

*Aristotle's Psychology*, [New York: Columbia University Press, 1989]) is also cited by Rachlin, but Rachlin follows Kantor's analysis more closely than he does Robinson's.

7. Most notably, in Joseph Rychlack, *The Psychology of Rigorous Humanism*, (New York: New York University Press, 1988). Rachlin contends that Rychlack's account is only "nominally teleological" (40).

8. See Thomas Leahey, *A History of Psychology: Main Currents in Psychological Thought* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1997) especially chapters 12, 14 and 15.

9. Danziger, "Does the History," 479.

Reviewed by **DEBORAH JOHNSON**, Psychology Department, University of Southern Maine, P.O. Box 9300, Portland ME 04104-9300.

---

*Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*: Vol. 34(2), 173–180 Spring 1998  
© 1998 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

CCC 0022-5061/98/020173-08

**Robert F. Barsky. *Noam Chomsky: A Life of Dissent*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997. 256 pp. \$27.50. ISBN 0-262-02418-7.**

Noam Chomsky—need it be said?—has earned legendary status for his prolific writing in linguistics and radical politics, as well as for his prodigious personal correspondence, his crushing schedule of lectures, his inspiring teaching, his technical brilliance, his take-no-prisoners debating style, and his personal generosity towards his students and other younger scholars. Now in his late 60s, he is retiring from his position at MIT, and this retrospective on Chomsky's career by Robert Barsky, an assistant professor of English at the University of Western Ontario, is as close as we are likely to get to a personal memoir from Chomsky's own hand. It hews closely to Chomsky's published views on his work, and it contains many lengthy quotations from Barsky's correspondence with Chomsky, allowing the reader to hear the unbuttoned Chomsky—to hear the opinions that he can state plainly but which he would put more cautiously in a form overtly meant for publication.

*A Life of Dissent* is a close-up shot of an extraordinary individual whose work has touched for the better the lives of many, including the writer of this review. But it seems to me to be—alas!—idiosyncratic and often cranky history. There are, after all, two questions that beg to be answered in any profile of Noam Chomsky: first, how does he in retrospect see the changes he and his colleagues brought to linguistics under the banner of generative grammar, and, second, what has been the relationship between his work in linguistics and his political activism? The question of how Chomsky's work in linguistics relates to that of other linguists is one that I know better, and the vision that emerges in this book is one that is in a number of important respects inaccurate, and in certain other respects surprising for lack of perspective. With regard to how Chomsky has managed to integrate two careers of mythic proportion, in activism and in academia—one can only listen with a certain degree of awe; but something is nonetheless missing here, like a great sauce lacking an important ingredient; I shall return to what it might be, below.

Barsky does provide what will be for most readers new and revelatory information about the political milieu in which Chomsky, and his mentor, Zellig Harris, navigated in the middle decades of this century, with a very interesting chapter on Harris, Avukah, and Hashomer Hatzair.

One of the essential elements in Barsky's account of Chomsky's career is an element of

what I would call a myth in the origin of many heroes: the notion that Chomsky came to the field of linguistics as an outsider, overcoming great hostility despite a lack of support from the leading lights in the field.<sup>1</sup> Barsky writes, “In the summer of 1954 . . . Chomsky was still an outsider to the field. . . . He did manage to publish a few reviews and articles, often outside the field of linguistics” (81–82) “So, by the mid-1950s, Noam Chomsky, a newly minted scholar, stood at the forefront of a nonexistent field. He was also unemployed.” (84). “In 1955, . . . Chomsky, in his own words, ‘had no identifiable field or credentials in anything.’” (86).

The facts, as Barsky describes them, suggest quite a different picture. Chomsky studied closely for several years with one of the leading theoreticians in linguistics, Zellig Harris, in one of the leading departments of linguistics, at the University of Pennsylvania, and he studied with other outstanding scholars there, notably the philosopher Nelson Goodman. A year after receiving his B.A. at the tender age of twenty, he obtained a four-year junior fellowship with the Harvard Society of Fellows (arguably the country’s most prestigious home for young scholars) with Harris’ and Nelson Goodman’s backing. When that was completed, he joined a machine translation project at MIT, under Victor Yngve’s supervision; Chomsky was viewed by many then as an outstanding young scholar, and Yngve’s appointment of Chomsky was based in large part on Harris’ strong backing of Chomsky.<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 1954, Chomsky was as little an outsider to the field of linguistics as a 25-year-old man could possibly be, and by 1955 or 1956, he had parlayed—and why not!—his credentials and his backing (now from other scholars, including the legendary Roman Jakobson) into a tenure-track position at MIT; tenure and promotion followed quickly after that.

I have already alluded to another aspect of the myth—that Chomsky’s work was so *outré* that he had difficulty getting it published. The record, as far as I have been able to find it, suggests that Chomsky had no more trouble in his youth than any one else. Did personalities and schisms play a role? No doubt, as they always do. André Martinet, twenty years older than Chomsky and editor of a major journal in the mid 1950s, does recount with some smug glee in his memoirs how he ensured that his journal did not publish an early Chomsky submission, though Martinet’s account mixes in two other factors: first, that Martinet’s junior colleague at Columbia, Uriel Weinreich, was a strong advocate of Chomsky’s work at that point, and, second, that Martinet ultimately held it against both Chomsky and Weinreich that they practiced what Martinet perceived to be a Jewish sort of linguistics.<sup>3</sup>

One area that I found particularly interesting is Barsky’s description of Chomsky’s relation to the heated disagreements between the generative semanticists and the interpretive semanticists—what Paul Postal (and later Fritz Newmeyer and Randy Harris) have called “the linguistic wars.”<sup>4</sup> Barsky’s account, again, largely follows Chomsky’s present view of those events. This view is that during that period, he “had quite different things on [his] mind.” (151). Barsky says, “While the battle [the linguistic wars] raged on at MIT, Chomsky reached ‘the peak’ of his antiwar activity. Between fulfilling this commitment, conducting his linguistic research, and publishing the results, he ‘hardly would have had time for ‘power struggles’ even if I had been interested.’” (151) This is, blessedly, the *only* place where special pleading is offered in Chomsky’s defense, though it is unattractive enough in this single place. Filling out Chomsky’s and Barsky’s argument are unspoken assumptions, something like this: others may judge the quality and the intensity of an intellectual debate by the written record, and one may judge that George Lakoff, John Ross, Postal, James McCawley, Ray Jackendoff, and others were caught up in the passion of that linguistic moment in just that way. But Chomsky’s involvement in these questions cannot be judged on the same grounds, for when his mind turned from linguistics, it turned to truly important things, like the war in Vietnam,

while when the other linguists' minds turned from linguistics to other things (like their kids' sniffles or their mortgage payments, perhaps), they continued to feel swept up in a debate that was a tempest in a teapot, when viewed from, say, the perspective of the United Nations or the draft resistance movement. Ironically, it is this Barsky-Chomsky version of history that puts the major emphasis on intangible and subjective human emotions (and does it through the treacherously unreliable lens of personal recollections twenty years later, rather than through documentary record) rather than careful evaluation of the issues involved.<sup>5</sup>

And one cannot help but wonder how seriously this argument is meant to be taken, when offered in the context of factually inaccurate remarks. Chomsky is quoted as saying that the appointments made in his department were of generative semanticists, citing Postal, Ross, David Perlmutter, and Paul Kiparsky (151). But Postal became a generative semanticist after he left MIT, Ross long after he was hired, Perlmutter was never a generative semanticist (as far as I can see, and as far as Perlmutter himself is concerned [personal communication, 1987]), and Kiparsky, of course, was a phonologist, who was a co-author of a single paper that could be interpreted as generative semanticist in tone ("Fact," with Carol Kiparsky).<sup>6</sup>

Curiously (at least to me as a linguist it seems curious) Barsky does not attempt to say just what it is that constituted the great break with American structuralism, nor what the reasoning was that underlay Chomsky's decision to make that break. The fundamental issue is the nature of learning—the developmental process that leads to knowledge. Once Chomsky had decided to take his views of transformational syntax seriously, he had to decide how to deal with the fact (for it certainly seemed to be a fact) that nothing in any way like the associationist learning strategies envisaged by psychology in the 1940s and 1950s could provide an account that took linguistic data as input and produced a generative grammar as output.

Chomsky took a major leap and decided that, if his theory of syntax was correct, then those theories of learning must be wrong. In the first (and in my view, much more interesting) phase of generative grammar—the phase that lasted from *The Logical Structure of Linguistic Theory* through *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*—The proposed that linguistic knowledge was epistemologically justified by its formal simplicity, as long as the grammar generated sentences that were largely consistent with the data of the language. A critical aspect of this position was that the formal simplicity at issue here was one that possibly (in Chomsky's view, almost certainly) was genetically idiosyncratic. General principles of theoretical simplicity would take one only a small part of the way towards developing a model of universal grammar in which the formally simple grammars are the ones that are epistemologically preferred, on Chomsky's view. Chomsky held little hope for the prospects of engaging information theory in the service of linguistic theory, despite the considerable cachet of information theory at the time at MIT. Further properties of grammars found consistently among human languages and which are arguably taken by the human language faculty as desirable (or expected, that is, preferred as analysis on the basis of suggestive primary data) would soon be discovered by linguists, on Chomsky's view, and many of these would be explainable only in an evolutionary sense.

This interesting perspective was largely abandoned, beginning perhaps with Chomsky and Howard Lasnik's "Filters and Control" (1977), to be replaced by the principles and parameters view, which is in essence an abandonment of the notion of learning—or to put it even more tendentiously, a call to the position that linguistics has nothing of significance to say about the human learning, for there is essentially no learning in the matter of linguistics.<sup>8</sup>

These are issues that go well beyond technical questions in linguistics, even if under-

standing them in all their details may be an intellectually daunting enterprise. A full-bore analysis of Chomsky's intellectual career must come to grips with these issues not least because the issue of learnability in cognition is not ultimately unrelated to the issue of how malleable human beings are with regard to their needs and desires in a political context.

Chomsky's public activism first reached a wide audience in connection with his uncompromising stance against American military involvement in Vietnam, through his articles in *The New York Review of Books* and his book, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, published in 1969 by Pantheon.<sup>9</sup> His wide-ranging scholarly apparatus and his devastating rebuke of what he saw as liberal complicity in the public justification of an utterly immoral war in Southeast Asia won for him broad recognition and a loyal following as early as 1967. In the years since, he has published a range of detailed criticisms of Western journalists and academic writers who, on Chomsky's view, violate the most elementary principles of logic and argumentation in order to justify and maintain the first world's political and economic order. He has attacked the hypocrisy and the ideologically-based weakness rampant in writing at virtually every level in mainstream political discourse in the United States.

For this alone, Chomsky would receive any prize that I might have to award for courageously opposing such evils as American involvement in Vietnam. But in the context of Barsky's book, we would like to know more about the ways in which Chomsky's political activism is connected to his views on human nature, and Barsky offers some thoughts on this matter that seem, by and large, to be inadequate, in my view.

One of the fundamental questions that anyone thinking radically about the political world must deal with is the origin of evil (and eventually linked to that, of inequality) in the political realm—the modern descendant of the theologian's puzzle regarding why there can be evil in a world created by a perfect God. For reasons that are transparent, I should think, there has traditionally been a connection between the belief that evil is inherent in human nature, on the one hand, and the belief in the importance of powerful external social and political forces, whether the result of long-term historical development in a Burkean fashion, or the result of a well-planned Bolshevik state. Society functions to control the dark side of human nature for the civilized ends of that society. Views of the human essence in which boundless violence, xenophobic hatred, pathological competitiveness, and unmovable laziness are *not* part of human nature, but rather exceptional responses to unnecessary (that is, contingent) social forces, are compatible with utopian political views: if we can identify the forces in the world as we know it that have led to evil as we know it, then we can work to restructure the political system. In so doing, we can achieve a society in which those forces no longer are present, so that on an individual level, pathological behavior will simply not be forthcoming.

From early on in his political writings, Chomsky has rejected this easy connection between a belief in human plasticity and optimistic political utopianism, in favor of the view (one associated in some circles with the early Marx) that humans have a richly definable nature, with natural inclinations towards creativity, constructive and cooperative energy, and egalitarian social relations. Barsky cites on several occasions Chomsky's first political essay, written when Chomsky was 10, on the Spanish Civil War, and he discusses at some length Chomsky's view that the anarchist movement in Barcelona during the Civil War, described by George Orwell in *Homage to Catalonia*, was one of the rare occurrences in modern history during which, in Chomsky's opinion, human political nature was allowed to surface (to use a linguist's turn of phrase). I remember very clearly as a college student in the late 1960s how much this same view was widely held, and widely seen as being implemented (as well as could be managed) by Castro's and Mao's New Economic Man, in only slightly different form.<sup>10</sup>

Barsky observes that human beings require liberty and a nurturing environment in which to express their humanity (113), and he notes that this requirement has been central to Chomsky's thought. He cites Humboldt:

"when free of external control, 'all peasants and craftsmen could be transformed into *artists*, i.e., people who love their craft for its own sake, who refine it with their self-guided energy and inventiveness, and who in so doing cultivate their own intellectual energies, ennoble their character, and increase their enjoyments.'" (113).

In the political realm, then, human nature can be characterized, but those characteristics are expressed by a highly malleable nature that responds to the nurturing or the hostile environment in which it finds itself. And that nature is fundamentally good. It would be good for humankind globally if each individual achieved this self-realization. This view leaves insufficient room, in my opinion, for the roots of evil in human nature. All evil ends up being attributed to the system, and all good to individual human nature, surely an untenable disjunction. In the end, Barsky's account of Chomsky's views leave the difficult questions unanswered and, I fear, barely asked.<sup>11</sup>

A number of unfortunate—in some cases misleading—errors of historical record can be found in this book. There is an allusion to "the Stalinist-Fascist pact that was forged during World War II," (29), presumably a reference to the short-lived treaty between Germany and the Soviet Union, signed August 23, 1939, before World War II is generally taken to have started—and of course Hitler *ignored* the pact and invaded the Soviet Union, and their *war* is what was forged during World War II, not their pact. (Barsky's next sentence is, "The misrepresentation of events persists even today in standard historical texts," though what he is referring to is unclear). This in turn is followed by a passage that is difficult to follow, because it seems to suggest that at a point when Chomsky was seven years old (that is, through most of 1936; he was born December 7, 1928), his political analysis of the Spanish Civil War led him to understand Stalin's psychology better than most adult Stalinist sympathizers, many of whom were taken by surprise by Stalin's outrageous purges during the late 1930s. By comparison, Chomsky's friend Seymour Melman had to wait until 1939 when (he tells Barsky) "this famous Russian general defected and wrote articles in the *Saturday Evening Post*" (29; he is clearly referring to General Walter Krivitsky, European chief of the GRU, the Soviet military intelligence apparatus, who defected in 1938, following Stalin's assassination of Ignace Poretsky/Reiss in Switzerland). In retrospect it seems obvious that anyone who could not conclude that Stalin was functionally insane by the late 1930s needed to have his glasses cleaned, but what this had to do with a six or seven-year-old boy in Philadelphia remains obscure.

Barsky on occasion seems to put some odd thoughts into Chomsky's head. At one point, Barsky writes, "[h]e knew what had happened to figures such as Rosa Luxemburg (murdered), Antonio Gramsci (jailed), Bertrand Russell hailed, as well), Karl Korsch (marginalized), and Sacco and Vanzetti." (123–124) Sacco and Vanzetti? Sacco, according to recent accounts, was indeed guilty of murdering the paymaster in 1920, though perhaps—as with Lee Harvey Oswald, Alger Hiss, and Judge Crater—we shall never really know. But Barsky is to be encouraged to watch his historical parallels. And of course Bertrand Russell won the Nobel Prize for Literature.<sup>12</sup>

The Chomsky–Faurisson Affair in 1979 remains a sore point for some in the discussion of Chomsky's political writings, and it is discussed at length by Barsky. For Chomsky as for Barsky, Chomsky's involvement was entirely a matter of supporting freedom of expression. Unsympathetic critics used it as an opportunity to brand Chomsky with anti-Semitic labels,



but even critics potentially sympathetic to Chomsky's political views believed that his remarks showed lack of judgment. When Chomsky asserted that he had not read what it was that Faurisson had written, and that he did not care, because what was at issue was Faurisson's right to express his views, not the validity of those views—when Chomsky asserted that, critics (myself included) shook their heads. Surely Chomsky should have taken the opportunity to read what was at issue: surely he *had* taken the opportunity: is there anything, after all, that the man does *not* read? Was Chomsky's statement that he hadn't read it just a rhetorical device? And if he *had* taken the opportunity to read it, why did he *not* say what we might expect him to say: something like, in the light of what we have long known about Nazi-sponsored extermination of European Jews, surely a contemporary who questions the broad outlines of that proposition must have either a screw loose or a highly dubious political agenda; but either way, I defend his right to say it and publish it without being taken to court by the State as a criminal.

It seems to me that it was the fact that this expectation was not met was what stuck in the craw of many of his critics. It is hard—well, impossible—to accept at face value the notion that a principle (such as that of freedom of expression) is so broad, deep, and exceptionless that one need not look at any particular case to determine whether or not freedom of expression is what is at issue; and yet that seems to be what Chomsky (at least as presented by Barsky) asks us to accept.

As I see it, the point is (or is best viewed as) one that pragmatism has best articulated, and I don't mean to use the term pragmatism as it has occasionally been used in a colloquial sense, to mean whatever works best for oneself in the short run. I mean rather the view of human activity that Barsky says was governing in the best education that Chomsky received, at his first school, one organized along the lines of John Dewey's philosophy. Pragmatism takes principles to be always subject to revision and to reinterpretation, based on continued human experience. Principles applied without regard for their context, and principles applied to particular cases with no concern for learning about the eventual consequences of that mode of application of the principle—these are principles that have not evolved pragmatically. Even a school-child knows Justice Holmes's classic formulation of the restriction on freedom of speech: one cannot cry "Fire!" in crowded theater, knowing that there is in fact no danger from fire. The French government has, apparently, made a criminal offense out of certain kinds of historical falsification (however that is defined in France). The arguments to be made are presumably the familiar ones, regarding the dangers to society of undertaking that kind of state-run censorship; that is how I see it, in any event, though it seems, from Barsky's account, that Chomsky would strongly disagree with it, and might even view it as "a contemptible position" (178), for Chomsky is quoted as saying that it would be a contemptible position to defend freedom of speech on the grounds that the speech that might be suppressed, in an atmosphere that did not defend such freedom, would turn out to be valuable.

The issue is much like the debate concerning capital punishment. I don't doubt that a large proportion of those firmly against capital punishment hold the position because of their belief in the sanctity of human life. So where do we fit in the argument (supposing that there is such an argument) against capital punishment on the grounds that it has not been effective in lowering the crime rate? Is it a sign of moral dwarfism to find a context in which that is of any relevance? Perhaps here some *would* say that such contingent, empirical matters should not enter into the discussion, but clearly others would disagree. If we lower the ante and consider vegetarianism, there would clearly be some who hold that eating animal flesh is wrong on purely moral grounds, while others would support vegetarianism on the grounds

that it lowers the rate of heart disease. Few would object to the pragmatic view here: principles at various levels may interact, and on some occasions, principles that are morally more mundane may be as influential as those that are morally refined. Surely issues of freedom of speech fit into such a category.

In the end, this epitomizes much of what has been controversial about Chomsky's views. On issues of importance, Chomsky's utter certainty of the correctness of the position that he takes is captivating and attractive—up to a point, at least. For most of us humans, the critical points in our lives have been the moments when insight arrived and uncertainty evaporated. On Barsky's account, Chomsky's career has not been characterized by a series of scientific discoveries and personal triumphs but has been just the general working out, in an at times sympathetic environment, of ideas that he started out with when he was about seven years old. Of course, that is not very different from the Chomskian view of the language faculty. Maybe there is a connection.

### NOTES

I am grateful for comments on a draft of this from Ami Kronfeld, Robert Barsky, Fritz Newmeyer, and Geoffrey Huck. Some or all of them may continue to think that I am insufficiently sympathetic in what I present to the material that I criticize. They are probably correct, and I thank them for several improvements in what follows.

1. Similar points are made, with considerably greater wit, by Geoffrey Pullum, *The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax and Other Irreverent Essays on the Study of Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
2. Victor Yngve, personal communication.
3. André Martinet, *Mémoires d'un linguiste* (Paris: Quai Voltaire, 1993). The reader may imagine for himself or herself what might lie behind Martinet's perverse categories. For his part, Martinet in his memoirs says that Jewish linguistics is the kind of linguistics where one does not pay enough attention to the facts, unlike his own kind. Martinet's evident hostility to Chomsky in this work is worth a second thought. That hostility seems to derive to some degree from Chomsky's cultural background—for Martinet does not fail to draw the reader's attention to a linguist's religion when the linguist is Jewish—but to a greater degree derives from Chomsky's considerable professional success and influence.
4. My interest is reflected, among other things, in a book that I wrote on the subject with Geoffrey Huck. *Ideology and Linguistic Theory: Noam Chomsky and the Deep Structure Debates* (London: Routledge, 1995).
5. Ami Kronfeld, in a personal communication, has pointed out to me that Chomsky has long remarked that he consciously let go of certain research projects that he had been seriously involved in because of his commitment to the anti-war effort. As far as I know, this refers to areas such as mathematical linguistics and phonology, two areas that Chomsky did not return to after this point. But the issues joined during the linguistic wars were those that Chomsky remained interested in.
6. Perlmutter, personal communication, 1987. Paul Kiparsky and Carol Kiparsky, "Fact" in *Progress in Linguistics: A Collection of Papers*, Manfred Bierwisch and Karl Erich Heidolph, Ed. (The Hague: Mouton, 1970).
7. Noam Chomsky, *Structure of Linguistic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975) and Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1965).
8. Noam Chomsky and Howard Lasnik, "Filters and Controls," *Linguistic Inquiry* 8 (1977): 425–504.
9. Noam Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins* (New York: Pantheon, 1969).
10. Ami Kronfeld has raised the question as to whether this is a fair connection to make; were not the policies of Castro and Mao far more hospitable to an avant-gardist view of the revolutionary party, the revolutionary party leading the worker malgré lui? Whoever mistook Castro for a left anarchist, after all? My recollection is rather clear than many people who, like this writer, were in college in the late 1960s had precisely that image, one that was explored at length in socialist publications in this country at that time. This point is not without considerable relevance, for the image of a utopia founded on workers' control of their means of production will always be judged by how plausible it is to imagine that system as the principal organizing principle of society. If Israeli kibbutzim (or the short-lived workers' councils in Barcelona during the Spanish Revolution) can serve as an existence proof for such a view, their existence will undercut the view (compelling, for many, in this day and age) that both historical and essentialist forces conspire to lead non-market-driven societies to economic ruin, to police-state, or both.
11. The reader of this book should be prepared for unexpected apologetics from Barsky (though these have nothing

to do with Chomsky, as far as I can tell): "The Soviet Union was, and still is, falsely referred to and condemned as a communist or Marxist state by historians, journalists, and political scientists. It was, in fact, a Bolshevik state led by ironfisted totalitarian leaders and supported by a powerful and omnipresent army committed to upholding interests and power structures that would never have been permitted to exist in a truly communist state." (39)

12. Francis Russell, *Sacco and Vanzetti: The Case Resolved* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).

Reviewed by **JOHN GOLDSMITH**, Edward Carson Waller Distinguished Service Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637.

**Lynn McDonald. *The Women Founders of the Social Sciences*.** Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994. 287 pp. \$26.95. ISBN 0-88629-219-0.

The issue of gender is just beginning to be employed as an analytical device in the history of the social sciences. A number of the defining works in this genre (including my own, Thomas Haskell's, and Dorothy Ross's)<sup>1</sup> can be faulted for paying little or no attention to women as social scientists, or to gender as a formative category in the development of these important bodies of knowledge and social practice. William Leach was one of the first to recognize the important role that female reformers played in establishing social science as an organized activity and designing its investigative practices. As Leach revealed, the American Social Science Association, the United States version of the mid-century international social science movement for liberal reform based upon knowledge of "social laws," had women founders and was feminist in outlook.<sup>2</sup>

A new literature is now coming along that places gender at the center of the analysis. In American studies, for example, the current trend has been to argue that female social scientists, barred from academe and working in reform organizations, settlement houses, and government bureaus that they created, invented an altogether different form of social science than men. Theirs was a compassionate, problem-based, richly empirical social science that did not valorize objectivity as male, academic social science did, but made knowledge the handmaiden of reform, turning social investigation into a potent weapon in crusades for reforms in child welfare, women's rights, housing, health, working conditions, and morals. In so doing, female social scientists problematized issues involving marriage and the family and transferred them from the private, domestic sphere to the contested terrain of public policy. Thus, correcting Jurgen Habermas's original assessment, important recent works argue that an autonomous sphere of critical, rational discourse did not succumb at the end of the nineteenth century but was reinvigorated by women's (as well as workers') organization and activism, challenging received traditions regarding public and private, gender and class.<sup>3</sup>

Some of this newer work goes too far, over-generalizing about both sexes, overestimating gender differences, and ignoring the many qualities that male and female social scientists had in common. McDonald's study cuts the opposite way. Charging full tilt against postmodern assessments of the entire Western tradition of empirical social science as hopelessly gendered and thus useless as a basis for praxis, she surveys the contributions of twenty-some British, French, and American women writers on social science methods from the 17th



Copyright of Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences is the property of John Wiley & Sons Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.