
Book Reviews

Women and Society: A Critical Review of the Literature with a Selected Annotated Bibliography. *Compiled and edited by Marie Barovic Rosenberg and Len V. Bergstrom.* Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications, 1975, 354 pp. \$17.50.

This bibliography contains somewhat over 3800 citations in 11 major categories. Of these, the largest are sociology (877), political science (665), history (631), and economics (381). Smaller sections cover philosophy and religion; medicine and health; biography, autobiography, and memoirs; literature and the arts; psychology; anthropology; and reference works. The title is misleading on several counts. The "critical review of the literature" consists of three brief essays on women in history, women at work, and women in politics, totalling 20 pages altogether. To all but those approaching these topics for the very first time, these "reviews" will seem uncritical and unanalytical, and contain a number of intellectually naive statements. For example, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* is described as "the bible of feminism," and the review continues to say that "from her (Wollstonecraft's) pen sprang not only the works of Simone de Beauvoir, but also the feminist scholarship of Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran, editors of *Woman in Sexist Society*."

Only some of the citations are annotated. Of these, many say little more than one could deduce from the title, and others seem capricious, e.g., Janet Saltzman Chafetz' text on the sociology of sex roles is annotated only by "Deals with lesbianism." It is also not clear in what sense the bibliography is "selected," as the sources, types, and orientations of the materials included are extremely eclectic and uneven. The compilers do not give much emphasis to the truly new scholarship on women emerging in the disciplines they survey.

Because the dissemination of bibliography is so essential to any discipline, and particularly to new ones, one hesitates to criticize any serious bibliographical effort. There are, of course, a substantial number of potentially important items to be gleaned from this work, and it has some limited value in providing introductory bibliographies for a number of disciplines relevant to sex roles. However, the serious or sophisticated student pursuing sex-role issues in any of the disciplines covered here will not find it to be a major resource. Perhaps the time has past when ambitious general bibliographies on women such as this should (or

can) be produced, in contrast to more carefully selected and annotated bibliographies in more limited areas of women and sex roles.

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Woman: Dependent or Independent Variable? Edited by Rhoda Kesler Unger and Florence L. Denmark. New York, Psychological Dimensions, 1975, 828 pp. \$11.75.

Sex-Role Stereotypes Revisited: Psychological Approaches to Women's Studies. Rhoda Kesler Unger. New York, Harper & Row (Harper Studies in Language and Literature), 1975, 53 pp. \$1.75.

Unger and Denmark's *Woman: Dependent or Independent Variable?* contains 38 articles in seven categories: sex-role stereotypes, clinicians' views and clinical issues of women, the development of sex differences and sex roles, sex differences in cognitive functioning, the question of psychosexual neutrality at birth, psychological aspects of the menstrual cycle and pregnancy, and internal and external barriers to women's achievement. It also includes a brief overview of research on female sexuality. The selection is predominantly empirical and psychological in nature, but does include several key sociological and anthropological perspectives, and several important review or theoretical articles.

This book is more than a collection of readings. It provides an up-to-date and comprehensive overview of the leading perspectives and methods for a major set of topics in the psychology of women and sex roles. For courses which stress students learning how to use and interpret original research material, this reader is ideal. At the beginning of each section, Unger and Denmark provide clear and extensive overview essays concerning each topic which constitute significant statements in their own right. The further introductions to the individual articles point out issues concerning both the methodology and value assumptions which each raises, and will sharpen students' response to these materials. Because of the context which these careful introductions set, this collection could well stand alone as a text on the psychology of women and/or sex roles. *Woman: Dependent or Independent Variable?* should be highly recommended as an integrated, interpretive reader on the psychology of women which meets an important need for both students and professionals.

In *Sex-Role Stereotypes Revisited*, Unger shows the same skillful interweaving of introductory and interpretive material with carefully selected excerpts from original research evident in the previous volume. Unger develops the concept of sex-role stereotyping and its use in understanding relationships between the

sexes. In relatively short span, this module documents the existence and nature of sex-role stereotypes, how stereotypes influence the evaluation of women's and men's behavior, and considers stereotyping in children's literature and in parents' and teachers' behavior toward children. A particular virtue of this module is its inclusion of material indicating complexities and ambiguities about stereotyping which are often overlooked, for example, evidence indicating that the male stereotype is not necessarily more positive than the female (Unger and Siiter), and that women are not always discriminated against relative to men (Starer and Denmark). Unger's discussion questions and suggestions for projects interspersed throughout the text will make it challenging and engaging for students.

Certain features of the module's organization, however, did seem arbitrary or confusing to me. For example, Deaux and Emswiller's study of the attribution of skill or luck on sex-linked tasks seems inappropriately presented in a section titled "Do stereotypes influence behavior" while an important study by Unger, Raymond, and Levine which actually used behavioral dependent variables is presented in a later section ostensibly comparing women's and men's stereotyping of women. But in this latter section, the implications of the Unger et al. study for the question of similarities or differences between women's and men's stereotyping are not made clear. The material in the module, nonetheless, is very strong. It is a concise as well as intellectually sophisticated introduction to a central topic in sex roles, and should circulate widely outside the undergraduate English curriculum for which the series in which it appears was designed.

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Women and Men: An Anthropologist's View. *Ernestine Friedl.* New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975, 148 pp.

Female of the Species. *M. Kay Martin and Barbara Voorhies.* New York, Columbia University Press, 1975, 425 pp.

The debate over sex-role behaviors rages anew in anthropology. On the one side are those who look to physiology and the course of human evolution for evidences of a firm biological base for the division of labor across the spectrum of human societies and for explanation of the cross-cultural similarities in allocation of power and behavioral modes assigned to gender. On the other side stand the economic determinists, examining specific ecological adaptations and their attendant ideologies for clarification of variations in work tasks, assignment of rights and duties, and personality modes for men and women. Both sides labor under the disadvantage of the questionable accuracy or completeness of the data

on which they base their arguments. The biases of the initial investigators, carried from our own culture, have typically led to the treatment of women as peripheral to the mainstream of society, as objects rather than actors on the social stage, and has reinforced the stereotypes emergent from our own cultural milieu.

Both of these volumes are attempts to survey and critique the literature in the field and arrive at a new synthesis that will clarify the extent to which "biology is destiny" and the degree to which "man makes himself" as a cultural creation. The volume by Martin and Voorhies is the more comprehensive and far-ranging. To a large degree this is due to the space limitations placed on Friedl, whose volume is designed for a series of short studies on major topics in current anthropology. Her narrower range is also a function of her concern for the level of sophistication of her audience: in order to incorporate basic information on social organization in preliterate societies she limits her discussion to hunter-gatherer and simple horticultural levels of economic organization. Martin and Voorhies range from primate evolution to women in advanced capitalist and socialist societies. It is a more ambitious volume, and at times a more engrossing one. However, for those unaccustomed to the jargon of anthropology, Friedl's book might be the more useful starting point. Both volumes present the viewpoint that the subsistence technology of a society has consequences for the sexual division of labor, the differential allocation of power and prestige between the sexes, and the quality of the relationship between men and women or between those of the same sex. Neither volume posits a golden age of matriarchy or a conspiracy going back before the dawn of history for the oppression of women by men. Both also recognize the variations and exceptions that occur within the same technological levels in similar settings.

Friedl's general position is that hunter-gatherer societies come closest to exemplifying political and economic equalitarianism. The only major social division in such societies is between the sexes who are bound in interdependence yet function autonomously. Male domination at that level of organization arises only where hunting is the sole (or conspicuously major) source of food, as among the Eskimo. Then, the male monopoly of the hunt and extradomestic exchanges of valued resources provide men with power and prestige and negatively affect the status of women. Where both sexes share almost equally in the food quest or women provide the bulk of subsistence foods, as among the Washo or the !Kung Bushmen, social equality is greatest. She implies that the Eskimo are atypical of existent hunter-gatherer groups and of groups early in human history.

In comparison, she finds horticultural societies to be less egalitarian. Males control the allocation and clearing of land and are involved in warfare to protect these resources from competing neighbors. Although women produce the bulk or all of the foodstuffs, males control extradomestic exchanges and distributions, and dominate religious and political activities. Indeed, women themselves become an item of exchange within these systems. The matrilineal Iroquois, among

whom such patterns of oppression did not attain, are accorded only one brief paragraph, leaving up in the air any causative explanation of *how* or *why* men gain control over critical resources and the female labor force, save a biologically based explanation of men's greater fitness for land-clearing and warfare, and the limitations placed on women by childbearing and nursing. Several pages are devoted to differential socialization of children in such societies.

Female of the Species begins with sex as biological process and a discussion of the absence of fixed correlations between gender and behavioral traits when put in cross-cultural perspective. Their chapters on the conflicting evidence from prehuman primate studies and review of anthropological theory (*The Science of Man Looks at Woman*) underscores the point that many of our present notions of the nature of the sexes can only be understood by historical reconstruction of the culture-specific stereotypes that we have placed upon field observations and the very questions we ask. Much anthropological writing, whether it be studies of monkeys in the wild, field observation in exotic societies, or armchair speculation, incorporates a 19th-century cultural bias that tends to isolate and polarize the sexes. We look for opposite and complimentary behaviors in line with our expectations rather than focusing on overlap and shared similarities, reversals from the expected or alternative loci of power and influence.

Martin and Voorhies attribute a greater degree of equality to hunter-gatherer societies, as does Friedl, with a stress on the economic dominance of women. Yet the case study they select, the Tiwi of Australia, is a questionable example of equal or high status for women. True, they control the goods that they produce, but they themselves are a form of capital—producers of goods and reproducers of the labor force—and they are exchanged and manipulated by men as a way of gaining prestige and political power.

Unlike Friedl, they are less willing to see all horticultural societies as more oppressive toward women. They put more stress on economic variations, and differences in descent reckoning and rules about residence after marriage. As they point out, the status of women is highest in matrilineal societies where the local community is organized around related women, and lowest in patrilineal societies where the wife joins her husband's village as a stranger. However, their case study, the Hagen of New Guinea, is a paradigm of the male-dominated society in which both women and the goods that they produce are the stuff of transactions between male groups. Moreover, the lower status of women has supernatural dimensions. Not only are women seen as intellectually, physically, and emotionally inferior to men but in addition they are regarded as capable (both inadvertently and willfully) of polluting and poisoning others with their genitalia during intercourse, menstruation, and childbirth. The reader longs for a matching counterexample.

With the development of plow agriculture, Martin and Voorhies see women transformed from primary producers to processors of raw materials and in-

creasingly confined to an "inside" domestic role. New mythologies develop to bolster the sharp dichotomization of sex roles: these include an elaborate syndrome of subordinate and submissive behaviors for women, placing of a high value on female virginity and a denial of female sexuality. This overview holds true for the Middle East—their case example here is Iraq—and for east Asia and peasant Europe. But it presents problems for dealing with southeast Asia and central America where women are involved in trade and exchange and/or remain engaged in primary production. Moreover, their Iraqi example becomes an excellent argument for alternative loci of influence and control: their veiled and housebound Iraqi women seem to lead lives of greater dignity and warmth within a network of other women than do the Hagen women cited earlier.

The final chapters, dealing with pastoral societies and modern industrial societies are less strong than the preceding ones: both are dealt with as developing out of agricultural societies and retaining the ideologies formulated within those societies. The authors appear to shift away from their earlier economic/ecological line of analysis to focus on culture lag, tradition and persistence of ideas.

The final statements of the book deal with the anticipated demise of gender roles in complex societies. The line of argument is that they are outmoded and dysfunctional, maintained at too high a cost for societies which must select and train people on the basis of their talents and abilities rather than their anatomical attributes. While it is comforting to think that gender will cease to be the major marker of social distinctions, that sex-assigned tasks and behaviors will "wither away" (though one shudders to think what the human mind might devise to replace it) the earlier materials in the book make such a conclusion unconvincing. They suggest rather that strong dichotomization of sex roles can and does occur at any and all levels of socioeconomic integration. It may also be minimal at any and all levels of social complexity, from bands of wandering foragers to large-scale planned industrial societies. Which leaves me with my avid students, pounding the table and demanding to know *why*.

Despite these criticisms, both books are strongly recommended for the questions they raise, the data they present, and their focus on cultural learning and social experience within particular economic frameworks for an understanding of gender roles and behaviors.

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