

international development interventions aimed at 'Third World' women.

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BECKERMAN, STEPHEN & PAUL VALENTINE (eds). *Cultures of multiple fathers: the theory and practice of partible paternity in Lowland South America*. 291 pp. map, tables, figs., bibliogr. Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 2002. \$59.95 (cloth)

This volume is a rich compendium of previously unpublished field reports from across Lowland South America. It consists of an excellent introduction, followed by twelve chapters in which a range of regional specialists debate and dispute the implications of their own and one another's challenging and often-unexpected findings. Jargon free, tightly edited, and with a consistent focus, the book should interest not only Americanists but anyone concerned with kinship, gender, origins scenarios, sociobiology, or the history and evolution of the family. If you think you already know about such things – think again.

Beckerman and Valentine offer the first systematic account of a belief found deeply entrenched in a substantial number of Lowland South American societies. If a woman has sexual relations with several men before and during her pregnancy, then all are in varying degrees considered biological fathers of her child. Becoming pregnant is not an all-or-nothing event – it is a matter of degree. Since a baby is formed initially from sperm, all those who have sex with the mother play a role in making and strengthening that baby. In the case of at least one Venezuelan community, the indigenous belief turns out to be statistically well founded. A long-term investigation into the reproductive histories of 114 Banu women (involved in a total of 916 pregnancies) shows that infants with two fathers are significantly more likely to survive to age 15 than those with just one (pp. 27–41).

The editors adopt a sophisticated modern Darwinian framework, showing that they are well aware of the wider evolutionary significance of their results. Most modern scenarios of human evolution invoke paternity certainty as a key factor in the transition from African hominids to modern *Homo sapiens*. What is sometimes termed the Standard Model of Human Evolution links the emergence of a sexual division of labour with food-sharing, large brains, lengthy juvenile dependency, and continuous sexual receptivity. Evolving human females (so the argument runs) were burdened with increasingly dependent children, making it difficult for them to find sufficient food on their own. But males would only go hunting

and bring back their kills if females – faithful to an unusual degree – could offer paternity certainty in return.

In the study of kinship, this model can be traced back to Malinowski's doctrine of the individual family as the cellular unit of all human kinship. Malinowski's explicit agenda was to discredit the 'dangerous' evolutionism of Morgan and Engels, whose origins account had set out from collective parenthood. I have always suspected (current fashion notwithstanding) that Morgan's scholarship and evolutionary insights were a good deal less ideological, more honest, and more accurate than Malinowski's. But redressing the balance in this area has taken longer than any of us could have imagined.

Napoleon Chagnon backed the Standard Evolutionary Model with his celebrated account of male violence and jealousy among the Yanomami. Championing the same model, Steven Pinker observes that 'in no society do men readily share a wife'. This book offers a fuller picture by reminding us of a constellation of alternative observations – such as that evolutionary fitness is related to infant survivorship, and that it is in no woman's interest for her viable child by a previous partner to be subjected to the infanticidal attentions of her current mate. Balancing these considerations, women can pursue strategies for penalizing men who are excessively jealous while instead encouraging tolerance and co-operation. Given the enormously heavy costs of infanticide, why would it be in any woman's interests automatically to divulge information about paternity? Under conditions in which a partner might one day die or disappear women will enhance their reproductive success if they strive to confuse paternity, compelling mates to act on probabilities, not certainties.

In an especially engrossing chapter, Catherine Alès (pp. 62–85) shows partible paternity to be a significant factor among the Yanomami, where women engage systematically in multiple sexual partnerships – calling into question both the genealogies and socio-biological interpretations of Chagnon. Other chapters show that where residence is uxorilocal and women have corresponding freedom to choose, they strive to limit male control over their reproductivity, confusing paternity and fostering varying degrees of sexual tolerance. The groups discussed in this volume illustrate widely divergent patterns, but the chapters are sequenced and organized in such a way as to clarify the dynamics of variability across this vast region.

Partible paternity is most beneficial to children in those societies – such as the Canela (pp. 86–104) – where sibling unity is valued at the expense of marital bonds. Beckerman and Valentine interpret cross-cultural variability in this respect as reflecting 'a competition

between men and women over whose reproductive interests will dominate social life'. The authors conclude that in small egalitarian societies such as those under study,

women's reproductive interests are best served if mate choice is a non-binding, female decision; if there is a network of multiple females to aid or substitute for a woman in her mothering responsibilities; if male support for a woman and her children comes from multiple men; and if a woman is shielded from the effects of male sexual jealousy (p. 11).

This, then, is the authors' tentative answer to the Standard Model of Human Evolution. Conducting his research in a different part of the continent, Lewis Henry Morgan founded the study of kinship on the basis of intriguingly similar conclusions.

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BUJRA, JANET. *Serving class: masculinity and the feminisation of domestic service in Tanzania*. 222 pp., illus., bibliogr. Edinburgh: Univ. Press, 2000. £14.95 (paper)

Domestic service in the houses of the rich and middle classes in Tanzania is largely the preserve of men, yet domestic labour is almost wholly the responsibility of women and children. Janet Bujra considers the apparent paradox of this position in a book outlining the history of domestic service in the country and the reasons why men continued to dominate the sector until well into the 1980s. An account based on archival research and in depth interviews demonstrates the strong link between domestic service as a kind of wage labour and a twentieth-century masculine identity bound up with labour migration and earning a wage. Despite performing what are culturally considered to be demeaning female tasks, which most men would not publicly perform in their own homes, Bujra argues that the male identity of the labourer is not compromised by domestic service, which is perceived by male servants in terms of work for pay rather than women's work.

In recent years, women have begun to encroach on men's monopoly in the service sector, although they remain restricted to those tasks conventionally associated with women. By contrast, men can transcend the gender division of labour in a service setting where servant status seems to override the usual expectations about proper gendered behaviour. Bujra argues that the social relations of domestic service can transcend gender in certain ways because domestic service is primarily a class relation, and class takes prece-

dence in the racialized social hierarchies of Tanzania, where the power to control the labour of others derives not so much from gender or ethnicity as from access to the resources which enables some to command the labour of others.

According to Bujra, domestic service in Tanzania has become not merely an artefact but a symbol of class. Having servants indicates middle-class and elite status. It is also associated with expatriates and members of Asian ethnic groups who have managed to consolidate distinctly middle-class lifestyles, despite the constraints of socialism. But domestic service is not only confined to wealthy households. Bujra shows how idioms of service are bound up with the short-term migration of young people, mostly women, between rural and urban families and across less-wealthy and poorer households. For these women and girls, service, submission, and kinship inform the performance of domestic duties for both one's own and relatives' households. Domestic service becomes an elaboration of household relations for the powerless occupying subordinate positions. Such relationships are often transient. Young girls soon tire of servitude and are replaced by others keen to take their place in urban family homes.

*Serving class* is a potentially intriguing book about a phenomenon that is widespread across many countries in Africa, and elsewhere. It provides an insight into the development and scale of domestic service in a poor country, from the early days of colonial rule to its unanticipated expansion during the socialist regime at a time when employment of others was discouraged by the government. Bujra shows how the formal role of the male domestic servant has been superseded by social changes which have empowered women to participate in wage labour at the same time as demand for male house staff, with the exception of gardeners and guards, has declined.

Where the book is less convincing is in its analytical framework, which insists on viewing domestic service in Tanzania only in relation to class. This perspective means that the critical links between service, kinship, and domestic hierarchies are underplayed, especially in relation to young women servants who often have some link with employing families. Similarly, the class perspective seems to legitimate the omission of cultural factors from the accounts of both servants and employers. This is a pity. It is obvious from the cases presented that different employers perceive their relationships with servants in very different ways, depending on who the servant is and on the employers' own status and ethnicity. Tellingly, Bujra disaggregates interviews and case studies with servants and employers by ethnicity and race. Disappointingly, there is little analysis of