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The Big Tent of U.S. Women's and Gender History: A State of the Field

Cornelia H. Dayton and Lisa Levenstein

In October 2010 the journalist and author Susan Faludi incited a major controversy in feminist blogospheres, lecture circuits, and college classrooms with a provocative article in *Harper's Magazine* about generational splits among feminists. In Faludi's rendering, members of a young, tech-savvy generation embrace deconstruction theory, popular culture studies, and analyses of "the body" while celebrating their empowerment through high-heeled shoes and Lady Gaga. These priorities outrage an older generation, which focuses on the persistent structural oppression of women and does not consider blogging a valid form of political organizing. In 2009 this generational struggle came to a head in the highly contentious election for the National Organization for Women's presidency, which thirty-two-year-old Latifa Lyles lost by a razor-thin margin to Terry O'Neill, who was older by more than two decades. While many commentators have challenged Faludi's analysis, particularly her suggestion that young feminists are uninterested in questions of inequality and political organizing, most agree that significant tensions exist over the future direction of feminist politics.¹

The field of U.S. women's and gender history emerged out of the women's movement in the 1960s and has retained close connections to feminism. Yet in recent years the field has not been visibly riven by generational divides. Many trends in twenty-first-century feminist politics are reflected in women's history scholarship: growing emphases on cultural representations and "the body" and a broad agenda in which feminists train their lenses on subjects not associated only—or even primarily—with women. At the same time, scholarship on topics that have long been staples of women's history, such as politics and labor, continues to thrive, pursued by historians from all generations. Despite periodic expressions of concern over possible fragmentation, depoliticization, and lost

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¹ Susan Faludi, "American Electra: Feminism's Ritual Matricide," *Harper's Magazine*, 321 (Oct. 2010), 29–42; Katha Pollitt, "Feminist Mothers, Flapper Daughters?," *Nation*, Oct. 18, 2010, p. 9; Jennifer Baumgardner, "Electra Talk Back," Oct. 1, 2010, *Feministing*, <http://www.blogger.com/frame.php?url=http://feministing.com/2010/10/01/electra-talk-back-jennifer-baumgardner/>; Miriam Perez, "A Movement Has Got to Move," Sept. 28, 2010, *ibid.*, <http://feministing.com/2010/09/28/a-movement-has-got-to-move/>.

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sense of direction, the ethos of the field has consistently encouraged breadth, interdisciplinarity, and innovation.²

The expansive reach of U.S. women's and gender history makes a state-of-the-field article at once daunting and imperative. Partly because of the field's sheer breadth, compiling a comprehensive bibliography has become impossible. Another reason for this is that the titles of articles and monographs in which women and gender are central do not always signal that fact. Many researchers who do not self-identify as women's or gender historians deploy the field's tool kit in their research. And, as is the case for all historians, practitioners usually position themselves at the intersection of several fields, each with its own literature. This dispersion of scholarship and scholarly effort, combined with a proliferation of journals and other places to publish, has contributed to the lack of an overarching conversation. Rather than one threaded debate, diverse sets of conversations in women's and gender history's subfields sometimes eavesdrop on each other. Thus, we hope that a review of some recent directions in the field will generate dialogue over not just which developments have been the most significant but also what the "big tent" of women's and gender history means for the future.³

This essay, intended for both specialists and nonspecialists, assesses the significance of scholarship in U.S. women's and gender history from the last ten years and puts it into conversation. Part 1 highlights recent literature that reconceives the concept of gender both substantively and methodologically. After a short introduction to the field, we identify four major areas of recent inquiry on gender: the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation (and other categories) in shaping individual women's identities and gender regimes; relational differences among women of varied statuses; the mutual construction of sexual and gender norms; and the conceptual destabilizing of gender and sex. Taken together, these approaches form a body of literature that is changing how historians employ and understand gender.

In the essay's second part, we explore interventions recent scholarship has made in rewriting mainstream narratives of U.S. history. We hope to offer ideas not only to women's and gender history scholars but also to historians in other fields about ways to integrate women and gender into their courses, textbooks, and research agendas. In this section, we discuss new research on the history of rights, social movements, empire, and the modern state. We also explore work on the politics of reproduction, a burgeoning area in women's and gender history that offers a unique perspective on race, government policy, and the economy. While the goal of integrating U.S. women's and gender history

² One very rancorous, divisive episode within the field several decades ago focused on the 1982 Barnard Conference on Sexuality. See Elizabeth Wilson, "The Context of 'Between Pleasure and Danger': The Barnard Conference on Sexuality," *Feminist Review*, 13 (Spring 1983), 35–41. For concerns about the current direction of the field, see, for example, Gerda Lerner's comments in Nancy F. Cott, et al., "Considering the State of U.S. Women's History," *Journal of Women's History*, 15 (Spring 2003), 145–63; Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenges of Feminism* (Philadelphia, 2006); and Toby Ditz, "The New Men's History and the Peculiar Absence of Gendered Power: Some Remedies from Early American Gender History," *Gender and History*, 16 (April 2004), 1–35. On women in the discipline prior to the 1960s, see Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and the Historical Practice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); and Julie Des Jardins, *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America: Gender, Race, and the Politics of Memory, 1880–1945* (Chapel Hill, 2003).

³ For a similar point made about the lack of a central conversation, see Rebecca Edwards, "Women's and Gender History," in *American History Now*, ed. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia, 2011), 337. For historiographical analyses of subfields, see S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz, eds., *The Practice of U.S. Women's History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues* (New Brunswick, 2007); and Nancy A. Hewitt, ed., *A Companion to American Women's History* (Malden, 2005).

into the standard narrative of U.S. history has been central to the field's identity for decades, the new work is notable for its capacious understanding of the category of woman and creative uses of the concept of gender.

The vastness of the literature makes it impossible to mention all who have contributed to these conversations. As one reviewer put it, "women's history is a gift that keeps on giving." Rather than explore all aspects of recent scholarship or cover all the thriving subfields, we focus on some of the works published since 2000 that embody larger trends or point the field in particularly innovative directions.⁴

Women's history emerged as a distinct field within the historical profession in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when social movements were transforming the modern United States. Many of the earliest practitioners were active in the civil rights, student, antiwar, and feminist movements, and as Lise Vogel has observed, "even those who sat on or close to the sidelines . . . [were] affected by the turbulent social movement[s] of the period." In this highly politicized environment, race and class differences among women were frequently discussed, and much scholarship from the 1970s probed these and other distinctions. Pioneering studies by Gerda Lerner, Anne Firor Scott, and Thomas Dublin considered the importance of race, region, and class in women's lives. Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn illuminated varied historical experiences of black women. Linda Gordon and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall pointed to the role of sexuality in shaping women's experiences and scrutinized how class and race shaped this history. In the 1970s and early 1980s, many scholars also studied "women's cultures," contemplating how gender segregation and single-sex communities both constrained and empowered different groups of women.⁵

In the 1980s and 1990s, attention to race drove many innovations in the field, with growing scholarship on Latinas, Asian American women, Native American women, and, particularly, African American women. At the same time, scholars honed their understanding of the category of gender. Joan Scott's tremendously influential 1986 essay "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" brilliantly encapsulated the burgeoning literature in the field by illuminating how discourses of gender shaped all kinds of power relationships and political struggles.⁶ Historians began to explore masculinity more fully, examining men as gendered beings and identifying multiple masculinities at play at any one time. Black

⁴ Susan Kellogg, "Gender and Ethnohistory in the Americas: Recent Works," *Ethnohistory*, 55 (Fall 2008), 665–71, esp. 665.

⁵ Lise Vogel, "Telling Tales: Historians of Our Own Lives," *Journal of Women's History*, 2 (Winter 1991), 89–101, esp. 93; Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *Midcontinent American Studies Journal*, 10 (Spring 1969), 5–15; Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York, 1972); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830–1930* (Chicago, 1970); Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826–1860* (New York, 1979); Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington, 1978); Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York, 1976); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign against Lynching* (New York, 1979). See also Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York, 1981). For the focus on women's cultures, see Nancy A. Hewitt, "Beyond the Search for Sisterhood: American Women's History in the 1980s," *Social History*, 10 (Oct. 1985), 299–321; Ellen DuBois, et al., "Politics and Culture in Women's History: A Symposium," *Feminist Studies*, 6 (Spring 1980), 26–64; and Joanne Meyerowitz, "American Women's History: The Fall of Women's Culture," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 22 (Spring 1992), 27–52.

⁶ Much of the emerging work on diversely situated women can be traced in the various editions of *Unequal Sisters*, the most recent of which is Vicki L. Ruiz and Carol DuBois, eds., *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History* (New York, 2008). Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review*, 91 (Dec. 1986), 1053–75. For reflections on the impact of Joan Scott's essay, see



This photo shows a coffee break at the Fourth Meeting of the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, held at Mt. Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, August 11–13, 1978. This triennial conference has served as an important gathering place for scholars of women's and gender history. *Color photo by Mary Beth Norton. Courtesy Schlesinger Library.*

history, Latino/a history, Asian American history, gay and lesbian history, and working-class history underwent similar transformations as scholars used categories of race, sexuality, and class to understand whiteness, heteronormativity, and the middle class.⁷

Articulating concerns similar to ones that surfaced in other fields, some women's historians feared that gender history would overtake women's history and that scholars, in their haste to explore the production and deployment of femininity and masculinity, would abandon the task of excavating the materiality of women's lives and their organizational efforts. Those fears have largely dissipated as scholarship on gender has proven remarkably useful in furthering our understanding of women's and men's diverse historical experiences. Indeed, most practitioners in the field today would not consider studying women without also studying gender.⁸

Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1999), 199–222; and the forum, "Revisiting 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,'" *American Historical Review*, 113 (Dec. 2008), 1344–429.

⁷ See Daniel Wickberg, "Heterosexual White Male: Some Recent Inversions in American Cultural History," *Journal of American History*, 92 (June 2005), 136–57. On masculinities, early publications include E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago, 1995); and Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York, 1996). More recent titles reflect the increasing breadth of research. See Michael Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy: A History of Men's Dress in the American Republic, 1760–1860* (Chicago, 2003); Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York, 2005); K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York, 2005); Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, and the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York, 2008); and John Gilbert McCurdy, *Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States* (Ithaca, 2009).

⁸ On fears that gender history would overtake women's history, compare Alice Kessler-Harris, "Do We Still Need Women's History?," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54 (Dec. 7, 2007), B6–B7; and Ellen DuBois's comments in Cott, et al., "Considering the State of U.S. Women's History," 151.

By the 1990s, U.S. women's and gender historians' interest in the experiences of racially diverse groups of women and discourses of gender made the field well positioned to become a leader in the growing interdisciplinary scholarship on intersectionality. This research encapsulated long-standing insights made by women-of-color activists and thinkers by emphasizing that race and gender were not experienced separately and thus could not be analyzed independently of each other. Much of the first wave of scholarship by scholars such as Elsa Barkley Brown focused on the intersection of race and gender and explored the lives of African American and white heterosexual women more fully than other groups. Since then, as recognition of the multicultural character of the United States has become more widespread and debates over immigration have become a central feature of national politics, women's historians have joined other scholars in devoting increased attention to groups that do not identify as white or black. In addition, the visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in public culture and the importance of these groups to political debates have led to deeper historical research.⁹

We begin our examination of recent scholarship by highlighting two studies that represent the ongoing rethinking of gender through intersectionality. One offers an innovative model for examining the experiences of a wide range of racial and ethnic groups and the other presents an exemplary approach for considering sexuality along with race and gender. Nancy A. Hewitt's exploration of women's activism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focuses on Tampa, Florida, where the presence of Latino and Afro-Cuban communities complicated biracial Jim Crow dynamics. The range of organizations and settings tracked by Hewitt is impressive: civil rights groups, labor unions, mutual aid societies, church and missionary groups, literary clubs, political parties, Cuban independence campaigns, and factory floors. Hewitt emphasizes that her Anglo, African American, Latina, and Afro-Caribbean subjects "rarely claimed the same constellation of identities throughout their activist careers." At different moments, individuals or groups might emphasize "liberation movements rooted in national identities," labor movements, racial uplift, community improvement, or women's special concerns. It was often a combination of affiliations—an activist's gender and race, or her class and ethnicity, for example—that spurred a woman to ally with a particular cause.¹⁰

⁹ For example, see Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke," *Signs*, 14 (Spring 1989), 610–33. The term *intersectionality* was coined by the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1992 to describe a form of legal analysis that took both race and gender into account. The term has been adopted by a range of humanities scholars to describe work (both predating and following Crenshaw's) that points to the mutually enforcing vectors of race, class, gender, and sexuality. See Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989), 139–67; and Jennifer C. Nash, "Re-thinking Intersectionality," *Feminist Review*, 89 (June 2008), 1–15. See also Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York, 1990); Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston, 1988). For works that historicize intersectionality by exploring the activism and theory of women of color, see, for example, Serena Mayeri, *Reasoning from Race: Feminism, Law, and the Civil Rights Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011); Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin, 2011); and Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, N. C., 2011). Pioneering studies taking the field beyond a focus on white, black, and heterosexual subjects include Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 1998); and John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (1988; Chicago, 2012).

¹⁰ Nancy A. Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s–1920s* (Urbana, 2001), 14–15, esp. 14.

Anne Enke's study of post-World War II grassroots feminism elevates sexuality to a central analytical category, along with race, gender, and class. In her exploration of public geographies in several midwestern cities, founders of feminist coffee houses, advocates of new woman-friendly spaces (such as clinics and shelters), and softball players—black, white, lesbian, straight—discover empowerment and struggle to find appropriate labels, rules of access or membership, and pathways to social justice. By seamlessly integrating sexuality into an intersectional framework, Enke's work enables us to see in new ways the importance of lesbians' ideas and activism to feminist politics.¹¹

A second important line of inquiry on gender calls for sustained analysis of the ways women's identities depended both materially and ideologically on their relationship to other women. In the early 1990s Elsa Barkley Brown, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, and Peggy Pascoe (among others) pointed to the importance of these female relationships in shaping people's work and sense of themselves. For example, given that so many working-class women, and particularly women of color, were channeled into domestic service, Brown called upon historians to demonstrate that "middle-class women live the lives they do precisely because working-class women live the lives they do. . . [and] white women live the lives they do in large part because women of color live the ones they do."¹² What was needed was systematic analysis of how interactions among different groups of women and the conceptions these women had of one another shaped identities and social positions.

Thavolia Glymph answers the call by demonstrating that feminist scholars have averted their gaze from evidence that white slave-owning women routinely used physical violence toward black women in plantation households, which were, of course, workplaces. Rather than portraying ambivalent slaveholders who stood by while their menfolk exercised brutal discipline, Glymph reveals white women who were "expert" (and often less restrained than their husbands) at ritualized abuse. "Violence on the part of white women was integral to the making of slavery, crucial to shaping black and white women's understanding of what it meant to be female," Glymph explains. In chapters on the Civil War and immediate postwar years, Glymph reinforces research by Jacqueline Jones, Tera Hunter, and others showing that black women's assertive pursuit of freedom "forced white women to take on previously unthinkable tasks, and to re-think their place in southern society."¹³

¹¹ Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham, N.C., 2007). Other works integrating sexuality with race and gender include Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York, 2001); and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Doctor Mom Chung of the Fair-Haired Bastards: The Life of a Wartime Celebrity* (Berkeley, 2005).

¹² Elsa Barkley Brown, "What Has Happened Here': The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics," *Feminist Studies*, 18 (Summer 1992), 295–312, esp. 298; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs*, 18 (Autumn 1992), 1–43; Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (New York, 1993). Earlier monographs exploring relations between different groups of women include Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789–1860* (New York, 1986); and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1988).

¹³ Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York, 2008), 33, 5, 166. See also, for example, Nell Irvin Painter, *Southern History across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill, 2002), 15–39; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family, from Slavery to the Present* (New York, 1985); Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997); Leslie Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana, 1997); and Laura F. Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana, 1997). On Mexican women and Anglo women and the construction of

Other practitioners observe the relational nature of differences among women of varied statuses. In her study of women's work in the clothing trades in the Connecticut River valley of the early republic, Marla R. Miller notes that the notion of a seemingly homogeneous population obscures the unequal relations among women and elaborate hierarchies of socioeconomic status, age, race, and skill. White women's ability to earn income as tailoresses and gown makers or to produce quilted petticoats and ornamental needlework depended upon the work of domestic servants, both hired and enslaved. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's study of textile production in early New England and its commemoration in the colonial revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries recognizes causal links between settler women's productivity and indigenous people's displacement and near erasure. Colonists' sheep grazed in meadows where they might disturb Native American graves that had been dug during the great die-outs of the 1600s. The agonized, unpaid labor of men, women, and children on Britain's West Indian plantations helped produce the huge volume of cotton and linen spun and woven on goodwives' wheels and looms.¹⁴

A third group of works that probes the construction of gender points to the varied ways conceptions of sexual desire and sexual practices become integral to people's gender identities. In an exploration of the construction of masculinities, Thomas A. Foster argues that a multifaceted understanding of male sexual identity was a recognized part of gendered personhood in the eighteenth century. In the gossip networks and print culture of Massachusetts, a variety of sexualized masculine figures existed—the fop, the effeminate bachelor, the sodomite, the sexually predatory black man, the self-moderating husband—by which denizens measured themselves and others. Countering narratives of ever-expanding sexual liberality, Clare A. Lyons depicts the curbing of “a vibrant pleasure culture” in which nonmarital sex proliferated among all classes in revolutionary and postwar Philadelphia. She argues that this culture was foreclosed by 1830 with the emergence of a new gender system “positing radical differences between men and women” based in large part on a bifurcated vision of their anatomies and sexual desires. White women, now presumed to be sexually inert, were understood in contrast to virile white men and sexually promiscuous lower-class women and women of color. Looking at the long eighteenth century, Sharon Block cautions us to remember that a critical component of gender ideology was men's assumption that women wanted to have sex but felt compelled by propriety to feign resistance; this dynamic “severely circumscribed a woman's ability to consent to or refuse a sexual interaction.” Block's unprecedented research on the extent of coerced sex in early America stands in direct challenge to both Foster's and Lyons's work by underscoring that white men's ability to enact what today we would consider rape was an essential component of their gender identities.¹⁵

racial identities through families, see Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

¹⁴ Marla R. Miller, *The Needle's Eye: Women and Work in the Age of Revolution* (Amherst, 2006), 8, 227; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York, 2001). These studies can be seen as answering Carol Karlsen's call for relational approaches to early American women's history. See Carol Karlsen, “Women and Gender,” in *A Companion to Colonial America*, ed. Daniel Vickers (Malden, 2003), 194–235.

¹⁵ Thomas A. Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man: Massachusetts and the History of Sexuality in America* (Boston, 2006); Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730–1830* (Chapel Hill, 2006), 1, 2, 309–11, 393–95; Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in*

Several studies set in the twentieth century link contestations over permissible female sexual behavior with the development of normative conceptions of womanhood. Cheryl Hicks uncovers a range of black women's ideas about female respectability and sexual desire in early twentieth-century New York City. While contending with poverty, domestic violence, and discriminatory housing and labor markets, working-class women sought to uphold their own standards of femininity in the face of punitive state authorities and family and community expectations that social mobility depended on their chaste deportment. In a sweeping reconceptualization of southern history, Susan K. Cahn argues that efforts by girls from all classes and races to construct new norms of acceptable female sexual behavior made them central actors in the transformation of the region's patriarchal culture between 1920 and 1960. High schools, segregated reformatories, rock 'n' roll, and desegregation battles populate the rich terrain on which Cahn establishes that, by the end of the period, girls' "sexual self-determination" had undermined "the South's foundational association between chastity and whiteness." Regina Kunzel, in one section of her nuanced historical study of sexual cultures in U.S. prisons, points to continued constraints on women's abilities to define their sexual identities in the 1960s and 1970s. Since features of women's prison life such as "culturally sanctioned lesbianism, all-female kinship groups, [and] masculine-presenting and male-identifying women" challenged conventional ideas about women's sexual desires and identities, they were erased or reinterpreted by prison officials and investigators.¹⁶

A fourth approach to the study of gender is emerging from historians joining with a multidisciplinary array of scholars in destabilizing the relationship between gender identity and people's sex assignment as male or female. In the 1970s and 1980s, many historians adopted the staple of contemporary feminist theory that posited that biological sex (physical characteristics that allegedly distinguish men from women) was relatively fixed, while gender (ideas and practices of masculinity and femininity) changed over time and across space, class, and race. Feminist scholars in a range of disciplines have since troubled this binary by pointing to the ways that sex too is a social construct. Much of this work is indebted to anthropologists' research on cultures with conceptions of the sexed body not confined to a female-male binary (such as Native American beliefs in the berdache or third gender) and to the work of the theorist Judith Butler and others in the fields of performativity and queer studies, who argue that an individual's gender or sexual identity is neither given nor stable but stems from one's daily enactments that may or may not accord with cultural expectations. Historians have engaged these insights,

Early America (Chapel Hill, 2006), 18. See also Thomas A. Foster, ed., *New Men: Manliness in Early America* (New York, 2011); and Richard Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (Baltimore, 2009). For a slightly later period, see Patricia Cline Cohen, Timothy J. Gilfoyle, and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *The Flash Press: Sporting Male Weeklies in 1840s New York* (Chicago, 2008).

¹⁶ Cheryl Hicks, *Talk with You like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890–1935* (Chapel Hill, 2010); Susan K. Cahn, *Sexual Reckonings: Southern Girls in a Troubling Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007), 10; Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (Chicago, 2008), 111–48, esp. 129. On the history of prostitution, see Elizabeth Alice Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900–1945* (Chapel Hill, 2006); and Cynthia M. Blair, *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (Chicago, 2010). Other studies of the politics of regulation include Sharon E. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill, 2005); Julian Carter, *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1890–1940* (Durham, N.C., 2007); and Pippa Holloway, *Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control in Virginia, 1920–1945* (Chapel Hill, 2006).

suggesting that sex, like gender, has “to be understood as a system of attributed meaning”—a product of culture—instead of treating it as a “passive backdrop to changing conceptions of gender.”¹⁷

One of the most significant books to probe the relationship between sex and gender explores the historical roots of transsexuality. Joanne Meyerowitz's *How Sex Changed* uses the story of the male-to-female transsexual Christine Jorgensen as a window onto ever-shifting ideas about where an individual human's sex comes from and what it portends. The many strands of Meyerowitz's tapestry include media coverage of Jorgensen's 1952 operation and her vivid life afterward, debates among physicians and psychoanalysts, strategizing by Americans desiring sex-change surgery, and the positions taken by gay and feminist activists. By showing how we arrived at a late twentieth-century moment where, for some intellectuals and medical professionals, biological sex (“chromosomes, genes, genitals, hormones,” etc.), sexuality (erotic urges, fantasies, behavior), and gender (as in gender identity) have become disaggregated, Meyerowitz demonstrates that there is nothing inevitable or natural about these categories and ways of thinking. She emphasizes that we live today with significant tension between the acceptance of these ideas among many professionals and the very different notions promoted in popular culture, which often portrays male and female as opposites, masculinity and femininity as springing from biological sex, and “the contours of sexual desire” as arising out of gender identity. Meyerowitz's work is a prime example of how historical scholarship can shed light on contemporary debates, in this case pointing to the ways that the very categories of gender, sex, and sexuality—as well as the relationships among them—are historically constructed and constantly renegotiated.¹⁸

These insights about the production of knowledge categories are not just relevant in tracing the history of transsexuality. In an extended rumination, the historian Afsaneh Najmabadi urges historians to ask “how has sex become sex” when approaching all historical subjects. Najmabadi's research on nineteenth-century Iranian culture reveals how bodies with male genitals were not considered male during childhood and adolescence. Both women and adolescent men were desired by adult men; “a beautiful face could be either a young male or female with identical features.” Further, this “internally fractured” masculinity according to age was not the same as effeminization. Manhood in Qajar culture was not defined vis-à-vis womanhood; rather, all gender categories were defined in relation to adult manhood. By not automatically conflating sex assignment with gender expression, historians open up new ways of thinking about masculinity and femininity that deepen our understanding of the relationship between the construction of gender and other hierarchies.¹⁹

¹⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990; New York, 1999); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York, 1993); Will Roscoe, *Changing Ones: Third and Fourth Genders in Native North America* (New York, 1998); Sabine Lang, *Men as Women, Women as Men: Changing Gender in Native American Cultures*, trans. John L. Vantine (1990; Austin, 1998). Joan W. Scott, “Unanswered Questions,” *American Historical Review*, 113 (Dec. 2008), 1422–30, esp. 1424; Denise Riley, “Am I That Name?” *Feminism and the Category of “Women” in History* (London, 1988), 7.

¹⁸ Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), 3, 4. See also Susan Stryker, “Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity,” *Radical History Review*, 100 (Winter 2008), 144–57. For a related topic, see Elizabeth Reis, *Bodies in Doubt: An American History of Intersex* (Baltimore, 2009).

¹⁹ Afsaneh Najmabadi, “Beyond the Americas: Are Gender and Sexuality Useful Categories of Historical Analysis?,” *Journal of Women's History*, 18 (Spring 2006), 11–21, esp. 13, 12.

We expect all four of these approaches to the study of gender to thrive in the next decade, and we hope for increased conversation among them. They point the field toward what Jeanne Boydston has described as “a praxis that refuses gender as a set of more or less universalized assumptions and, instead, always interrogates it anew as a set of relatively open questions applied to a discrete time and place of inquiry.” As historians continue to question the assumptions undergirding their deployment of gender as an analytical tool, they further what Joan Scott has described as “the relentless interrogation of the taken-for-granted” that gives the field its radical core.²⁰

The project of U.S. women’s and gender history has always sought to engage the rest of the historical profession by showing how attention to women and gender fundamentally changes our understanding of major questions in U.S. history. Fifty years into the modern renaissance of the field is a salutary moment to summarize key reconceptualizations of the nation’s historical narrative engendered by this scholarship. These rewritings join well-established and emerging findings from other vibrant fields such as the history of sexuality and of ethnic and racial minorities. We examine insights relating to five topics: the rights revolution; activism and social movements; the emergence of the modern state; imperialism and diplomacy; and the politics of reproduction. Rather than explore all the rich literature pertaining to these areas, we offer examples of key findings. In the many guises that U.S. historians find themselves to be synthesizers, these broad rethinkings need to be part and parcel of the stories of the nation’s past that we convey to audiences.

Several recent studies posit new trajectories in the history of rights, reconceptualizing periodizations familiar to professional historians as well as tales of steady progress embraced by much of the public. Coalitions of women and minority groups have been claiming rights, sometimes with positive outcomes, throughout the nation’s history, but the perspective from the early twenty-first century prompts reflection: Why has formal legal equality been achieved in most spheres while social and structural inequalities persist? Barbara Young Welke’s synthesis of rights, citizenship, and legal personhood from the 1790s to the 1920s offers an explanation. She provocatively argues that not just the categories of white and male but also that of able-bodied were integral in monitoring the bounds of citizen rights and obligations. Careful attention to laws at all levels reveals that the embedding of abled persons’ and white men’s privilege became more explicit and particular during the long nineteenth century. State laws authorizing involuntary commitment and compulsory sterilization for those deemed feeble-minded, municipal ordinances aimed at clearing unsightly beggars from public spaces, and federal prohibitions on the immigration of many individuals with disabilities need to join the story we tell ourselves about citizenship. Welke’s emphasis on the persistence of unfreedoms for many Americans well into the twentieth century challenges narratives that depict the Civil War and Reconstruction era as a second revolution in rights.²¹

²⁰ Jeanne Boydston, “Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis,” *Gender and History*, 20 (Nov. 2008), 558–83, esp. 559; Joan Wallach Scott, “Feminism’s History,” *Journal of Women’s History*, 16 (Summer 2004), 10–29, esp. 23. For similar questions being asked in the history of sexuality, see Bruce Burgett, “The History of *x* in Early America,” *Early American Literature*, 44 (March 2009), 215–25.

²¹ Barbara Young Welke, *Law and the Borders of Belonging in the Long Nineteenth Century United States* (New York, 2010). Barbara Young Welke’s concept of the legal borders of belonging offers a wider lens than tracking formal rights and citizenship status. It accounts for the nation’s exclusion laws, removals of indigenous

Making a similar argument about a shorter period, Rosemarie Zagarri reframes political developments in the early republic. In concert with scholarship showing an enlarged scope of women's political activity in the American Revolution and postwar years, she demonstrates that definitive moves to exclude women did not congeal until the 1820s. As partisan political parties solidified their power and opted for caucuses rather than open-air meetings, "female politicians" were denounced and many literate women came to conclude they ought not meddle in what was defined as the political. Behind this lay a paradigmatic shift in thinking about gender occurring in transatlantic scientific and intellectual circles. Not only did American writers pick up on a two-sex model in which men's and women's reproductive systems were seen as dictating radically different natures but they also applied divergent frameworks to white men's and women's rights. In the periodical and pamphlet literature, Zagarri finds that different rights traditions applied to men and women. While white men enjoyed political liberties interpreted expansively, white women's natural rights were tightly associated with their "traditional duties as wives and mothers." By showing that essentialist thinking on gender and race was an entrenched part of the political system from the early national period onward, Zagarri helps us understand the stubborn endurance of race-based and gender-based prejudices in the U.S. polity.²²

Laura F. Edwards makes a startling intervention by asserting that using individual rights to measure changes in law and government between 1787 and 1840 is "hopelessly anachronistic because so much legal business was conducted within a localized system that maintained the collective order of the peace, not the rights of individuals." Analyzing local and circuit court records in the Carolinas, she excavates struggles for power and influence in the courtroom that often involved the entire community. Enslaved women and men as well as free white and black women and girls brought complaints, had their words and reputations weighed, and shaped legal practice. Outcomes depended "as much on personal reputations"—credit established over years or decades—"as on the external markers of status—race, class, gender, and age." One of the lessons of this study is that even in the antebellum South, white patriarchs' authority was contingent, contextual, and dispersed. A second contribution lies in Edwards's characterization of the shift she sees occurring in the 1830s as southern lawmakers extended the reach of state law and trumpeted the rights of white, nondependent males in their political speeches. The majority of southerners were denied most rights, and when it came to white men, all of

peoples, and treatment of individuals with perceived disabilities. See also Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity* (Chapel Hill, 2010). For a foundational rethinking of the history of rights, see Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and Obligations of Citizenship* (New York, 1998). For a synthetic account of race, gender, and citizenship that emphasizes labor relationships, see Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002).

²² Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia, 2007), 178, 182. On the relationship between gender and nation, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, N.C., 2006). On white women carving out influential political roles for themselves in Washington, D.C., see Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville, 2000); and Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York, 2006). Mary Beth Norton finds essentialist arguments (i.e., all women regardless of social status have similar traits) emerging a century earlier in English periodicals and Anglo-American women's private writings in Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by Their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca, 2011).

whom were supposedly on equal footing, “jurists defined rights narrowly, so as to affirm existing inequalities.” Whenever we discuss the legal and constitutional landscape in any era of U.S. history, Edwards warns us to acknowledge that a system based on rights “is not particularly useful to people who cannot claim them or use them.”²³

Marriage law offers an important vantage point from which to assess continuities and changes in rights. Historians of women and gender are at the forefront of scholarship demonstrating how marriage has been used to support race making, power asymmetries between men and women, and exclusions based on citizenship, ableness, and sexual orientation. In a groundbreaking study of miscegenation law, Peggy Pascoe shows that the national legal consensus depicting interracial unions as unnatural that coalesced in the late nineteenth century was integrally linked to ideas about men’s and women’s proper marital roles and to threats to white supremacy posed by African Americans’ citizenship and Asian immigration. Although Americans today celebrate the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* U.S. Supreme Court ruling (which declared antimiscegenation statutes unconstitutional) as ushering in an era of color blindness, categorizing by race—with its potential for invidious sorting—continues to permeate the modern administrative state and the culture at large. Pascoe’s illustration of continuities and variations in the nation’s marriage policies belies depictions of marriage as a timeless, unchanging institution and of expanded rights as ushering in dramatic change.²⁴

Research on immigration, naturalization, and deportation law from the start of Asian exclusion in the 1870s and 1880s to the present further highlights the importance of gender in shaping persistent exclusions in the polity. Scholars such as Martha Gardner and Eithne Luibhéid have shown how, in most of that period, many women could enter the United States only if they were to be part of male-headed households, as wives or domestics. Livelihoods (real or imagined) that smacked of female independence—such as those of seamstresses and sex workers—and signs of being a sexual outsider prompted exclusion or deportation. Furthermore, officials often justified expatriation by depicting foreign-born male workers as either oversexed primitives or effeminate and lacking the capacity for independent manhood. After World War II, when racial categories supposedly declined in importance as a basis for exclusion, gender continued to serve as a means to police the nation’s borders; entry was denied to those not complying with heteronormativity and conventional family structures.²⁵

²³ Laura F. Edwards, *The People and Their Peace: Legal Culture and the Transformation of Inequality in the Post-revolutionary South* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 11, 101, 10, 7, 72, 99, 172, 282–98. A wide range of actions, including domestic violence, divorce, and even the rape of enslaved women, was heard in legal cases because “offenses against subordinates” were understood as “offenses against the peace.” See *ibid.*, 107. For a nonlinear account of the contested meanings of freedom, see Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York, 1998).

²⁴ Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York, 2008); *Loving v. Virginia*, 368 U.S. 1 (1967). On marriage law and policy more broadly, see Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000). On Mexican and Indian women’s legal maneuverings related to marriage, see Miroslava Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s* (Tucson, 2004).

²⁵ Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of a Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870–1965* (Princeton, 2005); Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis, 2002); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, 2004), 101–16; Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’s Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s–1950s* (New York, 2006); Deborah Cohen, *Braceros: Migrant Citizens and Transnational Subjects in the Postwar United States and Mexico* (Chapel Hill, 2011); Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York, 2008); Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley, 2010). On immigration policies involving war brides, see Susan Zeiger, *Entangling*

Scholars have long identified the 1970s as a key moment in the history of women's rights, marking a period in which feminists succeeded in removing sex-based classifications from the law. Serena Mayeri recasts this familiar story by uncovering a largely forgotten history of female legal advocacy in the 1960s and 1970s, led in many instances by African American women. In a fascinating analysis of the instrumentality and limitations of feminists' attempts to "reason from race" (employ race-sex analogies to explain the predicament of women), Mayeri shows how black and white legal activists pursued conceptions of equality that were much more expansive than those that ultimately became law. She joins others in questioning the notion of progress for women in the 1970s by highlighting the partial nature of feminists' legal victories, which often did not address race and class inequities. By exploring why feminists' broad definitions of equality failed to take root, Mayeri complicates narratives that castigate 1960s and 1970s feminists for their race and class blinders.²⁶

Another realm of scholarship being transformed by women's and gender history is the literature on social movements. Recent studies have demonstrated that women were central figures in a broad range of movements, such as abolition, labor, and conservatism.²⁷ New works on the black freedom movement, the Chicano movement, and feminist activism serve here as examples of the extensive research underway.

Many historians have embraced inclusive portrayals of a black freedom movement that pursued goals well beyond the legal equality suggested in the term *civil rights*. Women's and gender history has been integral to this expansive view of the movement. By uncovering women's influence as grassroots activists and leaders, scholars have broadened our understanding of the kinds of issues pursued and the terrain on which agitation occurred. For example, Tiffany M. Gill shifts focus away from sit-ins and bus boycotts to the early twentieth-century beauty shop. Neither frivolous nor apolitical, salons run by black women served as key incubators of civil rights activism. With her emphasis on the importance of the Jim Crow era, Gill joins scholars who have urged us to think about the "long civil rights movement," beginning well before the 1960s and extending after. Similarly, Christina Greene's study of women and black politics in Durham, North Carolina, extends from the 1940s to the 1970s and explores sites ranging from grocery stores to public housing. Paying close attention to African American women's community organizing and the role of low-income women in fomenting resistance, Greene

Alliances: Foreign War Brides and American Soldiers in the Twentieth Century (New York, 2010); and Ji-Yeon Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America* (New York, 2002).

²⁶ Mayeri, *Reasoning from Race*. For a revisionist account of 1960s and 1970s judicial decisions regarding sexuality, see Marc Stein, *Sexual Injustice: Supreme Court Decisions from Griswold to Roe* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

²⁷ On abolition, see, for example, Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill, 2003); Margaret Washington, *Sojourner Truth's America* (Urbana, 2011); and Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart, eds., *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation* (New Haven, 2007). On labor, see, for example, Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham, N.C., 2007); Xiaolan Bao, *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948–92* (Urbana, 2006); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, 2004); Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006); and Venus Green, *Race on the Line: Gender, Labor, and Technology in the Bell System, 1880–1980* (Durham, N.C., 2001). On conservatism, see, for example, Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton, 2005); Catherine E. Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage through the Rise of the New Right* (Chapel Hill, 2006); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, 2001); and Melanie Susan Gustafson, *Women and the Republican Party, 1854–1924* (Urbana, 2001).

establishes that in a variety of protests, black women were frequently more numerous and more militant than men.²⁸

Scholars are deepening our understanding of the centrality of rape in the long civil rights movement. Crystal N. Feimster shows that in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century South, black and white women's vulnerability to rape often helped motivate their various organized efforts to achieve physical protection and empowerment. Further, our understanding of the links between sexual assault and lynching is fundamentally changed by Feimster's pioneering research on black women's significant presence as victims and white women's participation in sadistic acts of violence. In an examination of the post-World War II years, Danielle L. McGuire points to the ways black women's testimony about sexual violence—offered in a variety of settings—became an important movement strategy. Activists publicized episodes of black teenagers and women who survived kidnapping and gang rape by white men, and they insisted that prosecution ensue. Women joined the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955–1956 in droves partly because of white bus drivers' relentless verbal harassment.²⁹

Two important books on gender and the Chicano movement probe how women's roles were erased in popular memory and historical consciousness. Catherine S. Ramírez's interdisciplinary study *The Woman in the Zoot Suit* explores the experiences and memory of the young Mexican American women who took part in the zoot suit subculture in Los Angeles in the World War II era. While the male *pachuco* has been important to historical accounts of Mexican American politics and serves as a crucial figure in Chicano memory and identity, his female counterpart, the *pachuca*, is largely missing. Ramírez examines how *pachucas* participated in the major events of the 1940s, challenging gender expectations with their distinct and often sexualized dress, language, and style. In the 1960s, when the Chicano movement reclaimed the zoot suit, it celebrated the *pachuco* and ignored the *pachuca* because she lay outside the normative ideals of heterosexual family life upon which the movement based its nationalist narratives.³⁰

Maylei Blackwell echoes Ramírez in challenging historical accounts that have erased Chicana activism from 1960s and 1970s movement politics. Her study of Chicana student activists in California highlights how they contested “the gender confines of Chicano cultural nationalism” by creating a “subaltern counterpublic” through creative

²⁸ Tiffany M. Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry* (Urbana, 2010); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History*, 91 (March 2005), 1233–63; Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2005). See also Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill, 2005); Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York, 1997); Katherine Mellen Charron, *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark* (Chapel Hill, 2009); Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York, 2011); Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York, 2009); Megan Taylor Shockley, “We, Too, Are Americans”: *African American Women in Detroit and Richmond, 1940–54* (Urbana, 2003); and Laurie B. Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill, 2007).

²⁹ Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009); Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York, 2010). See also Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill, 2009).

³⁰ Catherine S. Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham, N.C., 2009).

use of newspapers and original artwork that reached a broad network of women on and off campuses. Through that network, Chicanas documented community issues and struggles, fostering greater political knowledge. In what Blackwell calls “double-time activism,” Chicana activists formed single-sex organizations to address women’s priorities while simultaneously working with men in the Chicano movement “to transform the organizations from within.”³¹

Nearly every U.S. history textbook and survey course discusses the growth of feminism, usually breaking it into a first wave of suffrage activism instigated by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a second wave sparked by the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963.³² This master narrative bears very little resemblance to historians’ current reconceptualizations of the trajectory of feminist politics.

Employing transnational frameworks, one strand of scholarship recasts the nineteenth-century campaign for woman’s rights as a “decidedly global” struggle. These studies look beyond the United States to the “complicated history of individual suffragists’ cross-border travel, their commitment to international organizing, the creation of international suffrage organizations, and the importance of these international forums to the achievement of suffrage at home.” In debates over U.S. expansion, some suffragists strategically deployed arguments about whites’ superior civilization, arguments that denigrated people from allegedly “less civilized” groups. Others capitalized on the politics of imperialism to force federal politicians to take a stand on the enfranchisement of women in colonized nations; some joined anti-imperialist campaigns.³³

Transnational approaches are also beginning to reshape our understanding of feminism in the interwar and post–World War II periods. For example, Erik S. McDuffie and Cheryl Higashida have uncovered a significant strand of twentieth-century black leftist feminism connected to international anticolonial and black liberation struggles. Jennifer Guglielmo has shown how labor migration and political exile affected the politics of working-class Italian radical women, while Kathy Davis’s study of the feminist classic *Our Bodies, Ourselves* traces how that book (originally published in 1973) was

³¹ Blackwell, *Chicana Power!*, 1, 13, 151, 30. On Chicana politics, see also Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin, 2009); Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries*, 152–92; Dionne Espinoza, “‘Revolutionary Sisters’: Women’s Solidarity and Collective Identification among Chicana Brown Berets in East Los Angeles, 1967–1970,” *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 26 (Spring 2001), 17–58; Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington, 1999); Lara Medina, *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia, 2005); and Vicki L. Ruiz and John R. Chávez, eds., *Memories and Migrations: Mapping Boricua and Chicana Histories* (Urbana, 2008).

³² Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, 1963). While many contemporary scholars focus on the grassroots women’s movement, feminist biography remains an important genre. Recent examples include Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life beyond Limits* (New York, 2010); Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Difficult Woman: The Challenging Life and Times of Lillian Hellman* (New York, 2012); and Lori E. Ginzberg, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton: An American Life* (New York, 2009).

³³ Allison Sneider, “The New Suffrage History: Voting Rights in International Perspective,” *History Compass*, 8 (July 2010), 692–703, esp. 692; Bonnie S. Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women’s Movement, 1830–1860* (New York, 2000); Louise Michelle Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York, 1999); Nancy A. Hewitt, “Re-rooting American Women’s Activism: Global Perspectives on 1848,” in *Women’s Rights and Human Rights: International Historical Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Grimshaw, Katie Holmes, and Marilyn Lake (New York, 2001), 123–37; Kristin L. Hoganson, “‘As Badly Off as the Filipinos’: U.S. Women’s Suffragists and the Imperial Issue at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Women’s History*, 13 (Summer 2001), 9–33; and Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansionism and the Woman Question, 1870–1929* (New York, 2008).

reshaped outside of the United States and then returned across national borders. In the 1980s and 1990s, Christine Stansell argues, the conservative movement stymied U.S. feminists' local and national agendas. When these feminists responded by turning their attention to transnational organizing, they helped foster the growth of an international women's movement.³⁴

The image of nineteenth- and twentieth-century feminism as a white middle-class, northeastern movement dominated by a few famous figures rarely appears in current scholarship. A range of authors has uncovered an incredibly diverse group of feminist activists who hailed from all classes, races, and sexual orientations and were located in all parts of the country. Without ignoring the racism embedded in some white women's organizing, scholars are also increasingly exploring how feminists resisted hierarchies based on gender, class, race, and sexuality, forging effective, albeit often painful, coalitions. These women campaigned for legal equality *and* for maternity leave, child care, reproductive rights, employment equity, social welfare services, protection from domestic and sexual violence, racial equality, economic justice, and sexual freedom.³⁵ The breadth of the issues pursued by different groups of women and the *longue durée* of their organizing has led the field largely to cast aside the idea of first, second, and third "waves" of feminist activism. Particularly because some of the most important organizing by non-white and working-class women does not fit this periodization, the wave model does not account for the multiclass, multiracial movement that historians have uncovered.³⁶

Empire building abroad, colonization in North America, and diplomacy are topics shot through with gender ideology and practices. Recent scholarship continues to illustrate this, whether analyzing early contests among indigenous and European polities over

³⁴ McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*; Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1955–1995* (Urbana, 2011); Jennifer Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution: Italian Women's Resistance and Radicalism in New York City, 1880–1945* (Chapel Hill, 2010); Kathy Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels across Borders* (Durham, N.C., 2007); Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (New York, 1973); Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present* (New York, 2010), 355–94. See also Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York, 2002).

³⁵ Work on the nineteenth century includes Martha S. Jones, *All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture, 1830–1900* (Chapel Hill, 2007); Lisa G. Materson, *For the Freedom of Her Race: Black Women and Electoral Politics in Illinois, 1877–1932* (Chapel Hill, 2009); Lisa Tetrault, "The Incorporation of American Feminism: Suffragists on the Postbellum Lyceum," *Journal of American History*, 96 (March 2010), 1027–56; Rebecca J. Mead, *How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868–1914* (New York, 2004); and Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill, 1997). On the twentieth century, see, along with works already cited in this essay, Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst, 2000); Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (New York, 2004); Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968–1980* (Durham, N.C., 2005); Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.* (Urbana, 2010); Stephanie Gilmore, ed., *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana, 2008); Linda Gordon and Rosalyn Baxandall, eds., *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York, 2000); Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York, 2000); Premilla Nadasen, "Expanding the Boundaries of the Women's Movement: Black Feminism and the Struggle for Welfare Rights," *Feminist Studies*, 28 (Summer 2002), 271–301; Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York, 2003); Winifred Breines, *The Trouble between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (New York, 2006); and Jael Silliman et al., *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

³⁶ Nancy A. Hewitt, ed., *No Permanent Waves: Recasting the Histories of U.S. Feminism* (New Brunswick, 2010); Cobble, *Other Women's Movement*; Kathleen A. Laughlin et al., "Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor," *Feminist Formations*, 22 (Spring 2010), 76–135.

North America or examining foreign policy in the last two centuries. Much of that work is in conversation with postcolonialism and subaltern studies, and feminist, queer, and critical race theory; some of it reflects the late twentieth-century tableau: the United States as occupier, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization alliance as “rescuer” of Afghan women, and the U.S. marketplace, labor force, and arts appearing ever more global.³⁷

Surviving accounts of treaties, missionizing, and warfare on the North American continent before 1776 make clear that trade, cross-cultural encounters, and diplomatic relations cannot be understood without unpacking gender tropes, the roles of women, and competing styles of military masculinity. Juliana Barr shows that in the area that became Texas “native codes of peace and war” predominated from the 1690s to the 1780s and that indigenous groups’ understandings of gender, kinship, and power defined and delimited Indian-Spanish interactions. Analyzing colonial-era encounters between the Lenape/Delaware and Europeans, Gunlög Fur examines how indigenous women variously responded to Moravian missionary efforts and how, ironically, native women “ceased to play a direct part in” diplomacy at the juncture when Indian and white men “increasingly used both gendered and sexualized terms to talk about themselves and others” in negotiations. Scholars increasingly urge that we analyze similarities and resonances in Indians’ and Europeans’ perspectives on gender, status, and politics. Ann M. Little, for example, argues that an important commonality in the gender frameworks of Iroquois, Algonquin, French, and English settler cultures—“the value they placed . . . on men’s performance in war and politics”—provided a shared set of symbols by which they could communicate hostility or peaceful intentions.³⁸

In the modern period, gendered discourses, such as the idea that the United States as a superpower must always be “tough,” have helped lead the nation into war and keep it there. Robert D. Dean argues that the foreign policy elite who escalated U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War need to be understood as a cohort of men who learned, starting at all-male upper-class boarding schools such as Groton, to embrace the “strenuous life” in preparation for leadership as warrior-heroes. Fortified by World War II service that put them in death’s way, men such as Dean Acheson (secretary of state under President Harry S. Truman and adviser to Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson) and McGeorge Bundy (national security adviser under Kennedy and Johnson) were scarred by the repeated antihomosexual “lavender” purges of the late 1940s and 1950s in which some of the “imperial brotherhood,” as Dean terms the cohort, lost their careers. The public servants who escaped the purges accepted the redrawn boundaries of

³⁷ Ann Laura Stoler’s work has been particularly influential. See Ann Laura Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,” *Journal of American History*, 88 (Dec. 2001), 829–65; and Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, N.C., 2006).

³⁸ Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, 2007), 2; Gunlög Fur, *A Nation of Women: Gender and Colonial Encounters among the Delaware Indians* (Philadelphia, 2009), 12; Ann M. Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia, 2007), 7. For a sustained probing of similarities, see Nancy Shoemaker, *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth-Century North America* (New York, 2004). On masculinities in the context of warfare, see R. Todd Romero, *Making War and Minting Christians: Masculinity, Religion, and Colonialism in Early New England* (Amherst, 2011); Tyler Boulware, “‘We Are MEN’: Native American and Euroamerican Projections of Masculinity during the Seven Years’ War,” in *New Men*, ed. Foster, 51–70; and Susan Abram, “Real Men: Masculinity, Spirituality, and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Cherokee Warfare,” *ibid.*, 71–94.

permissible policy, namely “a hard-line imperial anticommunism devoid of nuance” and the political necessity of never backing down. This outlook influenced the decision making of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and came to fruition in the relentless pursuit of victory in Vietnam despite overwhelming evidence pointing to the war’s futility.³⁹

For teachers constructing courses under the rubric of “the United States and the world,” there are available a host of studies on the gendered and sexualized aspects of U.S. military occupations and maintenance of bases in host countries. An exemplar is Mary A. Renda’s study of the U.S. occupation of Haiti (1915–1934) and its reverberations. Renda demonstrates that a historically specific ideology of paternalism undergirded the intervention. Marines were recruited to serve as protectors of feminized Haitians in need of guidance and discipline. The strength and resiliency of the endorsement of this paternalism by the U.S. military and other Americans must be understood, Renda argues, in the context of “increasingly visible African American and feminist challenges” to race and gender hierarchies in the early twentieth-century United States. Moreover, many intellectuals and artists—black and white, conservative and radical—were inspired by the occupation to feature Haiti in their works. This “American Africa” came to serve “as a locus of struggle over” a wide range of fraught issues, not least of which were the scars of racism and the meanings of national identity.⁴⁰

Recent scholarship echoes Renda’s work in underscoring ways that empire and military conflict have shaped gender and racial politics on U.S. soil. For example, Michele Mitchell shows that African American commentators at the turn of the twentieth century wove missionizing and colonizing efforts in Africa into their arguments for how manly black men would advance race pride; in doing so they relegated “race women” to the sidelines. Other scholars investigate how images and practices of domesticity were profoundly affected by Americans’ encounters with Asia and other parts of the world. Starting in the late nineteenth century, Kristin L. Hoganson asserts, American domesticity was “globally produced” through the interest of white, middle-class leisured women in foreign products to spice up and make more cosmopolitan the food they served, clothes they wore, and literature they read as clubwomen. Titillated and made to feel privileged and distinctive as taste makers by these “imperial buy-ins,” many women did not inquire into the plight of foreign workers who made the products or the U.S. government’s commercial and foreign policies sustaining imports. Also emphasizing the importance of

³⁹ Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst, 2001), 167. For more on the sex-security purges, see David K. Johnson, *Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago, 2004). For an innovative research model exploring masculine performances, see Frank Costigliola, *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War* (Princeton, 2012).

⁴⁰ Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915–1940* (Chapel Hill, 2001), 302, 36, 306. On the centrality of debates over regulating working-class women’s bodies and controlling population in another lengthy episode of colonial rule, see Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley, 2002). For gendered analyses of the United States as an occupier, see Katharine H. S. Moon, *Sex among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York, 1997); and Mire Koikari, *Pedagogy of Democracy: Feminism and the Cold War in the U.S. Occupation of Japan* (Philadelphia, 2008). Studies of military-civilian relations at U.S. military bases abroad include Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill, 2002); Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations, 1945–1949* (New Haven, 2003); Jana K. Lipman, *Guantánamo: A Working-Class History between Empire and Revolution* (Berkeley, 2008); and Maria Höhn and Seungsook Moon, eds., *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present* (Durham, N.C., 2010).

culture, Laura Wexler spotlights a pioneering cohort of white female professional photographers who were assigned to or sought out subjects such as shipboard sailors returning from the Philippines and students at boarding schools for Indians and blacks. Shaped by their upbringings, which took Anglo-Saxon racial superiority as a given, and armed with a canniness about what viewers wanted to see, female photographers produced images embedded with sentimental narratives of domesticated "savages" and off-duty, nonthreatening soldiers—images that elided the violence enacted when Sioux children were removed from their families and when American troops used terror tactics such as the water cure on Filipinos.⁴¹

Women's and gender historians have also fundamentally reconfigured how scholars envision the development of the modern U.S. state. Thanks to a significant body of scholarship from the 1980s and 1990s on the welfare state, we cannot conceive of many realms of policy making without considering women's roles in crafting the agenda. This pioneering literature also devised innovative methods of analyzing the processes through which state policies simultaneously create and reflect race, class, and gender inequalities.⁴² In recent years, scholars have reinforced these insights by exploring an expanded set of female actors and a wider range of public policies. They have examined how government policy influenced and was shaped by normative conceptions of masculinity and heterosexuality.

In a sweeping, dramatic account of the internal contradictions of the Confederacy, Stephanie McCurry makes the political actions of the unenfranchised central to the development of government policy. Building on work by Drew Gilpin Faust and others, McCurry argues that soldiers' wives emerged through their lobbying as a newly visible category in the eyes of the state and forced authorities to grant them unprecedented social welfare provisions. The strategies of newly mobilized poor, white, rural women—such as participating in food riots, writing and circulating petitions, obstructing conscription, and protesting taxation—shaped Confederate policy at crucial moments in the conflict.⁴³

Just as war opened new avenues for women's engagement with the government, so did the expansion of the federal welfare state. In her social history of the U.S. Indian Service, Cathleen D. Cahill shows how a government agency that has been largely

⁴¹ Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, 2004), 51–75. On cultural representations of masculinity several decades later, see Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity during World War II* (DeKalb, 2004). Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumer's Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865–1920* (Chapel Hill, 2007), 11–12, 255; and Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill, 2000). For a study that takes a broad cultural view of women's artistic appropriations, see Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York, 2003). On gendered tropes of orientalism in a later period, see Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley, 2003). For a transnational study, see The Modern around the World Girl Research Group, *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, N.C., 2008).

⁴² For early work in the field, see Linda Gordon, ed., *Women, the State, and Welfare* (Madison, 1990). Scholarship from the 1990s includes Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890–1935* (New York, 1994); Molly Ladd-Taylor, *Mother-Work: Women, Child-Welfare, and the State, 1890–1930* (Urbana, 1995); Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890–1935* (New York, 1994); and Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917–1942* (Ithaca, 1996).

⁴³ Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010). See also Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 1996); Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana, 2000); LeeAnn Whites and Alecia P. Long, eds., *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2009); Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 97–136; and Ella Forbes, *African American Women during the Civil War* (New York, 1998).

overlooked by welfare scholars employed numerous Native American and white women in field offices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sidestepping the directives of the male bureaucrats who created federal Indian policy, these female workers creatively implemented policies in ways that both benefitted and disadvantaged the Native American people they served. Examining a group of women who sought to influence policy making directly, Landon R. Y. Storrs illuminates how the creation of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was a response to a forty-year push by the women-dominated National Consumers League to implement federal labor policies.⁴⁴

Some of the most creative new scholarship shows how working-class women shaped public policies central to the development of the post–World War II urban United States. These women transformed the landscape of social welfare provisioning by increasingly turning to Aid for Families with Dependent Children, municipal courts, public housing, and public health care institutions. At times, working-class women’s individual and collective lobbying of the state enabled them to secure more autonomy and government support, which helped alleviate poverty within their communities and provided them with more leverage in their relationships with men. At other times, government authorities responded to women’s assertive claims by implementing harsh restrictions that made it more difficult for women and their families to use public programs. Historians seeking to document both the expansion and contraction of public welfare programs in the twentieth century must consider how poor women shaped these transformations.⁴⁵

The welfare state also sought to regulate men. Uncovering the historical roots of contemporary rhetoric about “deadbeat dads,” Michael Willrich and Anna R. Igra explore how turn-of-the-century institutions such as municipal courts sought to enforce norms of breadwinning on working-class husbands. Looking at subsequent decades, Alice Kessler-Harris also finds a white male–breadwinner norm shaping welfare programs such as Social Security that excluded many nonwhite men and most women. The idea that “some people (generally women) would get benefits by virtue of their family positions and others (mainly men) by virtue of their paid employment” became so ingrained in the public consciousness that many Americans considered the New Deal welfare system to be fair and just despite the significant gender and racial inequalities it perpetuated.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Cathleen D. Cahill, *Federal Fathers and Mothers: A Social History of the United States Indian Service, 1869–1933* (Chapel Hill, 2011); Landon R. Y. Storrs, *Civilizing Capitalism: The National Consumers’ League, Women’s Activism, and Labor Standards in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill, 2000). See also Margaret D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940* (Lincoln, 2009); and Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (Seattle, 2009).

⁴⁵ Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar’s Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston, 2005); Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York, 2005); Felicia Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights: Politics and Poverty in Modern America* (Philadelphia, 2007); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women’s Struggles against Urban Inequality* (New York, 2004); Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, 2009); Natalie M. Fousekis, *Demanding Child Care: Women’s Activism and the Politics of Welfare, 1940–1971* (Urbana, 2011); Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian, *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964–1980* (Athens, Ga., 2011). On working-class men and women and the postwar state, see Laura McEnaney, “Nightmares on Elm Street: Demobilizing in Chicago, 1945–1953,” *Journal of American History*, 92 (March 2006), 1265–91.

⁴⁶ Michael Willrich, “Home Slackers: Men, the State, and Welfare in Modern America,” *Journal of American History*, 87 (Sept. 2000), 460–89; Anna R. Igra, *Wives without Husbands: Marriage, Desertion, and Welfare in New York, 1900–1935* (Chapel Hill, 2006); Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th-Century America* (New York, 2001), 4. On the breakdown of the family wage ideal, see Marisa Chappell, *The War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America* (Philadelphia,

Ideas about sexuality were integrally linked to the evolution of the modern state, and Margot Canaday places new emphasis on the role of federal agencies in the crystallization over the twentieth century of a heterosexual-homosexual binary. Canaday's far-reaching study explores how three arms of the federal government—welfare, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the military—worked individually and in conjunction to define citizenship and sexuality. Challenging the idea that wars facilitate the empowerment of marginalized groups, Canaday shows that before World War II, immigration, military, and welfare officials were apprehensive about “sex perverts” and “gender inverts,” but only afterward did they gain the conceptual framework and administrative tools to mark those who were now termed *homosexuals* for systematic exclusion. The postwar purging of lesbians from the military entailed a significant expansion of the state's regulatory apparatuses. Thus the very process of state building was inextricably linked to the exclusion of sexual minorities from citizenship.⁴⁷

A fifth subset of new work in women's and gender history draws on decades of feminist scholarship highlighting the importance of the labor women perform to sustain people on a daily basis. Termed *reproductive labor*, this work is both paid and unpaid and includes cleaning, cooking, shopping, caring for children, and tending to the sick and the elderly. Marxist feminists considered women's responsibility for reproductive labor a lynchpin of their oppression, drawing attention to the ways women's unpaid work in the home sustained capitalism by enabling men to earn wages. Feminist historians have uncovered the ideological roots of this division of labor, showing that the idea of women's household labor as not being “real” work was itself a social construct that emerged in the Northeast alongside the growth of industrial capitalism. Scholars have also illuminated how reproductive labor was structured along class and racial lines, with low-income women of color often performing work that enabled middle-class white women to avoid physically and emotionally domestic tasks.⁴⁸

In the past decade, historical scholarship has pointed to the centrality of reproductive labor not only in constructing economic relationships but also in shaping U.S. politics writ large. This emphasis reflects the politicization of women's reproductive labors in late twentieth-century struggles over immigration, welfare for single mothers, eldercare, abortion, and birth control. Those present-day controversies have encouraged women's and gender historians to probe the transnational history of reproductive politics and ask new questions about how reproductive labor shaped the political and economic structures of the past.

Jennifer L. Morgan intervenes in the burgeoning scholarship on Europeans' reinvention of slavery in the Americas to remind us of the centrality of women's bodies and reproductive

2009); and Jennifer Mittelstadt, *From Welfare to Workfare: The Unintended Consequences of Liberal Reform, 1945–1965* (Chapel Hill, 2005).

⁴⁷ Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, 2009).

⁴⁸ Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York, 1990); Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work”; Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domesticity in Washington, D.C., 1910–1940* (Washington, 1994); Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920–1945* (Philadelphia, 1989). Recent studies of domestic work include Vanessa H. May, *Unprotected Labor: Household Workers, Politics, and Middle-Class Reform in New York, 1870–1940* (Chapel Hill, 2011); and Rebecca Sharpless, *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865–1960* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

capacities to the workings of the transatlantic slave system. Tracking the various representations of African women's bodies in the European male gaze from West Africa to Barbados to the Carolinas, Morgan shows us slaveholders coming to place special value on female human chattel for both their supposed fitness for physically demanding field work and their childbearing capacity. Morgan offers a powerful reminder that the trafficking of tens of thousands of women and their commodification as sexual and reproductive beings lay at the heart of the expanding system of Western capitalism and of what the historian Edmund S. Morgan called America's paradox—a republic of freedom built on slavery.⁴⁹

A large, growing body of scholarship points to multiple ways that debates over birth control, sterilization, and abortion were implicated in efforts to restrict the citizenship claims of racial minorities and lower-class people. For example, Susan E. Klepp explores the lasting reverberations of middle-class white women's promotion of planned childbearing and smaller family sizes in the new republic. She demonstrates that the equation of small families with respectability, restraint, and rationality was "an invention of the late eighteenth century" and shows how this new ideal contributed to negative portrayals of people of color and laboring-class natives and immigrants as incapable of restraint. Twentieth-century battles over immigration echo these prejudices and fears. Elena Gutiérrez's *Fertile Matters* illustrates how stereotypes of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant women as "hyper-fertile baby machines" who "breed like rabbits" helped legitimate population-control ideas, sterilization, welfare cuts, and immigration restriction in post-World War II Los Angeles.⁵⁰

Leslie J. Reagan shows how an epidemic could shake up racialized understandings of women's reproductive experiences and bring complicated moral and legal questions about pregnancy, disabilities, and abortion to the forefront of medical, political, and media culture. The 1960s rubella (German measles) epidemic led many pregnant women to seek blood tests and therapeutic abortions that were haunted by eugenic thinking about the disabled. Seen as avoiding the "tragedy" of giving birth to a severely disabled child, such women were exempted from prevailing public representations of abortion that associated the underground practice with deviant sexuality and working-class black women. The assumption that white middle-class families were the main victims of rubella influenced the growth of the abortion rights movement and the emerging right-to-life

⁴⁹ Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia, 2004); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975). See also Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1996). On various types of trafficking involving indigenous North American women, see James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill, 2002); and Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010).

⁵⁰ Susan E. Klepp, *Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760–1820* (Philadelphia, 2009), 259–62, 279, 281, esp. 262. Susan E. Klepp points to demographic evidence revealing that such pejorative claims were unfounded; in the period she studies, urban poor and free African American couples had the smallest family sizes. See *ibid.*, 119, 277. Elena R. Gutiérrez, *Fertile Matters: The Politics of Mexican-Origin Women's Reproduction* (Austin, 2008), xi. See also Rebecca M. Kluchin, *Fit to Be Tied: Sterilization and Reproductive Rights in America, 1950–1980* (New Brunswick, 2009); and Johanna Schoen, *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare* (Chapel Hill, 2005). On birth control, see Elaine Tyler May, *America and the Pill: A History of Promise, Peril, and Liberation* (New York, 2010); Cathy Moran Hajo, *Birth Control on Main Street: Organizing Clinics in the United States, 1916–1939* (Urbana, 2010); Wendy Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women's Health in the Second Wave* (Chicago, 2010); Andrea Tone, *Devices and Desires: A History of Contraceptives in America* (New York, 2002); and Linda Gordon, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America* (Urbana, 2002).

and disability movements. By tracing how the legacies of the epidemic “have been written . . . into law, medicine, science, and social movements; and into contemporary politics,” Reagan demonstrates that “anxieties about reproduction . . . have shaped national histories to a profound degree.”⁵¹

Research on reproductive politics underscores the toil involved in social reproduction. In *Foul Bodies*, Kathleen M. Brown uses the term *body work* to capture the array of “cleaning, healing, and caring labors” that women performed in early America and argues that cultural understandings of this work helped structure the entire social and political system. She addresses how, from the early modern period to the mid-nineteenth century, “some women [were] able to transcend reputations for disgusting physicality to become standard bearers and enforcers of a new ethos of bodily refinement and domestic purity.” Further, she asks, “why did middle-class women embrace this role with such zeal and work so hard to instill it in their children, who would become key players in the late-nineteenth-century urban sanitary reforms and imperial ‘civilizing’ projects?” Brown argues that the era of Native American, African, and European encounter is crucial to the first part of her story, entailing how elite and then middle-class men and women solidified a bodily care regime (“the European linen-laundry complex”) centered on the wearing of white linen shirts and undergarments to rub off dirt. In the early national period, middle-class women gained significant cultural authority as new water-based and disease-obsessed cleanliness practices emerged. The growing North-South political fissure, Brown suggests, was in part a divide between moral crusaders’ environmentalism—the belief that benighted urban poor folk and the enslaved could be taught body- and soul-saving techniques—and slavery proponents’ lumping together all African Americans as uncivilized.⁵²

The interconnected tasks of meal planning, household budgeting, and food shopping are central to reproductive labor in modern households. Tracey Deutsch argues that these often-overlooked aspects of many women’s unpaid work were neither politically nor economically insignificant. In the twentieth century, as food retailing underwent a major transformation from locally owned grocers to supermarkets, women used their status as shoppers to shape the consumer marketplace. In the 1930s and 1940s many women pushed local retailers to stock union goods, reduce their prices, and stop dishonest practices. Emphasizing that chain stores’ ultimate dominance did not reflect the “natural” workings of the capitalist system, Deutsch points to the importance of a series of decisions made by retailers, legislators, and women food shoppers who sought in different ways to shape the retail landscape.⁵³

Women make up over half of all legal immigrants to the United States today, and many of them hold jobs in the burgeoning care-work economy as child care workers, housecleaners, nurses, and home health care workers. Catherine Ceniza Choy explores a professional segment of this migration of care workers in her study of Filipino nurses.

⁵¹ Leslie J. Reagan, *Dangerous Pregnancies: Mothers, Disabilities, and Abortion in Modern America* (Berkeley, 2010), esp. 1, 4. For a review of recent scholarship on disability, see Catherine J. Kudlick, “Disability History: Why We Need Another ‘Other,’” *American Historical Review*, 108 (June 2003), 763–93.

⁵² Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven, 2009), 5, 4, 114, 361–63.

⁵³ Tracey Deutsch, *Building a Housewife’s Paradise: Gender, Politics, and American Grocery Stores in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, 2010). See also Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009); Susan Porter Benson, *Household Accounts: Working-Class Family Economies in the Interwar United States* (Ithaca, 2007).

Between 1965 and 1988 more than 70,000 foreign nurses entered the United States, nearly three-quarters of them from the Philippines. Uncovering a “culture of migration” that had roots in the U.S. colonization of the Philippines, Choy shows how the U.S. government, professional nursing organizations, recruitment agencies, and Filipino nurses created powerful narratives about the United States that encouraged women to migrate. The result has been the creation of an “empire of care” that bolsters the American position on the global stage but leaves the majority of the world’s population without adequate access to nurses.⁵⁴

Focusing on reproductive labor performed by low-income women from the United States and abroad, Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein explore how home care workers shaped the development of the U.S. health care system and labor movement. Laws and social policies passed in the twentieth century ensured that home care would be a low-wage, female-dominated job and enabled needy elderly and disabled people to avoid institutionalization. What the architects of this system did not anticipate was that the primarily female African American and immigrant home-care labor force starting in the late 1970s would create a powerful social movement rooted in local communities to seek legislative solutions to address the poor working conditions and social stigmas that they face. These women’s efforts to achieve dignity, self-determination, and financial security help us comprehend the changing strategies of the U.S. labor movement in the face of a growing “care work economy.”⁵⁵

The women’s and gender history scholarship of the past decade has continued the revelatory process by which topics once thought to be the province of men or interpretable without reference to gender and sexuality receive analytically compelling treatment. We are learning more and more about how women left their mark on all realms of U.S. politics—making claims on the state, crafting public policy, organizing social movements, and debating imperial activity. Burgeoning scholarship points to the profound ways that gendered ideas and imagery undergird public discourse, shape individual imagination, and perpetuate many types of inequities. While historians have long poked holes in stories of a single continuous, progressive march toward human freedom, the cover has now been entirely blown off any putative overarching narrative about a steady expansion of personal liberation that casts U.S. national development as exceptional. Instead, we see multiple vectors of change moving in many different directions.

As we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century, the remarkable breadth and reach of women’s and gender history poses challenges and opportunities. For decades, the field has maintained its vibrancy by engaging and drawing inspiration from all types of historical research and cross-disciplinary debates. Yet the profusion of new work has made it increasingly difficult for practitioners to stay abreast of the diverse subfields or keep up with new scholarship published in interdisciplinary journals such as *Signs* and

⁵⁴ Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham, N.C., 2003), 1–4, 9, esp. 4. On a related topic, see Susan L. Smith, *Japanese American Midwives: Culture, Community, and Health Politics, 1880–1950* (Urbana, 2005).

⁵⁵ Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein, *Caring for America: Home Health Workers in the Shadow of the Welfare State* (New York, 2012), 124. See also Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Forced to Care: Coercion and Caregiving in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010). On women’s influence on the labor movement more generally, see Cobble, *Other Women’s Movement*.

Feminist Studies that were once required reading for feminist historians. While the digital revolution has contributed to this information overload, it also offers new possibilities. Through blogs, interactive Web sites, and mobile applications, practitioners have access to innovative means for forging networks, learning about recent research, and furthering the field's longstanding goal of engaging the public. Indeed, the digital humanities offer rich opportunities to reinvent practices of collaboration and community-engaged scholarship that remain vital to maintaining the field's dynamism and honoring its historical roots.

As with all scholars, women's and gender historians are profoundly shaped by their own historical moment. Today, U.S. women continue to be overrepresented among the poor, much more than in other developed nations. Another disturbing trend is their incarceration rate, which is rising at nearly double the rate for men. Yet women recently began to outnumber men in four-year colleges, and they now constitute half the paid labor force. Living amid such paradoxes, scholars are employing ever more flexible understandings of gender that address contingency, multiplicity, and fluidity as well as enduring exclusions and hierarchies. Furthermore, many of the topics attracting current attention—imperialism, sexuality, reproduction, transnational social movements, immigration, human trafficking, criminal justice, and care work—reflect and herald the expansive horizons of twenty-first-century feminist politics. By sustaining traditions of politically engaged scholarship, women's and gender historians offer a set of forceful challenges to all teachers and interpreters of U.S. history.