
REVIEW ESSAYS

LABOR IN THE AMERICAS: Surviving in a World of Shifting Boundaries

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CAPITAL MOVES: RCA'S SEVENTY-YEAR QUEST FOR CHEAP LABOR.

By Jefferson Cowie. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999. Pp. 273. \$29.95 cloth.)

FROM PUERTO RICO TO PHILADELPHIA: PUERTO RICAN WORKERS AND POSTWAR ECONOMICS. By Carmen Teresa Whalen.

(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001. Pp. 309. \$74.50 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)

IMMIGRANT WOMEN. Edited by Rita James Simon. (New Brunswick, N.J., and London: Transaction Publishers, 2001. Pp. 198. \$24.95 paper.)

THE ECONOMICS OF GENDER IN MEXICO: WORK, FAMILY, STATE, AND MARKET. Edited by Elizabeth G. Katz and María C. Correia. (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2001. Pp. 297. \$22.00 paper.)

LABOR UNIONS, PARTISAN COALITIONS, AND MARKET REFORMS IN LATIN AMERICA. By María Victoria Murillo. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Pp. 250. \$59.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper.)

FROM THE FINCA TO THE MAQUILA: LABOR AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL AMERICA. By Juan Pablo Pérez Sáinz. (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1999. Pp. 189. \$65.00 cloth.)

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BEYOND SMOKE AND MIRRORS: MEXICAN IMMIGRATION IN AN ERA OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION. By Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002. Pp. 199. \$29.95 cloth.)

OPERATION GATEKEEPER: THE RISE OF THE "ILLEGAL ALIEN" AND THE MAKING OF THE U.S.-MEXICO BOUNDARY. By Joseph Nevins. (New York and London: Routledge, 2002. Pp. 286. \$17.95 paper.)

The control of space is an integral part of power relations. The state, as the pre-eminent power container, necessitates the control of space and the construction of territory, and therefore requires the construction of boundaries in both the physical (between national territories) and social senses (between citizens and "aliens"). (xx)

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Recently, practitioners in the fields of history, economics, anthropology, sociology, and geography have contributed a wealth of works dedicated to trying to comprehend, if not resolve, the seeming contradictions presented by contemporary phenomena relating to boundaries as they exist in a "globalized" world. Such contradictions include the undercutting of the sovereignty of nation-states through transnational institutions such as the World Trade Organization; the intensification of the power of nation-states through the militarization of boundaries; the transnationalization of capital; the constriction of the power of labor through geographical bounding; the often centuries-old pattern of migration flows; and the dynamics between these phenomena and the social and metaphorical boundaries formed by the categories of race, class, and gender. With capital more mobile than ever before, how is labor to survive and flourish in the "globalized" world?¹ Are there ways that labor can use geopolitical boundaries to its advantage? Or is labor's only hope to match the mobility of capital (either through the age-old strategy of migration or through the still largely unproved strategy of cross-boundary organization)?

All the works considered in this essay treat the theme of relations between labor and capital within the broader context of global North-South relations in the Americas.² All of the authors recognize the im-

1. The term "globalization," as I use it herein, refers to the economic, political, and sociocultural processes stemming from unfettered post-Soviet capitalism (i.e., capitalism without spheres of socialism interfering with market penetration). As such, its use is not meant to connote any substantive change in the international division of labor that has obtained throughout most of the historic period of capitalism.

2. My use of the terms "North" and "South" comes from development parlance, which currently prefers these terms to the older approximate synonym pairs of "core" and

portance of the phenomena of spatial bounding and the crossing of boundaries, sometimes by capital, sometimes by labor. Jefferson Cowie offers a treatment of capital moving continually southward throughout the United States until it crosses the final boundary from North to South. In Carmen Teresa Whalen's *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economics*, we see labor moving North, precisely in response to capital moving South. Whalen's is an historical study treating the period of the 1940s to the 1970s. *Immigrant Women*, edited by Rita Simon, is a contemporary treatment of labor in the North, having arrived in the United States from a wide spectrum of points in the global South. Meanwhile, the works by Juan Pablo Pérez Sáinz, Elizabeth G. Katz and María C. Correia, and María Victoria Murillo are all set in the South. Pérez Sáinz and Murillo take up the theme of transnational capital in the South, and its effects upon labor there, with sociologist Pérez Sáinz offering a structural analysis of Central America, and Murillo concentrating on the active responses of labor to neoliberalism in Mexico, Venezuela, and Argentina. *The Economics of Gender in Mexico: Work, Family, State, and Market*, edited by Katz and Correia, focuses on the economic survival strategies of Mexican workers who remain in Mexico. Finally, the works by Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone as well as Joseph Nevins take as their locus the boundary between North and South. Massey et al. concentrate on the geopolitical boundary of the U.S.-Mexico border, while Nevins deals with boundaries both geopolitical and social, not only *between* North and South but also *within* the North. Both treat the issue of how this boundary between South and North serves the interests of transnational capital, sometimes by allowing and encouraging labor to cross to the North, and sometimes by keeping labor bounded in the South.

In his study of one company's moves continually southward throughout the United States and then into Mexico, Jefferson Cowie correctly asserts that the trend of the transnationalization of capital does not mark a radical departure from historical precedents, as some proponents of the term "globalization" (as a period marker) would have us believe. It

"periphery," or "First World" and "Third World." Although "North" and "South" do tend to correspond to lines of hemisphere, there are noted exceptions, such as Australia (part of the "North"). For present purposes, it should be noted that Mexico, while a part of North America, is considered part of the global "South," and the same holds for Puerto Rico even though it is classified as a commonwealth of the United States. Throughout this essay my use of the term "boundary" rather than the more common term "border" derives from the distinction that geographers make between these two terms. Nevins defines "border" as "an area of interaction and gradual division between two separate political entities," and "boundary" as "a strict line of separation between two distinct territories" (8).

is in fact one more manifestation of the imperative of capital accumulation that has historically been operative since the inception of capitalism. Yet *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* is not the old familiar tale of deindustrialization as it exists in the popular imagination. Cowie originally thought he would be exploring the sharp divide between, on the one hand, the old system of labor relations (held to be, by historians, the "labor-management accord") that was in force in the industrialized world from at least the end of the Great Depression through the early 1970s³ and, on the other hand, the so-called "new international division of labor"⁴: i.e., the pattern whereby unionized majority-male workforces are replaced by women working in labor-intensive operations with little or no recourse to collective bargaining or other forms of worker resistance to capital accumulation. Instead, Cowie concludes first that the workforce in electronics had always been majority-female, and in fact, "women have borne the brunt of the process of restructuring both past and present" (5). Second, although Cowie might be accused of a slight misreading of the historical consensus in that most historians whose periodizations recognize a "labor-management accord" do concede that it only applied to a fairly small segment of (unionized) workers, he finds that capital was less committed to its end of the bargain in this "labor-management accord" (5). Cowie's *Capital Moves* is not a tale of "deindustrialization" at all, in fact, but rather a story of the relationship "between industrial investment and social change" because, joining with Cohen, Gerstle, and Kelley,⁵ Cowie insists upon resurrecting the agency of local communities and upon portraying how worker actions affected decisions taken by management, perhaps more than the other way around.

Capital Moves is an historically and geographically comparative study of the impact of capital migration on working-class communities. He follows RCA as it moved from the old industrial belt of the U.S. North-

3. This is also known as the "historic compromise between capital and labor." See Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

4. See Helen Safa, "Runaway Shops and Female Employment," *Signs*, Vol. 7 (1981): 418–33; June Nash and María Patricia Fernández-Kelly, eds., *Women, Men, and the International Division of Labor* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983); Jorge Bustamante, "Maquiladoras: A New Face of Capitalism on Mexico's Northern Frontier," in Nash and Fernández-Kelly. One problematic aspect of Cowie's work is that he occasionally relies on the periodization implied by those who claim the "new international division of labor" (see, e.g., 95–96).

5. Elizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

east, to the midwestern Rust Belt, across the Mason-Dixon line to the “right-to-work” U.S. South, and then across an international boundary to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. In so doing, the author takes the reader on a chronological tour through many of the key moments and most important sites in the twentieth-century labor history of the United States. Although he follows RCA through four distinct places and cultures, in a certain sense this is a story of replication, given that capital always moved in response to the development of one form or another of labor militancy. In 1931, just as RCA was starting up its operations in Camden, New Jersey, the city was still boasting of its record of “industrial peace.”⁶ By the following year, however, Polish and Italian workers had formed a 900-member Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) cell at RCA. Other workers had been trying to join the American Federation of Labor (AFL), but the AFL rebuked them, offering them non-voting status only; this sent RCA workers on a radical turn. The eventual strike at RCA’s factory in Camden brought national recognition to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and the repression unleashed at the striking workers made “Jersey justice” a byword in the U.S. labor movement (15–21). Finally, when workers earned the hard-fought right to collective bargaining (helped by favorable rulings related to the Wagner Act), RCA made good on its threat to move. Cowie argues that women had betrayed their supposed “cheapness” by endorsing the union contract, and they had undermined their supposed “docility” by engaging in street battles during the strike; therefore, the women’s production lines were the main ones that RCA moved to Indiana.

RCA initially found Bloomington, Indiana, an attractive site because people in southern Indiana were desperate for work by the late 1930s. The Depression had ruined farming and small-scale industry there, and the region had a limited industrial culture and corresponding low levels of unionization. It is interesting that RCA placed very strict qualifications on its new 80-percent-female workforce, such as high morals and being single; one is reminded of the Lowell mill girls because Cowie comments that RCA “delivered the industrial revolution to the women of Monroe County.” When the newly proletarianized responded with

6. The city leaders claimed that Camden had “never known a major strike,” even though the militia had in fact been called to Camden to put down labor unrest in 1919. Still, Camden’s record of “industrial peace” was noteworthy, especially given that by 1920, sixty percent of the foreign-born residents of Camden were “New Immigrants,” blacks who had arrived from the U.S. South during the Great Migration, or immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The labor militancy of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe in particular during this historical period has been well documented. Citing John Bodnar’s (1980) work, Cowie claims that the New Immigrants in Camden were most interested in job security and family stability and therefore not given to labor militancy, especially during the open-shop 1920s.

their own forms of militancy, RCA set its sights on Memphis, Tennessee. This town promised RCA high rates of unemployment (the city had not shared in the boom of the World War II era) and a labor movement controlled and divided by racism. But Memphis had a submerged CIO tradition, and the speed-ups and other hostile gestures undertaken by management pushed these to the surface, so the Memphis workforce, it turned out, was never as docile as RCA initially took them to be. The result was that the RCA factory there shut down within five short years of its opening.⁷ Following the failure in Memphis, RCA moved production to Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, where it remains to the present day (now under the new name of Thomson Consumer Electronics). Yet RCA still has not found its long-sought perfectly cheap and docile labor force, as Cowie documents the emergence of a radical workers' group and a successful sit-down strike in 1995.

Cowie, by telling the story of replication (in an historical comparative framework), speaks against the "exceptionalism that permeates the literature on maquiladoras and other export-processing zones," which tends to portray labor in these zones as lacking all recourse to any form of resistance to exploitation (155). In all cases industrialization brought social change that spawned resistance, and the same has been and will likely continue to be true in the case of the maquiladoras.⁸ Still, Cowie recognizes that plant shutdowns could have the effect of reversing the processes of social change he describes and could potentially reimpose the worker discipline cast off during the height of production (just as the workers at the Bloomington plant seem to have been completely tamed in the end). Therefore, Cowie's rebuttal of works by the proponents of the new international division of labor, which claim that this process is both new and *permanent*, brings to mind the following questions: Will capital continue to move on until there is no place left for it to go because there is no place that it has left untouched, uncontaminated by industrialization and the tendency in industrialized areas for workers to become contentious "malingerers"? Has labor any chance of organizing across boundaries in order to halt capital's constant threat of moving? The answer to the latter seems to be: only if

7. Labor militancy at RCA in Memphis exploded following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and far from being a tool to keep labor divided and docile, race asserted itself on the side of militancy, as worker manifestoes circulated at the time compared RCA to slave masters (91).

8. In this aspect, Cowie does tell an older tale, the Marxian tale of contradictions contained within capitalism and the Thompsonian tale of class formation. Cowie writes that "capital" means more than just buildings, tools, and the like. It is also a complex social relationship. Capital's desire for cheap labor brought into play social relations of industrial production, new for each set of workers who encountered RCA, and these new relations served to undermine the very qualities RCA sought: cheapness and docility (53).

historical memory among workers can be sustained, which is, after all, one of Cowie's most important, albeit unstated, aims.

The context for Carmen Teresa Whalen's study of Puerto Rican workers in both their home communities and in Philadelphia is the rapid transformation of the Puerto Rican economy from the late 1940s to 1970. The arrival of transnational capital within Puerto Rico following its declaration as a tax haven in 1947 spurred the shift from a largely agricultural to an industrialized economy; this in turn prompted massive rural-to-urban migration, both within Puerto Rico and from the island to the continental United States. With tobacco and sugar production in steep decline, Puerto Rico's rural working class had little choice but to move to survive, and while urban industry provided low-wage jobs for some women, most men and many women from these rural areas headed for the northeastern United States.⁹ It is encouraging that Whalen takes Cowie's premise regarding the historical continuity of the transnationalization of capital as a given; she even uses the phrase "[g]lobalization in the postwar era."

Whalen also emphasizes the continuity in the ways Puerto Rican migrants experienced their own labor contributions to household and community in Puerto Rico and in the continental United States. She links the Philadelphia Puerto Rican community with the communities these migrants left behind in Puerto Rico and demonstrates carefully how they recreated the household economy in their new setting. In both settings, women contributed nearly all the labor involved in the daily reproduction of the household, as well as performing wage-labor. That wage-labor was nothing new for Puerto Rican women is an important point because their relationship to wage-labor was used as a form of attack by the dominant white community in Philadelphia who sought to exclude the new migrants. Whalen takes up a theme addressed as well by Massey et al., and by Nevins: how migrants and immigrants have been defined through work and welcomed as temporary laborers but shunned as permanent community members throughout recent U.S. history.¹⁰ Whalen

9. Puerto Rican tobacco was in decline in part because of much cheaper tobacco production in Cuba, the Philippines, and Indonesia, and Puerto Rican sugar was in decline in part because even though Puerto Rican wages were the lowest, the costs of production in Puerto Rico were higher than in Louisiana, Florida, and Hawaii (41–42).

10. Whalen refers to this as a "central paradox" of labor migration and makes the case for viewing it as such by showing how the dominant white community's fears about Puerto Ricans limited their recruitment as laborers *in spite of* the need for labor in the U.S. during World War II (49). One weakness in Whalen's study is that her analysis does not factor in the Bracero Program (by which U.S. growers hired Mexican workers), and her third chapter, "Contract Labor," makes barely a mention of it, even though this undoubtedly had tremendous effects upon shaping the Puerto Rican migrant experience. Whalen later demonstrates how during the Cold War, Puerto Rican citizenship was transformed from a liability (citizens could not be as easily deported when labor needs

shows the discourse that arose from the mistaken view that the Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia were not economically displaced labor migrants but rather were immigrants “coming” to the United States in search of welfare (205). It will be remembered that it was the Puerto Rican community that was the subject of Oscar Lewis’ original formulation of his now uniformly disparaged “culture of poverty” thesis; and the relative poverty of the Puerto Rican community in Philadelphia was explained *culturally* with explicit reference to race and gender. On the assumption that women’s wage-labor was a new phenomenon and that it constituted a threat to men’s masculinity, Puerto Rican women were blamed for the tribulations they and their families faced.¹¹

Although it is true that the Puerto Rican community has been excluded from most U.S. immigration, labor, social, and women’s histories of the post-World War II era, it has not been for lack of data, for Whalen’s *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia* is extensively researched. The author draws upon a wealth of sources from both “sending” and “receiving” societies, including Catholic church records, city marriage licenses in Philadelphia, census data, the oral histories of fifty-seven people interviewed in the mid-1970s, and interviews conducted by the author with twenty-five people over the period from 1991 to 1998. In so doing, Whalen certainly succeeds in her attempt to remedy the invisibility of Puerto Ricans in U.S. history.

Rita James Simon’s *Immigrant Women* is an edited collection that treats the theme of immigrant labor in the North.¹² The first chapter, Nancy

diminished) into an asset because (a) criticism of foreign contract labor increased; and (b) the context of the Cold War added a “patriotic tone” to a reliance upon domestic labor (50). This is a point well taken; nevertheless, this particular line of analysis could have been strengthened by taking into consideration the voices of organized labor in the U.S. mainland.

11. Indeed, it would have been quite interesting to hear more Puerto Rican male voices on the subject of women’s wage-labor, both in Puerto Rico and in Philadelphia, and how attitudes might have shifted over the time period Whalen is addressing. Nevertheless, Whalen’s rebuttal of the “culture of poverty” (later transformed to the “underclass”) thesis is one of the great strengths of this work. Oscar Lewis and Oscar Handlin generated feverish responses from historians who insisted on the agency of the historical subject and who, in contrast to the “culture of poverty” thesis, tended to tell the “immigrant success story.” These treatments left out such historical facts as genuine exploitation and nativism. Meanwhile, analyses by Puerto Rican authors have addressed such structural factors as colonialism and other systems of global exploitation but often at the expense of the agency of the historical subject. While I think that we have gone a bit too far in the wrong direction when an historian feels the need to state that “policy makers had human agency, too” (9), I do think that Whalen’s history succeeds in uniting the best of each of these analyses.

12. The contributions to this book are all reprints of journal articles that appeared in *Gender Issues* in 1998 and 1999. One set of articles focuses specifically on the labor-force experi-

Foner's "Benefits and Burdens: Immigrant Women and Work in New York City," demonstrates several of the shortcomings of the work as a whole. Foner writes, "Indeed, Latin American and Caribbean women strongly identify as wives and mothers and they like being in charge of the domestic domain" (8). Such problematic generalizations are interspersed throughout the book.¹³ Also, Foner draws upon research conducted as long ago as the early 1980s, yet she maintains the present tense throughout her analysis. To be sure, these essays are never claimed to be historical treatments, but instead are, for the most part, broad surveys based on aggregates of data on women—across a wide range of time and space, and surely of class, race, ethnicity, and yes, gender as well (although the implications of these kinds of differences among women are rarely addressed). The reader finds, however, that the scope of these essays is often too broad in that the analysis does not have the focus needed to break any new ground. Foner, for example, arrives at the rather bland conclusion that wage-labor has the potential both to oppress and to liberate immigrant women (15). The best essay in this collection is Harriet Orcutt Duleep's "The Family Investment Model: Formalization and Review of Evidence from Across Immigrant Groups." Duleep, an economist, is one of the originators of the concept of "family investment," which she uses to explain the varying propensities, among immigrant groups, of married women to engage in wage-labor. According to this model, "the higher the return to investment in U.S.-specific skills [e.g., language skills, technical skills] by the husband, the more likely that married immigrant women will work to support that investment" (86). Duleep thus advocates thinking of the "family investment strategy" as "a sequence of steps that the wife takes in order to help finance the career path of her husband and her own career path" (97) rather than considering in isolation a married woman's decision as to whether and when to perform wage-labor. The reader wonders whether this model could in fact be amended to apply to *all* members of a family, given that it is a *family* strategy and that as such, it surely affects all members' economic decisions to some degree.

Another work that focuses on family economic survival strategies but from *within* the geopolitical boundaries of the global South is the edited work by Elizabeth G. Katz and Maria C. Correia, *The Economics of Gender in Mexico*. This study, commissioned by the World Bank, examines gender differences in relation to the Mexican economy in gen-

ences of immigrant women, while the other articles are more heterogeneous. It is this first set I concentrate on here, since the others are beyond the scope of this review essay.

13. Also problematic is one author's use of the terms "racial" and "ethnic" as qualifiers of the term "women," to mean "women of color," a practice which disregards the relational quality of the concept of race (see 25).

eral terms and the labor market more specifically.¹⁴ One of the most interesting aspects of this volume is that its authors examine gender issues over the course of the life cycle, starting with the themes of gender differences in the educational system and of child labor; then covering adult participation in wage-labor, in both urban and rural settings; and finally a discussion of the socioeconomic situation of elderly women and men in Mexico.

The first chapter, by Susan W. Parker and Carla Pederzini, seeks to analyze the determinants of levels of education among girls and boys. The authors' analysis draws upon a very rich source, the 1995 National Survey of the Population and Housing Count (referred to in Mexico simply as "*el Conteo*"). They conclude that there are no substantial gender differences in education for the Mexican population under the age of twenty, except in some rural areas; and that this advance is largely a result of the education levels attained by the mothers of the current generation of youth. The analysis of Parker and Pederzini could be enhanced by addressing the question of parental attitudes toward female participation in wage-labor, especially as contrasted with parental expectations concerning daughters and the labor involved in household maintenance and child-bearing and rearing. Felicia Marie Knaul's "The Impact of Child Labor and School Dropout on Human Capital: Gender Differences in Mexico" raises the important question of how to account for unpaid labor in different types of analyses. The econometric models Knaul uses do not account for unwaged labor (which child labor often is), and she recognizes that "[t]he exclusion of unpaid housework biases [her] analysis . . . particularly with respect to females" (59). Although this is an omission recognized by many of the authors in this volume, the reason for not analyzing unpaid labor is partly a lack of data. This is precisely why we need oral histories and ethnographies, so that information on unwaged labor will not be lost simply for want of social scientists' models with which to understand it.¹⁵

The strongest analysis in this volume is Wendy Cunningham's "Breadwinner versus Caregiver: Labor Force Participation and Sectoral Choice over the Mexican Business Cycle." Cunningham writes that studies that take "gender" as a primary explanatory variable of differential labor patterns between women and men (as when "gender" is mistakenly used to mean nothing more than biological sex) suffer two pri-

14. It is important to note, as the authors do, that the gender analysis in this work is confined to "human capital and labor market issues," and that "other important topics such as reproductive health and violence" are not addressed (7).

15. Neither does Knaul offer sufficient analysis of agricultural labor, which, again, is often child labor and which would interfere with schooling, although she does at least recognize that this issue needs more attention.

mary problems. First, such studies assume that women and men are two homogeneous groups; and second, these studies tend to find that women and men are intrinsically different, a conclusion that automatically derives from the premise. Instead, states Cunningham, it is household *roles*, which are formed in the interactions between the variables of gender and household composition, that determine a person's participation in the wage-labor force (85). Cunningham explores periods of economic shock in Mexico in order to highlight the gendered dimensions of economic downturns. In this examination of household strategies used to weather economic recessions, she finds a great deal of "intragender heterogeneity" and also many similarities among women and men, depending primarily on their family circumstances. For example, she finds that husbands are "unresponsive to economic shocks," meaning that in general, they perform wage-labor regardless of the state of the economy because only fifteen percent of Mexican married men have wives who also earn wages, and all husbands are dependent upon the unwaged labor of their family members. Wives, on the other hand, are the most responsive to economic shocks, entering the wage-labor workforce in large numbers during such periods in order to substitute for or supplement the primary breadwinner's wages. Generally, husbands and single mothers practice similar economic strategies, as do single women and men (86, 92, 102–06). Cunningham therefore acts in accordance with Duleep's prescription and undertakes a complex analysis of gender as it relates to whole-family household survival strategies, and in doing so is quite revealing.

Given the importance of microenterprise in the current Mexican economy, the piece by Susana M. Sánchez and José A. Pagán, "Explaining Gender Differences in Earnings in the Microenterprise Sector," is at first glance quite welcome. These authors, however, do not undertake the kind of gender analysis that their co-author Cunningham recommends, which would have been quite useful in examining this sector. Instead, they use "gender" to mean "biological sex" (see p. 186) and never end up analyzing sex discrimination as presenting barriers to women's entry into particular microenterprise sectors. They do bring up selected issues related to gender—e.g., gender roles that operate (although specifically how, we are left wondering) with regard to access to credit—but these issues are not analyzed, as the reader hopes authors contributing to such a book would seek to do. This brings me to this collection's central shortfall. An examination of gender has at least to take into account, in addition to sex, both age and marital status, for the range of gender expectations an individual faces changes according to the ways these three variables are combined. Most of the authors in this study recognize this, but the way it plays out economically is often not analyzed in the depth the reader would hope. The patterns

are discerned—and the authors make excellent use of empirical analysis to discern them—but the reasons for and mechanics of such phenomena as sex discrimination too often remain unknown to the reader; and knowing these is the second required step toward formulating good policy, which is what the authors of this volume seek to accomplish.¹⁶ Furthermore, given the importance of migration for the Mexican economy at the present moment, this volume would have done well to include a treatment of gender's effects on migration patterns and practices, as well as migration's effect on gender roles among those who remain in Mexico or return there from points north.

While *The Economics of Gender in Mexico* offers little discussion of the effects of transnational capital upon the Mexican economy, the inclusion of this dynamic is one of the greatest contributions of the work by political scientist María Victoria Murillo, *Labor Unions, Partisan Coalitions, and Market Reforms in Latin America*. Murillo analyzes state-labor relations in Mexico, Venezuela, and Argentina, all of which went through neoliberal reforms in the 1980s under the leadership of “populists” who came to power with the support of organized labor: Carlos Salinas (Partido Revolucionario Institucional—PRI) in Mexico; Carlos Andrés Pérez (Acción Democrática—AD) in Venezuela; and Carlos Menem (Peronist) in Argentina. Murillo was struck by the irony of ostensibly pro-labor governments that ended up imposing (anti-labor) structural adjustment packages, a dynamic that, in my estimation, serves to underscore the impotence of states to use geopolitical boundaries as a way of protecting labor from the demands of transnational capital.

The literature to which Murillo is responding is primarily that of Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier and of one of her mentors, Jorge I. Domínguez.¹⁷ Collier and Collier focus on the state's goal of cultivating alliances with organized labor as a way of maintaining control, and Murillo builds upon their analysis by delineating, from the perspective of union leaders, the gains made or losses incurred by entering such alliances. Domínguez, in order to account for the success or failure of structural adjustment, emphasizes the concentration of power in the executive branch and the executive's skill in wielding such power. Again,

16. A case in point occurs when Pagán and Sánchez write, “Nonetheless, the empirical results are also consistent with the *conjecture* that women are disproportionately represented in self-employment as a result of relatively lower barriers to entry into this sector, *perhaps* as a result of labor market discrimination in the wage and salary sector” (221, emphasis added).

17. Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); and Jorge I. Domínguez, ed., *Techonpols: Freeing Politics and Markets in Latin America in the 1990s* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

Murillo brings in the perspective of labor as key to understanding the relative ease with which structural adjustment is implemented (30, 199), and she does so quite capably, basing her study on archival research and interviews with over eighty people involved in organized labor in the three countries.

Examining the three variables of “partisan loyalty,” “leadership competition,” and “union competition,” Murillo looks into the internal dynamics of unions and union confederations; and at competition *among* unions to answer the questions of when and why the state offered concessions to labor and when and why the unions offered resistance to the state. These three variables can indicate whether the state has the upper hand, manifesting itself in restraint over organized labor, or whether organized labor is stronger and can offer the state genuine militancy. A high level of competition among unions, for example, signals the government that unions are weak, and in that situation the state will therefore be unlikely to offer concessions to organized labor. The case studies she has analyzed allow Murillo to elaborate a four-pattern template for categorizing the nature of state-labor relations: (a) “cooperation” occurs when the state exercises “effective restraint” over organized labor; (b) “subordination” occurs when the state’s attempts at restraint are ineffective; (c) “opposition” is effective militancy on the part of labor; and (d) “resistance” is ineffective militancy (1–8, 25). Murillo’s theory is solid if somewhat intuitive, and she supports it with a comparative analysis of unions in five different sectors (automobile, education, electricity, oil, and telecommunications) that also takes into account the crucial factor of whether the unions were representing workers active in the export sector or solely domestically.¹⁸

In Argentina, even though individual unions in particular sectors responded to structural adjustment with militancy, the loyalty of the Peronist CGT (General Confederation of Labor) was repaid by certain concessions to labor on the part of the Menem administration, concessions that cushioned some workers from the harshest effects of neoliberalism. In addition, this collaboration on the part of Peronist unions facilitated a relatively rapid implementation of structural adjustment, which hiked unemployment, and in turn tamed organized labor and made negotiations with the government more immediately

18. Throughout most of the twentieth century and continuing through the present, organized labor in Latin American export sectors has often been able to wield more power than workers in domestic sectors and has also, on occasion, been subject to much harsher crackdowns because of these workers’ importance to their national economies in the generation of foreign exchange. See, e.g., Jonathan C. Brown, ed., *Workers’ Control in Latin America, 1930–1979* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997); and Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America*.

palatable than militancy (131–72).¹⁹ Divisions were much stronger within the Venezuelan labor movement at the time of President Carlos Andrés Pérez's attempts to implement structural adjustment, and these were manifested in labor *disloyalty* to the administration.²⁰ Partisan competition within the AD-dominated CTV (Venezuelan Workers' Confederation), along with the rise in popularity among workers of the leftist Causa R, spurred union leaders to mount two general strikes and organize multiple protests against neoliberal reforms. As a consequence, the interaction between the CTV and the government took the form of "opposition," and labor militancy was effective in hindering planned structural adjustment and in obtaining compensation for these reforms (52–91).

In Mexico, the absence of viable alternatives to the PRI meant that not only the largest confederation, the CTM (Mexican Workers' Confederation), but also other major labor confederations remained loyal to the Salinas administration, and a situation of "subordination" obtained so that unions and their members received little in return for their collaboration (92–130). Structural adjustment in Mexico was particularly wide-sweeping in its reversal of the gains made by labor in the preceding decades. Although Murillo *does* note the importance of taking into account repression in the Mexican case, if there is any major drawback to her analysis, it would be the extent to which she takes the rosy view of the administrations of Menem, Salinas, and Pérez. Murillo seems to accept the myth, propounded by the administrations themselves, that none of these three presidents was "truly neoliberal," but rather that all three were "the true heirs of the great original mythology of their respective parties" (174).

Still, Murillo's contribution to understanding the nature of capital-labor relations within a world of quickly shifting boundaries is quite valuable for her analysis addresses "one of the political challenges created when increasing capital mobility and trade integration make state

19. Murillo writes, "It is worth noting that the behavior of individual unions was not very constrained by the CGT, in contrast to what happened in Mexico and Venezuela where the confederations were more centralized. Indeed, although SMATA [Related Trades of the Automobile Industry] and FOETRA [Federation of Telephone Workers and Employees of the Argentine Republic] had joined the proreform CGT, they increased their militancy during the period of the division based on their internal dynamics. The decentralized authority of the CGT permitted the largest unions to control the confederation and allowed the coexistence of diverse strategies even among loyal unions" (169).

20. Murillo attributes the fact of greater partisan competition to a much longer tradition of partisan plurality in the labor movement in Venezuela, as opposed to Mexico and Argentina. In Venezuela, a proportional representation electoral system allowed minorities to be included in union executive committees. The Argentine system did not have this feature, and it was prohibited in Mexico through the "exclusion clause"; therefore, leadership competition within unions was relatively low in these two countries (203).

intervention more difficult in nations across the world" (196). Although dynamics at the national level may be increasingly losing relevance in a "globalized" world, Murillo carefully demonstrates the importance of paying attention to the subtleties of internal dynamics at the micro-level (e.g., rivalries among unions or union leaders) in order to appreciate fully the spectrum of responses organized labor can offer transnational capital.

Sociologist Juan Pablo Pérez Sáinz also looks at the effects of transnational capital upon labor in the global South, and the setting for his study is Central America.²¹ He begins *From the Finca to the Maquila: Labor and Capitalist Development in Central America* with two workers' accounts of how they experience their workday, one given by Rigoberta Menchú, describing a day in the life of work on a coffee plantation in Guatemala circa the mid-1960s, and the other given by Lesley Rodríguez Solórzano, a fifteen-year-old Honduran girl working in a garment factory in the Honduran free-trade zone in the early 1990s. The similarities of the descriptions, despite the different settings and most importantly despite the passage of time, are indeed striking, and it was this similarity that inspired Pérez Sáinz to undertake the current study.

His thesis is similar to the one propounded by Cowie. Pérez Sáinz writes that "a certain logic, which has constructed a vulnerable world of labor in Central American countries, has persisted over time" (2). In order to "reveal and identify this logic," the author offers an historical analysis of Central America beginning in the 1950s and continuing through the present moment. The first chapter offers a brief synchronic summary of labor systems in effect in the region as of 1950 and a review of the region's early labor movement. Some readers might find this helpful, although since he is concerned with establishing patterns as well as being careful to point out exceptions, it is conceivable that this quick survey covering all of Central America could sometimes be dizzying, especially for those unfamiliar with the terrain. The remaining chapters take the reader through the period of attempted agricultural diversification (the late 1940s through the early 1960s); attempts at Import-Substitution Industrialization (ISI) in the 1960s; the 1970s, which saw the decline of ISI and the exacerbation of political crises that "degenerated into state terrorism"; and the 1980s, which saw the re-emergence of the "old oligarchic crisis," which had never been resolved. Most interesting is the discussion of the informal sector. The author believes that in the current setting, this sector deserves a new term,

21. This book is the English translation of a work originally published as *De la finca a la maquila: modernización capitalista y trabajo en Centroamérica*, by Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO).

"neoinformality." First, although the sector itself is not new, the mechanisms that created its current incarnation are new. No longer are capital-intensive operations such as export agriculture driving the growth of the informal sector, but instead its growth is directly related to the "new" production techniques of maquiladoras, subcontracting, and piecework production in homes. Second, the informal sector now employs the *nouveaux pauvres*, people who are now excluded, by the effects of neoliberal reforms, from the sectors that used to employ them (116, 129–35).

For the most part, this work supports Pérez Sáinz's thesis based on secondary sources.²² As such, it stands as an adequate survey of the literature on late twentieth-century Central America—especially of publications in Spanish by scholars in Latin America. Still, I am unclear as to the intended audience for this work, for his lack of definition or explanation of such terms as "old oligarchic crisis" seems to indicate that he is writing for those already familiar with Central American political and economic history; at the same time, though, I would question whether any of the analyses he presents is new to this group of readers. As for the style of the work, it is in large measure the style of work to which the "new labor history" was responding: except for some recounting of the chronology of strikes and of the formation of various workers' associations, the voices of labor are mostly absent.²³ Ironically, this style only serves to reinforce the condition of the *vulnerability* of labor, which the author hopes his work will mitigate through illumination. It is this emphasis upon labor vulnerability that allows him to reach the ahistoric conclusion of the book: "It appears that time has come to a standstill for Central American workers in their transition

22. Two of the authors Pérez Sáinz relies upon most heavily are Edelberto Torres-Rivas and Victor Bulmer-Thomas. He draws upon Torres-Rivas for much of his economic analysis. See Edelberto Torres-Rivas, *Interpretación del desarrollo social centroamericano* (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1989); Edelberto Torres-Rivas, "Quién destapó la caja de Pandora?" in Daniel Camacho and Manuel Rojas, eds., *La crisis centroamericana* (San José, Costa Rica: EDUCA/FLACSO, 1984); and Edelberto Torres-Rivas, *Centroamérica: la democracia posible* (San José, Costa Rica: EDUCA/FLACSO, 1987). Bulmer-Thomas provides the groundwork for the author's political analysis, especially the 1989 work of Bulmer-Thomas in which he delineates the historic similarities in the paths taken in state-labor relations in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua on the one hand; and how divergent this path was compared to those taken by Costa Rica and Honduras. See Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *La economía política de Centroamérica desde 1920* (Tegucigalpa: Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica, 1989); and Victor Bulmer-Thomas, "La crisis de la economía de agroexportación (1930–1945)," in Victor Hugo Acuña Ortega, ed., *Historia general de centroamérica: las repúblicas agroexportadoras (1870–1945)* (Madrid: FLACSO/Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario, 1993).

23. Other exceptions include the opening passage of the book (cited above) and his use of a FLACSO regional survey of worker attitudes on treatment and overtime (124).

from the *finca* to the *maquila*" (165). Getting closer to the voices of workers themselves—as Cowie, Whalen, and Murillo do so well—would allow a more historically accurate conclusion and perhaps a more optimistic one as well.

The last two works under consideration focus on the boundaries between the global South and North, and both take the locus of the Mexico-U.S. boundary as the primary site of analysis. Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone address their *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* to a popular audience and specifically to U.S. policymakers, while Joseph Nevins' *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary* will appeal primarily to an academic audience. The authors of *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors* open their work by stating,

If one does not understand how a complicated piece of machinery works, one should not try to fix it. . . . Blindly tinkering with a gear here or a cog there, or adding new levers and springs simply because they 'look good,' is to invite a host of unintended consequences, and perhaps to cause a calamity that no one expected or desired. (1)

The premise is that "the Mexico-U.S. migration system functioned as a complicated piece of machinery" in the 1965–86 period, at which point tinkering by U.S. politicians, beginning with the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986, threw a "wrench into the works." This book is therefore intended as "a kind of 'owner's manual' to explain how the system works theoretically, how it was built historically, and how it functions" (3).²⁴

Chapters three through five offer a concisely thorough treatment of the historical emergence of the present boundary line between the United States and Mexico; a description of the well-functioning and stable "machine" in place from 1965 to 1985; and a summary of the problems with post-1986 U.S. immigration policies.²⁵ The authors conclude at the end of this section, "Not only have the instrumental goals of border control (deterring undocumented immigration) not been achieved, but the net effect of America's self-contradictory policies has been to promote rather than restrict Mexican immigration, and these policies have

24. The mechanistic metaphor is not always the most apt, especially when the authors are describing processes much more organic than mechanistic, such as the social and economic processes that emerged gradually over the years to support migration flows in both directions. Also, given that the audience is "policymakers and citizens"—implicitly in the United States the use of the term "owner's" is unfortunate, reinforcing U.S. dominance and implying that Mexican migration would *serve* us if only we would leave it alone and let it proceed.

25. Information presented in chapter four derives from the Mexican Migration Project (MMP), an excellent source of two decades' worth of binational data, and these data are well presented here.

done so under circumstances that exacerbate the negative consequences for both nations" (104). Chapter six, "Breakdown: Failure in the Post-1986 U.S. Immigration System," is devoted to spelling out these negative consequences. The authors correctly point out that the Border Patrol strategy of "prevention through deterrence" was undermined by acts of political theater meant for public consumption. Operation Hold the Line (in the El Paso sector) and Operation Gatekeeper (in the San Diego sector) further militarized the boundary and pushed migrants to cross in less patrolled areas where they were less likely to be caught (and more likely to die from the desert conditions); that is, the new Border Patrol strategy effectively reduced the odds of arrest. Nevertheless, state the authors, this strategy does serve the overall aims of U.S. immigration policy, which function both to provide cheap labor and to keep migrants "socially invisible" (109, 112). The authors certainly make their case. Unfortunately, some of the arguments in chapter six deliberately appeal to anti-immigration nativists by pointing out that one of the "problems" is the now more widespread and permanent nature of Mexican (im)migration. Nor did the authors follow through with an explication of the problems posed for Mexicans and for the Mexican economy when circumstances force a certain portion of a given family's members to live away from home for extended periods of time.²⁶

Too often immigration policy debates focus solely on migration's effects upon "receiving" societies and whether or not people should be allowed to stay in "receiving" societies. This is neither here nor there. If we can all agree that no one should be forced by circumstance to leave her or his home, then the question becomes: what causes some regions at some historical moments to become "sending" societies, and what kinds of policies can help remedy this? Although written just on the eve of a potential breakthrough in binational policy on Mexican immigration to the United States (and this moment has been surpassed now by the events following 11 September 2001), *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors* is a welcome contribution to the debate on immigration policy. In the final chapter, the authors elaborate five sound principles with which to guide global immigration policy, in accordance with the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. These principles, and indeed the book as a whole, should provide some lively discussion among policymakers and in undergraduate classrooms.

Joseph Nevins, in *Operation Gatekeeper*, makes a similar argument to that of Massey et al. that border control is largely an act of political theater, but whereas Massey et al. argue that this process really did not begin in earnest until 1986 when IRCA was the "wrench" thrown into

26. The authors do give this issue brief consideration (see 152), but they do not address, for example, migration's effects upon family members remaining in Mexico.

the works, Nevins places Operation Gatekeeper as the crowning act of border control into a larger historical context of nation-state-building. He argues that especially in the light of “globalization” (i.e., the socio-economic, political, and other forces implied in this term), “the state must constantly reproduce boundaries (spatial, social, cultural, economic, and political) between ‘us’ and ‘them’, giving the boundaries the appearance of being natural and not in need of explanation” (160). Nevins thus treats the issue of how the boundary between the global South and North is intentionally and continually recreated within the North through the discourse of the “illegal alien” and the positing of a binary opposition between “citizen” and “alien.”²⁷

Nevins writes, “[T]he unauthorized immigrant is very much a part of a transnational society of which the [United States] is a part—that is, of a network of social relations that go and emanate from beyond U.S. territory” (140). One of the key relations to be considered within this transnational network of social relations is that between labor and capital, and his treatment of the history of both the development of the U.S.-Mexico boundary and of the social bounding of the United States—a process that is constantly replicated—grants primacy to this relationship. He correctly notes that following the establishment of the boundary in its present location, the early attempts to “alienize” those of Mexican descent living on the U.S. side of the line were a way to bolster the system of the apartheid-like dual-wage system that reinforced the race-class nexus in the U.S. Southwest (104).²⁸ The interplay between labor and capital also shaped immigration policy throughout the twentieth century. Nevins points out that the dichotomous ideologies of “tolerance” on one hand and anti-immigrant sentiment on the other hand are “part and parcel of a complex culture as well as an outgrowth of [these] competing interests” (97). Organized labor in the United States has often favored strong restrictions on immigration, while capital has largely been the proponent of an open-door or at least revolving-door policy.²⁹

27. One aspect in which Nevins’ analysis could be strengthened is his treatment of the nexus of race, class, and gender. To be fair, he does recognize this, stating, “[T]he conflation of concerns about ‘illegal’ immigration with those concerned with the race/ethnicity of immigrants themselves ignores the role that issues of class and gender also play in fueling anti-immigrant sentiment (an omission for which I must also plead guilty)” (118). I should also note that lest one fault Nevins for attributing all agency to “the state” and none to actors within civil society, he treats the discourse concerning illegality as one that is, albeit state-led, wholly dialectic. See 121–22.

28. The 1911 quote from the Dillingham Commission on “the Mexican”—“he is less desirable as a citizen than as a laborer” (104)—reminds us of Whalen’s analysis of the ways Puerto Rican migrants were treated throughout the time period she considers.

29. One oversight is that Nevins’ discussion of labor’s opposition to immigration and immigrants in the second half of the nineteenth century generally makes little distinction between the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor.

Nevins' *Operation Gatekeeper* is sophisticated in its theoretical framework, and it portrays with great agility the spatial contradictions that make "globalization" a double-edged sword that can cut against labor in two ways: nation-states seem no longer as capable or as willing as they once were to erect geopolitical boundaries to protect the gains made by organized labor within those boundaries, and yet, when workers seek to cross boundaries physically by migrating as a survival strategy, they are met with the sudden and brutal force of these same boundaries. The twin phenomena of the North American Free Trade Agreement and *Operation Gatekeeper* make this stunningly clear.

Toward the end of his study, Jefferson Cowie writes,

It could be argued that the only way for the Bloomington employees to escape the trap set by a globalized labor market was to build a strong floor for wages and working conditions that spanned international boundaries. Rather than rush a portion of the union's funds and personnel to Mexico, however, the Bloomington workers merely complained. They had difficulty envisioning a world far beyond the boundary of Monroe County. (175)

Is this the moral of the story? As David Harvey and others have pointed out, capital historically has occupied a much larger conceptual space than labor has (Cowie, 182). Except where subsoil wealth is concerned, capital has demonstrated little need for remaining in a given location and instead has preferred to roam throughout the world in search of the conditions of production best suited to capital accumulation. For the working class on the other hand, it is *place* that takes primacy over abstract conceptions of space. When labor is aggrieved over the actions of capital, place has historically been a primary determinant of whether and how a struggle is waged; it is most often the preservation of the local community for which workers strive, and the local community that provides sustenance for a successful struggle. Still, Cowie advocates removing the constraints that the "limitations of local identity" place upon "a more expansive notion of working-class politics" (182). Meanwhile, the writings of Whalen and Nevins remind us once again that in times of insecurity, people often resort to the reinforcing of the kinds of social boundaries that can impede the formation of such broad-based coalitions. Nevins, for example, writes that the fight against the "illegal" is "a fight for an ever-fleeting sense of individual and communal security" (175). If physical migration does not prove a viable survival strategy for labor, it remains to be seen whether acting upon wider conceptions of "community" can provide workers a better chance to flourish.