

## Reviews

*Nature and Nurture: Aboriginal child-rearing in north-central Arnhem Land.*

By Annette Hamilton.

Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1981.

Pp. 183, Appendix, Index. Price \$9.95 (paper bound).

### TWO VIEWS

Studies on child-rearing and socialization in general have been absent among Aboriginal Australian societies, in part due to the rise and demise of culture and personality analysis which was primarily concerned with global models in which culture was derivative of socialization. Over the past twenty years, the role of anthropologists in personality studies has been replaced by psychologists who have conceptualized the problem as essentially developmental thus giving rise to a Piagetian conception of change and development which is linked with language acquisition and verbal response.

The author of this work has had a vast amount of fieldwork and experience among the Anbarra of north central Arnhem Land. Over the past ten years a number of works have been published by Dr Hamilton, but this work is the most succinct statement of the issues which are central to understanding what socialization means among the Anbarra. The first half of the book consists of a series of chronological sets through which the child is socialized from birth to early teens. In each age set, the data provided is determined from quantitative cases based on the kinds of contacts and to the frequency of contacts which a child has with various members of the primary group of familial kin as well as other members of the community. However, data in tabular form are fully animated through the use of detailed case studies and individual histories from which we are able to detect the issues, traumas and dynamics of inner-group interaction as they are evolved through time. The reading is not boring, the data are explained and analysed in a highly skillful manner, and above all Hamilton has provided us with a detailed set of verbal behaviour sets through which human interaction is expressed. Thus, the nature of expressions of warning, instruction, command, crying, etc., is set forth in terms of how they are structured at any one time, and how this structure tends to change and

is modified as a child expands his/her horizons by interacting with different sets of relatives and peers as they form into age sets and gang members.

Part II consists of four chapters which summarize how socialization is related and expressed through demographic features such as birth rate, questions of infanticide, breast-feeding, age of weaning, etc. Sensorimotor developments and changes are also analysed in terms of the sex of the infant and how this development changes by age. The most interesting chapter deals with the emergence of self and person. Although this chapter is much abbreviated and could have been more critical, Hamilton demonstrates how certain virtues such as food sharing, emotional constraints and aggressive behaviour relate to the emergence of individuality. What is missing in this context is the role of language learning and to what extent do grammatical and lexical structures limit and/or create ideas of personhood as they relate to discourse. If we assume that the concept of 'I' is a linguistic universal, does this emerge as a result of the speaker being central in discourse, or are language and linguistic structures to be analysed in terms which are not grounded in behaviour and human development. It would appear that these questions are not only critical to understanding universals, but even within the context of Anbarra culture much of the cultural dynamics and symbolic structures are coded in language which is imperative to what the human means in any culture.

Throughout this volume, Hamilton attempts to show how the Anbarra experience in socialization and child-rearing contrasts with Western notions of child socialization. Also many psychological theories pertaining to childhood development are closely scrutinized and critically evaluated. Studies of innateness among children and the ethnological basis of childhood such as attachment are directly dealt with in a innovative and highly imaginative way. Contrasts of this scale and scope are interesting but at another level of intellectual discourse it would have been ideal to relate Anbarra structures of socialization to other features of Anbarra culture. Thus, how culture and an ontological entity is transmitted both as a set of values as well as morality would have been critical in comprehending how Anbarra values, world view, cosmology and symbolic structures are expressed in socialization, how they are

packed and unpacked in language, and how parents inculcate social values to children. Such processes are not only imperative to understanding what the human and infant means, but also in determining the kinds of mutual constraints which childhood development has on culture and world view and vice versa. Furthermore, the connection between the child, the adult and culture is not isomorphic, since most of these processes are imbedded in contradictions and dysjunctions in which crises and human turmoil must be encountered as a means in which culture highlights its existence in and through individuals.

In conclusion, what I was searching for was a statement about Anbarra culture which establishes the context for socialization. Since most Aboriginal cultures maintain their spiritual existence apart and above human behaviour, it would have been critical to understand how culture relates to the humanity of the infant. But, alas, I am asking for another book which only Hamilton can provide as a means of fulfilling our curiosity and re-whetting our intellectual appetite.

ARAM A. YENGOYAN  
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This book concerns child-rearing practices and education within an Aboriginal group, the Anbarra, a sub-community of the Gidjingali living in north-east Arnhem Land. Surprisingly the begetting, bearing and nurturance of Aboriginal children has received little or no attention from previous field workers, anthropological or otherwise. The work is in the first place a corrective to excessive ethnocentric opinions.

The original manuscript has been revised with the needs of both the general and specialized reader in mind. The original data and detailed analysis is freely available at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. The general aim of the study was to examine the questions Malinowski raised regarding the family and especially the conflict of the natural claims of self-interest and familial emotions against the demands of a broader society.

Dr Hamilton, in her exploration of Anbarra family life, did so at a particular moment in Anbarra recent history about 10 years after relocation in the Maningrida Settlement. A time of transition imposing social, economic and political ramifications on the new settlers.

This non-anthropological reviewer believes the author to have written an interesting account of the natural cycle of continuation of a series of relationships between man, woman and nature for the general reader. He suspects that anthropologists will find their *Weltanschauung* expanded as important experiences of socialization are revealed.

The psychiatrist reviewer looked almost in vain for pathology. Bowlby's maternal deprivation hypothesis and its sombre conclusions are nowhere in evidence. Perhaps a glimpse of the origins of delinquency might be observed in the recent effects of an increase in child population, less spacing of births and the influences of Europeans in prolonging the final phases of Anbarra childhood.

Dr Hamilton has fairly pointed to certain 'regrettable consequences' of the lengthy gestation of her research findings. The intellectual questions of the 1960s when the fieldwork was undertaken are not the same a decade or more later. One pondered the situation at Maningrida in the 1980s?

The last chapters deal with a personal view on attachment behaviour. This is the least satisfactory part of the book. The simple clarity of the early chapters is replaced by the murky waters of Freudian notions with a sermon of John Wesley thrown in for good measure! The infant is demanding, insatiable, threatening in nature but malleable and infinitely controllable provided the right steps are followed and the right rewards and punishments are provided. On several pages Skinner, Piaget, Kohlberg and Cook rub shoulders.

The reviewer was struck by the modernity of the viewpoint of the Aboriginal commentator when invited to explain some apparent inexplicable behaviour. The Aboriginal would naturally ask who are the people involved, how are they related, who is present, who is absent? The Anbarra enquirer frames questions precisely as does contemporary urban social network theorists with their concerns of measuring egocentric social connections and the generation of social patterns by a person's own decisions in all contexts of interaction. In fact, much of the data presented in Dr Hamilton's research could be successfully handled by modern social network conceptualizations.

This is a fascinating and important book and deserves a wide readership. It contains helpful diagrams, maps and photographs. Readers should reflect its

message of an insight into the way people lived with their children before technological development and institutional inequalities took decisive priorities.

KARL KOLLER

*St. George Hospital*

*The fieldworker and the field, problems and challenges in sociological investigation.*

Edited by M. N. Srinivas, A. M. Shah and E. A. Ramaswamy.

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1979.

Pp. 288. Price: Rs 70.

It is often said that field work to a social anthropologist acts like a *rite de passage* and a guarantee of initiation into the professional cult. There are 18 authors in this book, all connected in some way with the Department of Sociology of the Delhi School of Economics from scarcely blooded graduate students to senior professors. The majority of authors carried out their field work in their own country in India but three worked outside India in their initial study. All the papers retain the interest of the reader although the quality varies considerably from P. C. Joshi's interesting material on class ideologies in rural Uttar Pradesh to short descriptions of the difficulties in negotiating with bureaucracies. In every instance however the emphasis is on the author's own problems in getting started and the way he either surmounted or got round the problems that he faced initially. The author's caste background in nearly every instance proves a major difficulty in establishing free *rapport* with most informants although in a few instances the field worker succeeded in taking advantage of belonging to a particular caste to set up a network of voluntary assistance. Only in factories or industrial studies does the author's caste appear to be irrelevant as a category on its own.

This is an interesting well-written description of the difficulties Indian anthropologists have in undertaking field work written in some cases many years after the main work has been published from a personal standpoint. I strongly recommend it.

To Australian readers, the last article in the book partially describes an incident from the victim's point of view, which some member of the Australian Society

of Anthropologists got involved with in an attempt to claim professional field work study rights over a minority Indian group in northern N.S.W.

I think this book should be read by everyone intending to carry out work in the field. The writing is clear and flows freely and I enjoyed it thoroughly.

WILLIAM H. NEWELL

*Tahiti Nui — Change and survival in French Polynesia 1767-1945.*

By Colin Newbury.

The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu 1980.

Pp. xvi + 380.

The differing responses of Pacific Island societies to the economic and political intrusions of Europeans is a fascinating area of research. Newbury's study of the Tahitian experience helps to fill a gap, complementing such works as those by Gilson and Davidson on Western Samoa. A limitation of these historical accounts is their indifference to the task of thinking out general dimensions in terms of which comparative work might proceed. *Tahiti Nui* is more deficient than most in this respect. But worse, it does not present a very coherent picture of its own case. The formless narrative style will exasperate non-specialists seeking an overview of the main contours of change.

Newbury emphasises the economic interchanges that have characterized European contact with the Tahitians since the late 18th century. The early development of a vigorous trade with N.S.W. and the Americas produced a class of Tahitian and part-Tahitian entrepreneurs. The Pomare family, based near Matavai Bay, enjoyed an initial advantage, but the European ventures soon widened and fragmented, playing on Pomare's rivalries with other chiefs. Newbury stresses the forces working against any chief's efforts to centralise political and economic power after contact with whites began.

Opportunities for the islanders to profit by participation in a burgeoning commercial economy encouraged them to collaborate with the English missionaries and other white settlers, and to acquiesce fairly quickly in French rule in the 1840s — some bloody confrontations notwithstanding. These opportunities were enhanced by the relative liberality of French colonial policy, and