
Book Reviews

Trade Union Women: A Study of Their Participation in a New York City Local.
Barbara M. Wertheimer and Anne H. Nelson. New York, Praeger Publishers,
Inc., 1975, 178 pp. \$15.00.

This book is a report of a 1972 survey aimed at discovering barriers to the participation of women in labor union organizations. Toward this goal the authors provide an excellent description of the sex structure of jobs and opportunity in a variety of union occupations, all blue collar with the exception of sales. This background is constructed from the questionnaire returns of union leaders representing 108 locals having jurisdiction in industries with one-third or more working women. The 55.5% response rate is open to the interpretation that uncooperative unions are disproportionately those who underutilize their female membership, but the resulting picture is not unduly rosy. Woman's place in each occupation reflects the familiar patterns of sex-typing and sex-ranking which Epstein has described for the professions.

In the area of union involvement, it is crucial to differentiate participation from leadership roles. Of the unions with more than 50% female membership only one-half have more than half their posts headed by women. In unions with 25% to 50% female membership, only 11% of the posts are held by women. Leader reports of female participation in committees, attendance at meetings, and willingness to run for election is positively associated with the proportion of females in the union membership. Unions with high female memberships also report higher numbers of women in staff, but increases in female composition to a majority or more have less impact on reported officeholding. In addition women who occupy unionwide positions are concentrated in the less prestigious and powerful posts.

The authors preface their book with the remark that they are seeking "additional explanations apart from gross bias that would explain the paucity of women in decision-making posts." (p. viii) To avoid pointing an accusing finger at men in power, their concept of bias as a gross and therefore empirically distinct process leads them to focus solely on individual motivation and roles, rather than on social structural processes. Union leaders explain female nonparticipation as a result of family responsibility, fear of late-night hours, or sheer lack of interest. These rationales do not fit the findings indicating differential involvement in committee and membership work versus leadership functions; nor do they ex-

plain the skew in the distribution of females occupying leadership roles. Yet Wertheimer and Nelson remain committed to this emphasis on women's psychosocial limitations. They propose that the positive association between female involvement and proportion of women in the rank and file may be explained by the availability of appropriate role models; the concessions male leaders make as female membership increases; and substantial elimination of male competition, thus removing the female fear of running for office. Though the inclusion of the second variable represents the only concession to alternative foci of social conflict and social control, these factors and their possible interactions merit consideration. However, the limitations and ideological biases of the first survey of union leaders are the basis for the second survey of the rank and file. Consequently alternative hypotheses are neither raised nor tested.

In the second survey, a cross-section of organized male and female workers in private industry and public employment were questioned about their union activities and perceived barriers to greater involvement. Explanations for low participation were classified as: personal and socio-cultural, job related, and union related. In answer to the question "What would you have to change in your life to make it easier for you to participate in union affairs?", the largest number of women cited fewer home responsibilities (from a list of personal limitations). Additional concern was expressed over fear of late night hours and husband's attitude. However, in every union except one, 2 women out of 10 answered "nothing needs to change," and *more men* than women in four of five unions expressed "lack of interest." The importance of female role conflict and the incompatibility of family and work institutions was demonstrated in the analysis of demographic distinctions between activists and nonactivists. Higher proportions of the divorced, separated, widowed, and single rank and file were activists, and participation was positively associated with age of children.

The use of a single survey instrument to assess a complex social process leaves many unanswered questions. The barriers to participation were too narrowly conceptualized, a limitation emphasized by the closed-ended format. Through this approach a respondent may or may not perceive a specific barrier, but *cannot* perceive an alternative. Unfortunately, any recognition of these socio-personal limitations further supports the viewpoint of the male union leaders initially surveyed. Neither the respondents nor the instrument are politically neutral, despite the authors' intentions.

A few study findings do provide important clues to evident gaps in explanation. First, with the exception of officeholding, female members are union involved in more ways than males. If temporal and spatial constraints operate similarly in participation and leadership activities, the institutional explanation is greatly weakened.

Second, female problems of self-esteem and feelings of incompetence must be linked to the concrete positions women occupy in the occupational hierarchy.

If, as interactionists argue, self-concept is shaped through the reactions and evaluations of others who have both referent and actual power, we can understand the consequences for leadership potential of the male–female inequities of job status, rewards, and opportunities for advancement. The finding that significantly more males than females tend to affirm the importance of seniority and skill in one qualifying for union office also reveals the important link between job status and union leadership. Whether or not we wish to interpret these attitudes as a powerful ideology, their pervasiveness indicates the complexity and strength of barriers to union leadership for workers who are at the bottom levels of their occupations or in dead-end jobs.

While the explanations for female un-involvement in union leadership are inadequate, the descriptions of the sex hierarchy in a number of occupations and their unions are precise and informative. In addition, this report empirically dispels the usual myths about the identity, needs, and goals of female workers. More than half of the women studied in each union have always worked, not interrupting their work for young children or other reasons. Yet they hold less skilled or dead-end jobs with which they are dissatisfied. The authors say “Equal pay is the rule for equal work, but most women in the world of work still find themselves with unequal work and lower paying jobs.” Here lies a beginning of the union leadership problem.

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The American Woman in Sport. *Ellen W. Gerber, Jan Felshin, Pearl Berlin, and Waneen Wyrick.* Reading, Massachusetts, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1974, 576 pp., 33 illus. \$10.95.

The invisibility of women’s sports has been destroyed. True for a brief time in the 1930s the names of Babe Didrickson Zaharias, Gertrude Ederle, and Amelia Earhart were household words. But only recently when Billie Jean King beat Bobbie Riggs, and Olga Korbut and Peggy Fleming won Olympic gold medals in front of television cameras have sportswomen come into the main arena of social life. Despite the preeminence of sports in American culture, social scientists have largely ignored it. Most of the work has been done by physical educators and remains well outside the purview of social scientists. None of these studies focus on sportswomen. Even women’s studies programs too often follow the academic values of male colleagues and focus on women’s roles in traditional academic spheres: marriage and the family, education, and the economy.

The American Woman in Sport illuminates an area of social life too long overlooked. The book consists of four sections written by different authors. Each section discusses a different aspect of the women's sport scene and includes an extensive bibliography. From a sociologist's viewpoint the most interesting section is Part I, "Chronicle of Participation." Ellen W. Gerber compares the organizational development of men's and women's sports since the Civil War. She finds Victorian notions of proper female behavior required women's athletics to develop in isolation behind the walls of women's colleges. In contrast, men's athletics—which coincided with the wider social norms—developed rapidly in public view through intercollegiate, industrial, and professional sports.

Part II, "The Social View," by Jan Felshin, argues that the social definitions of "woman" and of "sport" are mutually exclusive. Social restrictions, she claims, have almost totally inhibited women's athletic participation. Conflict has surrounded the development of women's college and Olympic sports so that women have been able to create athletic opportunities only by court action.

Pearl Berlin, in Part III, "The Woman Athlete," reviews the literature on physiological and motivational characteristics of sportswomen. Some demographic data are included, but they are limited. She finds few systematic differences in personality and motivation of men and women athletes. And those reported are questionable and may well be an artifact of the small number of women athletes available for study, the paucity of research, and bias resulting from predominance of male researchers.

In the final section, Part IV, "Biophysical Perspectives," Waneen Wyrick reviews the literature on the biophysical differences between the performance of male and female athletes. She finds the same paucity of data and sources of bias as did Berlin. In an interesting analysis, Wyrick compares four groups of athletes: outstanding men and women athletes, and college men and women athletes. Her data confirm the common finding that the average outstanding male athlete biophysically outperforms the average outstanding female athlete. But the overlap is enormous and is a function of the type of sport. Female skiers, for example, have better biophysical performance than male football players. And outstanding female athletes outperform male college athletes on biophysical tests. She also finds less difference between trained male athletes and college sportsmen than between trained female athletes and college sportswomen. To the scholar interested in methodology the most fruitful idea she presents is to classify athletes on a continuum of dimensions of body type rather than on the dichotomous variable of sex based on the nature of genitalia. This view suggests sexually integrated sports competitions among competitors of similar biophysical characteristics, as in boxing where participants compete in weight classes.

The authors, who are themselves physical educators, have directed their work to advanced physical education students. But the book is useful to sociologists, particularly those interested in sex roles. It surveys an enormous amount of research data not readily available in history, psychology, and biophysiology. In doing so, the book provides the stuff with which scholars trained in other disciplines can work. A careful reading of this work suggests many topics for further study, such as how the social structure determines the choice of sports selected by women, and how professional groups vie for control of women's sports. Teachers will find the book a useful way to introduce undergraduate students to the idea of social behavior.

Considering the dearth of information available, the authors have made a worthwhile contribution. One would hope others will continue to develop our knowledge in this field.

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Woman, Culture and Society. *Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, editors.* Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1974, 352 pp. \$12.50 hardcover, \$4.95 paperback.

Woman, Culture and Society is truly an important book within the field of anthropology. It is the first collection of essays which has broken through the barrier surrounding serious scholarship about women cross-culturally in the recent wave of feminism. While anthropology has acknowledged some shining examples of articulate women scholars who turned their focus to female socialization (e.g., Mead, 1935/1950, 1949) and female biography (e.g., Landes, 1938/1973), post-World War II concern with social structure, ecology, and symbolic systems has systematically overlooked female participation in culture, except as appendages of males. *Woman, Culture and Society* begins the long-needed correction of this oversight. The editors' introduction and the 16 essays in the collection are generated by the assumption that women's experience in culture and female strategies for coping are not the same as men's. Therefore the "science of man" needs to widen and refocus its analysis.

The essays cover a wide range of subjects. Some are theoretical pieces which attempt to account for postulated universals in the gender roles of humans. These include Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?", Chodorow's analysis of the implications of mothering for gender-linked personality traits, and Sanday's cross-cultural study, "Female Status in the Public Domain." Other

essays present culturally specific analyses. They give us revised data with which to reformulate our understandings of the total cultures of which they speak. These include Stack on "Sex Roles and Survival Strategies in an Urban Black Community," Tanner on comparative matrilocality, Paul's study of female subculture in a Guatemalan village, Wolf on Chinese women, Collier's discussion of women as political actors, and Hoffer's biography of a female West African chief. Women's work groups, and their corresponding forms of social organization and power (or powerless) bases are the focus of pieces by Lamphere, Sacks, Leis, and Denich. The subject of male dominance, especially its ideological and symbolic expression, is treated in essays by Bamberger and O'Laughlin.

The collection provides exciting materials, especially for teaching. Ortner's piece, a structuralist reading of male-female symbolic roles, provoked tremendous controversy among graduate students. There was appreciation of the coherence of the argument, disbelief in its methodology, and grateful recognition of a substantive analysis into which they could sink their collective teeth. Similarly, Stack's female perspective excited urban anthropology students. It demolished the worst premises of the culture of poverty literature, and helped to heal the split between the realms of the labor market ("male") and the household ("female") too often present in the analysis of the urban poor, especially the black urban poor. O'Laughlin's essay on female subordination in a prestate society used a mode of production framework for analysis. It generated fine discussion among students applying the Marxist perspective within anthropology. As a teacher, I find it very satisfying to have such a reader finally available, and to know that the quality and sophistication of the essays will challenge its audience.

As a researcher in the field of gender roles and the social structures which condition them, I have certain reservations about the theoretical premises underlying the general theme which links most, but not all, of these essays. The notion that the cultural interpretation of female biology universally turns women into the second sex is problematic for me. It gives greater credence to the accuracy of the collection and interpretation of the data on female sexuality, on motherhood, and on male-female mythology than I would grant. The possible male bias built into existing structuralist and symbolic systems models often used to analyze new data on women is not explored. Nor is the ethnohistory of the cultures under discussion examined for imperial and patriarchal penetration, penetration which could account for the introduction, or at least the exacerbation of female subordination. Nonetheless, the collection is enormously exciting; it's about time we had such a book to think about, fight with, appreciate. *Woman, Culture and Society* makes a substantive, scholarly contribution to the anthropological understanding of women. As such, it ought to be read by a wider audience than the people in women's studies, who have already granted it the deserved status of a best seller.

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Woman's Evolution: From Matriarchal Clan to Patriarchal Family. *Evelyn Reed*.
New York, Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1975, 491 pp. \$15.00.

The author provides a concoction of fiction, speculation, and feminist sexism. Shall it be classified as a "survival," as that term was applied in nineteenth-century anthropology? Or is the decline and fall of the neo-evolutionary approach in contemporary anthropology already upon us? Reading this book one longs to re-invent Boas, who with his co-workers and students responded to speculative nineteenth-century anthropology with the sedulous accumulation and evaluation of evidence.

The alleged purpose of this book is to provide women "on the way to liberation" with a glorious past (albeit a prehistoric one), which has been hidden from them by masculine misinterpretation. But the revelations are hardly liberating, since they are mired in a total misuse of evidence. The book is a mass of annotated citations, much in the style of Frazer, who together with Briffault and Crawley is used as Scripture to lend support to the unprovable assertions which comprise the subject of the book. Although recent influential works such as Harris's *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* are contained in the bibliography, their inclusion in no way disturbs the overwhelmingly anachronistic character of the volume. The approach is firmly rooted in the rampant speculation which was typical of anthropology in its infancy.

According to the author, it all began with matriarchy. The family as we know it is a mere neonate in terms of human evolution. In tracing this development, Reed is careful to include all the fun exotica: human sacrifice, cannibalism, rites of passage, totemism, etc. One can open the book anywhere and be dismayed. Anthropology is defined as "the science of the prehistoric evolution of human society," so that the roster of practicing anthropologists is considerably reduced. Thus, for example, Reed asserts that the *couvade* has received no recent consideration by anthropologists. This will come as a surprise to Robert L. Munroe and his co-workers (R. H. Munroe, 1964; R. L. Munroe & Munroe, 1971, 1973; R. L. Munroe, Munroe, & Nerlove, 1973; R. L. Munroe, Munroe, & Whiting, 1973). Furthermore, the definition of the *couvade* is expanded by Reed to include aspects of fathering behavior, such as that displayed by fathers among the Trobriand Islanders. By such an extension, the data presented by Mitchell and

Brandt (1972) suggest that some nonhuman primates perhaps also practice this quaint custom. The recent findings of primatologists are what might offer some tentative support for Reed's assertions. But Goodall, Lancaster, and Rowell are not cited.

By Reed's definition, this is a book of anthropology, since she attempts to trace the role of women in human evolution. For a far briefer, a far more convincing, and a genuinely anthropological article which achieves this purpose, the reader is referred to Slocum's "Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology" (1975).

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