



Anthropology

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REVIEW ESSAY

Anthropology

Rayna Rapp

If the anthropology of women is not coming of age in the English-speaking world, it is at least hitting an adolescent growth spurt. In the last year, three review essays have appeared, and four journals have produced special issues devoted to women. We have two new introductory texts which focus on women, men, and gender stratification, one collection of essays, a series of bibliographies, a directory of research interests of feminist anthropologists, and a growing concern with the status of female as compared to male anthropologists. At least one popular magazine has also given supportive attention to our new paradigms and research reports.¹ All of this concern is very encouraging, but integration of a fully developed body of literature still looms in the distance.

I want to thank Deborah Jay Stearns, who worked as my research assistant while I was preparing this essay. Her own research questions have stimulated me to better define my own.

1. The review essays are Naomi Quinn, "Anthropological Studies on Women's Status," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977): 181-225; Susan Carol Rogers, "Woman's Place: A Critical Review of Anthropological Theory," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 1 (January 1978): 123-73; and Rayna Rapp Reiter, "The Search for Origins: Unraveling the Threads of Gender Hierarchy," *Critique of Anthropology* 3, no. 9-10 (Winter 1977): 5-24. Journals which have published special issues on women include *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1976); *Rural Africana*, no. 29 (Winter 1975-76); *Latin American Perspectives* 4, nos. 1-2 and 4 (1977); and *Southern Exposure*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1977). New texts include Rae Lesser Blumberg, *Stratification: Socioeconomic and Sexual Inequality* (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1978); and Lila Leibowitz, *Females, Males, Families: A Biosocial Approach* (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1978). Other new resources

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In the last anthropology review essay (*Signs*, vol. 2, no. 3), Lamphere carefully dissected the debates concerning the universality of sexual asymmetry. New articles help us now to rephrase the question with attention to its historical complexity. Leacock continues her reconstruction of a precolonial, prestate ethnohistory for women, postulating kin-based relations of production in which neither women nor the products of their labor were privatized.² But data that point to the subordination of women in preclass societies continue to be produced. Webster questions the role of violence (specifically, rape) as the cutting edge of primitive subordination, and Shapiro gives us an analysis of sexual hierarchies among a tribal people in which male domination proceeds through kinship exchanges. As Webster, Shapiro, and Johnson remind us, we have enormous emotional, political, and scientific investments in the continued debate on sexual symmetry.³ I see the debate continuing in two directions: (1) historical; and (2) focusing on a small number of contemporary cultures, the better to investigate the ambiguous nature of specific contexts of sexual subordination.

Some feminist anthropologists have returned to Engels's classic work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), in which the rise of civilization is related to the increasing subjugation of women. His argument provides a model for the origin of gender hierarchies along with class formation. The intertwining of class and gender can be examined in modern archaeological research on state origins and in the ethnohistorical reconstructions of protostates and early civiliza-

mentioned are Alice Schlegel, ed., *Sexual Stratification: A Cross-cultural View* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); *Directory of Research Interests* (Austin, Tex.: Conference for Women in Anthropology, 1978); Ruth S. Freed, Stanley A. Freed, and Susannah A. Clark, "Male and Female Anthropologists," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 293 (July 1977): 25-50; and the magazine *Human Nature*, vol. 1 (1978). Bibliographies include Hamideh Sedghi, "Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Women in the Third World," *Reading Lists in Radical Political Economics* 3 (Winter 1977): 89-90; Heidi Hartmann and Rayna Rapp Reiter, "The Cultural and Economic Roots of Women's Status," *ibid.*, pp. 90-97; Meri Knaster, *Women in Spanish America: An Annotated Bibliography from Pre-Conquest to Contemporary Times* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1977); Beatrice Medicine, "The Role of Women in Native American Societies: A Bibliography," *Indian Historian* 8, no. 3 (1975): 50-53; Elizabeth Weatherford, "Women's Traditional Arts: A Bibliography," *Heresies* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 124-25; "Women in the South: A Bibliography," *Southern Exposure* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 98-103; and Jocelyn Murray, "Women in Africa: A Select Bibliography," *Rural Africana*, no. 29 (Winter 1975-76), pp. 215-29.

2. Eleanor Leacock, "Women in Egalitarian Societies," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977).

3. Paula Webster, "The Politics of Rape in Primitive Societies," *Michigan Discussions in Anthropology* 3 (Fall 1977): 99-106; Judith Shapiro, "Sexual Hierarchy among the Yanomama," in *Sex and Class in Latin America*, ed. June Nash and Helen I. Safa (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976); Patricia Johnson, "A Note on Egalitarian Societies," *Michigan Discussions in Anthropology* 3 (Fall 1977): 107-9.

tions. The methodological problems of such research are discussed in my own work, which contrasts the questions archaeologists and anthropologists have traditionally asked with those that feminists pose in order to update Engels's problematic. We need to focus on changing relations of kinship, cosmologies, warfare, and trade if we are to understand how civilizational processes affected women.⁴ Ortner suggests an intriguing relationship between the rise of archaic civilizations, marriage systems, and the symbolic use of women's sexual purity to represent interclass relations.⁵ Silverblatt's research on the Inca Empire shows us how indigenous cosmologies divided female and male domains and deities. As the empire expanded, sexual parallelism was redefined. Femaleness was equated with conquered communities, while maleness stood for the Inca rulers in religion and in marriage alliances.⁶ Nash discusses the layering over of androgynous or bisexual gods by male deities in the spread of the Aztec Empire, and Barstow provides an interpretation of female religious iconography in neolithic archaeology.⁷ Rohrlich-Leavitt's comparison of Crete and Sumer uses archaeological and written records to theorize the origin of male-dominant material and institutional relations, and Muller presents a reconstruction of the transition from chiefdoms to military states in Wales.⁸ Gailey's work on Tonga in Oceania reveals a stratified, kin-based society in the process of class formation.⁹ The historic contexts of state formation, especially its ideological legitimation via religious systems that redefine male/female relations, seem especially fruitful areas for future research.

Other researchers continue to explore sexual asymmetry or complementarity in more contemporary groups. For example, Schlegel's work on male/female symbolic domains among the Hopi analyzes the interpenetration of kinship, political, and ritual contexts. In the ideological relations between life-giving and life-taking forces, she sees the complementary roles of male and female as equally valued.¹⁰ Nelson's study of six native American Indian groups develops a typology of female sodalities and compares the economic and social relations which foster

4. Rayna Rapp, "Gender and Class: An Archaeology of Knowledge concerning the Origin of the State," *Dialectical Anthropology* 2, no. 4 (December 1977): 309-16.

5. Sherry B. Ortner, "The Virgin and the State," *Michigan Discussions in Anthropology* 2 (Fall 1976): 1-24; reprinted in *Feminist Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3 (October 1978).

6. Irene Silverblatt, "Andean Women: Gender and the Origin of the State," *Feminist Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3 (October 1978).

7. June Nash, "The Aztecs and the Ideology of Male Dominance," *Signs* 4, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 349-62; Ann Barstow, "The Uses of Neolithic Archaeology for Women's Prehistory," *Feminist Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3 (October 1978).

8. Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt, "Women in Transition: Crete and Sumer," in Bridenthal and Koonz; Viana Muller, "The Formation of the State and the Oppression of Women," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1977): 7-21.

9. Christine Gailey, "Women and the State in Tonga," *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Winter 1978).

10. Alice Schlegel, "Male and Female in Hopi Thought and Action," in Schlegel.

female organization among them.¹¹ Gender "status" is neither unitary nor is it necessarily expressed similarly among cultures anthropologists have grouped as similar. Examination of variations in a specific culture may yield complex results.

For example, Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow attributed the sexual egalitarianism they found in Barbados to an overlap between domestic and community relations which permits a positive evaluation of female sexuality and motherhood by both women and men. Additionally, slavery deterred the development of differences in female/male economic participation at the same time that race/class stratification kept dominant (white) ideologies (including that of male superiority) from penetrating popular culture.¹² Moses analyzes a neighboring island's cultural expressions of male dominance. In Montserrat, middle-class women internalize the ideology of male dominance more thoroughly than do working-class women. But, in each generation, the working women most likely to have to support themselves economically without male aid in their childbearing years reproduce gender relations in which boys do not expect to aid their wives and lovers in householding.¹³ Gender and class experiences vary subtly, and we cannot speak easily of one form of "male dominance" or "female autonomy" in such situations. Lewis's review of the literature on Afro-American family and sex-role socialization suggests that age and birth order, rather than gender polarities, are stressed for Afro-Americans. Socialization for nonpolarity contradicts later experiences of race/class stratification.¹⁴ Taken together, the three articles move us away from a unitary discussion of gender as either egalitarian or hierarchical. We are realizing the need for more subtle understandings of the variety of female experiences both within and between cultures.

This search for analysis of more finely delineated female experience informs a new use of the life cycle and the developmental cycle of domestic groups. According to Lamphere, women's domestic strategies may vary from those of men, depending on the relative autonomy or merger of domestic and political arenas. Gmelch reminds us that women may gain autonomy or power at different points in their life cycles from men.¹⁵ These concerns are carried forward as foci in a number of new

11. Ann Thrift Nelson, "Women in Groups: Women's Ritual Sodalities in Native North America," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 3 (1976): 29-67.

12. Constance Sutton and Susan Makiesky-Barrow, "Social Inequality and Sexual Status in Barbados," in Schlegel, *Sexual Stratification*.

13. Yolanda T. Moses, "Female Status, the Family, and Male Dominance in a West Indian Community," *Signs* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 142-51.

14. Diane K. Lewis, "The Black Family: Socialization and Sex Roles," *Phylon* 36, no. 3 (Fall 1975): 221-37.

15. Louise Lamphere, "Strategies, Cooperation and Conflict among Women in Domestic Groups," in *Women, Culture and Society*, ed. Michele Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974); Sharon Bohn Gmelch, "Eco-

ethnographies and articles. Kelley relates the life histories of four Yaqui women to the social and political events which shaped Yaqui culture, and Bunster locates a female Mapuche leader in both the familial characteristics and the historic experiences of her people in Chilean political life.¹⁶ Shostak emphasizes girlhood and early sexuality in her life history of a !Kung woman; Jones and Jones analyze the relative marital independence of Limbu women; and Roy's ethnography of Bengali women reveals the affective relations in families of orientation and procreation. Chamberlain's portrait of fenwomen in an English village illustrates the consistency of their lives from youth to old age.¹⁷ Such a method does not contribute to a new theory of women, but it provides better descriptions of the cultural evaluation of sexuality, marriage, and women's perceptions of other women as well as of men.

A "slice of life" approach, linking women's domestic experiences to changing political-economic relations, is found in Elmendorf's description of the village lives of a group of related Mayan women, Cornelisen's moving portrait of five women of a South Italian town, and the reprinted edition of Hagood's 1939 study of North Carolina's white tenant-farm women.¹⁸ In each, a region's cultural context and economic hardships are explored through the eyes of the women who make their lives in it.

The similarities and differences between women's and men's lives are still the subject of much methodological searching. Weiner's ethnography of the Trobriand Islanders from the female perspective is written in continuous dialogue with the ghost of Malinowski. Treading his turf, she inverted the life cycle and began by analyzing mortuary rituals in which women's exchange networks are central. In the process, she developed a theory of Trobriand matrilineality based on exchange and symbolic regeneration. Weiner's restudy of Malinowski's classic, male-centered ethnography is enormously valuable for its new data, new theory, and the lesson in the limitations of male-centered

conomic and Power Relations among Urban Tinkers: The Role of Women," *Urban Anthropology* 6, no. 3 (Fall 1977): 237-47.

16. Jane Holden Kelley, *Yaqui Women: Contemporary Life Histories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); Ximena Bunster, "The Emergence of a Mapuche Leader: Chile," in Nash and Safa (n. 3 above).

17. Marjorie Shostak, "Memories of a !Kung Girlhood," in *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers: Studies of the !Kung San and Their Neighbors*, ed. Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), reprinted in *Human Nature* 1, no. 4 (June 1978): 80-88; Rex L. Jones and Shirley Kurz Jones, *The Himalayan Woman* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1976); Manisha Roy, *Bengali Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); Mary Chamberlain, *Fenwomen* (London: Virago, 1975; distributed in the United States by Horizon Press, New York).

18. Mary Lindsay Elmendorf, *Nine Mayan Women* (New York: Schenkman Publishing Co., 1976); Ann Cornelisen, *Women of the Shadows* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Margaret Jarman Hagood, *Mothers of the South* (1939; reprint ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977).

methodologies.¹⁹ A final contribution to methodology is made in Bunster's "talking pictures," a description of use of *foto-novela* materials developed to interview 200 working mothers in Lima, Peru.²⁰ Responses to photographs depicting pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood were particularly revealing. Current discussions of demography and underdevelopment too often tend to cost-account children without exploring the subjective elements of alienation and productivity that childbearing raises for many women.

Feminist researchers exploring biosocial questions can provide a context for this theme. New interpretations of the biological basis for human evolution are offered by Leibowitz in her introductory text, *Females, Males, Families: A Biosocial Approach*. Half the book is devoted to an examination of sex in nature and the evolution of sex differences among primates. Leibowitz separates the notion of sex role from genetic determination and variation.²¹ Lancaster stresses the importance of carrying and sharing behaviors as central to hominid adaptation. Home bases and interdependence of the sexes, rather than male hunting, become keys to deciphering human evolution.²² Zihlman and Zihlman and Tanner offer a critique of the centrality of hunting in human evolution, which they see as having late origins. It is from mother-child and sibling sharing that Zihlman derives protokinsship and early economic relations. Using the logic and data of contemporary physical anthropology, she again raises questions of "the origin of the family" and "primitive promiscuity" which so distressed nineteenth-century social theorists.²³ While these authors differ in their methodologies (notably, the value of a sociobiological approach), they show us that female biology (the mothering of neotenus offspring) has always had a social context (the sharing of gathered foods and group socialization).

Exploration of the cultural contexts of female biological experiences is central to other studies, which examine female sexuality and re-

19. Annette Weiner, *Women of Value, Men of Renown: New Perspectives on Trobriand Exchange* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976).

20. Ximena Bunster B., "Talking Pictures: Field Method and Visual Mode," *Signs* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 278-93.

21. Leibowitz (n. 1 above). The second half of the book focuses on varieties of human families.

22. Jane Lancaster, "Carrying and Sharing in Human Evolution," *Human Nature* 1, no. 2 (February 1978): 82-89. See also Jane Lancaster, *Primate Behavior and the Emergence of Human Culture* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975).

23. Adrienne L. Zihlman, "Women in Evolution, Part II: Subsistence and Social Organization among Early Hominids," *Signs* 4, no. 1 (Autumn 1978): 4-20; Adrienne L. Zihlman and Nancy Tanner, "Gathering and the Hominid Adaptation," in *Female Hierarchies*, ed. L. Tiger and B. Fowler (Chicago: Aldine, 1978); Adrienne L. Zihlman, "Motherhood in Transition: From Ape to Human," in *The First Child and Family Formation*, ed. Warren B. Miller and Lucile F. Newman (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Carolina Population Center, 1978).

productive experience in search of the social construction of gender identity. Such works show that biology itself is mute; it speaks only through cultural constructions that people make of their experiences. When we look cross-culturally, sexuality takes on expanded meanings. Meigs, reporting on the Hua, a New Guinea Highland group characterized by elaborate sexual oppositions, finds two schemes by which their apparent gender antagonisms are mediated. One is through imitative, envious behavior. Males express disgust at menstruation and childbirth, but they symbolically appropriate both processes. Women eat male-associated foods to take on the dry, infertile characteristics of men when they want to reduce menstrual flow or inhibit fertility. Such cross-gendered appropriation is one way to resolve symbolic sexual antagonism. For the Hua, another way also exists. The concept of pollution (widely reported to pertain to sexual and other bodily excretions in New Guinea) is here conceptualized as an amount of gender which can flow between males and females and between the old and the young. After sufficient sexual intercourse and childbearing (which release pollution onto men and children), older women can become social men, and, conversely, older men can become social women. "Such a view permits most persons to experience both genders before they die."²⁴ The example of the Hua alerts us to the need to understand not only sexual oppositions and resolutions but, again, the subtle and changing nature of gender throughout the life cycle.

Newman explores "the lived body" for women in different cultures by comparing the experiences of first menstruation and first childbirth in India and the United States. In both cultures, women's self-concept is conditioned by domestic and public evaluation of her reproductive processes.²⁵ In addition, Dougherty studies black rural American girls raised in strongly woman-centered descent groups and networks. Adolescent sexuality for this subcultural group is playful and relaxed. Girls are not pushed into marriage, but into the life crisis of pregnancy, from which they emerge as adult women. Though older women supervise this transition, the girls have a great deal of latitude in choosing their own maturation, depending on what they do with babies and courting partners after the birth.²⁶ There is evidently extensive subcultural variation in the culture of sexuality which needs investigation.

Jordan's monograph, *Birth in Four Cultures*, gives us our first participant-observer ethnography of childbirth. Trained by a Mayan

24. Anna S. Meigs, "Male Pregnancy and the Reduction of Sexual Opposition in a New Guinea Highlands Society," *Ethnology* 15, no. 4 (October 1976): 393-407, quotation from p. 406.

25. Lucile F. Newman, "Symbolism and Status Change: Fertility and the First Child in India and the United States," in Miller and Newman.

26. Molly C. Dougherty, *Becoming a Woman in Rural Black Culture* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978).

(Mexican) midwife, Jordan and her colleague Fuller observed and worked delivering babies. The data from the Yucatan are compared with information on the United States, Holland, and Sweden, and a set of ecological, sociological, and symbolic relations is presented for each birthing system.²⁷ As Jordan points out, continuities and changes in birth systems should neither be romanticized nor evaluated independently of the political-economic relations in which they are embedded.

Changing political and economic relations in traditional societies are the topic of most new studies in the anthropology of women.²⁸ Many anthropologists writing on development subscribe to Boserup's now-classic model. In *Women's Role in Economic Development*, she outlines the detrimental effects which colonialism and then schemes for "modernization" have had on the female populations of Subsaharan Africa, South-east Asia, and Latin America.²⁹ Her model of underdevelopment for women is illustrated in case histories from the Vicos project in Peru, among Ghanaian women, and in the continuing analysis of the Igbo Women's War in Nigeria (1929).³⁰ Awe presents the history of female political and ritual leaders among the precolonial Yoruba, and Okonjo analyzes women's political institutions in traditional Igbo communities of

27. Brigitte Jordan, *Birth in Four Cultures* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1978), quotation from p. 73.

28. Recent overviews of women and development are found in Irene Tinker and Michele Bo Bramsen, eds., *Women and World Development* (Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Council, American Academy for the Advancement of Science, 1976); Elise Boulding, *Women in the Twentieth Century World*, pts. 1 and 2 (New York: Sage Publications, 1977; distributed by Halstead Press); *Women and National Development* (special issue), *Signs*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1977); *Women and Development: A Wingspread Workshop* (Racine, Wis.: Johnson Foundation, 1976). Area overviews are available for Africa in Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds., *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1976), esp. Leith Mullings, "Women and Economic Change in Africa"; *Rural Women: Development or Underdevelopment?* (special issue), *Rural Africana*, no. 29 (Winter 1975-76), esp. Audrey Wipper, "Introduction: The Underside of Development"; Nancy Leis, "West African Women and the Colonial Experience," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 3 (1976): 123-32. For Latin America, see Nash and Safa, eds. (n. 3 above), esp. June Nash, "A Critique of Social Science Roles in Latin America"; "Women and Class Struggle" and "Women in Revolution" (special issues), *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 4, nos. 1-2 and 4 (1977).

29. Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970; New York: St. Martin's Press).

30. Florence E. Babb, *The Development of Sexual Inequality in Vicos, Peru*, Special Studies, no. 83 (Buffalo: Council on International Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1976); Audrey Chapman Smock, "The Impact of Modernization on Women's Position in the Family in Ghana" in Schlegel, *Sexual Stratification* (n. 1 above). Judith Van Allen, "'Aba Riots' or Igbo 'Women's War'? Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women," in Hafkin and Bay. See also Judith Van Allen, "'Sitting on a Man': Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6 (1972): 165-80.

Midwestern Nigeria.³¹ What she labels "the dual-sex political system" was extremely widespread in much of the precolonial tribal world, especially in West Africa. A system of parallel social institutions grew out of women's community, work, and ritual relations with one another (initiation societies, age grades, title groups, marketing associations). Men had their own organizations. Gender-specific groups were often linked ritually. From an examination of gender-linked parallel social organization, we learn that an analysis which begins with the male-female dyad may not express the most central social or economic relations in which people participate. The "nuclear family" only exists in a larger cultural context, in these cases provided by gender, community, and often nationwide associational forms. Such community and gender-based organizations are often casualties of colonial penetration. Women then become more dependent on men, and sexual antagonisms probably increase. This is excellently illustrated in another case history by Etienne, who traces women's loss of control over the cloth trade among the Baule of the Ivory Coast. Her analysis includes not only the transformation of production-distribution relations, but an explicit discussion of how a sexually parallel system broke down.³² For Native American groups, Rothenberg documents the rising "cultural conservatism" of Seneca women after their land rights and political influence were threatened, and Brown describes the deterioration of marital relations between European men and native women in nineteenth-century Northwest Canada.³³ Colonial and imperial incursions are not simply "economic." They reorganize many aspects of social relations and cultural meanings, which in turn affect gender relations.

But changes brought about by colonialism, or, later, capitalist productive relations, are not automatically detrimental to women. Deere analyzes a transition from servile to wage-earning capitalist relations among Peruvian hacienda women which is clearly beneficial.³⁴ Nor can we assume that colonialism affected all women in a given culture in the

31. Bolanle Awe, "The Iyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political System," in Schlegel, *Sexual Stratification*; Kamene Okonjo, "The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria," in Hafkin and Bay.

32. Mona Etienne, "Women and Men, Cloth and Colonization: The Transformation of Production-Distribution Relations among the Baule (Ivory Coast)," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 65, no. 1 (1977): 41-64.

33. Diane Rothenberg, "Erosion of Power: An Economic Basis for the Selective Conservatism of Seneca Women in the Nineteenth Century," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 3 (1976): 106-22; Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Changing Views of Fur Trade Marriage and Domesticity," *ibid.*, pp. 92-105.

34. Carmen Diana Deere, "Changing Social Relations of Production and Peruvian Peasant Women's Work," *Latin American Perspectives* 4, nos. 1 and 2 (Winter 1977): 38-47. See also Carmen Diana Deere, "Rural Women's Subsistence Production in the Capitalist Periphery," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 9-17.

same way. Burkett contrasts the different experiences by class and race of the female population in early colonial Peru, where some women were more adversely affected than others by Hispanic sexual asymmetry.³⁵

Our search for the cultural evaluation of women has sometimes led us to underestimate the diverse experiences women have as members of their class. In the Javanese village which Stoler studied, women linked by bonds of neighborhood and kinship "exchange" labor in one another's harvest, but they do so unequally. The potential horizontal unity of women as givers and takers of labor is cut by the vertical disparity between land-wealthy and land-poor households.³⁶ In a similar vein, Kershaw shows why husband/wife relations are different for landed and less-landed households of Kikuyu (Kenya) farmers, and the Sanjeks give us a case of class differentiation among marketing women in a Ghanaian city.³⁷ The complex interpenetration of gender and class stratification is also presented in three articles concerning female servants in Colombia, Italy, and Hong Kong, where servile relations as well as female/male relations are changing in response to a labor market which is ultimately worldwide.³⁸

Gender stratification is easily carried over into new modes of productive relations, as case histories from Tanzania show. "Socialist villages" often maintain inequities in access to and control of land. A former division of labor—men doing cash cropping, women providing household food—is reproduced under collective development.³⁹ We must pay careful attention to household relations of production and consumption to understand how gender inequalities are reproduced in socialist societies dedicated to an ideology of female/male equality. Weinbaum's analysis of the Chinese case begins in the household, where income pooling masks inequalities between men and women in the paid labor force. Men work in the state (higher-paid) and women in the collective (lower-paid) sectors. Division of labor by sex corresponds to

35. Elinor C. Burkett, "In Dubious Sisterhood: Class and Sex in Spanish Colonial South America," *Latin American Perspectives* 4, nos. 1 and 2 (Winter 1977): 18–26.

36. Ann Stoler, "Class Structure and Female Autonomy in Rural Java," *Signs* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 74–89.

37. Greet Kershaw, "The Changing Roles of Men and Women in the Kikuyu Family by Socioeconomic Strata," *Rural Africana*, no. 29 (Winter 1975–76), pp. 173–94; Roger Sanjek and Lani Morioka Sanjek, "Notes on Women and Work in Adabraka," *African Urban Notes* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1976): 1–26.

38. Anna Rubbo and Michael Tausig, "Up off Their Knees: Servanthood in South-west Colombia," *Michigan Discussions in Anthropology* 3 (Fall 1977): 41–65; Susan Berkowitz Luton, "Female Servants in Southern Italy: The Changing Configuration of Honor and Power," *ibid.*, pp. 66–86; Andrea Sankar, "Female Domestic Service in Hong Kong," *ibid.*, pp. 87–98.

39. Birgit Storgaard, "Women in Ujamaa Villages," *Rural Africana*, no. 29 (Winter 1975–76), pp. 135–36. See also James L. Brain, "Less than Second-Class: Women in Rural Settlement Schemes in Tanzania," in Schlegel, *Sexual Stratification*.

unequal returns to labor, and this is both hidden and becomes the motor force on which household economies operate.⁴⁰ According to Bossen, male/female income differences in Guatemala City allow households to provide a labor reserve which responds rapidly to changing economic conditions. Gender divisions then work against class solidarity.⁴¹ My own work focuses on how relations of production and reproduction are constructed within households for different classes in the contemporary United States. The seemingly private experiences of different families mask the shared experiences of households reproducing class relations.⁴²

Much recent Marxist work on women discusses relations of reproduction and production which articulate households to larger economic processes. A major work on the subject—Meillassoux's *Femmes, greniers et capitaux*—is still only available in its original French, but reviews and responses to the book make its arguments accessible to English-speaking readers.⁴³ Reduced, Meillassoux's argument is this: Horticultural communities organize themselves around relations between generations and across genders. Such relations of reproduction require the control of women, whose precious fertility must be made demographically available. Exchange of women is elaborated into a complex ideology justifying authority of the male elders of the tribe. Domestic communities, organized through relations of reproduction, become a pool of cheap labor power once colonialism and later forms of capitalism penetrate them. The argument is a complex one, both valuable and deeply flawed. As Edholm, Harris, and Young point out, the term "reproduction" is ambiguous and covers three different topics: demography (having babies), maintenance of existent laborers (household and subsistence work), and all relations outside productive relations

40. Batya Weinbaum, "Women in Transition to Socialism: Perspectives on the Chinese Case," *Radical Review of Political Economics* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 34–58. See also Batya Weinbaum, "Redefining the Question of Revolution," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1977): 54–78.

41. Laurel Bossen, "Household Work Patterns in an Urban Shantytown in Guatemala," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 6, no. 3 (1976): 270–76.

42. Rayna Rapp, "Family and Class in Contemporary America: Notes toward an Understanding of Ideology," *Michigan Papers in Women's Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978), reprinted in *Science and Society* 42, no. 3 (1978): 278–300.

43. Claude Meillassoux, *Femmes, greniers et capitaux* (Paris: Maspero, 1975). The book is reviewed by Bridget O'Laughlin, *Critique of Anthropology* 2, no. 8 (Spring 1977): 3–32; Maureen MacIntosh, *Capital and Class* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1977): 119–27; Rayna Rapp, *Dialectical Anthropology* 2, no. 4 (December 1977): 317–23. It is discussed and utilized in Felicity Edholm, Olivia Harris, and Kate Young, "Conceptualising Women," *Critique of Anthropology* 3, nos. 9 and 10 (Winter 1977): 101–30; and Peter Aaby, "Engels and Women," *ibid.*, pp. 25–54. Jack Goody (*Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain* [Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976]) provides an analysis of Eurasia compared to Africa in terms of transmission of property, but does not discuss relations of reproduction.

which are required to maintain the entire capitalist mode. To sort out relations of reproduction so that they are neither reduced to biological imperatives nor made a cover for functionalism (e.g., "babies are reproduced for capitalism because the mode of production requires wage-laborers") is the task which lies ahead of us.

Many feminist anthropologists continue to explore ideologies of sexual stratification which assign women to domestic, or private, and men to public, or politicized, domains. The domestic/public dichotomy has often been taken as a description of social reality, rather than as a cultural statement masking relations which are highly problematic and expressed ideologically. The distinction between the domestic and the public has long existed in the anthropological literature, but it was Rosaldo who engendered it and theorized a universal separation between the activities and symbolic values of females and males, spatially as well as hierarchically organized.⁴⁴ Others inverted the scheme, carving out arenas for female power allegedly based in the domestic sphere.⁴⁵ The dichotomy is sometimes criticized as falsely universal.⁴⁶ Debate over the scheme and its application is continuous and highly productive.

The domestic/public distinction is used to legitimize the investigation of social relations among women and, then, between women and men. The Fallerses, for example, use the model to present their data on sex roles in a Turkish town. Extreme sex segregation creates a women's world in which female-centered kinship networks and rituals exist. A parallel world is pictured for men.⁴⁷ The "safety nets" which Moroccan women construct through patron-client relations, the fostering of children, and kinship manipulations all assure mutual obligations for support among women restricted to the private domain.⁴⁸ Dwyer describes the role of the female legal Moroccan intermediary who presides over jural interactions in which male/female domains must intersect.⁴⁹

44. Michele Z. Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview," in Rosaldo and Lamphere (n. 15 above). See also Peggy Sanday, "Female Status in the Public Domain," *ibid.*

45. Ernestine Friedl, "The Position of Women: Appearance and Reality," *Anthropological Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (July 1967): 98-105; Susan Carol Rogers, "Female Forms of Power and the Myth of Male Dominance: A Model of Female/Male Interaction in Peasant Society," *American Ethnologist* 2 (1975): 741-54.

46. Eleanor Leacock and June Nash, "Ideologies of Sex: Archetypes and Stereotypes," *Annals of the New York Academy of Science* 285 (1977): 618-45; Rogers, "Woman's Place" (n. 1 above).

47. Lloyd A. Fallers and Margaret C. Fallers, "Sex Roles in Edremit," in *Mediterranean Family Structures*, ed. J. G. Peristiany (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

48. Vanessa Maher, "Kin, Clients and Accomplices: Relationships among Women in Morocco," in *Sexual Divisions and Society: Process and Change*, ed. Diana Leonard Barker and Sheila Allen (London: Tavistock, 1976).

49. Daisy Hilse Dwyer, "Bridging the Gap between the Sexes in Moroccan Legal Practice," in Schlegel, *Sexual Stratification*.

Women are active, not passive, participants in their social relations, creating mechanisms for mediating the demands of extreme sex segregation.

Increasingly, researchers play with the paradigm to test its meaning and limitations. Rogers postulates four possible patterns for behavioral and ideological differentiation of the sexes, and in only one does she see female-male spheres as culturally articulated and expressive of power differences. She feels this pattern characterizes our own culture and is erroneously pinned on the ethnographic globe.⁵⁰ Fazel discusses the conversion of resources between public and private domains among pastoral nomads in Iran, where women control herds, brideprice, and goods destined for both market and tribal levies. Yet they are not recognized as power holders, so what does "public" mean in such a situation?⁵¹ Analyzing women and kinship in Sumatra, Jayawardena poses a definitional problem: women organize interhousehold relations of marriage, divorce, and production which "expand" into areas classified by anthropologists as "public."⁵² Sudarkasa feels that many of the political and economic activities anthropologists discuss as public were inseparably embedded inside households in precolonial West Africa. It may be that the public only exists as a sometimes-expansion of the domestic and is not defined as an exclusive realm of men.⁵³ O'Brien points out that, for example, in many southern Bantu societies women become political leaders in part by becoming female husbands. Women can act in "male" positions, but to do so they give up some amount of their cultural "womanness."⁵⁴ Mueller describes women in contemporary Lesotho as full participants in village-wide activities, without political power. "Public" is not a concept which describes power between men and women because it lies beyond the village in South Africa, for which Lesotho functions as a labor reserve. The public activities of women are neither exceptional nor politically valuable under apartheid/imperialism.⁵⁵ Among the outcast Tinkers Gmelch studied, women are political brokers with Irish society, but they do not have power in relation to Tinker men.⁵⁶ What is "public" and what is "gender" in these examples?

50. Rogers, "Woman's Place."

51. G. Reza Fazel, "Social and Political Status of Women among Pastoral Nomads: The Boyr Ahmad of Southwest Iran," *Anthropological Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1977): 77-88.

52. Chandra Jayawardena, "Women and Kinship in Acheh Besar, Northern Sumatra," *Ethnology* 16, no. 1 (1977): 21-38.

53. Niara Sudarkasa, "Female Employment and Family Organization in West Africa," in *New Research on Women and Sex Roles*, ed. Dorothy G. McGuigan (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Center for Continuing Education of Women, 1976).

54. Denise O'Brien, "Female Husbands in Southern Bantu Societies," in Schlegel, *Sexual Stratification*.

55. Martha Mueller, "Women and Men, Power and Powerlessness in Lesotho," *Signs* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 154-66.

56. Gmelch (n. 15 above).

Such cases warp the tight fit between women/domestic powerlessness and men/public powerfulness and make us question the universality of the model. They should alert us to the essentially ideological nature of the distinctions we are applying. I use the concept of ideology here in a specific sense. Ideologies are powerful cultural statements which simultaneously mask and reveal contradictions that grow out of necessary productive social relations. I do not think that such contradictions are universal between domestic and public domains. Rather, they are created in historically specific times and places when resource relations between households and larger political-economic arenas become problematic. Where a distinction is made between domestic and public spheres, it is not the separation of domains, but their problematic interdependencies I would analyze. For instance, throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean, segregation of sexual domains is the subject of constant comment by both natives and anthropologists. The female domain appears as a structure to oversee women's sexual purity. The "private" here is not reducible to a general "domestic": its cultural specificity is based on control of women's sexuality. As Ortner, Schneider, and Pitt-Rivers suggest, the politics of sex are inseparably muddled with the politics of state formation in the Mediterranean. Pitt-Rivers postulates that a transition out of elementary systems of marriage exchange into a politicized use of marriage as an idiom of status and power occurred here.⁵⁷ Historically, the domestic/public dichotomy has a specific cultural meaning in light of the sexual politics of state formation.

In other times and places, it may gloss different cultural contradictions and values. For example, the distinction between domestic and public in our own cultural experience does not rest on an ideology in which women's sexual purity is primary. Rather, it is the privatization of family life that the dichotomy calls forth. The distinction between private and public corresponds to the distinction between love and money—one is normatively the subject of the woman-centered family, the other is the focus of male-centered economic activities. We experience those domains and activities as distinct, but, of course, they are interpenetrating. Without secure economic relations ("money"), the households in which nuclear families are expected to live (for "love") are hard to form and keep functioning. It is women's job to mediate the contradictions between love and money in the private domain. Discussing the literature on woman-centered kinship, Yanagisako analyzes women's various activities in ministering to intra- and interhousehold relations. While the work women do is assumed to be an extension of their biological role ("mothering"), which is done privately (for "love"),

57. Ortner (n. 5 above); Jane Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Society," *Ethnology* 10, no. 1 (1971): 1-24; Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem, or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), esp. chap. 7.

the connections women maintain are ideologically charged and quite political. They allow men to represent the autonomy of the wage-dependent nuclear family unit, while women symbolically absorb the pressures that contradict that autonomy in extended kinship and neighborhood relations.⁵⁸ Our lives embody the cultural contradictions between social production and private reproduction, between public power and private powerlessness, in which the symbolic work of mediating the effects of capitalism on household relations is culturally assigned to women.⁵⁹ In the ancient Mediterranean, relations of reproduction were problematic in the formation of a public (state-organized) domain. In contemporary America, relations of production are problematic as they create or deny the possibilities for a private domain. It is tempting to universalize both as instances of domestic/public dichotomies, but I have tried to show why they are built out of different cultural contradictions, each demanding analysis.

We cannot write an accurate history of the West in relation to the Rest until we stop assuming that our experiences subsume everyone else's.⁶⁰ Our public/private conflicts are not necessarily the same as those of other times and places. The specific oppression of women cannot be documented if our categories are so broad as to decontextualize what "womanness" means as we struggle to change that definition. A Tanzanian female farmer, a Mapuche woman leader, and an American working-class housewife do not live in the same domestic domain, nor will the social upheavals necessary to give them power over their lives be the same. We must simultaneously understand the differences and the similarities, but not by reducing them to one simple pattern.

The final topic in this review concerns the description and evaluation of female traditions and activities inside the sexually segregated domains discussed above. With appreciation of the complexities of gender organization has come a corresponding search for the arts, forms of knowledge, rituals, and expressive genres which develop in "women's culture." An overview of women's traditional expressive arts is provided by Hollister and Weatherford, and Weatherford also surveys women's contributions to built environments.⁶¹ Green provides a short course in

58. Sylvia Junko Yanagisako, "Women-centered Kin Networks in Urban Bilateral Kinship," *American Ethnologist* 4, no. 2 (1977): 1-19. See also Rayna Rapp, "Family and Class" (n. 42 above).

59. My thoughts on families and social reproduction have been considerably sharpened by collaboration with Renate Bridenthal and Ellen Ross, to whom I owe my thanks. The three of us have jointly authored "Toward a Critique of Family History," *Feminist Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1 (February 1979).

60. The phrase is borrowed from Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us* (New York: Random House, 1975).

61. Valerie Hollister and Elizabeth Weatherford, "'By the Lakeside There Is an Echo': Towards a History of Women's Traditional Arts," *Heresies* 1, no. 4 (1978): 119-23; Elizabeth Weatherford, "Women's Traditional Architecture," *Heresies* 1, no. 2 (May 1977): 35-39.

traditional Southern women's bawdy lore which teaches women "... what they can expect in private out of the men and institutions they are taught to praise in public."⁶² Women's music can reveal contexts and contradictions in their lives. McLeod and Herndon describe the preservation of a Maltese song form that is transmitted by women who sing in public, and Shumsky reports on women's music in the Balkans which records both the beauty and the hardships of the female life cycle.⁶³

Women's traditions raise fundamental political issues in their analysis. MacCormack's discussion of the Sande society of Sierra Leone centers on the ritual relations through which women culturalize their biological experience. Sande lore and medicine are the collective knowledge through which older women socialize younger ones.⁶⁴ Mernissi reports on female participation at saints' sanctuaries in Morocco, where woman-centered healing systems are dramatically employed. The value of female experiences in sanctuaries is great, but Mernissi sees a connection between the strengths which the rituals encourage and the lack of progressive movements which might contribute to the eradication of both "tradition" and oppression.⁶⁵

When MacCormack and Mernissi delivered their papers at the Wellesley conference on women and development (1976), the discussion which followed was both exciting and distressing. The strong collective tradition which women transmit through the Sande society is based, in part, on ritual clitoridectomy. In such an example, we are confronted dramatically with the politics of tradition. Traditions may simultaneously give strength and provide insulation against radical revisions in women's often-contradictory position. The limits of cultural relativism are approached in such cases. As researchers and teachers, our work may identify women's traditional social relations and may potentially romanticize relations of oppression as well. The Mexican Indian women Friedlander studied remain more "Indian" than their men. Their crafts and rituals are promoted by the Mexican government. Being Indian is ideologically glorified and materially devalued. It is impossible to speak only of the traditions women preserve, without simultaneously analyzing how those traditions set them apart as oppressed. Friedlander provides a series of women's recipes for traditional foods, explaining the origins of

62. Rayna Green, "Magnolias Grow in Dirt: The Bawdy Lore of Southern Women," *Southern Exposure* 4, no. 3-4 (Winter 1977): 29-33.

63. Norma McLeod and Marcia Herndon, "The *Bormliza*: Maltese Folksong Style and Women," in *Women and Folklore*, ed. Claire R. Farrer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975). The book first appeared as a special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 88, no. 347 (1975); Ellen Shumsky, "Women's Songs from the Balkans and Eastern Europe," *Balkan Arts Traditions* 3, no. 1 (1977): 14-24.

64. Carol P. MacCormack, "Biological Events and Cultural Control," *Signs* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 93-102.

65. Fatima Mernissi, "Women, Saints, and Sanctuaries," *Signs* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1977): 101-12.

each ingredient and the labor processes needed for each dish. In the ingredients are reflected Hispanic and Mexican national domination; in the work processes are reflected the economic burdens of women.⁶⁶ Such an article raises political questions about identification with the culture of oppression. As we excavate and legitimize women's history, social organization, and cultural forms, we must not allow our own need for models of strong female collectivities to blind us to the dialectic of tradition. It will be our intellectual as well as political task to separate these strands as we grow more confident about the existence and value of female experiences in society and culture.

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66. Judith Friedlander, "The Aesthetics of Oppression: Traditional Arts of Women in Mexico," *Heresies* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 3-9.