stressing not the extent to which men benefited by women’s unpaid and underpaid labors but rather the “woman to woman relationship” that was a “peculiar characteristic of domestic work.” David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), 270. Ruth Schwartz Cowan offers historical explanations for allocating housework to women, she observes, “It is a convention so deeply embedded in our individual and collective consciousnesses that even the profound changes wrought by the twentieth century have not yet shaken it.” Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 150. Deploying Freudian notions of taboo and Mary Douglas’s study of cultural associations between moral and sanitary impurity, the US historian Phyllis Palmer shows how white, middle-class housewives during the interwar years presented themselves as cleaner and purer than those women who sullied themselves with the muck of wage labor by “restricting themselves to housework and to marital sex and distinguishing themselves from women of color and working-class women.” For the women they employed, meanwhile, “the halo around the words *home* and *domestic* seemed ironic.” Phyllis M. Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920–1945* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1989), 150, 87.

28. Ana Lau, “El nuevo movimiento feminista mexicano a fines del milenio,” in *Feminismo en México, ayer y hoy*, ed. Eli Bartra, Anna M. Fernández Poncela, and Ana Lau (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2000), 15; H. Pereira de Melo, “Feminists and Domestic Workers in Rio de Janeiro,” in *Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ed. Elsa Chaney and Mary García Castro (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1989), 363–72.

queried pointedly, “Could this be the liberation of some women at the price of the greater oppression of others?”²⁹ By the 1970s, as Pite indicates, middle-class Argentine women became increasingly concerned about the nature of their relationships with domestic employees, and that anxiety manifested itself in their response to the on-screen relationship between Doña Petrona and Juanita.³⁰

Compared to the US literature, the Latin Americanist scholarship on domestic labor focuses overwhelmingly on class rather than race.³¹ That pattern continues with the articles included here, although not without misgivings. The authors all have considered race but have confronted the limitations of extant sources, which generally offer insights into the racial dynamics of reproductive labor through elision and implication rather than through direct address. Blum notes the common conflation of race and class in postrevolutionary Mexico, and Milanich encountered a striking silence regarding race in her sources. Pite observes that in focus groups and interviews Argentines “seemed genuinely confused about how they might respond to [Pite’s] questions about their understanding of the racial or ethnic identities of Doña Petrona and Juanita Bordoy,” preferring instead to focus on the women’s provincial backgrounds. While all the contributors acknowledge racialized labor hierarchies, determining the practice, meanings, and historical processes behind these racial ideologies has remained somewhat elusive.

The authors’ attention to class, however, yields striking results. Milanich finds, for example, that while US and European women, particularly immigrants, often used domestic service as a stopping-off point on the way to forming their own families, for poorer Latin American women, domestic service was “more a life station than a life stage.” Milanich uncovers in Santiago not only a vibrant secondary market in domestic service, whereby wet nurses left their suckling infants with even poorer women, but also a widespread practice of mul-

29. Archivo Siglo XX, Fondo Organizaciones Sociales, Rosalba Todaro, “El trabajo doméstico: Tarea de mujeres?” *Boletín* no. 7, Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer (Dec. 1981): 3.

30. Ehrenreich and Hochschild highlight the irony of feminist aspirations to bring the “ambitious and independent women of the world together,” although not “in the way that second-wave feminists in affluent countries once liked to imagine—as sisters and allies struggling to achieve common goals. Instead, they come together as mistress and maid, employer and employee, across a great divide of privilege and opportunity.” Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Woman*, 11.

31. David Katzman found that “status, race and ethnicity, and sex are more salient features in household labor than are economic factors.” Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, vii. For a review of the US literature on race and domestic employment, see Dorothea Schneider, “The Work That Never Ends: New Literature on Paid Domestic Work and Women of Color,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, no. 2 (1998): 61–66.

tigenerational servitude, in which children were considered an asset rather than a liability for women's employment prospects. Poorer households, meanwhile, often employed children as their own servants to replace women and children who had gone to work in wealthier households. Further, state agencies and charitable institutions, including Catholic organizations, steered plebeian women away from marriage and motherhood and toward domestic service. "Domestic and reproductive labor was a resource allocated at the level of the individual household between men and women, adults and children, and mistresses and maids," she explains. "But there was also a societal allocation of domestic labor across social groups."

Understanding of the social relations of reproductive labor has benefited from the turn toward cultural history and a growing interest in subjectivity, psychoanalysis, and affect, exploring the "love" side of the love/labor dyad.³² The articles here build on recent scholarship attending to questions of household honor, respectability, and dignity and the labors required to sustain them.³³ Milanich shows how depictions of honorable domestic servants changed markedly over time, as employers shifted from employing mothers and their children (for example, as a cook and a table server) to preferring childless workers who would work long hours and not compromise the household's honor. Hutchison's study of organizing efforts among Chilean domestic employees builds on the Latin Americanist attention to working-class respectability and honor by underscoring persistent demands for "dignity," professional licensing, and recognition of a Día Nacional de Empleadas. Pite reads the very public relationship between Doña Petrona and her assistant Juanita to reveal expectations and anxieties about domestic employment relationships in contemporary Argentina.

By the early twentieth century, an emergent culture of working-class domesticity both celebrated reproductive labors and reinscribed gender norms and hierarchies around them. In Mexico, Blum shows, working-class respectability hinged on sustaining a moral economy of reciprocity and generational respect. Pite demonstrates how recipes and cooking techniques offered working- and middle-class households a gauge of modernization and cultural assimilation. In Chile, Milanich explains, this phenomenon "implied a shift in the deploy-

32. In a telling intervention from this body of scholarship, the literary critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak provides the introduction to a decidedly Marxist-feminist analysis of household labor. Fraad, Resnick, and Wolff, *Bringing It All Back Home*.

33. See for example Sueann Caulfield, Sarah C. Chambers, and Lara Putnam, eds. *Honor, Status, and Law in Modern Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2005); Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory*; Dain Borges, *The Family in Babia, Brazil: 1870–1945* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1992).

ment of poor women's domestic labor away from better-off households toward 'modernized' working-class ones, over which plebeian women would henceforth preside as wives and mothers."

As Milanich's findings indicate, the influence of cultural geography has drawn historians to attend to the diverse social spaces of reproductive labor.³⁴ Historians of domestic service as well as of homework (*trabajo a domicilio*) have stressed the porous nature of the divide between public and private spaces.³⁵ The essays here explore the fluidity between these two spheres even further. Blum investigates the mediation of intimate family relationships through juridical and welfare institutions. Pite's engaging discussion of a popular Argentine television program examines not physical spaces but rather the social space created by the motley audience connected by airwaves, as well as the domestic space imagined by the fictional kitchen of *Buenas Tardes, Mucho Gusto*. The televised representation of reproductive labor thus became another means by which the social relations of reproduction were themselves both reproduced and, as Pite demonstrates, reconsidered.

Modernizing Motherhood

Exploring the practices, spaces, and social relations of reproductive labor, this special issue offers new insights into Latin America's ambivalent and irregular process of modernization. In the articles here, we see precapitalist and neoliberal labor practices and social relations intermingled in ways that defy a progressive, linear narrative. Scholars have debated the impact of industrialization and commodification on reproductive labor.³⁶ These arguments centered largely on economic questions such as whether employers should pay a "family wage" and why household labor did not factor into the GNP when it remained unpaid, but did when it was paid.³⁷ The process of commodification, like industrialization, remained uneven and incomplete. Blum reminds us that although "the physical

34. See in particular Weeks, "Life Within and Against Work"; Katz, "Vagabond Capitalism."

35. On homework, see Eileen Boris, *Home to Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Homework in the United States* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994); Benería and Roldán, *The Crossroads of Class and Gender*.

36. For a summary of the argument that industrialization feminized and devalued reproductive labor, see Freedman, *No Turning Back*, chap. 6. For a challenge to this assertion, albeit focused on domestic service, see Moya, "Domestic Service in a Global Perspective." For a summary of these debates, see Weeks, "Life Within and Against Work."

37. See in particular Delphy, *Close to Home*, and Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction*.

separation of paid work from the household has often been attributed to the historical process of industrialization, . . . the conceptual separation of the realms of work and family created a family or domestic ideal that only the privileged could attain.” As Blum and Milanich document, even paid labor came with additional, unpaid labor of family members often performing the same tasks.

Sociologist Denise Segura’s research has demonstrated the importance of considering paid and unpaid labor in relation to one another. Her study of *mexicanas* (women born and raised in Mexico) and Chicanas (Mexican-descended women born and raised in the United States) regarding their attitudes toward combining motherhood with extradomestic wage labor challenge not only the conflation of these two groups into the unified category of “Hispanic” but also the assumption of “linear acculturation,” which posits that more recent immigrants will hold the most traditional concepts of motherhood and family. Her research found Chicanas, presumed to be more modern and acculturated, more likely to exit the wage labor force to care for children, while mexicanas, who had been “raised in a world where economic and household work often merged, do not dichotomize social life into public and private spheres, but appear to view employment as one workable domain of motherhood.”³⁸ Segura cautions scholars against allowing ideologies of motherhood to overshadow its material implications, arguing that “conceptualizations of motherhood that affirm its economic character may be better accommodating to women’s market participation in the US.”³⁹

As a corollary to debates over how to “count” reproductive labor, scholars and activists have speculated about whether women should demand wages for housework, as Evita Perón once suggested to the Argentine Congress (as Pite relates), or preserve reproductive labor as one of the last uncommodified forms of labor. As Christine Delphy has pointed out, reproductive labor remains one of the only sectors (the other being subsistence agriculture) where individu-

38. Denise A. Segura, “Working at Motherhood: Chicana and Mexican Immigrant Mothers and Employment,” in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994), 212. Anthropologist Patricia Pessar made a similar observation a decade earlier regarding Dominican women in New York. Patricia R. Pessar, “The Linkage between the Household and Workplace of Dominican Women in the United States,” *International Migration Review* 18 (1984): 188–211. This observation coincides with the findings of studies of Latin American women workers more generally; see especially Porter, *Working Women in Mexico City*, 155, and the essays in French and James, *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers*.

39. Segura, “Working at Motherhood,” 215.

als routinely perform the same labor in both commodified and uncommodified forms.⁴⁰ Like agricultural labor, domestic employment is widely considered exempt from wage and benefits regulations that generally characterize modern, industrialized societies. All of the articles included here examine the imbrication of commodified and uncommodified labor. For example, according to Milanich the majority of paid wet nurses in late nineteenth-century Santiago were wives of *inquilinos* on nearby haciendas, simultaneously participating in commodified and uncommodified labor relations. Domestic service, which remains more commonplace in Latin America than in the United States, includes a diverse array of arrangements whereby the worker's compensation often consists partly of accommodations and/or meals, further blurring the distinction between commodified and uncommodified labor.⁴¹ As Blum notes, such arrangements often played a critical role in working-class survival, as children took work as apprentices or domestic servants to alleviate pressure on household budgets. In quite distinct settings, Pite and Milanich both demonstrate how these semi-commodified and semifamilial employment relationships muddled the distinction between patronage protection and labor exploitation.

Considerations of modernization and industrialization have also raised questions about the importance of laborsaving technologies and their implications for reproductive labor. The impact of domestic technologies plays out differently, of course, in parts of the world where they (or the electricity to run them) remain inaccessible, but technologies such as mechanized corn mills or

40. Delphy, *Close to Home*, chap. 5.

41. On paid domestic labor in Latin America, see Isabel Laura Cárdenas, *Ramona y el robot: El servicio doméstico en barrios prestigiosos de Buenos Aires, 1895–1985* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1986); Lesley Gill, *Precarious Dependencies: Gender, Class, and Domestic Service in Bolivia* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994); Mary Goldsmith Connelly, “Uniformes, escobas, y lavaderos: El proceso productivo del servicio doméstico,” in *Trabajo, poder, y sexualidad*, ed. Orlandina de Oliveira (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1989), 103–32; Michelle A. Johnson, “‘Decent and Fair’: Aspects of Domestic Service in Jamaica, 1920–1970,” *Journal of Caribbean History* 30, no. 1–2 (1996): 83–106; Anna Rubbo and Michael T. Taussig, “Up off Their Knees: Servanthood in Southwest Colombia,” *Latin American Perspectives* 10, no. 4 (1983): 5–23; Ximena Bunster and Elsa Chaney, *Sellers and Servants: Working Women in Lima, Peru* (New York: Praeger, 1985); Beatriz Ruiz Gatyán F., “Un grupo trabajador importante no incluido en la historia laboral mexicana: Trabajadoras domésticas,” in *El trabajo y los trabajadores en la historia de México*, ed. Elsa Cecilia Frost, Michael C. Meyer, and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez (Mexico City: El Colegio de México / Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 1979), 417–55. On the United States, see Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.*; Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt*; Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*; Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica*.

water pumps also have had a tremendous impact on the composition of women's reproductive labor burdens. Latin Americanists have observed ambivalent responses among both men and women to the introduction of laborsaving devices, revealing fears that it diminishes the value of reproductive labor and threatens the patriarchal gender order. Historians Arnold Bauer and Dawn Keremitsis each have shown that, despite the tremendous impact of motorized corn mills on alleviating women's daily labor burdens, communities were often slow to embrace them.⁴² Katharine French-Fuller has found a similarly ambiguous response to the introduction of washing machines in contemporary Santiago, Chile.⁴³ As with more conventional labor histories, anxieties over laborsaving technologies often center on recognition of skills and expertise.⁴⁴ The Chilean domestic workers' repeated demand for professional certification, as documented in Hutchison's article, sets in relief the relationship between respectability and the recognition of skills, as does Doña Petrona's public performance of culinary skills as bourgeois domesticity.

42. Arnold J. Bauer, "Millers and Grinders: Technology and Household Economy in Meso-America," *Agricultural History* 64, no. 1 (1990): 1–17; Dawn Keremitsis, "Del metate al molino: La mujer mexicana de 1910 a 1940," *Historia Mexicana* 33, no. 2 (1983): 285–302. See also Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2005), 141–49.

43. Katharine French-Fuller, "Gendered Invisibility, Respectable Cleanliness: The Impact of the Washing Machine on Daily Living in Post-1950 Santiago, Chile," *Journal of Women's History* 18, no. 4 (2006): 79–100. US historians disagree about whether laborsaving technologies have reduced reproductive-labor burdens or simply restructured them. See Strasser, *Never Done*, 6; Alice Kessler-Harris, *Women Have Always Worked: A Historical Overview* (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press / New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), 21; Cowan, *More Work for Mother*, 45.

44. On the relationship between gender ideologies and definitions of skill, see Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991); Anne Phillips and Barbara Taylor, "Sex and Skill: Notes towards a Feminist Economics," *Feminist Review* 6 (1980): 79–88. US scholars again place a greater emphasis on race than Latin Americanists. Palmer shows how home economics curricula constructed the imaginary of middle-class white women as skilled domestic laborers and poorer, black women as unskilled. Thus, white, middle-class housewives, like their blue-collar counterparts, struggled to claim expertise that made them indispensable in the reproductive labor force (Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt*.) The sociologist Mary Romero, describing the household as a "site of class struggle" and domestic labor as a "capitalistic mode of production," found that the Denver domestic workers she interviewed insisted upon recognition of their expertise. Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.*, 44, 93.

Intimate Politics: Public Policy and Reproductive Labor

As Heidi Tinsman has recently noted, Latin Americanist feminist scholarship has tended, more than its US and European counterparts, to retain a Marxist and more state-centered framework, often analyzing domestic labor through the lens of dependency theory and structural inequalities.⁴⁵ Historians have focused on state agencies' efforts, often at the behest of industrialists, to "modernize" reproductive labor, using educators and social workers to shape conceptions of skilled homemakers to produce a modern, socialized industrial labor force.⁴⁶ "The central feminist insight," observes Maxine Molyneux, "was that the private or reproductive sphere, the social terrain upon which gender divisions and inequalities are constituted, lies at the interface between state and civil society."⁴⁷ The articles included here exemplify the corollary Molyneux indicates; just as studying public policies illuminates domestic practices, investigating reproductive labor helps us better understand the process of state formation.

Even though a conspicuous gap has existed between law and experience, as Blum and Hutchison attest, laws and legal practices have remained useful sources for gauging ideas about reproductive labor. As Milanich explains, even though wives and servants often performed indistinguishable labors in nineteenth-century Santiago, they enjoyed very different status and protection before the law, which allowed wives more respectability and autonomy. Milanich shows us the significance of absent laws, including the Chilean legislature's rejection of measures—such as vagrancy laws and passbook requirements—to discipline domestic servants, as well as exclusion of domestic employees from early twentieth-century labor reforms. Pite points out that Argentine domestic employees' rights also lagged behind their industrial counterparts, catching up

45. Heidi Tinsman, "A Paradigm of Our Own: Joan Scott in Latin American History," *American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (2008): 1357–74. Examples range from early interventions by scholars such as Ester Boserup to Jane Jaquette's recent reassessment: Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970); Jane S. Jaquette, ed., *Feminist Agendas and Democracy in Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2009).

46. See for example Barbara Weinstein, "Unskilled Worker, Skilled Housewife: Constructing the Working-Class Woman in São Paulo, Brazil," in French and James, *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers*, 72–98; Mary Kay Vaughan, "Modernizing Patriarchy: State Policies, Rural Households, and Women in Mexico, 1930–1940," in *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2000), 194–214.

47. Maxine Molyneux, "Twentieth-Century State Formations in Latin America," in Dore and Molyneux, *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, 34.

only after Juan Perón's ouster. Even then, Pite concedes, customary practice often eclipsed legal rights. More commonly, nonstate institutions mediated reproductive laborers' interactions with state agencies. Milanich demonstrates that, through Santiago's Casa de Huérfanos, the Chilean state played an active role in "subsidizing, training, and allocating this labor." Taking in the children of domestic servants and contracting out wet nurses, the publicly funded Casa functioned as the most important broker of reproductive labor. Notably, the Catholic Church figures prominently in both Chilean cases included here, playing an active role in defining understandings of dignity, respectability, and social justice.

Reproductive labor's ambiguous status as incompletely commodified, combined with its imbrication with intimate and affective relationships, has complicated relationships with reproductive laborers' two most probable institutional allies: labor unions and feminist organizations. As Hutchison shows, domestic workers' unions carefully managed their relationships with feminist organizations, the Catholic Church, and the changing Chilean regime. By the early 1980s, the union had a delicate but collaborative relationship with the *Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer*. Jo Fisher has found that substantial numbers of Argentine women addressed tensions between labor unions and the growing women's movement by forming a labor union of housewives, the *Sindicato de Amas de Casa*, which claimed a membership of a half-million women by 1995.⁴⁸

Many Latin American women's organizations and women-dominated unions have tried to bridge labor and feminist concerns through maternalist discourses, invoking motherhood as a political identity rather than a social or familial role. Although feminists in Latin America and elsewhere have debated whether maternalist strategies exacerbate the conflation of womanhood with motherhood—and a particularly idealized conception of motherhood that held women above the fray of partisan politics and competitive markets—the concept has retained considerable traction, not least because of maternalists' dramatic roles in challenging authoritarian regimes and serving as a basis for political and economic rights.⁴⁹ Much in the way that labor unions have highlighted

48. Jo Fisher, "Gender and the State in Argentina: The Case of the *Sindicato de Amas de Casa*," in Dore and Molyneux, *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, 322–45.

49. Among the most celebrated instances of maternalist activism has been the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, which many observers credit with eroding the legitimacy of Argentina's military junta. For a somewhat hagiographic depiction of the movement, see Marguerite Guzman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1994). See also Donna J. Guy, *White Slavery*

workers' economic contributions to demand political rights, maternalist movements have leveraged women's caring roles and motherly virtue to influence the political realm. Latin Americanist scholars have investigated the efficacy and resilience of maternalist strategies. As Maxine Molyneux has observed, "Latin American feminists highlighted gender differences and framed their demands for citizenship in terms of their maternal social function and superior morality, which they would deploy in the service of society."⁵⁰ Latin Americanists have taken a particular interest in Sonya Michel and Seth Koven's argument correlating strong maternalist movements with weak welfare states as the emergence of welfare states highlighted questions about the economic value of housework, since unpaid labor generally did not qualify women for public pensions.⁵¹

and Mothers Alive and Dead: The Troubled Meeting of Sex, Gender, Public Health, and Progress in Latin America (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2000); Christine Ehrick, "Madrinas and Missionaries: Uruguay and the Pan-American Women's Movement," *Gender and History* 10, no. 3 (1998): 406–24; Sarah Buck, "Activists and Mothers: Feminists and Maternalist Politics in Mexico, 1923–1953" (PhD diss., Rutgers Univ., 2002). These movements sometimes took an unsavory turn, as when "republican motherhood" yielded to eugenicist motherhood. See Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2005).

50. Molyneux, "Twentieth-Century State Formations in Latin America," 45. Scholars of other parts of the world, some of them with one foot in Latin American studies, have considered maternalist political strategies as well. Interviewing women about their responses to the Love Canal toxic waste disaster, environmental racism in North Carolina, and housing movements in South Africa, the historian Temma Kaplan found that their maternalist activism offered the possibility of a "third space that is neither public nor private." Temma Kaplan, *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 11. More recently, economist Lourdes Benería and political scientist Kathi Weeks have also held up reproductive labor (although not maternalism per se) as a promising arena for fashioning a new political paradigm. Lourdes Benería, *Gender, Development, and Globalization: Economics as if All People Mattered* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Weeks, "Life Within and Against Work."

51. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (New York: Routledge, 1993). For Latin Americanist scholarship, see Nichole Sanders, "Improving Mothers: Poverty, the Family, and 'Modern' Social Assistance in Mexico, 1937–1950," in *The Women's Revolution in Mexico, 1910–1953*, ed. Stephanie Mitchell and Patience A. Schell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 187–203; Nichole Sanders, "Gender and Welfare Reform in Post-Revolutionary Mexico," *Gender and History* 20, no. 1 (2008): 170–75; Nichole Sanders, "Mothering Mexico: The Historiography of Mothers and Motherhood in 20th-Century Mexico," *History Compass* 7, no. 6 (2009): 1542–53; Buck, "Activists and Mothers"; Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*; Donna J. Guy, "The Pan American Child Congresses, 1916 to 1942: Pan Americanism, Child Reform, and the Welfare State in Latin America," *Journal of Family History* 23, no. 3 (1998): 272–91.

The articles included here also examine how women have leveraged their status as household workers, rather than as mothers, for state-sanctioned rights and material benefits.⁵² A diverse array of women, from Chilean domestic employees to *poblana* street vendors, demanded recognition not of their morality and abnegation but rather of the dignity and skill of their labor.⁵³ As I have argued elsewhere, women in postrevolutionary Mexico struggled for recognition of their uncommodified labors as a basis for claiming citizenship rights and standing as workers.⁵⁴ Jo Fisher demonstrates that the Argentine housewives union, arguing for union recognition and state-funded wages and benefits, “emphasized women as workers with rights, not as wives and mothers carrying out their work out of love and duty. ‘It’s considered that women are naturals for housework—we say it’s got nothing to do with nature—it’s a cultural question.’”⁵⁵

Methods, Lacunae, and Opportunities

The articles collected in this special issue offer methodological suggestions for illuminating the poorly lit corners of reproductive labor history. Since reproductive labor practices only rarely appear in archival documentation, studies of paid

52. In the US case, Barbara Nelson has argued persuasively that New Deal welfare policies reinforced the perception that the “real” work of wage labor entitled men to social security and workmen’s compensation, while “mother’s aid” and its successor “welfare” programs constituted a charitable handout. Barbara J. Nelson, “The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen’s Compensation and Mother’s Aid,” in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, ed. Linda Gordon (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin, 1990), 123–51. Subsequent studies explored this dichotomy and the irony of its roots in the Progressives’ conviction that motherhood indeed constituted a full-time job. Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1992); Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890–1935* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917–1942* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995); Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890–1930* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1994).

53. Sandra Mendiola considered *poblana* street vendors in “Taking Children to Work: Street Vendors in a Mexican City,” paper presented at the Latin American Labor History Conference, Duke University, May 2007.

54. Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico*.

55. Fisher, “Gender and the State in Argentina,” 326. The US welfare historian Felicia Kornbluh similarly underscores in her 1996 review essay that maternalists argued that “women as mothers deserved a return from their government for the socially vital work they performed by raising children.” Felicia A. Kornbluh, “Review: The New Literature on Gender and the Welfare State: The U.S. Case,” *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 178.

domestic labor far outnumber those of unpaid domestic labor, and anthropological studies outnumber histories.⁵⁶ Blum's and Milanich's articles demonstrate, however, that sources such as social workers' reports and legal records provide glimpses of the intimate and quotidian lives of popular actors who rarely enjoy a prominent place in official records.⁵⁷ In most of Latin America, the strong influence of the Napoleonic Code, which specifies rights and duties of males and females at different life stages and operates on a case-by-case legal interpretation rather than precedent, has generated troves of rich evidence documenting competing expectations of social practice and household obligations. Latin Americanist historians have also turned a critical eye on older ethnographic accounts that provide details about life in rural and impoverished communities.⁵⁸

Blum and Milanich both demonstrate that documentary records, no less than ethnographic accounts, demand reading within the framework of their own contribution to knowledge production. To begin with, as Milanich and Pite both note, the documentary record often leaves out the informal labor negotiations and agreements that may have been oral or even implicit and that render archiving institutions less central. Further, state agencies and powerful institutions such as the Catholic Church or prominent political parties and labor unions enjoy greater importance in the archives than they would in the lives of ordinary people. Thus, the articles here and other scholars of reproductive labor have complemented documentary sources with oral and visual sources.

56. Elsa M. Chaney and Mary Garcia Castro, eds., *Muchachas No More: Household Workers in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1989). Early feminist interventions were divided on whether to integrate the study of paid and unpaid household labor. Joan Scott and Louise Tilly's classic study of French and British women's labor excludes household labor unless it was performed for pay, focusing instead on "productive activity." Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work, and Family* (1978: New York: Methuen, 1987), 5. Alice Kessler-Harris's ambitious 1981 survey of women's work, meanwhile, dedicates nearly half its pages to housework. Kessler-Harris, *Women Have Always Worked*. Her most recent volume, however, focuses entirely on women's wage labor. Alice Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2007).

57. Susan Porter Benson has recently used social work reports to reveal surprising aspects of working-class survival strategies in the Depression-era United States. Benson, *Household Accounts*.

58. See for example Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlán, a Mexican Village: A Study of Folk Life* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1930); Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatán* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1941); Oscar Lewis, *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty — San Juan and New York* (New York: Random House, 1966); Oscar Lewis, *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1959); Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sánchez, Autobiography of a Mexican Family* (New York: Random House, 1961).

Oral sources offer two dividends particularly relevant to investigating reproductive labor: perspectives from workers who often do not leave written records, and accounts of the ordinary realities that might not merit mention in documentary records. Latin American historians have long relied upon oral testimony and ethnographic accounts to study family life. From Peter Winn's *Weavers of Revolution* to Daniel James's *Doña María's Story*, students of Latin American labor history have explored the methodological challenges and possibilities of oral sources, creating a rich source base and increasingly nuanced and illuminating methods for exploring personal experiences.⁵⁹ While documentary evidence often parses experience into, for example, bureaucratic or legal categories, oral testimony tends to depict reproductive labor in a more holistic fashion, recognizing the love-labor hybridity as part of the fabric of everyday life. Sources such as novels and memoirs likewise reveal details and rhythms of daily life, but they impose a greater narrative coherence than oral histories, often obscuring the contradictions and inconsistencies of lived experience. Subjects giving life histories or interviews tend not to isolate reproductive labor from the rest of their lives as, for example, wage laborers, church members, union activists, or pleasure seekers, thus yielding a more complete perspective on everyday experience. They describe their domestic and extradomestic activities not in opposition but rather as integrated, each necessitating the other.

Two articles here use oral sources to investigate aspects of reproductive labor. Hutchison interviewed founding members of the Chilean Catholic household workers' association ANECAP to chart how their demands and strategies changed over the course of the Popular Unity and Pinochet governments. These informants all shed light on aspects of their respective histories that remain either outside of or oversimplified by the documentary records. Pite performed both collective and individual interviews with audience members to gauge the reception of Doña Petrona's show, in particular her interactions with

59. James offers a detailed discussion of oral history theories and methods, particularly as they illuminate conceptions of gender and the interplay between domestic and extradomestic life. Daniel James, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2000). See, among many other examples, Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory*; Verena Radkau, "La Fama" y la vida: *Una fábrica y sus obreras* (Mexico City: SEP Cultura, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1984); Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*; French and James, *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers*; Peter Winn, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986); Peter Winn, ed., *Victims of the Chilean Miracle: Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1972–2002* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2004).

Juanita, her domestic employee both onstage and off. Pite also makes particular use of visual sources, considering images from *Buenas Tardes*, *Mucho Gusto*, with its self-consciously embodied representations of domesticity and household authority.

As much as the articles offer, they also are far from comprehensive. Deepening our understanding in this field will require a more complete engagement with Latin American scholars, who often bring a different set of questions and analytical frameworks. As noted above, questions of race and racism remain understudied in Latin American history, including reproductive-labor history. Indeed, the very resistance to talking about race, as Pite found, itself merits examination. Further, although discussions of sexuality and sex commerce often entered into our discussions of reproductive labor, none of the articles here has taken up those questions. Like other forms of reproductive labor, sex and sex work move in and out of the domestic realm, between commodified and uncommodified forms and between labor and pleasure. Sex is often only nominally voluntary and, along with other domestic labors, has historically been considered part of what a wife owes a husband, part of the *alimentos* that Blum considers. We know from oral histories and memoirs that sexual abuse of domestic servants, particularly those who live in, has been commonplace, and the line between domestic service and sex work has often been breached. Such practices remain difficult to historicize and often appear most prominently as aberrations documented in criminal records and mass media. Going beyond these sensational and spectacular representations demands careful and delicate research.

The influence of social and cultural geography as well as the growth of transnational and comparative studies has set in relief the extent to which reproductive labor, in both its imaginaries and its practices, reflects specific histories, cultures, and ideologies and required constant policing and reinforcement.⁶⁰

60. On social and cultural geography, see Katharyne Mitchell, Sallie A. Marston, and Cindi Katz, eds., *Life's Work: Geographies of Social Reproduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). For a particularly illustrative example of the usefulness of transnational studies in this field, see Katz, "Vagabond Capitalism." For a discussion of the differences between and benefits of comparative and transnational historical studies, see Micol Seigel, "Beyond Compare: Historical Method after the Transnational Turn," *Radical History Review* 91 (2005): 62–90. A recent special issue of *Gender and Society* (vol. 17, no. 2 [April 2003]) on gender and care work demonstrates feminist sociologists' transnational turn in studying reproductive labor. The turn to comparative perspectives lent itself to the production of edited volumes that challenged conceptions of motherhood and domestic work as natural, biologized, or overdetermined. See for example Collins and Gimenez, *Work without Wages*; Glenn, Chang, and Forcey, *Mothering*; Nash and Safa, *Sex and Class in Latin America*; Nash, Safa, et al., *Women and Change in Latin America*.

Whereas earlier studies had used comparative perspectives to search for universals regarding reproductive labor, this research sets out to dissolve these universals, highlighting the contingencies of reproductive labor practices.⁶¹ In her introductory essay to the 1994 collection *Mothering*, Evelyn Nakano Glenn insists on “attending to the variation rather than searching for the universal,” arguing that the “concept of motherhood as universally women’s work disguises the fact that it is further subdivided, so that different aspects of caring labor are assigned to different groups of women.”⁶²

Studies of migrant communities that result from both international migration and rural-urban migration particularly highlight these contingencies and further demonstrate how globalization affects unpaid reproductive labor much as it does other forms of labor.⁶³ Some scholarship has considered diverse tactics for accommodating reproductive-labor demands through extended kin networks, cooperative efforts, and, most recently “transnational motherhood” (migrant women’s practice of leaving their children with family or community members in their home countries while they work abroad, often tending other people’s children).⁶⁴ In addition to Segura’s telling study of Chicanas and mexicanas, for example, Jennifer Hirsch has found that, unlike the earlier generations of braceros, the more recent generation of Mexican migrant workers tends to perform more domestic labor when they return to Mexico.⁶⁵

The articles here seek to restart a conversation between feminists and labor historians that has repeatedly been interrupted or cut short. They would evidence the ways that the field of reproductive-labor history engages the fields of political, social, economic, family, and cultural history, demanding a wholesale reconsideration of the ways historians have separated public from private, production from consumption, and labor from love. The political stakes of such a

61. The earlier approach is exemplified by the eminent anthropologist Jack Goody in *Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976).

62. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “Social Constructions of Mothering: A Thematic Overview,” in Glenn, Chang, and Forcey, *Mothering*, 5, 7.

63. For a review of this literature in the US context, see Schneider, “The Work That Never Ends.”

64. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila, “I’m Here, but I’m There: The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood,” *Gender and Society* 5, no. 11 (1997): 548–71.

65. Jennifer S. Hirsch, “En el Norte la Mujer Manda: Gender, Generation, and Geography in a Mexican Transnational Community,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, no. 9 (1999): 1339.

project are striking: both paid and unpaid reproductive laborers generally find themselves without access to health insurance and retirement pensions, and the structural adjustment programs of the 1990s eviscerated many state services, leaving reproductive laborers to take up the slack in tending the young, elderly, and infirm. Historicizing reproductive labor would go some distance toward making the case that reproductive laborers should struggle for and enjoy rights and benefits. However, the historiographical stakes are also high. Most obviously, the study of reproductive labor history allows us to examine more rigorously and more thoroughly a vast area of human experience that currently remains underexamined compared to other fields, including labor history. Just as important, it is an area of inquiry that challenges conventional analytics and boundaries between historical subfields and opens a significant reconceptualization of how we think, write, and teach Latin American history.

