

## BOOK REVIEWS

Leonore Loeb Adler, ed. *Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991) 296 pp., \$45.00.

This is a collection of essays by women writers from several countries including the United States, Great Britain, the former Soviet Union, India, China, Nigeria, and Thailand. These writers examine the interaction of biology, social role, and culture in shaping women's roles in different societies. They attempt to provide a broad overview of the conditions and the problems faced by women in their respective societies.

The unusual aspect of this collection lies in the fact that the essays are written from the "emic" or insider viewpoint as opposed to the "etic" or outsider perspective. Thus it gives the readers a unique vantage point on women's issues from within these societies. For example, there are interesting discussions regarding the practice of female circumcision in Egypt and Sudan, clitoridectomy in Nigeria, and the impact of Hindu values on women's self identity. Good overviews of the Tharu matriarchal system as well as the status of women in China and Japan are also available.

However, there are a few problems presented by the "emic" approach. The insider viewpoint results in a sometimes uncritical approach to the problems confronting women in these societies. First, little attention is paid to class or ethnicity as important factors determining women's positions in both the developed and the developing world. This becomes painfully evident in the discussion on the United States which is presented as a "very child-centered society." No mention is made here of the high rates of teenage pregnancies in certain socio-economic groups or of the high rates of poverty among children. Second, there is little discussion of the problems faced by women in rapidly industrializing societies like Thailand. Therefore no reference is made to the problems created by the exodus from rural Thailand to the factories in Bangkok—a process which has also helped to make prostitution a most lucrative business in that country. As Ruben Ardila, in her section on Latin America, accurately points out, the life-cycle of men and women "is closely

## *Explorations in Sights and Sounds*

related to their education level, social mobility, social class, and rural or urban cultural environment." Third, there is little discussion of the patriarchal context within which women's social roles have been developed in many of these countries. Thus the section on the USSR makes it clear that a woman is destined to "be a mother and a homemaker" and goes on to assert that traditional Russian families derived strength from the "patriarchal tradition." Given this kind of perspective, it is not surprising that this writer actually appears to blame prostitution as well as juvenile and infant delinquency on women.

This collection of essays does present new information on some groups of women that western readers may not have access to ordinarily (i.e., Alaskan, Thai, Australian). However, the insider perspective does prove to be a frustrating aspect of many sections of this book.

Sudha Ratan  
Georgia Southern University

**Leonore Loeb Adler and Uwe P. Gielen. *Cross-Cultural Topics on Psychology*. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994) 288 pp., \$69.50 cloth, \$19.95 paper.**

It has been over forty years since Gordon Allport published *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1954). To Allport, sociocultural factors play an important role in our prejudice, especially when we do not understand cultural differences. However, Allport's book dealt little with cross-cultural research. Fortunately, Leonore Loeb Adler and Uwe P. Gielen, two experts in cross-cultural research, have presented us with their recent study on how cultural understanding helps us to be more open-minded.

This book, consisting of fifteen chapters by different contributors, begins with cross-cultural history and research methods (in Part I), moves smoothly from development issues (in Part II) to personality and belief systems in cross-cultural psychology (in Part II), and finally ends with applications for cross-cultural psychology. Though "race," "ethnicity" and "culture" are indeed different from one another, the book's focus is not on the differences or similarities between these issues, but on the cultural diversity.

For example, chapter contributors selected are diverse and representative geographically or culturally (i.e., from various countries or cultures) and interdisciplinarily (not only from psychology, but also from anthropology, sociology, psychiatry, and other disci-