The House, the Street and the Brothel: Gender in Latin American History

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This article delineates scholarship in Latin American history (mostly in English) defined by gender relations and/or focused on women. From 1492 until 1750, the honor code, the process of miscegenation or race mixture, and property rights are emphasized. Scholarship has overturned the traditional view that colonial households and production were invariably patriarchal, since between 25 to 45 percent of households were headed by women. Illegitimacy and consensual unions were found to be prevalent principally among the non-white and non-elite populations.

From 1750 to 1930, profound and contradictory changes included a secularization process that caused women's loss of many colonial protections. However, new opportunities developed for women's employment and control of property. Women were essentially controlled within the private sphere during the colonial period, but that control moved to the workplace in the nineteenth century, and to the state in the early twentieth century. Gender was an important discourse in struggles to define the nation-state, with prostitution and disease as central themes. In the twentieth century social historians have demonstrated the differential gender impacts of economic and technological change brought by development projects, industrialization, and shifting strategies of multinational corporations. The most striking contributions of recent books on gender in Latin America include the continuing significance of honor after independence. Motherhood is another recurring theme in writings about women and their history in Latin America.

Keywords: Latin America, gender, historiography

In the late 1970s and 1980s, most Latin Americanist feminist scholars were anthropologists or sociologists engaged with contemporary politics. The development of a focus on gender among historians was slower, and to a large extent I would argue that works on Latin America which address the issue of gender almost invariably seem to be about something else—merchants, the family, property, the church, poverty, race, the nation-state, or capitalism. That this has been true (and to a large extent continues to be true) is because gender, like class, is not a thing in itself. In this respect, the problem of delineating the role of gender is embedded in a complex matrix of other political and social characteristics which influence its manifestations. However, individuals, unlike other embedded characteristics such as economy, are not only involved in relationships of gender, but are themselves gendered. Thus, gender cuts across other categories of human experience to a greater extent than many other characteristics.

In this article, I will delineate aspects of Latin American history critically defined by gender relations and/or focused on women, and the most critical scholarship to address these themes. I will mostly focus

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on scholarship in English, though there certainly have been many pertinent studies in Spanish and Portuguese. However, gender has not been as central a concern in the different national historiographies in Latin America. This is true in spite of an enormous scholarship in Latin American countries on topics attractive to gender historians, such as family, sexuality, race mixture, marriage, and women's roles in labor, politics and everyday life.

I will begin with the colonial period, since that history continued to influence gender relations and gender ideology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In some cases, I believe these are characteristics which distinguish Latin American societies from others to a large extent, while other aspects definitely have resonance in the US, Europe or elsewhere.

During the colonial period, from 1492 until 1750, three historical issues related to gender must be emphasized.[1] The first is the relationship between the honor code and gender ideology. The second is the overwhelming influence of the process of miscegenation or race mixture, its interaction with gender, and its impact on class relations and politics. The third is the system of property rights and the corporate system of government, which privileged the patriarchal family. During the long nineteenth century (1750-1930), Latin America went through a profound and contradictory transformation that radically altered political, economic and social relationships. Historian Susan Besse has called this process the "restructuring of patriarchy."[2]

It is impossible to think about Latin American history without considering the culture of honor.[3] That culture, derived from the Mediterranean, was supported by canon law and the church and essentially determined social hierarchy in the colonial period. The culture of honor also determined the interaction of ideologies affecting gender and race. In its most basic form honor was related to status—which was

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[1] This reflects the periodization commonly used to delineate change from a social and economic point of view, with the transition occurring with the Bourbon rise to power in Spain and Portugal. Similarly, the long nineteenth center (or middle period) is often defined as 1750 to 1930 to reflect social and economic change. See Victor M. Uribe-Uran, ed., *State and Society in Spanish America During the Age of Revolution* (Wilmington, Scholarly Resources, 2001), xi.

[2] Susan K. Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[3] Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame and Violence in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Elizabeth Kuznesof, "The Construction of Gender in Colonial Latin America," *Colonial Latin American Review* 1 (1992): 253-270.

male and depended on conquest, victory and dominion—and honor-virtue (which was the maintenance of status over time and generally depended upon female virtue). The loss of honor through the shame of a woman—who is seen as unchaste or seen in public without proper escort or in the wrong place—could entirely shame a family through several generations. Thus, a contemporary Spanish proverb related to honor in sixteenth-century Seville was “Neither broken sword nor wandering woman”. This proverb signified two potent symbols of disorder—the dishonored man and female shame. The imagery also emphasizes the importance of enclosure as the key defense against shame and disorder.

Enclosure and purity were developed as strategies to defend the faith and protect the social order, with religion playing a strong political role.[4] Religious symbols of female martyrs promoted the belief that women should be self-sacrificing. The Holy Virgin represented a standard of female perfection—as one scholar remarked, she is the only woman to be both a virgin and a mother. Sixteenth-century paintings of Mary Magdalene demonstrated that weak, sinful women must assume the kneeling position of the penitent, which justified female submission and male domination. From the thirteenth century, the Catholic Church took increasingly aggressive action to control the sexuality and gender relations of the faithful. Although the culture of honor was claimed by the elite to only be significant for their class, the church’s forms of social control—which related to that culture—were exercised for all classes, cultures and races. It is also very clear that all classes and ethnic groups or races identified with the idea of honor and claimed its privileges for themselves.[5] This can be seen in the many judicial procedures claiming a loss of honor in colonial Latin America.

Prior to 1492, race in Spain tended to be mostly related to religion—the distinction between Christians and non-Christians. Jews were subject to increasing persecution and segregation as Catholicism became more and more identified with political and cultural loyalty to Spain and the Spanish crown in this period. The common Spanish idea of blood as a vehicle initially of religious faith and later as a mark of social condition is related to medieval notions that a child’s substance and character was provided by a mother’s blood and eventually a mother’s milk. This issue of religious purity in the New World was transformed into one of “lineage” or racial stock.[6]

[4] Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Nancy E. van Deusen, *Between the Sacred and the Worldly: The Institutional and Cultural Practice of Recogimiento in Colonial Lima* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[5] Lyman Johnson, “Dangerous Words, Provocative Gestures, and Violent Acts,” Richard Boyer, “Honor among Plebeians,” and Sandra Lauderdale Graham, “Honor among Slaves,” in Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, *The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame and Violence in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

[6] Elizabeth Kuznesof, “Ethnic and Gender Influences on ‘Spanish’-Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 4 (1995): 159-161; Verena Stolcke, “A New World Engendered: The Making of the

Race and Gender in Conquest

In the Americas, paganism provided a convenient initial excuse for conquest and enslavement of indigenous people. However, as Indians were gradually Christianized, race replaced paganism as a justification for Spanish domination. Furthermore, gender functioned as a facilitator of political negotiation and inter-ethnic relations in the New World. Because more than 80 percent of Spanish immigrants to the Indies between 1492 and 1580 were male, race and gender ideologies interacted to reinforce the political and cultural hegemony of the Spanish in the New World. In the first generation, many *conquistadores* took indigenous mistresses, and also often married Aztec or Incan princesses. The children, however, were often designated "Spaniards." In some cases, convents were founded specifically for the illegitimate female offspring of Spanish men and indigenous women. These convents were used to inculcate the young *mestizas* with Spanish culture and make them into appropriate wives for Spaniards.[7] Racial categories, based on the original religious distinctions, came to be one of the most persistent and determinative modes of social and legal discrimination among people in colonial Latin America. It is also important to point out that gender and race were embedded categories. In cultures stratified by both gender and race, gender is always also a racial category and race is a gender category.

While it might seem that race is immutable, in fact it is clear that the official racial categorisation of many individuals in Latin America changed during their lifetimes. In particular, it was very common for a woman's race to change depending on the man she married. For example, a *mestiza* who married a Spanish man might then be classified in the marriage or burial records as a Spaniard. Often the child of a Spanish man would be classified as Spanish, no matter the race of his wife. In addition, the crown might issue a decree called a *limpieza de Sangre* or certificate of clean blood if it was felt the individual was "culturally Spanish." Such a certificate allowed that person to serve in the city council, join a particular guild or occupation, or attend the university.[8]

At the time of the conquest and during the period of evangelization, it is interesting to see how categories of gender, race, honor and religion were translated between Iberian cultures of Spain and Portugal, and the Indigenous and African cultures after slaves were introduced into the New World. At

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Iberian Transatlantic Empires," in *A Companion to Gender History*, eds. Teresa Meade and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 371-389.

[7] Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 15-32.

[8] Kuznesof, "Ethnic and Gender Influences", 162-163. For an analysis of the etiology of *Limpieza de Sangre* and its use in colonial Mexico, see Maria Elena Martinez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

many times, what indigenous peoples saw in the images of Catholicism were parallels of their own beliefs and values. For example, the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared on the hill sacred to Tonanzin, the Aztec goddess of fertility. The Virgin of the Andes, painted in Cuzco in the eighteenth century, was visualized in the image of a mountain, as sacred space, and also similar to Pachamama, the Andean goddess of the earth.[9]

Women were supposed to be escorted outside the house and enclosed within. The requirements that women live in an enclosed situation, shielded from the public eye and men, also was extremely problematic for poor women, who needed to work but also wished to be honorable and respected. Some used a form of dress to comply with these expectations, entirely covering themselves with a long shawl, with only their eyes showing. However, this type of dress was eventually prohibited in Lima, as it was seen as a cover for forbidden and sinful activities.

African slavery provided the third element of race mixture. In countries such as Brazil, Venezuela and Cuba, slaves made up as much as 50 to 80 percent of the population in some periods. Slave women worked alongside men on the plantations but were especially important in domestic service and in urban slavery. Clearly, poor women and women of mixed caste were very important in the urban workforce and the marketplace.

Race, as used by those in colonial Latin America, was seen as connoting elements of character and civilization as well as physical or genetic traits. “Civilized” stock (more Spanish) was seen as genetically stronger, especially if possessed by men. “Barbaric” racial stock (African) could debase racially neutral or civilizable stock. For that reason, enormous efforts were made to discourage unions of African men and indigenous women. While in Latin America manumission of slaves was common, many laws attempted to prevent ex-slaves from establishing independent households or entering respectable occupations. Nevertheless, Afro-descended and ex-slaves clearly did identify with the Iberian honor code and did their best to improve their social status. [10]

Public honor was enormously important for the private lives of colonial men and women. Elite women whose pregnancies were not followed by marriage endured private exile and seclusion, lives spent in spinsterhood and celibacy, often separated from children, lover and family, and sometimes died alone in

[9] Carol Damian, *The Virgin of the Andes: Art and Ritual in Colonial Cuzco* (Miami Beach: Grassfield Press, 1995).

[10] Kuznesof, “Ethnic and Gender Influences”, 159-168.

childbirth.[11] Lower-class women were often abandoned when their pregnancies were discovered and frequently resorted to dangerous abortions and infanticides because of poverty and lack of personal support. The promise of marriage was private, but a woman was told she needed to "prove" her virginity. Efforts to hide private shame often included the abandonment of babies to foundling homes. It is interesting that the majority of abandoned babies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were white.

By the early eighteenth century, judges began to differentiate the value of women's honor, based on their *calidad* (quality or race). While honor continued to be an important reason for marriage (to restore the honor of the seduced or "offended" woman), it became increasingly common for men of higher status to "compensate" a woman for her virginity with the offer of a dowry or other payment, for example. In a case in 1705, two women claimed to have lost their honor to the same man—one an aristocrat and one a *mestiza.* The judge decided that the honor lost by the aristocratic woman was greater than that lost by the *mestiza*, and the former was therefore given the right to marry her seducer, though in fact the *mestiza* possessed the earlier promise to wed. [12]

By the eighteenth century, it was clear that the "honor" of a man (and his family) was no longer dependent on his fulfillment of a marriage promise, but rather upon the implications of the proposed marriage for the bloodline and wealth of his family. Thus, "race" as a mode of social discrimination was gradually incorporated into the definition of gender and social worth. In 1778, the Royal Pragmatic on Marriage determined that marriages were to be between "equals" required parental permission for Spaniards under twenty-five. This essentially overturned the Catholic doctrine of "freedom of marriage," which had dictated since the thirteenth century that God privately indicated to individuals who their intended spouse should be. The question of equality was differently interpreted, sometimes focusing on wealth, sometimes on race.

In the eighteenth century, the discourse about race and social class in Latin America was made concrete in a style among artists of paintings called the *Pintura de Castas* adopted by diverse painters in Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia. Each painting showed a man of one race (for example Spanish), a woman of a different race (maybe indigenous), and a child who was the product of their union (in this case Mestizo). The context of the paintings was also interesting as the less prestigious races were often shown as unkempt, in primitive surroundings, and sometimes indicating violent interactions between the man and

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[11] Ann Twinam, *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[12] Ramon Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 234.

woman, as racial miscegenation was believed to result in disorder and the decline of racial stock. These paintings showed all of the possible permutations of racial mixture or *castas*—often proceeding to strange labels such as *"Tente en el aire"* ("Hanging in the air") or "*Alli esta"* ("There you are!"), as racial mixture became more and more dilute. The paintings also show the stereotypes of personality or level of civilization and probable living conditions and occupation of people in a given group.[13]

In a 1995 paper, I attempted to deconstruct cultural, rhetorical and ethnic influences on the categorization of "Spanish" creole society in Colonial Spanish America.[14] I argued that

> …the ideology of gender…partially suppressed that of 'race' as a category of social discrimination in the first seventy years or more of Spanish colonial society. This occurred in part because of the overwhelming importance of sex in the identity of women in that period, to the extent that other social characteristics seemed to be invisible….Therefore, race functioned primarily as a discriminator for men, putting non-Spanish women in a privileged position for social mobility.[15]

I also presented evidence from various studies to suggest that illegitimate *mestiza* daughters of *conquistadores* were sought after as wives in the sixteenth century by Spanish and creole artisans, merchants, landowners, and other professionals. At the same time, legitimate *mestiza* daughters of *conquistadores*, often defined at birth as Spanish, were frequently married to the sons and nephews of other *conquistadores,* or to their own kin.[16] By 1570, Spaniards in the New World began to claim there was no longer a shortage of European women in the Indies.[17] I argued that the reason the shortage of Spanish women appeared to have disappeared was because "…the offspring of Spaniards and Indian women (many of whom were categorized as Spanish in their birth records) and the offspring of those

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[13] *La Pintura de Castas* (Artes de Mexico: Nueva Epoca, 8: verano 1990). See studies on identity, race and casta painting by Magali M. Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

[14] Kuznesof, "Ethnic and Gender Influences", 153-176.

[15] Ibid. 161.

[16] Keith A. Davies, *Landowners in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 67-68, 75, 82; J.I. Israel. *Race, Class and Politics in Colonial Mexico, 1610-1670* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 60-62.

[17] Richard Konetzke, "La emigracion de mujeres espanolas a America durante la epoca colonial," *Revista Internacional de Sociologia* 3 (9): 123-50. Konetzke assumes the increase in "Spanish" women was because of undocumented female immigration.

mestizas with more Spaniards had created a new “Spanish” population with a balanced sex ratio.”[18] Thus, many “Spanish” women had indigenous background but were successfully reclassified as Spanish.

An important part of my argument was the idea that “race” as used by sixteenth-century Spaniards connoted elements of character and civilization as well as genetic characteristics.[19] Further, “civilized” racial stock was usually believed to be stronger or more determinative than neutral or non-civilized stock, such as that of indigenous peoples. Also, male blood or race was seen as stronger than that of females.

This latter point of the strength of male blood or race has obvious importance for the gender relations of the conquest period, and the racial categorization of offspring. It also reflects the Catholic position that women were intellectually and morally inferior to men. Furthermore, women were seen as especially susceptible to evil and weak when faced with temptations. For this reason, it was seen as necessary for women to be constantly under masculine tutelage, whether that of father, husband, or priest.[20] In a certain way, the malleability of the female with respect to moral character and culture can be seen as a reason why male blood would be viewed as culturally determinative.

Thus, honor, good character and civilized behavior were seen as being carried through a lineage, very often or preferably through the blood. The unique circumstances of the conquest presented a situation in which Spanish male *conquistadores* very often were fathers of illegitimate *mestizo* children. Most *conquistadores* were gifted with indigenous women as part of the dynamics of the conquest situation. For many, the offspring of those unions (some legitimate, many illegitimate) were their only children. In any case, the existence of these children provided a dilemma for the individual *conquistadores* and for the crown.

Significantly, children were very useful to the early settlers. Daughters could be wed to the children of associates to forge or reinforce a business or political alliance. Sons would carry forth a name or a particular enterprise or patrimony. While being associated with fathering an illegitimate child was potentially damaging to the good name of a *conquistador*, dying without an heir was often seen as even

[18] Kuznesof, “Ethnic and Gender Influences”, 161.

[19] Kuznesof, “Ethnic and Gender Influences”, 164.

[20] Maria Emma Mannarelli*, Pecados Publicos: La ilegitimidad en Lima, siglo XVII* (Lima: Centro de la Mujer Peruana, 1994), 34.

less desirable. [21] *Conquistadores* preferred to leave possessions to an heir, rather than to the Spanish state. For this reason, many *conquistadores* asked that the crown legitimate their *mestizo* offspring, and some also recognized these offspring as heirs. Many *conquistadores* had a strong interest that their mixed-blood offspring be socially defined as honorable and that they be capable of carrying their progenitor's name and honor forward to the next generation.

Colonial Latin American society was a corporate patriarchy, divided along lines of estate, race, and gender.[22] State theory rests on the principle that a well-ordered society was composed of well-ruled *familias*. Such *familias* were governed by patriarchs who exercised power, demanded obedience, provided maintenance, and guaranteed protection. Male prerogatives were pervasive. Nevertheless, the extent of women's legal subordination has been greatly exaggerated.

In contrast to Anglo-Saxon legal tradition, the Spanish and Portuguese crowns granted women extensive privileges. Adult women could sign contracts, ratify official documents, make wills, and appear in court. A married woman might need to ask her husband's consent for these activities, but it was common for consent to be given. Women were guaranteed an equal share of their parents' wealth, including land, by mandatory partible inheritance laws. Women were guaranteed equal property rights with men throughout Latin America during the colonial period and much of the nineteenth century.[23] Some authors even suggest that women had an advantage in inheritance because of the importance of the dowry to marriage.[24] These property rights (which contrasted strongly with women's rights in Anglo-

[21] Burns, *Colonial Habits*, 15-32.

[22] Elizabeth Kuznesof and Robert Oppenheimer, "The Family and Society in Nineteenth-Century Latin America: An Historiographical Introduction," *Journal of Family History* 10 (1985): 215-234; Elizabeth Dore, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Gender and the State in the Long Nineteenth Century," in *Gender and the State in Latin America* eds. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 10-14.

[23] See the discussion of legal rights of women in the Iberian peninsula and in Colonial Latin America in Susan Migden Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7-13; Silvia Marina Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 53-70; Bianca Premo, *Youth, Authority, and Legal Minority in Colonial Lima* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 24-31. It appears that the Portuguese system in practice may have accorded women more rights as adults than in Spain or Spanish America.

[24] Muriel Nazzari, *Disappearance of the Dowry: Women, Families, and Social Change in Sao Paulo, Brazil (1600-1900)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 166-167.

Saxon countries) may be one explanation for the high proportion of female-headed households in Latin American countries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. [25]

Independence and the Nineteenth Century

The economic transformation began even before the wars of independence from 1810 to 1826. The Enlightenment, combined with the Industrial Revolution and the enormous expansion of local and international trade, motivated elites to facilitate the education of women and to allow them into occupations that were previously closed to them.[26] The new governments founded with independence from Spain and Portugal wrote constitutions and tried to come up with a definition of citizenship. The whole idea of including the general adult male populations of Latin American countries as citizens was extremely foreign, and initially resulted in highly contradictory formulations. However, independence also presented a new opportunity for a different discourse to define the "good citizen." This discussion also focused on honor, but this time on honor as a civil virtue based on merit, rather than a religious virtue based on lineage or shame. [27] In the period from 1750 to 1930, the historical issues most important to gender and women included citizenship, secularization, changes in the laws of marriage, urbanization and the expansion of women's employment.

Demographic studies of communities and households in the 1980s challenged the notion that the large, extended families characteristic of the "feudal" colonial period predominated throughout the region. On the contrary, researchers consistently found that the average household size in rural and urban areas was small (between four and six free members), and that it grew in the nineteenth century to accommodate production for new capitalist markets. Second, these studies overturned the idea that households and production were invariably patriarchal, for they found between 25 to 45 percent of households headed by women. In the early 1980s, myself and others concluded that the numbers of female-headed households rose with the beginnings of urbanization and industrialization as a response to demands for domestic market production. [28] Several historians uncovered data on illegitimacy and consensual unions by ethnic or class group in local studies, finding both prevalent principally among the non-white and non-elite populations. Some conclude from this that lower-class groups disregarded the moral values disseminated by the church, a finding rejected by more recent cultural historians. Beyond

[25] Elizabeth Kuznesof, "The Role of the Female-Headed Household in Brazilian Modernization," *The Journal of Social History* 13 (1980): 589-613; Arrom, *Women of Mexico City*, 130-133.

[26] Ibid. 14-20.

[27] Sarah C. Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender and Politics in Arequipa, Peru 1780-1854* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1999).

[28] Ibid., 224; Elizabeth Kuznesof, *Household Economy and Urban Development: Sao Paulo, 1765 to 1836* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986); Arrom, *Women of Mexico City*.

the finding that female-headed households and illegitimacy have been unusually high in much of the region from the colonial period to the present, historians continue to find tremendous variation in degree and patterns by region and over time. [29]

The Modern Period (1930-2011)

The family in Latin America was historically a more central and active force in shaping political, social, and economic institutions than was true in Europe or the United States.[30] In the 1970s and 1980s, women appeared as agents of Latin American family and social history, which was the first step for a number of historians towards a more focused analysis of gender.[31] Issues such as the dowry, inheritance, marriage customs, sexuality, household organization and women's employment began to be addressed as part of this research.[32]

In the late nineteenth century, the question of women and their rights of citizenship began to be important. Contemporary legal changes resulted in increased civil rights for single women, lowering the age of majority and increasing personal and financial freedom. The right to take a job and to keep their own wages for personal purposes was assured for the first time. However, patriarchal authority over married women was actually increased in the same period, even as the protections afforded previously by the dowry and inheritance law were vitiated. [33] As Christine Hunefeldt concluded: "Liberalism, far from opening doors for women, shifted the ground on which women waged battles for survival—while maintaining women's inferior legal status."[34]

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[29] Steve J. Stern, *The Secret History of Gender: Women, Men and Power in Late Colonial Mexico* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) provides interesting insights on marriage from the perspective of non-elite women.

[30] Kuznesof and Oppenheimer, "The Family and Society," 215-257. See the special issue of the *Journal of Family History* "The Latin American Family in the Nineteenth Century" 10 (1985), which includes several articles focusing on women and gender issues.

[31] Sueann Caulfield, "The History of Gender in the Historiography of Latin America," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81 (2001): 449-490.

[32] Nazzari, *Disappearance of the Dowry*; Twinam, *Public Lives*.

[33] Kuznesof and Oppenheimer, "The Family and Society," 227-228; Nazzari, *Disappearance of the Dowry*, 163-168.

[34] Christine Hunefeldt, *Liberalism in the Bedroom: Quarreling Spouses in Nineteenth-Century Lima* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2000), 15.

During the long nineteenth century from 1750 to 1930, profound and contradictory changes transformed and restructured the societies, politics and economy of Latin American countries. These changes included a process of secularization that caused women to lose many protections of the colonial period, but also opened up opportunities for women's employment and independent control of property. This process initially increased the inequality between men and women, particularly within marriage. While women were essentially controlled within the private sphere in the patriarchal system of the colonial period, that control was moved first into the workplace in the early nineteenth century, and then to the state level by the early twentieth century. Gender became an important discourse in struggles to define the nation-state, with prostitution and disease as central themes.[35]

Anthropologist Verena Martínez-Alier's *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (1974) is a path-breaking historical study of the intersection of race, gender, and class in the maintenance of social hierarchy, and of the importance of sexuality and marriage to religious and secular authorities. The book is based on church and state regulations regarding marriage, interracial couples' petitions for permission to marry, and judicial cases of seduction and elopement. Historians began to test Martinez-Alier's ideas in various contexts, examining mating and marriage patterns, and looking at racial mixture, and illegitimacy.

Professional elites in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin America were highly motivated to "modernize" and "civilize" urban space and populations. Gender played a primary role in defining and representing modernity and civilization. Women were primary targets for reformers. The new ideal was the Republican Mother, who educated her children toward moral and civic values to "modernize" family life through education, public health campaigns and the media.[36] The identity of the dishonest woman was constructed just as insistently as that of her counterpart. Ironically, even in this discourse of modernization, the dishonest woman tended to include all of those who worked outside the home as well as those who actually worked in the sex trade. The debate was over "the public woman" and the homebound "honest woman." The focus on prostitution as a site of disease, dirt and degeneracy in the

[35] Katherine Elaine Bliss, *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001); Donna Guy, *Sex and Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family and Nation in Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); Teresa A. Meade, *"Civilizing" Rio: Reform and Resistance in a Brazilian City 1889-1930* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997). Sueann Caulfield, *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

[36] Besse*, Restructuring Patriarchy*; Eileen J. Suarez Findlay. *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Donna J. Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State: Performing Charity and Creating Rights in Argentina, 1880-1955* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures & the State in Chile, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

late nineteenth century is notable. Continuous and frenzied efforts to regulate, segregate, examine and otherwise harass prostitutes became the rule in several Latin American countries. While prostitution was viewed as a "necessary evil" because of the physical needs of males, the prostitutes alone were blamed for venereal diseases. Thus, in the debate over citizenship it was possible to concede a passive citizenship to virtuous family women (civil and social rights), while even those forms of citizenship were denied to dishonest women or prostitutes. Thus, the issue of honor/virtue also resulted in a gendered construction of citizenship. Interesting enough, in Buenos Aires, after decades of debate over state-regulated bordellos, involving issues of morality, social control and public health, the abolitionists were finally victorious. By the 1930s, the symbolic debate over dangerous woman had shifted from the bordello to the factory. It was the working woman, rather than the prostitute, whose independence came to be perceived as a threat to the family and the nation.[37]

As Maxine Molyneux observes, "Feminism in Latin America evolved within a cultural context that was in many ways inimical to gender equality. Ideas of gender difference were strongly rooted in Catholicism, which gave symbolic meaning to maternalist constructions of femininity and underpinned the idea of separate spheres for man and women."[38] Although liberals often supported improvements in women's rights, they held to contemporary scientific explanations of gender roles as rooted in biological difference. Female education and women's employment received male support in the first wave of feminism because these improvements were necessary to the goal of national development and could be seen as serving the family. Women challenged their treatment in the law, framing their demands for citizenship in terms of their maternal "social function" and superior morality, which they would deploy in the service of society. Women's activities in the late nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century were highly stratified by race, social class and location. These differences vitiated attempts to develop broad-based feminist organizations around common issues. Studies show that in the 1920s and 1930s, women's groups were predominantly composed of middle-class and elite women who organized around the issues of suffrage and economic gender inequality in the workplace.[39]

Social historians have utilized the framework of "development" to look closely at the sexual division of labor and inequities in salary, education, and access to state benefits. These studies demonstrate the differential impact on women and men of economic and technological change brought by development projects, industrialization, and shifting strategies of multinational corporations. These changes affected sex roles and family relations in complex ways and provoked a variety of individual and collective

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[37] Bliss, *Compromised Positions*; Guy, *Sex and Danger*.

[38] Maxine Molyneux, "Twentieth-Century State Formations in Latin America," in *Gender and the State in Latin America* eds. Dore and Molyneux, 33-81.

[39] Asuncion Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

responses. As Heidi Tinsman notes, the answer to the question of whether development, as conceived by national and international capitalist policymakers, improved women's status was generally "no." Women's wages might have increased with new factory work, but their status relative to men fell. Development policies in socialist Cuba or Chile were generally more favorable to women than those of capitalist countries, but even there, limits to women's full participation in decision-making tempered the gains.[40] Development also provoked female rural-urban and international migration for employment, a topic that has increasingly entered the historiography.[41]

If we look at powerful Latin American women in this period, we find many of them are also ambiguous figures. For example, Eva Peron (First Lady of Argentina 1946-1952) combined democratic and authoritarian elements, and anxiously avoided the feminist label, which was seen as antinationalist. She believed that women should engage in social action and leave political action to men. Women's role was to conserve traditional ideas of religion and morality within the family. However, she was a powerful example of female leadership and defended women against domestic violence, espoused suffrage and helped women get elected to the legislature.[42]

Under President Getulio Vargas (1930-46; 1950-54), the Brazilian state actively worked to redefine gender roles, prescribing appropriate male and female educational curricula, employment opportunities, public roles, familial responsibilities, and sexual behavior. The goal was to reconcile employers' demands for female labor and women's demands for equality with the larger social need to harness women and the family more securely to the tasks of social reproduction. This led to certain

[40] Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). Other relevant studies that use this approach include Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Compare this "development" approach to gender to analysis in Ann Schofield's essay on Alice Kessler-Harris and Joan Scott in this volume of *History of Women in the Americas*. Latin American historiography more approximates Scott's focus on gender and power then Kessler-Harris's insistence on women as actors in history.

[41] Much of this takes the form of domestic service. Putnam, *Company They Kept*; Nara Milanich, "Women, Children, and the Social Organization of Domestic Labor in Chile," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91 (2011), 29-62; Teresa C. Vergara, "Growing Up Indian: Migration, Labor, and Life in Lima (1570-1640)," in *Raising an Empire: Children in Early Modern Iberia and Colonial Latin America*, eds. Ondina E. Gonzalez and Bianca Premo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 75-97; Catherine Komisaruk, "Indigenous Labor as Family Labor: Tributes, Migration, and Hispanicization in Colonial Guatemala," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 6 (2009): 59-61.

[42] For an analysis of feminism in Argentina, see Marta Raquel Zabaleta, *Feminine Stereotypes and Roles in Theory and Practice in Argentina Before and After the First Lady Eva Peron* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001).

contradictions. In 1930 and 1932, laws were passed to prohibit women from working in jobs that might endanger their health, jeopardize their maternity, or compromise their morality. On the other hand, the 1934 constitution granted a number of new rights to women related to suffrage, political office, labor law, the protection of the family and social welfare. However, the *Estado Novo* in 1937 (the "New State", a dictatorship) rolled back many of these gains and excluded women as political actors. One area of significant expansion for women's employment was white-collar service positions in urban areas, which attracted middle-class and elite women with education.[43]

The second wave of feminism in Latin America in the 1970s received support from the international women's movement, and in Brazil, the popular women's movement was an important component of the opposition to the military dictatorship. The women's movement in this period organized around the three axes of human rights, economic survival and a feminist agenda. The Brazilian constitution of 1988 was unusual in its declaration of a state interest in the prevention of domestic violence, a clause that would not have been included without the concerted actions of the Brazilian women's movement. In 1997, Brazil adopted a law requiring parties to have a minimum number of female candidates on the ballot. Unfortunately, this measure was relatively ineffective as a means to increase women's representation in the Brazilian government because of the inordinately complex party system in Brazil.[44]

The most striking contributions of recent books on gender in Latin America include the recognition of the continuing significance of honor after independence and through political regimes ranging from the U.S. military to socialist and populist reformers. This recognition reminds us of the colonial legacy explicit in the works of Sarah Chambers and Eileen Findlay, as well as in Sueann Caulfield's study of honor as seen through legal, political, and urban reform movements and cases of sexual crime in early-twentieth-century Brazil. These books, as well as thescholarship on the colonial era cited above, demonstrate that to understand honor requires attention to the material and symbolic aspects of gender, its intersection with categories of race, class, region, and generation, and the fluidity of the individual experiences that combine to set social patterns. Another factor that continues to distinguish feminism and give women authority in Latin America is motherhood. This theme also has recurred in writings about women and their history in Latin America from the colonial period to the present.

[43] Besse*, Restructuring Patriarchy*, 164-198. This expansion in women's employment also caused domestic service as an occupation to expand in Latin America even as it declined rapidly in the rest of the world.

[44] Fiona Macaulay, *Gender Politics in Brazil and Chile: The Role of Parties in National and Local Policymaking* (Oxford: Palgrave, 2006).