file of life histories is exemplary for sociologist practitioners of historical methodology.

As more and more Americans face hard times during the '70's, the book assumes a measure of timeliness. It provokes thoughts about the future—namely, about the viability of current social institutions and Depression-era adaptation for the new forms of socioeconomic stress on the horizon. In that sense, *Children of the Great Depression* is more than a thoughtful assessment of the past.

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Sex Roles in Central Brazil

Women of the Forest. YOLANDA MURPHY and ROBERT F. MURPHY. Columbia University Press, New York, 1974. xvi, 236 pp. Cloth, $10; paper, $3.45.

When Yolanda and Robert Murphy studied the Tupi-speaking Mundurucú of central Brazil in the early 1950's, this small enclave of 1250 Indians was on the brink of social disintegration. Traditionally hunter-gatherers who also practice slash-and-burn agriculture, they inhabit circular villages in the savannahs of the Upper Tapajoz River valley. According to travelers' reports the Mundurucú were once one of the most warlike peoples of South America. Today, however, their warring activities have been sharply curtailed. No longer at liberty to roam the savannahs at will, a portion of the Mundurucú people have opted for another mode of life. Abandoning the traditional savannah villages they have settled along the banks of the Cururú River, where they currently are engaged in the rubber trade with local Brazilians.

This pursuit of a frontier life-style has brought about many modifications in Mundurucú social organization. Not the least of these are changes in the relations between the sexes. In *Women of the Forest* the Murphys portray the two worlds of the Mundurucú from the vantage point of the woman.

Traditional Mundurucú society is described as essentially an egalitarian one in which "sex roles are the most basic form of social distinction" (p. 70). The Murphys' account presents anatomical differences as the grounds for classlike divisions. As a result of the emphasis on sexual dimorphism Mundurucú men and women live separate and unequal lives in contiguous social settings. The women, anchored to matrilocal extended-family households, are responsible for the production and processing of vegetable foods. Daily horticultural pursuits occupy their time away from the village, and much of their time in the village is spent in the production of manioc flour. A communal manioc shed serves the women both as a social club and as a common work area.

Men have no share in women's work. Domiciled exclusively in a men's house, adult males spend their days either outside the village in hunting and courtship expeditions or in the performance of rituals associated with an ancestor cult. The gulf between the sexes appears to be bridged only for the purposes of procreation and the distribution of meat. Quite apart from these intermittent transactions in which women receive meat and sperm in return for the female product—babies (who at birth are automatically members in their fathers' patriclans)—there is little that seems to bind men to women. Love relationships are described as diffuse and short-lived; divorce is easy and occurs frequently. Thus solidary relations are not forged between the sexes but exist within them.

Greater prestige is accorded to male occupations, with men always dominant in politics and religion. The Murphys try to account for these inequities between the sexes by resorting to a facile Freudian interpretation. Should public displays of sexual antagonism be regarded as merely cover-ups for male fears of inadequacy? Must the men's house and its secret rituals be viewed as fantasies constructed by the men to fool themselves and women into thinking that men are inherently superior beings? No doubt the Mundurucú myths and their symbolism are conducive to Freudian analysis, but at least this reader finds the validity of such interpretations questionable when used to explain cultural phenomena in non-Western societies.

Among the Mundurucú who left their traditional villages in the savannah and relocated on the Cururú River, the old system of sexual segregation seems to have broken down, the Murphys report. Women and men now work side by side in gardening and cooperate with each other in the extraction of wild rubber and other forest products. In this new situation hunting has become less important than fishing, and both have become individual rather than collective tasks. The nuclear family replaces the extended one in important household and village functions. Without a men's house and its male-associated ancestral cult the men now live with their wives and children. No one seems to lament the passing of the old order, least of all the women, who, the Murphys emphasize, are happier in the new setting.

That the Mundurucú women should indicate a preference for machine-age manufactured goods and the exclusive companionship of a solitary husband to a plurality of amorous liaisons and the convenience of child-care by coresident matrikin may not be surprising to Western readers. What is surprising is that the Murphys have made it into an occasion for a comparison of Mundurucú women with American women. It does seem specious to assert, when so little is known about the psychology of the Mundurucú woman, that there is a commonality, a "sisterhood" (p. 232), between all women which cross-cuts cultural boundaries and is readily identifiable on other grounds, presumably, than biological ones. Such statements, were they to be proven exact, might well render social science studies of the kind the Murphys were originally intent upon both cumbersome and unnecessary.

To the trained ethnographer familiar with the repercussions of socioeconomic breakdown, it looks as if the Mundurucú women have exchanged one set of oppressions for another, for if they are no longer the occasional victims of male group tyranny they are now the dependents of husbands trapped in symbiotic trade relationships with Brazilians. Can one conclude then that it is preferable to be a victim of economic oppression than to submit to sexual humiliation? This is certainly the gist of the Murphys' book, but it is hard to determine the answer from the evidence they present. Clearly the costs and rewards of a new life for the Mundurucú need to be more carefully scrutinized. The Murphys' book, constructed more than 20 years after the original fieldwork took place, is a good beginning. The study of sex roles and their allocation, interaction, and rationalization deserves a prominent place in current anthropological research. One may hope that some of the issues raised in *Women of the Forest* will become the concern of future field projects.

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African Mammals

The Carnivores of West Africa. D. R. ROSEVEAR. The British Museum (Natural History), London, 1974. xii, 548 pp. + plates. £18.50. British Museum (Natural History) Publication No. 723.

The third and final volume of a series on West African mammals (the others were on bats and rodents, respectively), this book is crammed with information and is a valuable reference work on carnivores. It includes so many of the species found in