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Where Did All the Men Go? Female-Headed/Female-Supported Households in Cross-Cultural Perspective. Joan Mencher and Anne Okongwu, eds. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993. 282 pp.

VIRGINIA KERNS

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This wide-ranging and excellent volume grew out of symposia held at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in 1986 and at the 12th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Zagreb. The 12 contributors are anthropologists and sociologists; about half of them are academics, and the other contributors work in a variety of settings in which they deal directly with social research and policy issues relating to female-headed households.

The 14 chapters (including a very thorough and helpful introduction by the editors, Joan Mencher and Anne Okongwu, and a short summary at the end of the volume) vary in approach. Two chapters draw on both secondary data and original research to construct models explaining "mother-child families" (Rae Lesser Blumberg) and "matrifocal families" in low-income groups (Anna Lou Dehavenon). Another two address policy planning issues that pertain to female-headed households in South Asia (Andrea Menefee Singh) and in the United States (Anna Lou Dehavenon and Anne Okongwu). The remaining chapters are case studies. Five focus on regions in the Americas and in southern Africa where female-headed households are well known, if often poorly understood: specifically, the United States (Anne Okongwu), Jamaica (Deborah D'Amico), Curaçao (Eva Abraham), Brazil and Colombia (Mary Garcia Castro), and Mozambique and Malawi (Nana Apeadu). The remaining chapters deal with the Middle East and South Asia: specifically, Egypt (Lucie Wood Saunders and Sohair Mehanna), India (Joan Mencher), and Bangladesh (Mahmuda Islam). Little has been written about female-headed and female-supported households in these last areas, in part because of their lower frequency; they represent 15 percent of all households in Bangladesh (p. 235) as compared with over 40 percent in some areas of the Caribbean (p. 138). In terms of sheer numbers, however, South Asia may well surpass other regions: Joan Mencher estimates that there are about 20 million female-headed households in India (p. 215), with 60 million people living in them (p. 204).

The contributors challenge many of the assumptions about female-headed and female-supported households that abound in the scholarly literature as well as in the public mind. They show that women become household heads not only by default but sometimes by choice; that some children may be better off in female-headed households (because a larger proportion of household income is spent on providing for children's basic needs); that the definition of headship is often problematic, and the term

"female-headed households," as commonly used, masks enormous variation in composition, functioning, and economic and social circumstances. While it is well known that a disproportionate number of female-headed/female-supported households are poor, many chapters document the myriad social (as well as economic) constraints with which women must contend. Even those who are not poor often encounter daunting problems as, for example, they try to represent their households in domains that are culturally defined as male. The book's dedication is quite apt: "To all the women struggling to maintain female-headed households." ■

Women, Education, and Family Structure in India. Carol Chapnick Mukhopadhyay and Susan Seymour, eds. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994. 246 pp.

KAREN LEONARD

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This worthy book makes two points: that education for women in South Asia is undertaken only with the support of the "patrifocal family system and ideology," and that such education can challenge that same system and ideology. The editors hope for the latter, and some of the findings reported in this volume do point in that direction.

The editors emphasize the importance of microethnographic, comparative, and historical work to understand the linkages between women's participation in the public domain of education and the private world of kinship and family. Contending that little research has been done on these linkages, they open with an extended discussion of their thesis and an overview of the subsequent chapters. The statistical data used are from the 1981 census, with a few figures from 1986 and 1987; it would have been useful, and it probably was possible, to update with 1991 census figures before publication. Two revised chapters from books published in 1988 follow to provide background: the first, by Karuna Chanana, covers social reform and women's education in pre-independence India, while the second, by Malavika Karlekar, covers women's nature and education in Bengal. Anthropological research reports by Steve Derne and Carol Mukhopadhyay come next. Derne interviewed 49 urban upper-caste Hindu merchants of Benares in 1986-87 and shows how fathers' concerns about arranging their daughters' marriages limit women's educational levels. Here, education for women is making some gains, but men still determine its level, and the patrifocal system is not really being challenged. Mukhopadhyay's 1988-89 research on women's underrepresentation in engineering and science in India shows why these specialties present special problems for the marriageability of women. Yet her figures show dramatic recent rises in female enrollment in these and related

areas in India, and she does not make comparisons with the United States, where women are even more underrepresented in these fields, though a different family system and ideology prevail.

The next three chapters present microethnographic, longitudinal, comparative research. Sylvia Vatuk's work on women's education in one South Indian Muslim family (*khandan*) is based on unusually rich family records. The family was associated both with the Nawab of Arcot and the Nizam of Hyderabad, and Vatuk follows the educational trajectories for both men and women from the late 19th century to the present. Women in this Muslim family were traditionally literate, educated at home; daughters began receiving formal schooling in English and Urdu outside the home from 1915 on, and a solidary "women's society" within the family provided essential support for this. Cohort analysis shows that significant and rising proportions of educated women worked outside the home, and that a rising age at marriage, rising numbers of never-married women, a decline in the observance of purdah, and increases in family exogamy and overseas migration accompanied the growth of women's education. Vatuk's thoughtful analysis makes an outstanding contribution to the volume.

Susan Seymour's comparative study of 24 households in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, over 25 years shows significant changes with respect to education and marriage, changes that vary depending on residence in the Old Town or New Capital and on caste and class status. The sample is small, but in the class-based system of the New Capital setting, she found dramatic rises in the age of marriage, the rate of employment for educated women, and intrafamilial tensions leading to neolocal residence, separation, or divorce. Helen Ullrich's study of Havik Brahmins in a multicaste village in Karnataka covers the same time span and utilizes questionnaires and interviews with 79 men and 45 women. She found increased age at marriage, increased female independence and assertiveness in all areas including marriage, introduction of the dowry system, and neolocal residence after marriage. Some of the changes clearly erode patriarchal authority, yet she concludes that patrifocal ideology can still be maintained by fathers who encourage education and continue to arrange marriages for their daughters.

The final chapter, again by Susan Seymour, reports on an Asian Women's Institute (AWI) joint research project initiated in 1982 to investigate the effects of maternal employment upon daughters' aspirations. Samples of nearly one hundred students from four women's colleges in India and Pakistan produced survey findings that high levels of aspirations were not correlated with maternal employment, that students had a wider variety of career interests than their mothers, and that a majority evaluated work as of comparable or greater importance than marriage. Students in Pakistan were similar to the Indian

students save in desired family size, preference for sons, and ranking on a "patrifocal values" scale. Noting that these students had been receiving Western-style education in Christian-founded schools that had stressed autonomous decision making and concern with the individual, Seymour did find that autonomous decision making was applied to marriage, and she comments that parent selection of spouses perpetuates the patrifocal family system, and, in India, the caste system.

The volume, particularly those chapters that present historical, microethnographic, and comparative analyses, contributes much to our knowledge of the interrelationships between education for women and family decision making in the elite levels of South Asian society. ■

Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women. Jeanette Rodriguez. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994. xxxiii + 227 pp., photographs, figures, notes, bibliography, index.

JOSÉ E. LIMÓN
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Rodriguez deserves praise and the blessing of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* for making this good book available to scholars of women's culture, Mexican-American society, Mexico, theology, and anthropology. Each of these audiences and the general public will derive great profit from its reading. First among its several virtues is the clear and simple, but deeply fundamental, line of inquiry it proposes. Rodriguez wants to find out—empirically—how and in what terms do ordinary, which is to say nonelite (more on this later), Mexican-American women experience greater Mexico's most famous religious symbol. Notwithstanding an enormous amount of literature on this subject, it seems that no one else has really sought to ask this of such a sector of society either in the United States or in Mexico. Even the outstanding benchmark work of Eric Wolf and Victor and Edith Turner operated at a more distanced level of inquiry and interpretation. Rodriguez reports on this specific empirical inquiry among "acculturated" women; but before getting there, she does a marvelous job of contextualizing and enriching her contemporaneous inquiry with a thorough review of the historical literature on Our Lady of Guadalupe including two engaging discussions, one a close reading of the textualizations of the stories of Juan Diego's encounter with Guadalupe (the often forgotten *man* in most discussions), the other a review of the technical literature on the physical analysis of the actual image that was handed down in tradition (chapters 1 through 3). These findings, chiefly the empowering historical significance of Our Lady of Guadalupe for the marginalized in Mexico, will then empower her interpretation of the symbol's significance for contemporary women. In counterresponse to much social