

Toward a Unified Analysis of Gender and Kinship

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THIS ESSAY attempts to draw together and advance the theoretical contribution that feminist rethinking of gender has made to our understanding of both gender and kinship.* Our answer to the question of what a feminist perspective has to offer the study of gender and kinship is that, above all, it can generate new puzzles and, thereby, make possible new answers.

A productive first step in rethinking any subject is to make what once seemed apparent cry out for explanation. Anthropologists inspired by the women's movement in the late 1960's took such a step when they questioned whether male dominance was a cross-cultural universal and, if so, why (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Reiter 1975; Friedl 1975). By asking what explained sexual inequality, they rejected it as an unchangeable, natural fact and redefined it as a social fact.† A second step entailed questioning the homogeneity of the categories "male" and "female" themselves and investigating their diverse social meanings among different societies (Rosaldo and Atkinson 1975; Ortner and Whitehead 1981; Strathern 1981a). Once we recognized that these categories are defined in different ways in specific societies, we no longer took them as a priori, universal categories upon which particular relations of

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†Although we recognize that some anthropologists questioned the universality of Western concepts of gender before the late 1960's, we begin with the 1960's women's movement because it inspired the arguments we discuss in this paper.

gender hierarchy are constructed. Instead, the social and cultural processes by which these categories are constituted came to be seen as one and the same as those creating inequality between men and women.

In this essay, we suggest that the next puzzle we must generate and then solve is the *difference* between men and women. Rather than taking for granted that "male" and "female" are two natural categories of human beings whose relations are everywhere structured by their difference, we ask whether this is indeed the case in each society we study and, if so, what specific social and cultural processes cause men and women to *appear* different from each other. Although we do not deny that biological differences exist between men and women (just as they do among men and among women), our analytic strategy is to question whether these differences are the universal basis for the cultural categories "male" and "female." In other words, we argue against the notion that cross-cultural variations in gender categories and inequalities are merely diverse elaborations and extensions of the same natural fact.

We begin our essay with a critical review of a number of analytical dichotomies that have guided much of the literature on gender in anthropology and related disciplines for the past decade, and we conclude that they assume that gender is everywhere rooted in the same difference. Our point is that, in doing so, these dichotomies take for granted what they should explain. In the second section of this essay, we discuss commonalities between the assumptions underlying these dichotomies and the assumptions that have dominated kinship studies in anthropology since their beginnings in the nineteenth century. We argue that gender and kinship have been defined as fields of study by our folk conception of the same thing, namely, the biological facts of sexual reproduction. Consequently, what have been conceptualized as two discrete fields of study constitute a single field that has not succeeded in freeing itself from notions about natural differences between people. In the final section of the essay, we propose a multifaceted strategy for transcending the analytical categories and dichotomies that have dominated past studies of kinship and gender. Because the analytical program we suggest requires study of culturally constructed social inequalities, we begin with a critique of the concept of "egalitarian society." We then suggest an analytical program that entails explicating the dynamic cultural systems of meanings through which different kinds

of historically specific systems of inequality are realized and transformed.

Questioning Analytical Dichotomies in the Study of Gender

In questioning analytical dichotomies, we first examine those of "nature/culture" (Ortner 1974), "domestic/public" (Rosaldo 1974), and "reproduction/production" (see Harris and Young 1981). Each of these has been said to structure relations between men and women in all societies and, therefore, to offer a universal explanation of sexual inequality. Whereas the dichotomies of domestic/public and nature/culture are more in line with structuralist perspectives, the distinction between reproduction and production has emerged from a functionalist-Marxist perspective.

Second, we examine implicit dichotomies between women's and men's consciousnesses. Scholars (for example, Rohrlich-Leavitt, Sykes, and Weatherford 1975; Weiner 1976) seeking to correct the androcentric bias in ethnographic accounts by advocating attention to "women's point of view" have posited a distinction between men's and women's perspectives of social relationships. Arguing that most anthropological monographs reflected men's views of how their system worked, they suggested we correct this bias by including women's accounts of social and cultural institutions in our ethnographies. In contrast, Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (1981) have more recently proposed a focus on male prestige systems, not as a way of correcting male bias, but as a way of understanding the cultural construction of gender. These latter authors, however, share with the former the notion that men and women—as unitary and opposed categories—have different views of how their mutual system works.

Domestic/Public and Nature/Culture

Ortner and Whitehead propose that the nature/culture and domestic/public oppositions, along with the distinction between self-interest and the social good identified by Marilyn Strathern (1981b), derive from the same sociological insight: "that the sphere of social activity predominantly associated with males encompasses the sphere predominantly associated with females and is, for that reason, culturally accorded higher value" (1981: 7-8). The emphasis placed on any one of these specific contrasts, they suggest,

depends upon the theoretical interests of the analyst and the empirically observed "idiom" of a particular culture; however, "all could be present without inconsistency; all are in a sense transformations of one another" (1981: 8).

Since these dichotomies were first presented a little over ten years ago as explanations of universal sexual asymmetry, both the domestic/public dichotomy proposed by Michelle Rosaldo (1974) and the nature/culture opposition proposed by Sherry Ortner (1974) have come under considerable criticism. Ortner's hypothesis that the symbolic association of a lesser valued "nature" with females and of a more highly valued, transcendent "culture" with males is the basis for the universal devaluation of females has been most persuasively and thoroughly criticized in Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern's volume *Nature, Culture, and Gender* (1980). In their introduction to this collection of essays, MacCormack and Strathern pose the crucial question, When can we usefully translate a symbolic opposition found in another culture into one found in ours? Together the case studies in their volume argue that our nature/culture opposition does not do justice to the range of symbolic configurations of gender meanings found in other societies.

Strathern (1980), for one, builds a convincing case that the Hagen opposition between "mbo" and "römi" is not homologous to the nature/culture opposition in our culture, but has both different symbolic meaning and social consequences. The strength of Strathern's argument rests as much on her explication of our conception of the nature/culture dichotomy as on Hagen conceptions. This kind of effort has been too often slighted in discussions about the universality of cultural features—whether the disputed features are symbolic oppositions or social institutions such as "marriage" or "incest." In other words, in many instances our erroneous assumptions about the concepts of other people are coupled with erroneous assumptions about the simplicity or homogeneity of our own cultural concepts. As Maurice and Jean Bloch point out, we cannot assume that the terms we use in our own cultural discourse provide a straightforward, unambiguous analytical focus (1980: 125).

Bloch and Bloch's historical analysis of the changing usage of "nature" as a category for challenging the prevailing cultural order in eighteenth-century France (1980) reveals a particularly crucial dimension that is missed by the claim for a universal nature/culture

opposition—a synchronic dimension that permits change. Like all universal structural oppositions, this one necessarily flattens dynamic transformations of meanings into static structural sameness. Consequently, it tends to impede the elucidation of the historical processes through which systems of meanings change.

① This absence of a historical dynamic is closely tied to another problem inherent in the claim for a universal symbolic opposition. ② This is the problem of conceptualizing symbolic systems as if they exist apart from social action. Only if we construed symbolic systems as having a structure independent of social action could we claim that a symbolic opposition of gender categories is universal without claiming that a system of gender relations is universal. Such a view is the result of too dichotomized a vision of ideas and action. Thus, the issue is not whether the Hagen concept of "mbo" stands in relation to the Hagen concept of "rómi" as our concept of "culture" stands in relation to our concept of "nature," but, rather, whether mbo/rómi constitutes the same system of social relations in Hagen society as nature/culture does in ours. Put another way, the question we should ask is, What do these oppositions do for social relations and, conversely, how do people encounter these oppositions in their practice of social relations?

Whereas the nature/culture opposition—draws on a Lévi-Straussian symbolic-structuralist perspective, the domestic/public opposition is more in line with a structural-functionalist perspective of the sort that has prevailed in the field of kinship studies. Michelle Rosaldo first construed the domestic/public opposition as the "basis of a structural framework" necessary to explain the general identification of women with domestic life and men with public life and the consequent universal, cross-cultural asymmetry in the evaluation of the sexes. At the core of this identification of women with domestic life lay their role as mothers: "Women become absorbed primarily in domestic activities because of their role as mothers. Their economic and political activities are constrained by the responsibilities of childcare and the focus of their emotions and attentions is particularistic and directed toward children and the home" (Rosaldo 1974: 24).

Although she did not initially draw a link between the domestic/public opposition and the distinction between the domestic domain and the politico-jural domain, which had long been employed in kinship studies (Fortes 1958, 1969), Rosaldo later (1980)

acknowledged that link and its problematic theoretical implications (Yanagisako 1979). She came to share Rayna Reiter's (1975) view of the domestic/public opposition as an ideological product of our society and a legacy of our Victorian heritage that "cast the sexes in dichotomous and contrastive terms" (Rosaldo 1980: 404). As John Comaroff notes in this volume, such a dichotomous vision of society is logically entailed in a "universal asymmetry" thesis that relies upon an orthodox image of the form and content of the two domains. Conversely, arguments against the universality of sexual asymmetry and inequality have necessarily engaged in a critical reexamination of this image. As Rapp (1979) and Comaroff (this volume) point out, however, these latter efforts have encompassed a range of feminist theoretical perspectives.

Attempts to salvage the domestic/public opposition—which continue to accept the two categories as a valid description of a universal reality even though varying widely in their specific content and interpenetration—cannot escape the self-defeating circularity inherent in its initial formulation (Comaroff this volume). As Yanagisako points out in this collection, the claim that women become absorbed in domestic activities because of their role as mothers is tautological given the definition of "domestic" as "those minimal institutions and modes of activity that are organized immediately around one or more mothers and their children" (Rosaldo 1974: 23).

The a priori definition of the domestic domain by the mother-child relation is inextricably linked with the troubling analytical problems arising from its claim for universality. These are shared by the nature/culture opposition. As Karen Sacks (1976, 1979), Eleanor Leacock (1978), and Alice Schlegel (1977) have argued convincingly, those writers who assert the universality of sexual asymmetry encourage the search for biological causes, even though such writers explicitly emphasize social processes. In their contributions to *Woman, Culture, and Society*, Rosaldo and Ortner both proposed social causes for universal sexual asymmetry, as did Nancy Chodorow in her contribution to the 1974 book, but each author focused on the social construction of a biological "fact": women's capacity to bear and nurse infants. The obvious conclusion is that biological motherhood "explains" the universal devaluation of women. As Rosaldo herself later noted, a focus on universals makes us "victims of a conceptual tradition that discovers 'essence'

in the natural characteristics" that distinguish the sexes, "and then declares that women's present lot derives from what, 'in essence,' women are" (1980: 401).

In summary, we suggest that Ortner and Whitehead's claim that the domestic/public and nature/culture oppositions are transformations of each other is valid (1981: 7-8), although not because these oppositions summarize, each in a way more suited to the theoretical interests of a particular analyst or the cultural idiom of a particular society, a universal structure of gender relations. Rather, domestic/public and nature/culture, like the reproduction/production distinction we discuss below, are variations of an analytical dichotomy that takes for granted what we think should be explained.

Fertes: dichotomy: lineage = descent => what men do in public
Reproduction/Production x kinship => domestic, what women do at home, important, does not last

In the last decade, several writers (for example, Eisenstein 1979; Benería and Sen 1981; Harris and Young 1981), attempting to develop a Marxist theory of gender while at the same time bringing a feminist perspective to Marxist theory, have argued for the need to develop a theory of relations of reproduction. Olivia Harris and Kate Young (1981: 110) note that the proliferation of studies in Marxist literature centered on the concept of reproduction reflects not only feminist concern with the status of women but, among other things, the concern of some Marxists to "break conclusively with economistic versions of a Marxism which places too great an emphasis on the forces of production" (see, for example, Hindness and Hirst 1975; Friedman 1976). Women have been cast as the "means of reproduction" in several Marxist discussions of the control of labor and its reproduction in both capitalist and precapitalist societies.

Claude Meillassoux's (1981) evolutionary theory of the domestic community is perhaps the most ambitious of these works in its attempt to build an analysis of the family into a Marxist analysis of imperialism. For Meillassoux, control over the labor of individual human beings is more important than control over the means of production in defining the relations of production in agricultural societies where productive forces are not highly developed. The reproduction of the domestic community of these societies is contingent upon the reproduction of human beings and, consequently, upon control over women, whom Meillassoux views as the means of that reproduction. In capitalist societies, on the other hand, cap-

ital is unable itself to reproduce the labor power necessary for social reproduction. Therefore, it must rely on both precapitalist modes of production, such as exist in Third World countries, and on the family—in particular, women's work in it, in industrial society—as the means of reproduction of labor power.

Feminists have strongly criticized two inextricably linked aspects of Meillassoux's theory: his analytical treatment of women and his concept of reproduction. They challenge his view of women solely as "reproducers" and his neglect of their productive activities (Harris and Young 1981; O'Laughlin 1977), which blind him to the ways in which the social constraints placed on women's productive activities, as well as the control placed on their reproductive activities, structure their oppression. They point to the ironic lack of attention to what is commonly called "domestic work" in a book dedicated to the analysis of reproduction.

These limitations in Meillassoux's work can be largely traced to the considerable ambiguity surrounding his use of the term reproduction, which conflates biological reproduction with the reproduction of the social system. For Meillassoux, kinship is the institution which at once regulates the function of the reproduction of human beings and the reproduction of the entire social formation (Meillassoux 1981: xi). This functionalist perspective also underlies his assumption—one common in much of the anthropological literature—that precapitalist societies are in static equilibrium. Thus, despite his interest in the evolution of social forms, Meillassoux ends up with a Marxist version of teleological functionalism in which "all modes exist to reproduce themselves" (Harris and Young 1981: 115).

Unfortunately, many critics attempting to compensate for Meillassoux's inattention to "domestic work" have employed a concept of reproduction similar to his. As a consequence, their work has also been characterized by conceptual confusion. These writers take as their starting point Engels's formulation of the distinction between reproduction and production. In contrast to Marx (1967: 566), who used these terms to describe a unitary social process, Engels tended to treat production and reproduction as two distinct, although coordinated, aspects of the process of social production: "This again, is of a twofold character: on the one side the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing, and shelter and the tools necessary for that reproduction; on the other side the

gender studies more than kinship studies
point of assimilation with theory

production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species" (1972: 71).

It is not surprising that Engels's formulation would receive so much recent attention from Marxist-feminist social scientists, as it is one of the few early Marxist statements offering an explicit approach to gender. Much of the literature on the subject of women and capitalist development, for example, employs this distinction. In their 1981 critique of Ester Boserup's neoclassical, comparative study of the role of women in economic development (1970), the economists Lourdes Benería and Gita Sen argue that we should attend to the role of reproduction in determining women's position in society. They rightly fault Boserup for her distinction between "economic activity" and "domestic work," which results in her excluding such activities as food processing—largely a female activity—from her description of economic activity in agricultural societies. Their concept of reproduction, however, proves more a liability than an asset. They define reproduction as not only biological reproduction and daily maintenance of the labor force but also social reproduction, that is, the perpetuation of social systems (Benería and Sen 1981: 290). Yet, in their analysis of the ways in which the status of women has changed with economic transformations, reproduction is reduced to "domestic work." Accordingly, when they discuss industrial society, they equate "housework" with reproductive work and assume the household is the focal point of all sorts of reproduction (Benería and Sen 1981: 293, 291).

The social historians Louise Tilly and Joan Scott also employ a similar distinction in their history of women's work in industrializing England and France. Reproduction is for them, by definition, a gendered category: "Reproductive activity is used here as a shorthand for the whole set of women's household activities: childbearing, child rearing, and day-to-day management of the consumption and production of services for household members" (Tilly and Scott 1980: 6). This unfortunate equation of reproductive activity with women's household activities excludes anything men do from the category of reproductive activity and, consequently, is blind to men's contribution to "childbearing, child rearing and day-to-day management of the consumption and production of services for household members." This, in turn, makes it impossible for Tilly and Scott to attain their goal of writing a history of the changing re-

lation between the reproductive work of women and men. There can be no such history of change when, by their own definition, men do not engage in reproductive work.

The best attempt to clarify the confusion surrounding usages of the term reproduction and its relation to production is Olivia Harris and Kate Young's comprehensive review of the concept (1981). Having found fault with Meillassoux's concept of reproduction, Harris and Young propose to salvage it by isolating different meanings of the concept, which they see located at "different levels of abstraction and generality" and which "entail different types of causality and different levels of determination." "Here we have isolated three senses of the concept of reproduction for discussion which seem to us to cover the major uses of the term and to illustrate the confusion that has resulted from their conflation. We feel it is necessary to distinguish social reproduction, that is, the overall reproduction of a particular social formation from the reproduction of labor itself; and further to distinguish the latter from the specific forms of biological reproduction" (Harris and Young 1981: 113).

By teasing apart these different meanings of reproduction, Harris and Young do an excellent job of displaying the density and complexity of the concept. Yet, their attempt to place these meanings in distinct and analytically useful levels generates new problems. It becomes quickly apparent just how difficult it is for them to separate their notion of the reproduction of labor and their notion of social reproduction. They admit that: "to talk of the reproduction of labour is in itself perhaps too limited; it would be more accurate to talk of the reproduction of adequate bearers of specific social relationships, since we also wish to include under this category classes of non-labourers" (Harris and Young 1981: 113). Once the reproduction of labor slips into the reproduction of "adequate bearers of specific social relations"—a process that presumably includes such social categories as "males" and "females" as well as "lineage elders" and "capitalists"—it becomes indistinguishable from the process of social reproduction. That is to say, if "capitalists" are being reproduced, then relations of capital must be simultaneously reproduced; just as, if "males" and "females" are being reproduced, then gender relations must be reproduced.

As do all the authors who draw upon Engels's distinction between production and reproduction, Harris and Young locate the construction of gender relations—and, consequently, women's

subordination—in the reproductive process. The productive process, regardless of the particular mode of production it comprises, is conceptualized as theoretically independent of gender considerations. Like the notion that relations of reproduction are more homogeneous and unchanging than relations of production, this line of thought grants the two spheres of activities an analytical autonomy that seems unjustified.

What lies behind the willingness of so many authors to overlook the conceptual ambiguity and confusion of the reproduction/production distinction and to remain committed to its usefulness for understanding gender relations? Behind this distinction, we suggest, is a symbolically meaningful and institutionally experienced opposition that our own culture draws between the production of people and the production of things. When Harris and Young consider the reproduction of a particular social formation—which in Marxist terms entails the reproduction of a particular mode of production—they do not see gender as relevant because, although both women and men are involved in production, they do not appear to be involved as “men” and “women.” In other words, their gender attributes do not appear to be crucial in structuring their relations. Yet, Harris and Young see women as “women” and men as “men” when they are involved in the reproduction of labor and biological reproduction because in our cultural system of meanings, the production of people is thought to occur through the process of sexual procreation. Sexual procreation, in turn, is construed as possible because of the biological difference between men and women. The production of material goods, in contrast, is not seen as being about sex, and thus it is not necessarily rooted in sexual difference, even when two sexes are involved in it.

In this folk model, which informs much of the social scientific writing on reproduction and production, the two categories are construed as functionally differentiated spheres of activity that stand in a means/end relation to each other. Our experience in our own society is that work in production earns money, and money is the means by which the family can be maintained and, therefore, reproduced. At the same time, the reverse holds: the family and its reproduction of people through love and sexual procreation are the means by which labor—and thus the productive system of society—is reproduced. Although we realize that wage work, money, and factories do not exist in many of the societies we study, we im-

pose our own institutional divisions and culturally meaningful categories onto them by positing the universal existence of functionally differentiated spheres of activity. In our folk model, we contrast the following pairs, each linked, respectively, to the productive and reproductive spheres:

material goods	people
technology	biology
male or gender neutral	female or gendered
wage work	nonwage work
factory	family
money	love

A means/end relation between the family and capitalism has prevailed in Western sociological thought, not only in the writings of Marxist functionalists but in those of structural-functionalist theorists as well. In Talcott Parsons's theory of the family in capitalist-industrial society (Parsons and Bales 1955), the particular form of the family helps to reproduce the “economic system” by permitting the social and geographic mobility required by an open-class, universalistic, achievement-based occupational system while still providing for the socialization of children and nurturance of adults. In sum, both Parsonian structural-functionalist theory and Marxist-functionalist theory posit a means/end relationship between what they construe as the reproductive and productive spheres of capitalist-industrial society.

At the bottom of the analytical confusion surrounding the reproduction/production dichotomy is a circularity similar to that which has plagued the domestic/public distinction. Like the former analytical opposition, it leads us back to reinventing, in a new form, the same dualism we were trying to escape.

Women's Consciousness / Men's Consciousness

One of the first changes called for by feminist scholars in the social sciences was the correction of androcentric views that had paid little attention not only to women's activities and roles but also to their views of social relationships and cultural practices. This feminist challenge was useful in calling into question seemingly natural social units. Among the social units taken for granted were the “families” that anthropologists continued to discover everywhere as long as they confounded genealogically defined relationships

with particular kinds of culturally meaningful, social relationships (Yanagisako 1979; Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako 1982). The feminist questioning (for example, Collier 1974; Lamphere 1974; Harris 1981; Wolf 1972) of the assumed unity of families, households, and other sorts of domestic groups denaturalized these units by asking whether their members had the same or different views, interests, and strategies. The recognition of the diversity and, in some cases, the conflict of interests among the members of supposedly solidary groups opened the way to a richer understanding of the dynamics of these groups (for example, Wolf 1972; Yanagisako 1985) and their interaction with other social units.

At the same time, we have come to realize that correcting the androcentrism of the past without reproducing its conceptual error in inverted form requires considerable rethinking of our notions of culture and ideology. We appear to have left behind naive claims (for example, Rohrlach, Leavitt, Sykes, and Weatherford 1975) that female anthropologists intuitively understand the subjective experience of their female informants simply by dint of their sex. Likewise, we have rejected claims for a universal "woman's point of view" or a universal "womanhood." Marilyn Strathern has argued convincingly that "it is to mistake symbol for index to imagine that what Trobrianders make out of women identifies something essential about *womankind*. We merely learn, surely, how it is that cultures constitute themselves" (1981a: 671). Furthermore, we cannot assume that *within* a society there is a unitary "woman's point of view" that crosscuts significant differences in, for example, age, household position, or social class.

Despite this skepticism about the existence of a unitary "woman's point of view" in any society, the notion that there is a unitary "man's point of view" appears more resilient (for example, Ardener 1972). Because men are socially dominant over women, it is tempting to treat the cultural system of a society as a product of their values and beliefs and to assume that it is shared by most, if not all, of them. This assumption is implicit in the concept of a "male prestige system," which Ortner and Whitehead (1981) have proposed for understanding, among other things, the connections between gender and kinship.

Ortner and Whitehead suggest that in all societies the most important structures for the cultural construction of gender are the "structures of prestige." Moreover, because some form of male

dominance operates in every society, "the cultural construction of sex and gender tends everywhere to be stamped by the prestige considerations of socially dominant male actors" (Ortner and Whitehead 1981: 12). "Women's perspectives are to a great extent constrained and conditioned by the dominant ideology. The analysis of the dominant ideology must thus precede, or at least encompass, the analysis of the perspective of women" (Ortner and Whitehead 1981: x). In the above quotations, Ortner and Whitehead assume that men's perspectives are not also constrained and conditioned by the dominant ideology. Instead, in the case of men, ideology and the perspectives of social actors are conflated. This, of course, assumes a priori that men and women have distinctly different perspectives, including different ideas about prestige relations.

The problems generated by this conceptualization of the dominant ideology are manifested in confusion about the analytical status of prestige structures. At times Ortner and Whitehead refer to prestige as a "sphere of relations," at other times as a "set of structures" on the same level as political structures, and at still other times as "a dimension of social relations" of all kinds of structures, including political structures (1981: 10, 12-13). They also speak of "prestige situations" (1981: 13). For the most part, however, they use the term "prestige structures": "The sets of prestige positions or levels that result from a particular line of social evaluation, the mechanisms by which groups arrive at given levels or positions, and the overall conditions of reproduction of the system of statuses, we will designate as a 'prestige structure'" (Ortner and Whitehead 1981: 13). Confusion about the status of prestige structures, moreover, leads to a tautological proposition about their relation to gender systems. Ortner and Whitehead contend on the one hand that the "social organization of prestige is the domain of social structure that most directly affects cultural notions of gender and sexuality," on the other, that "a gender system is first and foremost a prestige structure itself" (1981: 16).

Much of the confusion can be attributed to equating the dominant ideology with men's point of view. Even in those hypothetical cases where men as a whole are socially dominant over women as a whole and share the same values, beliefs, and goals, it seems a mistake to construe their perspective as more encompassing of the larger cultural system than women's perspective. For, like women's

views, men's views are constrained and conditioned by the particular forms of their relations with others. The men and women in a particular society may construe women's ideas and experience as more restricted than that of men (see, for example, Yamagisako this volume), and this may be reflected in the appearance that men have certain kinds of knowledge that women do not. But, this appearance does not justify the analytical incorporation of women's views in a supposedly more inclusive male ideology. Our task, rather, should be to make apparent the social and cultural processes that create such appearances.

In the end, the concept of "male prestige system" tends to replicate the problems inherent in the domestic/public dichotomy. Because it too rests on the notion of an encompassing male sphere and an encompassed female one, it assumes that "domestic life" is "insulated from the wider social sphere" (although its degree of insulation may vary) and that "domestic life" is concerned with "gender relations" and "child socialization." Thus, for example, in discussing Marshall Sahlins's (1981) analysis of systemic change in post-contact Hawaii, Ortner writes, "To the degree that domestic life is insulated from the wider social sphere . . . , important practices—of gender relations and child socialization—remain relatively untouched, and the transmission of novel meanings, values, and categorical relations to succeeding generations may be hindered. At the very least, what is transmitted will be significantly—and conservatively—modified" (1984: 156–57).

Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "embodiment" offers a useful framework to counter the notion of conservative domestic spheres, detached from the public world of struggle and change. Domestic life, for Bourdieu, is not insulated from the wider social sphere. Rather, he argues that both gender relations and child socialization take place in a socially structured world. He writes that, for the child, "the awakening of consciousness of sexual identity and the incorporation of the dispositions associated with a determinate social definition of the social functions incumbent on men and women come hand in hand with the adoption of a socially defined vision of the sexual division of labor" (1977: 93).

Bourdieu's framework thus suggests that gender relations and child socialization—far from being insulated from changes in "meanings, values, and categorical relations"—are implicated in those changes. Indeed, the same point is suggested by Sahlins's

analysis of change in Hawaii that Ortner discusses, for Sahlins describes how the struggle over novel meanings of hierarchy was simultaneously a struggle over chiefship and gender relations. For Hawaiians, understandings of the chief/commoner relation and the husband/wife relation were implicated in each other and changed together. Similarly, Yamagisako's essay in this collection shows how Japanese Americans' conceptions of the domains of husbands and wives changed along with their institutional model of the relations between family and society.

The reemergence of a form of the domestic/public dichotomy in the concept of "male prestige systems" brings us full circle and poses, in a particularly dramatic way, the question of why we keep reinventing this dichotomy or transformations of it, such as reproduction/production. If, as we have argued, these oppositions assume the difference we should be trying to explain, why do we find them so compelling? Why do they seem, as Rosaldo (1980) claimed even when she argued against using domestic/public as an analytic device, so "telling"?

The answer, we suggest, lies in our own cultural conception of gender and its assumption of a natural difference between women and men. To arrive at an understanding of that conception, however, requires that we first review some recent insights in kinship studies. As we will demonstrate, there are striking similarities between muddles in kinship studies and those that we have just discussed in gender studies. Kinship and gender, moreover, are held together by more than a common set of methodological and conceptual problems. They constitute, by our very definition of them, a single topic of study.

The Mutual Constitution of Gender and Kinship

Both "gender" and "kinship" studies have been concerned with understanding the rights and duties that order relations between people defined by difference. Both begin by taking "difference" for granted and treating it as a presocial fact. Although social constructions are built on it, the difference itself is not viewed as a social construction. The fundamental units of gender—males and females—and the fundamental units of kinship—the genealogical grid—are both viewed as existing outside of and beyond culture. In this section, we consider David M. Schneider's critique of the biological

model that pervades and constrains kinship studies in order to suggest a parallel critique of gender studies.

Kinship and the Biological "Facts" of Sexual Reproduction

Among kinship theorists, Schneider (1964, 1968, 1972, 1984) has been the most consistent in refusing to take for granted what others have, namely, that the fundamental units of kinship are everywhere genealogical relationships. In his cultural analysis of American kinship (1968), Schneider first demonstrated that our particular folk conceptions of kinship lie behind our assumption of the universality of the genealogical grid. By explicating the symbolic system through which Americans construct genealogical relationships, Schneider denaturalized kinship and displayed its cultural foundations.

Most recently, in his 1984 critical review of the history of kinship studies, Schneider argues that, for anthropologists, kinship has always been rooted in biology because, by our own definition, it is about relationships based in sexual reproduction. When we undertake studies of kinship in other societies, we feel compelled to start from some common place, and that place has always been sexual reproduction. We do not ask what relationships are involved in the reproduction of humans in particular societies. Instead, we assume that the primary reproductive relationship in all societies is the relationship between a man and a woman characterized by sexual intercourse and its physiological consequences of pregnancy and parturition. The only time we bother to ask questions about reproduction is when we discover that the natives do not draw the same connections we do between these events, as in the case of the Trobriand Islanders, or when we discover that the natives permit marriages between people with the same genital equipment, as among the Nuer or Lovedu. In other words, we assume that of all the activities in which people participate, the ones that create human offspring are heterosexual intercourse, pregnancy, and parturition. Together these constitute the biological process upon which we presume culture builds such social relationships as marriage, filiation, and coparenthood.

The one major modification in kinship studies since the middle of the nineteenth century, according to Schneider, was the shift from an emphasis on the social recognition of the biological bonds arising out of the process of procreation to an emphasis on the so-

ciocultural characteristics of the relations mapped onto those bonds (Schneider 1984: 54). Since this shift, kinship theorists have been adamant that they view marriage, parenthood, and all other kinship relationships as social relationships and not biological ones. Schneider argues convincingly, however, that for all the claims these writers make that they are speaking of social paters and social maters and not genitors and genitrexes, they have biological parenthood in mind all the time. This point is perhaps no more clearly illustrated than in the following statement by Fortes, quoted by Schneider: "The facts of sex, procreation, and the rearing of offspring constitute only the universal raw material of kinship systems" (Fortes 1949: 345, italics ours). For Fortes, as for the other kinship theorists reviewed by Schneider, these facts are unambiguously construed as natural ones.

Although it is apparent that heterosexual intercourse, pregnancy, and parturition are involved in human reproduction, it is also apparent that producing humans entails more than this. M. Bridget O'Laughlin (1977) put it very succinctly when she wrote, "Human reproduction is never simply a matter of conception and birth." There is a wide range of activities in which people participate besides heterosexual intercourse and parturition that contribute to the birth of viable babies and to their development into adults. These activities, in turn, involve and are organized by a number of relationships other than those of parenthood and marriage. Given the wide range of human activities and relationships that can be viewed as contributing to the production of human beings, why do we focus on only a few of them as the universal basis of kinship? Why do we construe these few activities and relationships as natural facts, rather than investigating the ways in which they are, like all social facts, culturally constructed? The answer Schneider has proposed is that our theory of kinship is simultaneously a folk theory of biological reproduction.

Gender and the Biological "Facts" of Sexual Reproduction

Schneider's insight that kinship is by definition about sexual procreation leads us to realize that assumptions about gender lie at the core of kinship studies. Moreover, not only are ideas about gender central to analyses of kinship, but ideas about kinship are central to analyses of gender. Because both gender and kinship have been defined as topics of study by our conception of the same thing,

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namely, sexual procreation, we cannot think about one without thinking about the other. In short, these two fields of studies are mutually constituted.

Gender assumptions pervade notions about the facts of sexual reproduction commonplace in the kinship literature. Much of what is written about atoms of kinship (Lévi-Strauss 1949), the axiom of prescriptive altruism (Fortes 1958; Fortes 1969), the universality of the family (Fox 1967), and the centrality of the mother-child bond (Goodenough 1970) is rooted in assumptions about the natural characteristics of women and men and their natural roles in sexual procreation. The standard units of our genealogies, after all, are circles and triangles about which we assume a number of things. Above all, we take for granted that they represent two naturally different categories of people and that the natural difference between them is the basis of human reproduction and, therefore, kinship. Harold Scheffler's (1974: 749) statement that "the foundation of any kinship system consists in the folk-cultural theory designed to account for the fact that women give birth to children" reveals that, for him, kinship is everywhere about the same biological fact. Although he recognizes that there are a variety of ways in which this "fact" may be accounted for in different societies, Scheffler, like most kinship theorists, assumes certain social consequences follow necessarily from it, including that biological motherhood is everywhere the core of the social relationship of motherhood (Scheffler 1970).*

Likewise, the literature on gender is sensitive to the many ways in which pregnancy and childbirth are conceptualized and valued in different societies and to the different ways in which the activities surrounding them can be socially organized. But, the conviction that the biological difference in the roles of women and men in sexual reproduction lies at the core of the cultural organization of gender persists in comparative analyses. As we argued in the previous section, the analytical oppositions of domestic/public, nature/culture, and reproduction/production all begin with this as-

*It is noteworthy that motherhood is the locus of many assumptions in feminist writing as well as in the nonfeminist kinship literature. However, in the feminist literature, the emphasis is more on the ways in which mothering constrains and structures women's lives and psyches (for example, Chodorow 1979), whereas in the nonfeminist kinship literature (for example, Fortes 1969; Goodenough 1970; Scheffler 1974), the emphasis is on the positive affect and bond that maternal nurturance creates in domestic relationships.

sumption of difference. Like kinship theorists, moreover, analysts of gender have assumed that specific social consequences necessarily follow from this difference between men and women. For example, the assumption that women bear the greater burden and responsibility for human reproduction pervades gender studies, in particular those works employing a reproduction/production distinction. Yet, this notion often appears to be more a metaphorical extension of our emphasis on the fact that women bear children than a conclusion based on systematic comparison of the contribution of men and women to human reproduction. In other words, the fact that women bear children and men do not is interpreted as creating a universal relation of human reproduction. Accordingly, we have been much slower to question the purported universals of the reproductive relations of men and women than we have been to question the purported universals of their productive relations. For example, as we have shown, in the literature on women and capitalist development, women's natural burden in reproduction is viewed as constraining their role in production, rather than seen as itself shaped by historical changes in the organization of production.

The centrality of sexual reproduction in the definition of gender is reflected in the distinction between sex and gender that has become a convention in much of the feminist literature. Judith Shapiro summarizes the distinction between the terms as follows:

[T]hey serve a useful analytic purpose in contrasting a set of biological facts with a set of cultural facts. Were I to be scrupulous in my use of terms, I would use the term "sex" only when I was speaking of biological differences between males and females, and use "gender" whenever I was referring to the social, cultural, psychological constructs that are imposed upon these biological differences. . . . [G]ender . . . designates a set of categories to which we can give the same label crosslinguistically, or cross-culturally, because they have some connection to sex differences. These categories are, however, conventional or arbitrary insofar as they are not reducible to, or directly derivative of, natural, biological facts; they vary from one language to another, one culture to another, in the way in which they order experience and action" (1981: 449, italics ours).

The attempt to separate the study of gender categories from the biological facts to which they are seen to be universally connected mirrors the attempt of kinship theorists reviewed by Schneider (1984) to separate the study of kinship from the same biological facts. Like the latter attempt, this one seems doomed to fail, be-

cause it too starts from a definition of its subject matter that is rooted in those biological facts. It is impossible, of course, to know what gender or kinship would mean if they are to be entirely disconnected from sex and biological reproduction. We have no choice but to begin our investigations of others with our own concepts. But, we can unpack the cultural assumptions embodied in them, which limit our capacity to understand social systems informed by other cultural assumptions.

Although gender and kinship studies start from what are construed as the same biological facts of sexual reproduction, they might appear to be headed in different analytical directions: kinship to the social character of genealogical relations and gender to the social character of male-female relations (and even to male-male relations and female-female relations). However, because both build their explanations of the social rights and duties and the relations of equality and inequality among people on these presumably natural characteristics, both retain the legacy of their beginnings in notions about the same natural differences between people. Consequently, what have been conceptualized as two discrete, if interconnected, fields of study constitute a single field.

Our realization of the unitary constitution of gender and kinship as topics of study should make us wary of treating them as distinct analytical problems. As Schneider (1984: 175) points out, part of the "conventional wisdom of kinship" has been the idea that kinship forms a system that can be treated as a distinct institution or domain. Like "economics," "politics," and "religion," kinship has been posited as one of the fundamental building blocks of society by anthropologists (Schneider 1984: 181).^{*} At the same time, neither should we assume that in all societies kinship creates gender or that gender creates kinship. Although the two may be mutually constituted as topics of study by our society, this does not mean they are linked in the same way in all societies. Instead, as we shall suggest below, we should seek rather than assume knowledge of the socially significant domains of relations in any particular society and what constitutes them. Having rejected the notion that

^{*}Schneider attributes this to the mid-nineteenth-century attempt by anthropologists to establish the history or development of civilization as this was embodied in European culture, and to the notion that development proceeded from the simple to the complex, from the undifferentiated to the differentiated. To the extent that kinship, economics, politics, and religion were undifferentiated, a society was "primitive," "simple," or "simpler."

there are presocial, universal domains of social relations, such as a domestic domain and a public domain, a kinship domain and a political domain, we must ask what symbolic and social processes make these domains appear self-evident, and perhaps even "natural," fields of activity in any society (see Comaroff this volume).

We operate with distinction natural/cultural, yet our notion of "nature" => culturally constructed

• not all societies make these distinctions, some societies do not distinguish between ~~of~~ themselves & their natural parents

• yet genealogies we draw = socially explained & assumed genetic links => our society assumes that ^{if} John is the son of his father, when they live together as a family unit

x note of these have to be structured on biological differs => not everywhere the case

• also model & diagrams: correspond primarily to social relationships, although we assume, that these are coherent with genetic & biological relationships