Lazega’s metaphor may have betrayed him. Whereas the machine metaphor emphasizes stability and timelessness—implying that structure is important—organic systems evolve and adapt as integrated wholes—implying that structure is transient, merely one frame from a motion picture. Lazega tells nothing about the firm’s evolution, how it reflects and acts on its environment, how it affects the nonwork lives of its members. He says success within the firm requires political skill, but he portrays the firm as sitting in equilibrium. He analyzes his law firm in dozens of ways but he gives readers little help in integrating these distinct analyses. He says the firm exemplifies collegial organizations, but he gives no clues about how typical this example might be, what other kinds of collegial organizations exist, or how the population of collegial organizations has changed over the centuries. His statistics allow multiple interpretations, but he does not map these differing perceptions onto different niches, statuses, or positions. Lazega (p. 267) says his research exposes “three generic social mechanisms that allow collegial organizations to operate,” but since he studied only an operating organization, he has evidence regarding the necessity of these “generic social mechanisms.” Thus, a second reason to read this book is to stimulate reflection about the influence of metaphors on scientific research.


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A paradox lies at the heart of U.S. society: though all of its citizens are, in theory, free, many are “less than equal” when it comes to political access and economic security. To explain this pervasive and persistent inequality, feminist and critical race theorists have called for research that focuses on the intersections between race and gender. In Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, director of the Center for Race and Gender at the University of California, Berkeley, responds with a comparative survey of the origins of political and economic inequality in three regions—the South, the Southwest, and Hawaii—from 1870 to 1930 (Reconstruction through the end of the Progressive Era). While the comparison is intended to unearth national patterns of subjugation, examinations of citizenship and labor at the local level allow Glenn to attend to matters of spatial segregation and “racial etiquette.” By reading against the grain of primary documents, Glenn discloses forms of resistance that James C. Scott terms “hidden transcripts.”

The specific causes of economic inequality differed in the three regions,
but Glenn reveals striking similarities among them. In all three, racial ethnic minorities were barred from owning property and thus became subject to various forms of “coerced labor,” largely in low-skilled, labor-intensive agricultural jobs. While white male workers subscribed (though were not always able to live up) to a male breadwinner ideal, minority women and children were expected to work for wages. Denied access to training and adequate—or often any—education, members of racial minorities had limited hope for mobility within the rapidly industrializing economy, which, in any case, allocated jobs according to a racialized and gendered hierarchy.

Political patterns in the three regions were more varied. In the South, newly freed African-Americans enjoyed a brief period of political participation until Jim Crow laws disenfranchised them. Although it was black men, not women, who initially made formal political gains, women always had an equal voice within the black community. Once Jim Crow began to threaten black men who asserted themselves politically, women assumed a more public role.

Mexicans’ political inequality in the Southwest was rooted in the complicated racial politics emerging from the treaty ending the Mexican-American War, which promised citizenship to all Mexicans residing in the territories conquered by the United States. At issue was Mexicans’ racial status; while the treaty implied that they were white, Anglos at the state and local level declared otherwise and sought to deprive them of political rights. Mexicans resisted through labor organizing, occasional violence, and withdrawal into ethnic colonias. At the same time, Glenn argues, they “challenged American nationalist notions of fixed borders and boundaries . . . [by] moving freely within the border region and retaining ties and forming political alliances across official borders” (p. 189).

The origins of political inequality between haoles and Japanese in Hawaii arose from yet another instance of racialized imperialism. The islands were annexed by the United States in 1898, following nearly a century of Euro-American appropriation through trade, missionary outreach, and land privatization. After exhausting the native Hawaiian labor supply, sugar and pineapple growers imported workers from abroad, principally Japan. The first Japanese workers—men who arrived without their families—were summarily branded as “nonwhite” and excluded from politics. But as they were permitted to import “picture brides” and formed families, the Japanese became the largest racial ethnic group in Hawaii, demanding education and other rights of citizenship and claiming a dual identity as both Japanese and American.

As a synthesis of several decades of primary scholarship, much of Unequal Freedom will be familiar to specialists; nevertheless, the three cases are well-documented, and, taken together, they offer a compelling overview of how racial and gender inequality became entrenched in different sites during a formative period of American history. The study makes few
theoretical advances, however. A systematic comparison of the three cases, along with an analysis of the links between local and national developments, potentially offers a fresh understanding of racialized gender as a national phenomenon, but Glenn draws few generalizations from her abundant empirical data. She concedes that there is little direct evidence of connections among white male elites across regions but misses an opportunity to pursue the cultural transmission of “ideas about race” (p. 238) that might explain commonalities. Instead, she attributes them to “the development of an interconnected capitalist economy” (p. 237) and claims that “established patterns of race relations in internal colonies shaped responses to peoples in external colonies” (p. 238). Such interpretations are certainly not original to Glenn and have received richer and more nuanced explication elsewhere, particularly in recent studies on the culture of empire in the United States. Glenn’s brief attempt in the conclusion to suggest continuities between historical and contemporary patterns of subjugation hardly does justice to the very different political, economic, and social configurations that have produced racial and gender inequality since 1930.


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As two and a half decades of market reform has drastically remade, and in some cases unmade, the Chinese industrial work unit system, Frazier’s historical analysis of its making has immense contemporary significance. It allows us to appreciate the complex and deep roots of this entrenched institution, the current regime’s trepidation in reforming it, and the profound social consequences of its dismantling. Against a backdrop of half a century of political and economic upheavals in China—from the Republican era to the first decade of Communist rule—the book lucidly traces how different components of the *danwei*, or work unit, system emerged as responses to the challenges of late industrialization, state building, wartime crisis, revolutionary mobilization, transition to state socialism, and the imposition of the command economy. The main features of the Chinese Communist industrial workplace included concentration of authority in shop-floor supervisors, provision of comprehensive workplace welfare, compressed seniority wage schemes, subordination of management to local party committees, and Party penetration into and mobilization of the workforce. The book offers original and fascinating data that shows how workers, managers, and party and state agents, with different, at times countervailing, concerns and constraints, actively en-