problems in traveling were vividly recaptured by his accounts of driving in the swampy terrain. My vehicle too had to be pushed and pried out of the muck more than once. It is also interesting to have a document by a federal agent that is so revealing, not only of his reactions to his job, but also of his total inexperience and training for such a position. The primary value of this work for the student lies in the personal nature of these revelations.

Merwyn S. Garbarino
University of Illinois at Chicago
Circle Campus

Women in Navajo Society. By Ruth Roessel. Rough Rock, Navajo Nation, Arizona: Navajo Resource Center, 1981. 184 pp. $15.00 Cloth.

Ruth Roessel has done a valuable service in bringing together in one volume an assortment of materials which bear on being female and Navajo. Part I reviews past publications on the subject. Part II begins with the mythic past when various Holy People were on the earth and sets forth instructions on child-rearing and marriage which were given at that time; it includes a section on Changing Woman, probably the single most important supernatural being in Navajo culture. The remaining chapters in Part II set forth in some detail the roles and associated ideal behavior of traditional Navajo women, from marriage to food and its preparation, to participation in curing rituals and in politics. A recounting of some of the highlights of the author's life and her summary chapter, "My Philosophy," are in Part III. The book is illustrated by just over one hundred black-and-white photographs and numerous sketches.

It seems fair to review the book according to the criteria Roessel used in her review of the literature in Part I. Her approval is accorded those whose "writing and research are primarily designed to assist, benefit or be used by the Navajos" rather than those whose writing "is mainly aimed at their profession and for 'understanding of a general order' " (31). Thus she uses twenty-six photographs of her daughter's *Kinaalda*, or puberty ceremony, while the book *Kinaalda* by a female Anglo-American anthropologist (Charlotte Frisbie, 1967), which contains fifteen pictures of the ceremony, draws the threat that "The desire by anthropol-

ogists to record and photograph ceremonies ultimately may result in the refusal by the Navajos to allow such interference" (21). Roessel does not mention the extremely valuable and interesting life history by the Navajo woman Irene Stewart (1980), or possibly it was not yet available; Stewart's book contains three pictures taken at a 1956 *Kinaalda*, apparently by Franciscan Fathers.

It is one thing for Roessel to reproach anthropologists; it is very much another matter for her to exhort Navajo women to save themselves and the whole Navajo Nation by becoming the traditionals their mothers' mothers were, and which Roessel none too subtly suggests she is. It is the "feminist Ghost Dance" message, however, that is a central message of the book. It is rather horrifying to have this message addressed to women—some of whom are in very deep, real pain—whose access to traditional Navajo life is irrevocably blocked and whose pain is caused, or at least exacerbated, by this irrevocable fact. Such women have told Roessel

> My children don't even listen to me and they just talk back and make fun of me when I tell them to do something. It's impossible to reach the children, and I don't know what is going to happen. (77)

and

> Our children . . . are too far ahead of us, and they don't listen to us anymore. What is causing this ever-increasing distance between our children and ourselves? . . . Why are our children so different? Why don't they listen to us? (76)

Roessel answers that parents, grandparents and other relatives must teach these children (176), but of course teaching children who will not listen is a great part of the problem of the transmission of culture, as the women have just told her. It is difficult to see how Roessel's harsh words meet her criteria or to see how what she writes will in fact assist and benefit these Navajo women:

> Today, we find many educated and articulate women who do not believe and do not know their own culture. These individuals are a disgrace to the tradition of Changing Woman as it applies to the traditional role

> of prestige and respect which Navajo women should enjoy in Navajo society. (125)

Roessel admits that rapid change is the order today and that many children will not have the same experience she did of carrying water in buckets and herding sheep, learning from the latter "independence, strength and patience as I took care of them." (176) She is sure, however, that "we still can be Navajos. In Anglo schools children are taught the pioneers. Many children have learned to be proud of these independent people." (176)

Readers looking for ethnographic data on the equal or higher status of women in Navajo culture will find it neither in Roessel's data nor in her own perceptions. She wants to stress the frequently enviable status of traditional Navajo women in order to exhort present-day Navajo women to strive for it, but she also stresses the desirability of following the precepts she quotes so approvingly from *Fascinating Womanhood* (Andelin, 1975):

> A man wants a woman who will place him at the top of her priority list—not second, but first. He wants to be the kingpin around which all other activities of her life revolve. (52)
>
> We, as Navajo women, often drive our husbands either out of the home or to the bottle because we do not understand and love them and do not make them No. 1 in our lives. (54)

The acceptance of being No. 2 is desirable beyond the home as well. In tribal politics Navajo women, who are characterized as knowledgeable and traditional, are said to

> . . . believe that for a Navajo woman to become Chairman [of the Tribal Council] the teachings and traditions of the Navajos would be violated. These Navajo women believe that it is proper and someday possible that Navajo women may occupy the position of Vice-Chairman. . . . (133)

Nonetheless, Roessel approves the "philosophy" of the Navajo Women's Association, founded in 1978, which

> specifically spells out the role of women to be one not occupying the top positions of leadership but, rather, standing behind the men. . . . The organization ex-

> plicitly recognizes the primary role that men play, with the secondary role going to women. (134)

Ironically, the one area in which Roessel approves equality is, for reasons of behavior she also approves, not one likely to be achieved. She writes,

> . . . there are no restrictions which limit or prevent a Navajo girl or woman from being a medicinewoman. Quite the contrary—it was the accepted practice for it to happen. . . ." (122)

She notes that Navajo women become herbalists (123) and diagnosticians (124) as well, but she does not mention that most herbalists and diagnosticians are female while the majority of the higher status medicine men or singers are male. Alice Kehoe has noted the same imbalance for the Cree:

> Women are not seen in the role of priest-shaman, but only as herbalists, a part-time occupation that can be managed in the brief periods between household tasks, or late in life as lesser shamans. ("The Metonymic Pole and Social Roles," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 1973:270)

This is not to dispute Roessel's assertion that Navajo women can become prestigious singers, but rather to point out that, following her own concerns that women place their families first, the greater number of medicine men will continue to be male while women will continue to fill the secondary, albeit necessary and desirable, roles of herbalist and diagnostician.

We can be grateful that Roessel has both knowledge of Navajo traditions and willingness to share that knowledge, and we must agree with her that "Any direct benefit that the Navajos can obtain or receive from writing about the Navajo people will be increasingly important in the future." (31) Given that in very truth we are all one, the benefit will be in fact to all human beings as more Navajos write about Navajos. Fruitful regard and sharing are hampered rather than enhanced, however, by cries of Disgrace! and Shame! It is wisdom still, before exhorting our sister to do and be as we are, to walk the proverbial mile in her moccasins.

Joyce Griffen
Northern Arizona University