Book Reviews

Sex Roles and Cultural Domains

Woman, Culture, and Society. MICHELLE ZIMBALIST ROSALDO and LOUISE LAMPHERE, Eds. Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif., 1974. xiv, 352 pp. Cloth, $12.50; paper, $3.95.

This is an important collection, an anthropological contribution to the growing literature on the nature of women's and men's roles in different societies. It is well within the mainstreams of both feminist and anthropological theoretical concerns today, though the articles vary considerably in their perspectives and somewhat in scholarly quality.

Advertisements for the book apearing in the *New York Review of Books* have asserted that women are universally subordinate to men—a conclusion most of the 16 contributors appear to accept, even though many readers may feel that that issue is by no means clearly settled by either ethnographic or historical materials available to us today (see for example E. B. Leacock's introduction to Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, International, 1972). The tone and the mood are set by introductory quotations from two of the contemporary world's best-known women—Margaret Mead and Simone de Beauvoir. According to Mead, men's activities are always deemed more important than those of women, and de Beauvoir asks the penetrating question of how this situation ever came to be in the first place. These two themes appear over and over again in the book and the authors' efforts to deal with them will anger, amuse, or delight, depending upon the reader's previous knowledge and inclinations, but I guarantee that the total experience will be both exciting and informative.

Some of the articles are ethnographic case studies, presenting heretofore unknown facts about how women cope with the limitations placed upon their sex in various parts of Africa, China, Guatemala, Indonesia, the Balkans, and the United States. Others take a more general or cross-cultural approach and use selected ethnographic materials to support the views they wish to propound. Several use a structuralist methodology deriving from Lévi-Strauss, positing an underlying and all-pervading duality or opposition which serves both to define and to sanction status differences between the sexes. Although such efforts tend, in this writer's view, to be tautological and nonexplanatory, Ortner's contribution seems extraordinarily well written and thought-provoking. She suggests that women's lower status is related to a basic and universally perceived opposition between "nature" and "culture," in which women, owing to the nature of their reproductive apparatus and its associated role, are more associated with the "raw," "uncultured," more "natural" sphere. A logical extension of this classification, according to Ortner, is that the family or domestic unit, with which woman is primarily associated, is also in opposition to the larger and higher level of the society itself, which is both identified with and controlled by males.

At this point Ortner joins the two editors and many of the contributors in distinguishing between the domestic (private) and public (jural, political) domains for purposes of analysis. Nearly all use this distinction, either implicitly or explicitly, in ordering their data and their arguments. They seem generally agreed that women tend to be associated with the domestic and men with the public. The controversy then rages as to how much control each sex actually wields in the other's domain and what this means in terms of the subordination of women. The whole question of female subordination makes little sense unless we define both the domain and what is meant by such terms as "control," "dominance," "power," "influence," and "authority." Women are sometimes seen to "influence" political affairs indirectly through their skills in manipulating particular men—usually sons and husbands (see especially Collier, Denich, Wolf). On the other hand, in some societies women hold high office and seem to wield considerable power or authority in their own right (Hoffer, Sacks, Tanner). Elsewhere women have no means at all of entering or affecting the public domain, the culture rigidly relegating them to what seems an entirely separate world (Bamberger, Denich, Paul).

Interestingly, the question of male dominance or even influence in domestic affairs is less often discussed, here or elsewhere. Matrifocality, which is dealt with specifically by Lamphere and Tanner, has for some time been the object of much attention, especially from Afro-Americanists. Several of the latter, including this writer, have sometimes wondered why anthropologists and others have been surprised to find societies in which women are structurally and symbolically supreme in the domestic sphere. Such surprise and theoretical attention would indicate a contrary expectation—namely, that men dominate at home as well as in public. Such a view is probably one of our Victorian (if not Greek and Roman) heritages. Yet in this collection only Sacks and Rosaldo deal with the issue at all, and then it is by suggesting that true liberation for both men and women will occur only when men are brought back into the domestic sphere, the distinction between "private" and "public" thus ultimately being eliminated. Ironically enough, this suggestion implies that it is men's increased presence and participation on the domestic scene that will enhance the prestige of that unit and its activities. This would seem to confirm the notion Mead pointed to that any thing or activity is more important if men are associated with it.

Only Paul, in what some will decry as an article too supportive of what seems to be a humiliating and painful female existence among Guatemalan Indians, describes an important sphere that is primarily relegated to women. She argues that life is hard for both sexes, and that, although woman's lot may seem onerous, she is in fact highly respected for her skills in such things as weaving and the processing of food. But, in addition, when it comes to the "mystery of sex," as she puts it, woman is supreme. Paul herself does not go into the theoretical ramifications of her material, nor do others in the volume with the exception of Ortner, who seems to devalue women's sexual reproductive functions as determinants of their status.

The contributors seem agreed that whatever a woman's role may be, it is socioculturally, rather than biologically, defined. Leis's article is a magnificent

put-down to those writers who have captured the public's fancy with the idea that men are biologically more capable of cooperating in groups than are women. At the same time, most of the contributors also recognize that the biological facts of life have probably played a role, especially in earlier times, in the formation of the social and cultural patterns which are now so broadly acceptable that they seem to be innate. Sanday suggests, for example, that male roles in early history had to do largely with subsistence and defense since women were required to spend so much of their energy in child-bearing and child-rearing. She suggests that because of this biologically determined fact men were in a better position to gain control over strategic resources and thus, ultimately, over the society at large. One of the difficulties with this kind of argument, in my view, is that it often misses the point that lives themselves may be strategic resources, especially in societies where population size itself is a crucial variable in determining survival for the entire group. Why, then, should women not have achieved a more prominent position as a result of their control in this domain?

Chodorow, the only nonanthropologist among the contributors, presents ideas deriving from psychoanalytic and personality theory to explain how women become socialized into their roles. She notes that the universal assignment to women of the mothering role has effects on both male and female personality structures, to the possible disadvantage of both.

Most of the contributors, then, concern themselves with male and female roles in relation to power and authority over resources and people in the society at large. There is less attention to control over one's own body and activities. This issue might be termed the degree of "independence" which women as individuals are permitted in any given sociocultural system. Of course, it must also be examined in relation to the independence of men as well. Leis deals specifically with this and notes among the Ijaw of West Africa the separateness of the sexes in their daily activities and in the mechanisms they use for achieving personal autonomy on the one hand and societal preservation on the other.

Sacks and O'Laughlin, the latter in a brilliant analysis of how symbolic systems support behavior patterns necessary to the maintenance of the entire social order, also address themselves to this issue. Sacks, in reinterpreting Engels, espouses a Marxist point of view that tends to divert attention from sex to class. Like Engels, she notes the role of the development of private property in determining sex roles in class societies. She also notes that although both sexes are exploited by the system, women are put into a more subordinate position in class society because they are not defined as being socially adult. Rather, through the institution of the family, they are relegated to a peculiar status as wives and wards of men. It then follows that liberation necessitates changes in the family as well as in the economic system.

Aside from a few annoying lapses in scholarliness and a few more serious errors in logical analysis, I found the articles in this book—most of which are by authors who are relatively little known within the field of anthropology, either because of their relative youth or because they have chosen life paths which place their husbands' career plans ahead of their own—to be generally well written and the book as a whole to be a significant contribution. I should emphasize, however, that the book is in no way definitive, nor should anyone think that the last word is even around the corner. For example, no one has as yet, to my knowledge, applied formal methodological principles of ethnoscience to the study of women and the domains thought to be important to them. The positing of the domestic and public domains is a useful beginning, but as I have tried to indicate elsewhere (D. G. McGuigan, Ed., *A Sampler of Women's Studies*, University of Michigan Center for Continuing Education of Women, 1973), this analytic distinction may be oversimplified. I have suggested what I call a "supradomestic domain" lying somewhere between the two. I find this useful in dealing with those concerns which derive ultimately from the domestic sphere but which are controlled, in complex societies, at a higher than domestic level. I have hypothesized that women who enter the so-called political world in our own society tend to be concerned primarily with issues such as consumerism, health, and education, most of which may be seen as extensions of the formerly private or domestic sphere.

Certainly the tide has turned, and increasingly both men and women anthropologists will be paying attention to the fact that males and females may be said to live in different worlds, differently constructed and differently perceived. Much of the early ethnography should be reinterpreted and new studies undertaken to cast more light on some of the varied issues this book either introduces or takes for granted. Perhaps the most important of these is whether, in all societies, women are indeed subordinate to men and whether this has always been so.

I would urge that the book be read, but I would also urge that it be read critically, with the recognition that it is in many ways an incomplete and unrounded exposition.

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High Energy Physics

Particle-Interaction Physics at High Energies. S. J. LINDENBAUM. Oxford University Press, New York, 1973. xiv, 512 pp., illus. $48. International Series of Monographs on Physics.

Hadron Physics at Very High Energies. DAVID HORN and FREDRIK ZACHARIASEN. Benjamin, Reading, Mass., 1973. xviii, 378 pp., illus. Cloth, $17.50; paper, $9.50. Frontiers in Physics.

These books are as different as night and day. The first, a solid-looking member of the prestigious International Series of Monographs on Physics, is written by an experimenter and covers, albeit unevenly, all of high energy physics as it stood about 1970. The second, part of the Frontiers in Physics series, is written by theorists, treats strong interactions only, and deals almost exclusively with developments since 1970. For Lindenbaum "high energies" means incident laboratory energies up to about 30 Gev. Only at the very end, in a sort of "stop press" section, are data up to 70 Gev from the Serpukhov accelerator discussed. This is the domain where total cross sections appeared to be approaching constant asymptotic values. In contrast, while Horn and Zachariasen do mention energies below 30 Gev, their emphasis is on "very high energies," that is, energies attained at the intersecting storage ring (ISR) at CERN (the equivalent of up to 2000 Gev in the laboratory) or at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (currently up to 400 Gev). This is the domain of rising total cross sections.

The books are almost orthogonal in content, then. What about purpose? Lindenbaum has written a monograph