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Chicano History: Paradigm Shifts and Shifting Boundaries

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to recount the paradigmatic shifts in Chicano history. The author recounts how the study of Chicano history first began through the male lens, then shifted to include women, and later adopted postmodernist approaches. He outlines three interpretations that dominated modern historical writings, with all found in Chicano history. These interpretations are the bourgeois version of the past, a proletarian analogue, and a “historicist” history that was local and particularistic. He first states that the bourgeois version of Chicano history emphasized the resurgence and regeneration of the economy, including assimilation. Several scholars employing the proletarian analogue, which is based on examining working-class Chicanos through socialist frames, leftist frameworks, and internal colonialism, led the next stage in the development of Chicano history. Following these writings of Chicano history came feminist critiques of the lack of representation of women in Chicano history. The last phase of Chicano history discussed is postmodernism, which emphasizes the complexity and intersectionality of Chicano history.