

REVIEW ESSAY

Anthropology

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Anthropologists have continued to explore the variety in women's roles in our own and other cultures. As more data are published, the major theoretical issues are becoming clarified, while the utility of various frameworks for analysis are undergoing scrutiny.¹ Since 1974, there have been a number of new and important publications, including two new collections, three general books, and a number of special issues of journals or collected conference papers. There have been and will be several collections or special monographs devoted to the role of women in particular geographic or cultural areas (China, the Middle East, Africa, Iberia), as well as individual case studies. Finally, special sessions such as those at the American Anthropological Association, the Middle Eastern Studies Association, and the Latin American Studies Association meetings have been devoted to aspects of women's roles.

In these new materials I see four trends: (1) the clarification of several different positions surrounding the issue of women's universal subordination versus the existence of sexual equality in some kinds of societies; (2) the search for an appropriate cross-cultural framework for

1. This review takes a narrower focus on the anthropological literature than the 1974 *Signs* anthropology review, concentrating on theoretical issues within social-cultural anthropology and the study of sex roles (i.e., topics dealing with economics, politics, social organization, and cultural symbolism as they relate to the understanding of women's roles). In cutting the manuscript, many items had to be eliminated, making the review much less comprehensive than was originally planned.

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the analysis of sex roles and women's status; (3) a focus on regional or continental studies, often in an interdisciplinary context, in order to engage in "controlled comparison" of women's roles within an area under the same kinds of cultural and historical influences; and (4) a more intense awareness of the need to analyze change, both historical and contemporary, as evidenced in increasing attention to the effects of colonialism on women's position, the importance of migration in changing family and women's situations, and the impact of "modernization" and "development" (emanating from the capitalist West) and revolution (often emanating from specifically socialist struggles) on women's position.

Subordination or Inequality: How Do We Know?

The issue of whether or not there is and always has been universal sexual asymmetry or the subordination of women is far from resolved. This issue was clearly set forth in several articles in *Women, Culture and Society* which argued that in every known culture women are considered in some way inferior to men. This inferiority occurs: (1) in terms of cultural evaluations where women's activities, personalities, and bodily processes are seen as less important, incomplete, or polluting; and (2) in terms of political power, where women are denied access to areas of public decision making open to men. Rosaldo, Chodorow, and Ortner² all argue that women's domestic role as mother (socially defined and not simply determined by biology) accounts for this subordination. Rosaldo suggests that women's role as mother and primary socializer of children in turn sets up the possibility of a distinction between a domestic and a public sphere, the former the province of women, the latter of men.

A real problem in clarifying this issue is that of definition. Anthropologists still tend to use words like "asymmetry," "subordination," "equality," "status," and "power" imprecisely. A situation of sexual equality would be one in which all men and women (regardless of social group or strata) could and actually did make decisions over the same range of activities and people, that is, exercise the same kinds of control. Subordination of women or sexual inequality would be a situation where this was not the case, where there were some decisions which women could not and did not make, some activities from which they were excluded, and some resources which they did not control. In a society where there is hierarchy, rank, or a system of stratified groups, some

2. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," pp. 17-42; Nancy Chodorow, "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," pp. 43-66; Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" pp. 67-89; all in *Woman, Culture and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974).

men usually dominate over other men and all women. Generally, the more complex the society, the more heterosexual subgroups are differentiated from each other and, in addition, women in each group, even the dominant ones, are subordinate to their own men.

Debate on the issue of equality versus subordination, which had begun before the publication of *Woman, Culture and Society*, has largely centered on the interpretation of the hunter-gatherer material. In these small-scale band societies, many feel, a case can be made for sexual equality. On the other hand, if these societies are not egalitarian, then more highly stratified, complex societies are unlikely to be, thus strengthening the case for universal subordination.

There seem to be several positions now emerging. The first, while not necessarily arguing that women in every culture are subordinated, takes the position that inequality where it exists can be explained in part by biological differences between the sexes. This rejects the oversimplified statements and uncritical use of biological evidence found in the writings of Tiger and Goldberg,³ but argues that there are significant biological differences and that this evidence must be carefully scrutinized. For example, Draper, in a series of articles about !Kung women and differential sex-role socialization,⁴ takes the position that "the sexes begin life with different repertoires of response potential and that in reaction to some categories of stimuli, at least, the sexes will respond differentially."⁵ Data on newborns in our own society suggest that females do more spontaneous smiling, have longer attention spans, are more attentive to human faces, and acquire language more quickly than males. Draper feels that these differences are biological and may be related to the importance of fetal hormones in "pre-programming" the brain to respond differentially to certain kinds of stimuli. Thus females start out with certain responses making them more sensitive to social cues. This in turn means that they will experience the socialization techniques of their mothers in a more intense, consistent, and thorough manner than will males.⁶

3. Lionel Tiger, *Men in Groups* (New York: Random House, 1969); Steven Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1973).

4. Pat Draper, "!Kung Women: Contrasts in Sexual Egalitarianism in Foraging and Sedentary Contexts," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975); "Cultural Pressure on Sex Difference," *American Ethnologist* 2, no. 4 (November 1975): 602-15; "Sex Differences in Cognitive Styles: Socialization and Constitutional Variables," in *Women in Schools and Society*, ed. Billye Y. S. Fogleman and Ann Sigrid Nihlen, *Council on Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (special issue) 6, no. 3 (August 1975): 3-6; and "Social and Economic Constraints on Child Life among the !Kung," in *Kalahari Hunter Gatherers*, ed. R. B. Lee and Irven DeVore (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

5. Draper, "Cultural Pressure on Sex Differences," p. 602.

6. Draper, "Sex Differences in Cognitive Styles: Socialization and Constitutional Variables," p. 3.

Draper has used the same kind of analysis in exploring differences among !Kung in the foraging context and in recently sedentized populations. In hunting-gathering groups !Kung girls have a more restricted spatial range, value adult company, and are more sensitive to social cues from adults, but these sex differences are not exploited, and there is little sex-role differentiation. As the !Kung have become sedentized, little girls become "ready targets for heightened pressure for cooperation, errand running, and child tending."⁷

Draper argues that the foraging !Kung are a sexually egalitarian society and that male tendencies for aggression and leadership are damped down by the ecological and structural arrangements of !Kung hunting and gathering. In the new sedentary contexts women become more homebound. Men take over political decision making. There is more investment in property, increasing differences in wealth, and the beginning of male ranking. In other words, the !Kung are egalitarian because they are a special case where the *lack* of firm leadership roles, the *lack* of approved aggressive outlets or dominance behavior, and the *lack* of warfare has meant that men do not assume the dominant roles that would result from their "natural" biological repertoire of behavior.

Although Draper's arguments are the most carefully worked out to date, I see many difficulties in (1) generalizing from tentative hormonal evidence and some primate experiments, (2) relying on research on neonates and young children in our own culture, and (3) utilizing psychological data produced in experimental settings without regard to observations of the social context in which these are learned (e.g., at home, in schools, from parents, and from peers). In part the argument depends on marshaling evidence from a variety of experimental situations involving different populations and extremely diverse kinds of evidence, all of which are pieced together to suggest that there are hormonally based differences according to sex in our area of behavior. As an anthropologist, I feel this approach has the liabilities of much of the sex-role work in psychology: lack of attention to cultural meanings attached to behaviors and to social situations and structure which may teach little boys and girls different responses. Draper herself is aware of these difficulties and advocates additional cross-cultural research in different behavioral settings as a way of providing better support for her generalizations. Nevertheless, her data on differences between foraging !Kung boys and girls can possibly be explained by economic and social inequalities in !Kung life and by the fact that women are the primary socializers of children. In other words, the !Kung may not be as egalitarian as Draper suggests, and these inequalities could be explained by economic or social factors without resorting to biological explanations.

7. Draper, "Cultural Pressure on Sex Differences," p. 604.

A second position is that taken by Schlegel, Briggs, Matthiasson, and others who present what I call the "complementary but equal" argument. Schlegel suggests, for example, that the Hopi are an egalitarian society in which male power to control their persons, property, or activities may extend over a different sphere but is *no greater* than women's control over their persons, property and activity.⁸ Thus, the areas in which women exert dominance are perceived by the Hopi, according to Schlegel, as equally important as those areas controlled by men. Similarly, using data from a hunting-fishing population, the Eskimo, Briggs characterizes male and female roles as interdependent. Men are first and foremost hunters, while women are responsible for the preparation of hides and meat, sewing, child care, and other household tasks. Women do envy men's ability to travel, hunt, and make political decisions but are aware that these activities require endurance and strength in harsh conditions, while political decision making involves making decisions in a society which values restraint and *not* imposing one's will on others.⁹

Matthiasson, in her introduction to *Many Sisters*, accepts Briggs's analysis of the Eskimo and classifies them as a "complementary society" in which "women are valued for themselves and the contributions they make to society. In these societies, women are neither inferior nor superior to men, merely different."¹⁰ However, the Matthiasson approach focuses primarily on the authority and power women have in the household and skirts the issue of public power and influence. My feeling is that the category of "complementary society" is no more than a label for societies where anthropologists, on closer examination, find that women do and say more than we naively might have expected. A different interpretation of the evidence would lead one to argue that women are subordinate in both the Hopi and Eskimo cases.

For the Hopi, male control over male activities may be no greater than female control over the female sphere, but there is a sense in which male control is not only public but extends to the entire community. The Hopi political system is integrated with the religious one, which, despite the presence of three female sacred societies, is very much dominated by men. Women may keep the sacred bundles of their brothers and feed the Kachinas (masked figures representing the supernaturals), but they may not impersonate the gods themselves. Surely exclusion of the women from the Kachina cult and from participation in the most esoteric rites is crucial here. Feeding the supernaturals is one thing, but becoming sacred through ritual impersonation is another, since these

8. Alice Schlegel, "Women Anthropologists Look at Women," *Reviews in Anthropology* 1, no. 6 (November/December 1974): 553-60.

9. Jean Briggs, "Eskimo Women: Makers of Men," in *Many Sisters*, ed. Carolyn J. Matthiasson (New York: Free Press, 1975), pp. 261-304.

10. Matthiasson, p. xviii.

acts insure good crops and long life for the entire population. Female activities are important, but male control of agricultural activities (though on their wife's clan land) and of the politicoreligious system seems to add up to more pervasive male decision making over more areas of Hopi life.

Briggs's statements on Eskimo women and men focus on the complementary division of labor in the household but do not emphasize that men control the productive resources, while women process the objects that men obtain in the hunt. Friedl, for example, sees just these facts as the basis for finding male dominance and female submissiveness among the Eskimo.¹¹ Friedl emphasizes male command of meat distributions, male feuding and patterns of violence, wifely obedience to the husband's decisions, and male control over female sexuality (male rights to allocate female sexual favors, wife exchange, sexual assault, male jealousy over female adulterous exploits).

The "complementary but equal" position as exemplified by these three authors lacks a consistent treatment of the control of economic resources and how this translates into political decision making. There is a tendency to see male and female roles as a problem of value and worth, to focus on household units, and to downplay decisions made in a wider arena of activities.

The "complementary but equal" analysis of male-female roles is also part of the third position held by Leacock, Rohrlich-Leavitt, Nash, Sutton, Klein, and Sacks. These anthropologists emphasize the ways that colonialism and contact between Europeans and native peoples have transformed and undercut many native economies, in turn transforming the nature of sex roles. They also stress the impact of missionaries and teachers who imposed European notions of maleness and femaleness on native cosmologies and beliefs. Anthropologists (mainly male) have either been unaware of these imposed categories or have unconsciously used their own version of these European views in analysis and interpretation. For example, Leacock and Nash argue that Lévi-Straussian categories like "Nature" and "Culture" oversimplify and impose a dichotomous set of relationships on more complex cosmologies which use both male and female symbolism.¹² Rohrlich-Leavitt et al. feel that the bias of male anthropologists in interpreting women's roles among the Australian aborigines has been substantial.¹³ In contrast, these authors argue that monographs written by sympathetic female

11. Ernestine Friedl, *Women and Men: An Anthropologist's View* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975), pp. 39-45.

12. Eleanor Leacock and June Nash, "Ideologies of Sex: Archetypes and Stereotypes" (unpublished manuscript); available from Leacock, Department of Anthropology, City College, City University of New York, New York, New York 10031.

13. Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt, Barbara Sykes, and Elizabeth Weatherford, "Aboriginal Woman: Male and Female Anthropological Perspectives," in Reiter, ed., pp. 110-26.

anthropologists¹⁴ have achieved a more balanced perspective emphasizing women's economic roles (including the hunting of small animals), women's control over reproduction (including women's rituals), and their participation in marriage arrangements. These analysts see hunting-gathering and some tribal-level societies as possessing communal economies with no corporate control of economic resources, dispersed decision making, and interdependence of individuals (both men and women) and a concomitant emphasis on autonomy. The dichotomy between a domestic and public sphere does not hold for these groups, especially those with a foraging adaptation.¹⁵ Perhaps the best analysis of these kinds of societies at the economic level is still Sacks's reinterpretation of Engels.¹⁶ In these "communal economies" there was a division of labor by sex, but all production was of the same kind—"production for use." People worked for the communal household or clan rather than for individuals. Decision making, both economic and political, involved the equal participation of all members, men and women. Both sexes were social producers and equal members of the group.¹⁷ Leacock argues that similar patterns held for the Montagnais-Naskapi as they existed at contact,¹⁸ and Klein suggests a similar analysis for the Tlingit.¹⁹

There are several difficulties with this version of the "complementary but equal" position. First, I have difficulty accepting the interpretation of the ethnographic examples, especially the North American ones, the Iroquois, the Tlingit, and even the Naskapi. Certainly the European contact had a profound impact on these societies; even in interpreting the early sources we are dealing with societies that may have already been disrupted and transformed. On the one hand, nineteenth-century trade probably pushed the Tlingit toward a more stratified, male-oriented society, increasing the cultural emphasis on the potlatch. On the other hand, the impact of the fur trade on the Iroquois during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries probably strengthened women's position, their control over agriculture, and their input into political decision making. Finally, the fur trade may have changed the Naskapi

14. See, e.g., Phyllis Kaberry, *Aboriginal Woman: Sacred and Profane* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1939); Jane Goodale, *Tiwi Wives* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971).

15. Constance Sutton, Susan Makieskyl, Daisy Dwyer, and Laura Klein, "Women, Knowledge, and Power," in *Women Cross-culturally: Change and Challenge*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 581-600.

16. Karen Sacks, "Engels Revisited: Women, the Organization of Production, and Private Property," in Rosaldo and Lamphere, eds., pp. 207-28.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 208-9.

18. Eleanor Leacock, "Class, Commodity, and the Status of Women," in Rohrlich-Leavitt, ed., pp. 601-16.

19. Laura Klein, "Tlingit Women and Politics" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1975).

band system from an exogamous, matrilocal, flexible structure to an endogamous, more patrilocal one with considerable emphasis on the individual (male-inherited) trap line. However, the fur trade did not seem to have altered the dispersed nature of decision making, the emphasis on autonomy, and lack of rank and prestige hierarchies.²⁰ Thus, colonial contact may increase or decrease women's control over economic resources to give them greater or lesser access to political decision-making processes; the problem then becomes one of understanding how to interpret the data even for these relatively "early" situations.

This brings me to the second problem, women's role in decision-making systems which have been characterized as "dispersed" and even egalitarian. I think the qualities of these systems are correctly described (and are similar to decision-making procedures I have outlined for the Navajo),²¹ but I would hesitate to say that men and women participate in decision making in the same or in an equal way. In consensus or dispersed decision making, it is up to each individual to decide. Rather than *A* making a decision over *B* or a group of *B*'s, *A* indirectly lets *B* and *C* know his or her feelings on a matter and then indirectly gets a "reading" on their reactions and whether or not they will "go along." If so, *A* articulates a decision reached by group consensus. In hunter-gatherer societies, it is my impression that women have input into decisions, but they rarely are the "articulators" of decisions which involve the entire band, such as a decision to move camp, engage in a communal hunt, etc. Usually this role falls to a male, though older women are not entirely excluded. The lack of recognition of this "male bias" in the way decisions are made, even in these dispersed decision-making systems, is in my opinion one of the critical deficiencies of this version of the "complementary but equal" position.

A third point (also applicable to Briggs's analysis) is that these theorists do not see the *division of labor* as problematic in creating asymmetry and subordination. They accept the possibility that different productive and processing roles can be equal as long as they produce "use values" rather than exchange values. Finally, they do not work out an analysis of reproduction or what Rubin calls "the sex-gender system"²² and particularly ignore the role of marriage in creating inequality. Both the division of labor and marriage between families or kin

20. Eleanor Leacock, "Status among the Montagnais-Naskapi of Labrador," *Ethnohistory* 5, no. 3 (Summer 1958): 200-209; and "Matrilocality in a Simple Hunting Economy (Montagnais-Naskapi)," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1955): 31-47.

21. Louise Lamphere, "The Navajo Cultural System: An Analysis of Concepts of Cooperation and Autonomy and Their Relation to Gossip and Witchcraft," in *Apachean Culture History and Ethnology*, ed. Keith Basso and M. E. Opler, Anthropological Papers, no. 21 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1971).

22. Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women," in Reiter, ed. (n. 4), pp. 157-210.

groups (regulated by the incest taboo and rules about exogamy) are cultural universals which are now being explored in terms of their implications for female subordination. Both, I feel, are at the roots of sexual inequality, even in foraging societies, and need to be fully explored before we can accept the "complementary but equal" arguments.

The fourth and final position, which I have already mentioned, is the one argued by several contributors to *Woman, Culture and Society*. This position posits the universal subordination of women, but those who hold this point of view are beginning to reformulate the parameters of this subordination and suggest alternative explanations of its roots. These new approaches, found in a few suggestive articles, go a long way to clearing up and penetrating beyond the difficulties I find in the communal economy approach.

One kind of analysis centers on production, distribution, and exchange. Both Sanday and Friedl²³ have pointed to the fact that women not only need to contribute to production if they are to have power, but they need to maintain control over these resources and (as Friedl emphasizes) over the distribution of them outside the household or minimal family unit. But even these analyses assume that the division of labor is something natural and universal. Only a paper by Siskind has taken this division as problematic and as creating differences in access to resources which in turn necessitates exchange. In describing what she calls the "bifurcate mode of production" (basically two kinds of productive activities, one set allocated to men and the other to women), she points out that "given a division of labor, no one is able to be self-sustaining."²⁴ This sets up the necessity of exchange of the *objects* of the productive process (the berries, the game, or the fish) as well as the *means* for their production (i.e., the tools necessary to hunt and collect).

The objects, of course, may be exchanged between men and women at the point of being taken from their natural state (after the hunt or right from the basket of roots or berries) or at the end of a process whereby the animal or plant is transformed into a more edible form (by cooking, grinding, or drying) or a more usable form for clothing, shelter, or medicines (by tanning, drying, or curing). Men often enter into women's productive sphere: they assert a claim on their gathered products through producing the gathering nets or other tools which women use, while women, since they usually do not produce men's tools, can only have claims on men's products through giving men claims on their children (i.e., claims on their labor once they become productive adults).

The rules and social categories through which these exchanges take

23. Peggy Sanday, "Female Status in the Public Domain," in Rosaldo and Lamphere, eds. (n. 2), pp. 180-206; Friedl (n. 11), pp. 8-9.

24. Janet Siskind, "Kinship-Relations of Production" (unpublished manuscript); available from author, Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University, Newark, New Jersey 07102.

place are what anthropologists usually view as "kinship," a system which creates marriages and family units. Kinship in band-level societies is extremely flexible, but it is a system of rules which excludes some people from exchanges and includes others (e.g., narrows the exchange to the point that a !Kung woman brings in mangongo nuts for a particular man who stands in relationship of a "husband"). Kinship in this bifurcate mode of production also creates a distinction of older and younger as well as maintaining the distinction between male and female. Categories like "husband," "wife," "parent," "child," "brother," and "sister" are not natural categories but are created out of the laboring process and the resulting claims that individuals make on objects and tools (the means of production) and on the potential labor of others. Kinship organizes work and sex, production and reproduction.

Rubin makes several similar points in her paper, "The Traffic in Women." She sees the economic system even of band-level societies as analytically distinct from what she calls the "sex-gender system," yet each has "productive" and "reproductive" aspects. She views Lévi-Strauss's analysis of "the exchange of women" through marriage as a theory of sexual inequality. The necessity of this exchange is the division of labor itself; it ensures the union of men and women by making the smallest viable economic unit contain at least one man and one woman. Like Siskind, Rubin notes that the division of labor creates a reciprocal state of dependency between the sexes, but Rubin claims that it also exacerbates the biological differences between the sexes and thereby creates gender. The division of labor combined with the incest taboo means that women and men must minimally coexist in families and that the families need to exchange some of their members for opposite-sex partners found in other families. Rubin sees the subordination of women as critically summarized in marriage exchange. Following Lévi-Strauss, she feels that men acquire rights over women (e.g., their daughters, their sisters, their nieces) and give these rights over their labor, their sexuality, and their children to other men in exchange (often in a very indirect way) for "wives" for themselves or for valued goods. To the extent that women do not have control over the decision making involved in marriage and sexuality, they are subordinate.

These papers suggest new possibilities for assessing the question of sexual equality in band-level hunting-gathering societies. In the productive process itself, we need to look for inequities in the exchanges between men and women. If men can lay claim to female-gathered products by making tools for women, if men through the social distribution of meat can create more ties of obligation among men and women, and, finally, if men can make claims on the labor of sons and daughters which can in turn be exchanged through their marriages, then perhaps we can argue that men exercise greater decision-making "range" than do women. Women, of course, make their own exchanges and, especially in

hunting-gathering societies, are not “sitting idly by” waiting for men to gain a monopoly on life. Through foraging activities they bring in 60–80 percent of the diet, distribute it to their families (i.e., husbands and children), and perhaps to other relatives; they also participate in the marriage negotiations for their sons and daughters.

Then in what sense is there sexual subordination? I am impressed with Shostak’s analysis of !Kung women’s lives;²⁵ her accounts from informants about their marriages indicate that in the foraging context of twenty years ago, young girls were betrothed to older boys at a time when they were still prepubescent and would rather have remained playing in the bush. Although many of these early marriages break up, there is considerable pressure on the girl from her parents to accept the new responsibilities of cooking and gathering for her husband and pressure (and even aggressiveness) from the new husband to accept his sexual advances. It is the thirteen- to fourteen-year-old !Kung woman who is in the most vulnerable and unequal situation, and it is perhaps in the husband-wife pair bond that domination is a reality.

This brings us to the possibility of life cycles in decision-making ability. !Kung males achieve adulthood with marriage; the ability to hunt creates the possibility of gaining a wife. This, in turn, allows men to participate in meat exchanges, to become part of male hunting groups, to begin the process of acquiring knowledge, wisdom, and the characteristics of generosity and sharing. For women marriage means providing for a particular man, possibly accepting unwanted sexual advances, and beginning the process of building a network of social ties that may not range as widely as that of men nor be achieved until a more advanced age.

The relation of ideology and economy in differentiating men from women and infusing the cultural categories of “male” and “female” with differential value has also been discussed in a recent paper by Collier and Rosaldo.²⁶ They argue that the anthropologist’s model of Man the Hunter, long criticized as inadequately characterizing the economic realities of foraging and some horticultural societies, does summarize native conceptions of maleness as propagated by men and accepted by women. There is no fully elaborated ideology which emphasizes a distinctive woman’s nature or maternal role; instead, there is a celebration of men’s roles as warriors, hunters, and providers, a stress on the male contribution to reproduction, and an interest in flirtation and sex.²⁷ The

25. Marjorie Shostak, “A !Kung Woman’s Memories of Childhood,” in Lee and DeVore, eds. (n. 4).

26. Jane Fishburne Collier and Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, “Marriage, Motherhood, and Direct Exchange, Expressions of Male Dominance in ‘Egalitarian’ Societies” (paper presented at the American Anthropological Association meeting, San Francisco, December 1975).

27. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Man the Hunter ideology, as expressed in these cultures, sees marriage as necessary but as a process which creates autonomous adult men (those who can hunt, provide, and join men in "important" decisions or communal rituals) while it domesticates women (gives them greater responsibilities in gathering, processing, and child rearing and ties each woman to providing for one man). But the ideology also "miscasts" the relationships between the sexes as well as those between older and younger men. Typically, it sees the relationship between man and wife as an exchange of meat for sex,²⁸ when in reality women provide vegetable foods (even when meat is scarce), and both men and women enjoy sex. In addition, by placing value on hunting, violence, and even competition for women, this ideology motivates young men to become hunters, but it also "covers over" the authority of older men, which lies in the ability to articulate consensus, utilize the knowledge of kinship which comes with age, and become the repositories of the virtues of autonomy and generosity. In this view, sex-role ideology helps to summarize and reproduce a set of social relations based on already unequal tendencies within production, distribution, and the marital bond.

There are, of course, many unanswered questions in these first tentative attempts to analyze the division of labor, marriage relationships, and a supporting male-oriented ideology as fundamental in creating inequality between the sexes. No one has yet analyzed in sufficient detail the productive activities and resulting exchanges between men and women for one ethnographic case, such as the Eskimo or !Kung. No one has yet done a study of decision making in a hunter-gatherer group that would help us to relate control over meat and vegetable produce to the type of consensus decision making mentioned earlier. These kinds of detailed studies are necessary in order to weigh different kinds of evidence (economic, political, and ideological) and to put together a solid and convincing argument either for egalitarianism or the subordination of women in these small-scale societies. Finally, one would have to ask some questions about motherhood. Surely, childbearing and child rearing are important female activities which could be a liability or an asset, depending on point of view. Could socialization be considered a productive activity? If women invest so much time in child rearing, and if they stake out claims to their children's future productive labor, why are they willing to exchange these claims with men in return for something else? Why, when they retain some claim, are they willing to exchange their daughters for a son-in-law, pushing young girls into unequal relationships? Why, in the end, are they willing to "buy into" an ideology which elevates Man the Hunter, which values meat as "real food," and which mystifies the nature of male-female relationships as one of the exchange of meat for sex?

28. Siskind.

In other words, the issue of subordination versus sexual equality (in the sense of decision-making ability distributed equally across the sexes) is still unsettled. In order to pursue the issue, anthropologists need to get beyond the notion that hunting-gathering societies have “communal economies,” that they are characterized by consensus decision making, and that they have been transformed by colonialism. All these things are true, but we still have not verified or tested the possibility that inequality lies in the division of labor and the marital relationship created through exchange. We need more data, but we also need a better model of social structure, one that can put production, reproduction, and sex-role ideology together in a clear and consistent way.

Cross-cultural Frameworks

Collections of essays now being published, as well as recent textbooks, illustrate the need for better, more insightful frameworks for understanding women’s roles cross-culturally. In many ways, anthropologists have brought to the analysis of sex roles the theoretical perspectives and models of culture and society that they had already adopted through earlier training. Thus, Friedl writes from a “materialist” perspective,²⁹ and Martin and Voorhies in their text, *Female of the Species*, take a clearly ecological and evolutionary approach. Kessler’s book, *Women: An Anthropological View*, is more eclectic, using evolutionary categories in some chapters and organizing others around a functional approach. The major portion of the book includes case histories of women’s lives, simply presented as women speaking for themselves. Overall the book merely pulls together much of what has been published elsewhere, using a variety of approaches, but often substituting categories implied in chapter headings and subtitles for a clear and penetrating analysis. Matthiasson’s collection, *Many Sisters*, suffers from much the same difficulty: the use of a typology of societies in order to abstract comparisons in women’s roles, without a framework which concretely demonstrates just how women’s economic, domestic, and reproductive concerns and the structure of the larger society all fit together.

Although we have gained a good deal from a quasi-evolutionary framework, I feel it is time to break beyond these rather naive categories. We have come to think in terms of women in “gathering societies” and, for example, to compare their situation with a category like “peasant women” without even looking for the ways in which both types of women have been affected by the world market, the spread of health and educational facilities, and political policies of the nation-state.

29. Friedl (n. 11), p. 7.

Regional and Area Studies

In assessing the material on sexual egalitarianism and subordination, I have outlined where I think new and more interesting models will be forthcoming. However, we still need studies which deal more fully with the history of women's roles in other cultures, which provide a careful analysis of class differences as they affect women, and which examine the impact of colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism on women's work and home life. Such analyses are emerging from continental and regional studies.

For instance, in putting together a collection of articles on women in the Middle East, Beck and Keddi take a perspective which combines historical and anthropological approaches and focuses attention on the impact of external forces as these relate to the lives of women.³⁰ For some countries, we now have several monograph-length analyses, which in combination help us to assess the importance of history, region, class, family structure, and religious ideology in creating difference in women's roles. Maher's monograph on Morocco, for example, contains detailed information on women's work groups, female networks, marriage and divorce in a village setting and a semi-urban town, although the most interesting cases and important generalizations are buried in the middle of chapters and do not emerge with clarity.³¹ Mernissi's book focuses on Muslim concepts of female sexuality, contrasting traditional views with modern urban situations; she finds considerable "sexual anomie," a gap between the ideology of sexual segregation and the reality where Moroccan women are using male spaces, going without the veil, and making their own decisions.³² Finally, Fernea's chronicle of her family's experiences living on a crowded street in Marrakesh gives a rich account of women's lives which contextualizes many of the theoretical points made by other authors.³³

The literature on Latin America, like that on the Middle East, has continued to expand, with additional interest in professional women, female political figures, and domestic servants,³⁴ as well as new material

30. See Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Beyond the Veil: Women in the Middle East*. As the volume is still in press, I have not commented on the articles included in detail.

31. Vanessa Maher, *Women and Property in Morocco*, Cambridge Studies in Anthropology, no. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

32. Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil* (New York: Wiley, 1975), p. 51.

33. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, *A Street in Marrakech: A Personal Encounter with the Lives of Moroccan Women* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1975).

34. Nora Scott Kinzer, "Sociocultural Factors Mitigating Role Conflict of Buenos Aires Professional Women," and Elsa M. Chaney, "The Mobilization of Women: Three Societies," both in Rohrlich-Leavitt, ed. (n. 15), pp. 181-98 and 471-90, respectively; Margo L. Smith, "The Female Domestic Servant and Social Change: Lima, Peru," in Rohrlich-Leavitt, ed., pp. 163-80; Susan E. Brown, "Love Unites Them and Hunger Separates Them: Poor Women in the Dominican Republic," in Reiter, ed. (n. 4), pp.

on the lives of working-class women, and the effect of capitalist development on women's status.³⁵ Pescatello's new book, *Power and Pawn: The Female in Iberian Families, Societies, and Cultures*, presents an excellent overview of women in Latin cultures, Indian as well as mestizo, and how they were affected by Spanish and Portuguese contact.³⁶ She takes the controversial position that in nonmodern contexts, since the family is at the center of society and women are at the heart of the family, they hold important power. Those, like myself, who feel that power is primarily wielded in the public world will want a more convincing analysis of just how power within the family should be balanced against the overall picture of male dominance in a class-stratified society. Pescatello is sensitive to these issues, and the strength of her book lies in the presentation of historical material on women at all class levels and the impact of demographic variables on sex-role relationships. The literature on the possibilities of transforming sex roles has been enhanced by new material on Cuba, including Randall's portraits of *Cuban Women Now*.³⁷

A third area where studies of women's roles provide rich data, sensitive to historical period, political context, and social stratification, is the growing literature on prerevolutionary China, Taiwan, and the People's Republic. *Women in Chinese Society*, edited by Wolf and Witke,³⁸ gives a sense of the broad spectrum of women's lives in prerevolutionary China and Taiwan, while Sidel's books on the family, child care, and women, in combination with several important articles, emphasize both the great strides women have made since the Chinese revolution and the difficulties of transforming a patriarchal society into an egalitarian one.³⁹

The interdisciplinary efforts of anthropologists, historians, and others, as illustrated by the area collections and monographs, will, I hope, allow us to begin to build new frameworks which emphasize change rather than stasis and complex systems rather than isolated units.

322-31; Heleieth Ira Bongiovani Saffioti, "Female Labor and Capitalism in the United States and Brazil," in Rohlrlich-Leavitt, ed., pp. 59-94; and Anna Rubbo, "The Spread of Capitalism in Rural Colombia: Effects on Poor Women," in Reiter, ed., pp. 333-57.

35. Virve Piho, "Life and Labor of the Woman Textile Worker in Mexico City," in Rohlrlich-Leavitt, ed., pp. 191-245; and Ximena Bunster-Burotto, "Talking Pictures: Field Method and Visual Mode" (paper presented at the Wellesley Conference on Women and Development, Wellesley, Mass., June 2-6, 1976).

36. Ann Pescatello, ed., *Female and Male in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).

37. Margaret Randall, *Cuban Women Now* (Toronto: Women's Press & Dumont Press Graphix, 1974).

38. Margery Wolf and Roxane Witke, eds., *Women in Chinese Society* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975); for a review of this book, see Norma Diamond, *Signs* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 219-21.

39. Ruth Sidel, *Women and Child Care in China* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1973), and *Families of Fengsheng: Urban Life in China* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974).

There are other positive trends as well, including an issue of *Anthropological Quarterly* devoted to "Women in the Migratory Process" and several contributions to *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (e.g., those by Diamond, Rubbo, Remy, and Reiter) which are successful in linking the larger needs of the economy and political system with particular characteristics of women. Based on her research in a rural French village,⁴⁰ Reiter argues that the dominance of men in the public sphere and of women in the private domain of the family is related to the growth of the state, which usurps power and control over economic resources from kin units and relegates them to a private economy whose orientation falls to women. Diamond, Rubbo, Remy, and Bossen⁴¹ show that "development" undermines women's roles in agriculture and trade, while men are pulled into capital-intensive occupations, leaving women with jobs in the low-paid service sector.

In the last few years, the contributions of social and cultural anthropologists have criticized prevailing theories and clarified some of the major issues in this growing new field. Nevertheless, with regard to issues like universal asymmetry, we need a better model of society in order to assess the available evidence. In cross-cultural comparisons we need a better framework for comparing women's situations in what we now call "hunting-gathering," "tribal," and "peasant" communities to make clear the impact of colonialism, a world economy, and the nation-state on these subpopulations and consequently on women in these groups. Finally, we need more monographs—exhaustive case studies which put together the details of women's lives with an analysis of their relation to others in the community and the place of the community in a larger social and historical context. Both area and continental studies and the recent focus on social change, migration, urban situations, the impact of colonialism, capitalism, and development should bring together the kinds of analysis which can further illuminate our understanding of women's roles in other societies as well as in our own.

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40. Rayna R. Reiter, "Men and Women in the South of France: Public and Private Domains," in Reiter, ed. (n. 4), pp. 252–82.

41. Laurel Bossen, "Women in Modernizing Societies," *American Ethnologist* 2, no. 4 (November 1975): 587–601, see esp. p. 595; Dorothy Remy, "Underdevelopment and the Experience of Women: A Nigerian Case Study," in Reiter, ed., pp. 370–71. Some of these issues have also been addressed in papers delivered in a symposium on "The Structure and Organization of Monopoly Capital" (American Anthropological Association meeting, Mexico City, November 19–24, 1974), and a symposium on "Sexual Politics in Colonialism and Culture Change" (American Anthropological Association meeting, San Francisco, December 2–6, 1975), and at the Conference on Women and Development (Wellesley, Mass., June 2–6, 1976).