Global Perspectives on the United States: A Nation By Nation Survey (Review)

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reference titles that deal with modern social issues: abortion, alcoholism, child abuse, controlled substances, etc. Though it is unique as a single-volume subject encyclopedia on the topic, numerous other titles include some coverage of domestic violence. Is there something about this that makes it stand out and, more specifically, makes it worth the purchase price?

The 138 A–Z entries fall into seven categories, including “Child Abuse and Elder Abuse,” “Domestic Violence and the Law,” and several others that one might expect from a volume such as this. The category that sets this effort apart from what already exists in the literature is “Cross-Cultural and Religious Perspectives.” Not only are there articles on particular American groups (for example, African Americans) and their cultural attitudes with regard to domestic violence but non-American perspectives on domestic violence and its legal implications are presented in several entries on Africa as well as entries on Greece, Spain, and other countries. Also covered are attitudes toward domestic violence from some major religious groups, such as in the entry Qur’anic perspectives on wife abuse. The cross-cultural and multicultural focus of these articles is one of the encyclopedia’s strengths. Another category worth noting is “Understudied Areas within Domestic Violence Research,” most of which have to do with nontraditional relationships. Examples include Caregiver violence against people with disabilities, Lesbian battering, and Male victims of domestic violence and reasons they stay with their abusers.

Each article is several pages long, with cross-references to other articles in the volume and with substantial bibliographies. The majority of contributors have an academic affiliation, some from foreign universities. There is a thorough and comprehensive index. Academic libraries with a focus on social sciences and large public libraries with substantial social-sciences collections will want to give this volume serious consideration. —Damie Hoover

Ed. by Daniel A. Stout.
2007. 467p. illus. Routledge, $150
(9780415969468). 201.

The intended audience for this work, part of the Routledge Encyclopedias of Religion and Society series, is university students, journalists, and “theorists, or those seeking a deeper more thorough examination of religion and communication.” The encyclopedia attempts to bridge the gap that exists between communication theory and anthropology, psychology, sociology, and other disciplines that study religion. To accomplish its goal, it examines such issues as individual communication with deity, the communication aspects of ritual, and the ways in which media have affected religious culture.

Each of the 124 articles fits into one of 5 broad topic areas: “Alternative Religious Movements,” “Forms of Communication and Media,” “Historical Periods,” “Key Concepts,” and “Religious Traditions.” Entry topics range widely; examples include Baha’i, Humor and laughter, Jihad, Journalism, Native American religion, Profane communication, Sports, and Wicca. The article Body decoration is fairly typical. Continuing over 5 clearly written pages, it explains body decoration in the context of religious history and experience, describes its forms and patterns, and examines its significance as expressed in rites of passage, rituals, festivals, marriage ceremonies, and death. Occasionally, entries include brief sections of primary source material. For example, Libraries includes the mission statement of the American Theological Library Association. Entries are accompanied by lists of additional readings and a small number of black-and-white photos.

This is a fine example of a single-volume subject encyclopedia. Furthermore, it does an excellent job treating a highly multidisciplinary topic. It is a recommended purchase for collections that support research on the topic. —Art A. Lichtenstein

Encyclopedia of the Antarctic.
Ed. by Beau Riffenburgh.
2v. 2007. 1,146p. illus. Routledge, $425
(9780415970242). 998.

Antarctica is defined politically by the Antarctic Treaty as all areas south of 60 degrees S latitude. Scholars generally consider the boundary to be the Polar Front, an irregularly located current in the Southern Ocean where cold waters meet the warmer waters of the southern Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific oceans. The Encyclopedia of the Antarctic covers these areas as well as a few related geographic locations. Editor Riffenburgh is affiliated with the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge. The encyclopedia follows Encyclopedia of the Arctic, published by Routledge in 2004.

The detail of coverage is amazing. The nearly 500 articles range from 300 to 6,000 words and cover Antarctic subjects from islands of the region to various animal life, from plankton to sea mammals. Geologic articles on topics such as fossils, plate tectonics, and volcanoes explore the ties the continent has to the rest of the planet. Countries having Antarctic research stations—for instance, Brazil, Finland, and South Africa—each have a separate entry describing the station, its location, and type of research. Polar exploration is heavily represented through biographical...