

religious found itself both restrained from entering on an equal footing a field that was not its own and working simultaneously on the consolidation of the regime (the price of institutional survival) and on its destruction, as a vector of disalienation, detotalization, and desovietization (the price of safeguarding its identity)."

As Hank Johnston notes, however, the relationship between the state and the national church varies, depending on historical, geopolitical, and security factors; regime ideology; and control of the local population. He emphasizes that there is no linear relationship between the freedom given to the national church and its affinity with nationalist causes. Church collaboration or complicity with the regime thus has different implications in different cultural contexts — in Armenia, for example, Johnston observes that the church's complicity with the regime did not damage its legitimacy among the population. On the other hand, Natalia Dinello's analysis of Russian public opinion data suggests that "the only institution that inspired considerable trust on the eve of the breakdown of the Soviet Union was the Russian Orthodox Church," a finding she attributes to the fact that "the church was neither involved in the establishment of the Soviet regime nor held responsible for the failures of perestroika."

Similarly, the impact of the collapse of Soviet Communism on religious revitalization varies across different societal contexts, a point stressed by several of the contributors (see especially the chapters by Irena Borowik, Luigi Tomasi, and Ivan Varga). A complicating factor shaping the cultural strength of religious institutions in the postcommunist era is their organizational adaptability to broader intrainstitutional dynamics. Thus Catholic churches in eastern Europe must now confront the challenge of cultural openness articulated 30 years ago by Vatican II (see Varga), while reunited Evangelical German churches must adjust administratively to one another (see Beckley, Chalfant, and Johnson); furthermore, both the Evangelical German Church and the Slovak Evangelical Church (see Gluchman) must carve out a new, morally authoritative identity.

Finally, although religion may well have lost some of its power to enchant, all the essays in this volume serve as reminders that religion continues to provide institutions and social movements with a rich resource and an anchor for culturally contested symbols and meanings. This function is perhaps expressed most concretely by the Bosnian-Croat conflict over "ownership" of Medjugorje, the site of a populist Catholic shrine located in Bosnia-Herzegovina (see Markle and McCrea). This book is a valuable contribution not just to students interested in eastern Europe or religion but to anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the multifaceted ways in which culture both drives and constrains social and political action.

**Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era.**

*Edited by Deborah Davis and Stevan Harrell.* University of California Press, 1993. 370 pp. Cloth, \$55.00; paper, \$17.00.

*Reviewer: YU XIE, University of Michigan*

This valuable volume includes contributions from five sociologists, five anthropologists, and a psychiatrist. Pooling fresh empirical results from ten independent research projects conducted in different locales in China, the book provides the

latest evidence on recent changes in the contemporary Chinese family and their implications. Written for a broad audience, both China specialists and social scientists with an interest in the family will find it valuable.

Although the essays in this book were first presented at a conference, they are not part of a single, organized research effort. Methods, data sources, and field locations vary greatly. However, Deborah Davis and Stevan Harrell have done a fine job of keeping a coherent focus throughout the volume. Specifically, the book addresses the following question: What are the consequences for the family of the rapid political, social, and demographic changes in China that began in 1978 and continue today in full force? In their introductory essay, Davis and Harrell provide a good historical background and set up a broad conceptual framework for later chapters that recognizes cultural, demographic, economic, and political forces at work and their interplays in affecting processes related to such family outcomes as marriage, childbearing, and caring for dependents.

A review chapter by Jonathan Unger on urban families is followed by ten remaining chapters that are all based on original research on a variety of topics in different settings. There are three chapters on household structure, by Davis (in Shanghai), Harrell (in rural Sichuan), and Graham E. Johnson (in rural Guangdong); three on marriage, by Mark Selden (in rural Hebei), Helen F. Siu (in rural Guangdong), and Martin King Whyte (in Chengdu); two on childbearing, by Susan Greenhalgh (in rural Shaanxi) and Hill Gates (in Taipei and Chengdu); one on caring for family members with schizophrenia, by Michael R. Phillips (in various cities); and one on caring for the elderly, by Charlotte Ikels (in Guangzhou).

In general, the empirical work is well executed and the associated interpretations well thought out. The only problematic essay is the one by Gates on birth limitation among urban capital-owning women. Her thesis is basically Marxian; she argues that among petty-capitalist women the power derived from owning capital positions them to determine their own destiny by limiting their fertility. Her evidence, however, is weak and inconclusive. The data she uses from her interviews with small groups of women do not rule out alternative explanations. For example, economists have long argued that a higher earning capacity increases women's opportunity cost for childbearing; furthermore, the modernization perspective predicts that better-educated women tend to be more in control of their childbearing decisions and that they have lower fertility rates. That is to say, the lower fertility levels that Gates observed among capital-owning women may have had nothing to do with their ownership of the means of production. Gates's tendency to twist evidence to fit her argument is apparent in her statement that "life expectancies for Chinese women were lower than those for men," for which she provides no historical context, leading readers to believe that her remark applies to the post-Mao period. I consulted her source and found that since the 1960s life expectancies for Chinese women have been consistently higher than those for men.

All of the authors base their research on relatively small samples (between 100 and 1,000 cases) that each drew from local communities, which is somewhat surprising as well as puzzling. Why not have made use of existing large-scale national data sources? For example, high-quality unit-record data from the 1982 Chinese census have been available for some time and could have been used by the authors. A few large fertility surveys are also available. While there might be

a subdisciplinary culture opposed to the use of secondary data among China specialists, I see no justification for such opposition. From a statistical point of view, more information should be no worse than less information. In the long run, it is important that China specialists begin to share data and become accustomed to secondary data analyses if they wish to make cumulative progress.

**Voicing Social Concern.**

By Otto N. Larsen. University Press of America, 1994. 306 pp. \$32.50.

Reviewer: KAREN A. CERULO, Rutgers University

The traditional publication forum for sociologists holds little opportunity for the placement of essays and commentaries. The professional journals are almost solely restricted to complex theoretical treatises or systematic empirical research. Few homes are provided for pieces that encourage the sociological eye to focus and thoughtfully speculate on the emerging patterns, current events, or long-term trends that constitute our social worlds. Such a glaring gap in the literature makes the appearance of *Voicing Social Concern* especially valuable. Within its pages readers will find 33 considered and often provocative commentaries offered by well-known scholar Otto N. Larsen.

These essays were originally presented as talks during Larsen's worldwide travels. They span a 40-year period and together address a wide variety of topics, including censorship, human relations, innovation and productivity, media violence, political elections, pornography, and the future of sociology. They are straightforward, clear, and void of professional jargon. Indeed, in the author's own words, they represent and attempt to "convert research ideas into a pertinent message of interest to intelligent people beyond those regularly met in a circle of peers with technical specialties."

Those looking for in-depth treatment or complex theoretical excursions will be disappointed by the volume. But those searching for ways to jump-start critical thinking will find it a useful tool. Despite the broad time period from which the writings are drawn, Larsen's essays raise fresh, insightful questions on currently pressing issues. For example, even though his essay on the effectiveness of communication, "Trying to Be Effective — Vying to Be Successful," is over 30 years old, the issues Larson probes remain at the heart of cultural sociology and communication discourse. In some cases the essays exemplify the intellectual creativity generated when one merges nontraditional "data" with key sociological concerns. "Comic Books and Creative Leisure" provides one such illustration. And often these commentaries afford the opportunity to retrace thinking on key issues such as pornography, sex, violence, and sociology itself. In so doing, Larsen's work provides a basis by which to enhance the fruits of future action.

Both the content and style of this book make it suitable for advanced undergraduate courses as well as graduate seminar classes. In each of these arenas the Larsen essays could easily serve as an entree to more in-depth treatments of the matters at hand. And whether one agrees or disagrees with Larsen's views, *Voicing Social Concern* is sufficiently engaging to capture the reader and spark subsequent meaningful discussion.