



Anthropology

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REVIEW ESSAY

Anthropology

Jane Monnig Atkinson

Since Rayna Rapp's 1979 *Signs* review essay on the anthropology of women,¹ the field has entered its second decade. In the past few years, contributors to early volumes such as *Woman, Culture, and Society* and *Toward an Anthropology of Women* have published new books significant to feminist studies.² Old formulations have been challenged and new ones phrased. Scholars have also voiced concerns about women in the profession, both in publications and in a major battle among members of the American Anthropological Association over the censure of five univer-

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1. Rayna Rapp, "Review Essay: Anthropology," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 4, no. 3 (1979): 497-513.

2. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); Carol Hoffer MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern, eds., *Nature, Culture and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, eds., *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Michelle Z. Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Karen Sacks, *Sisters and Wives: The Past and Future of Sexual Equality* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979); Peggy Sanday, *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni-

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sity departments for discriminatory hiring practices.³ A special issue of the *American Anthropologist* was devoted to Margaret Mead, not only the best-known woman anthropologist but also the discipline's most renowned practitioner.⁴ And one of the leading figures of feminist anthropology, Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, met a tragic and untimely death at age thirty-seven on October 11, 1981, while beginning a new research project in the Philippines.

Anthropology as a discipline thrives on a tension between theory building and fine-grained ethnographic investigation.⁵ The anthropology of women is no exception to this pattern. In its initial phases, researchers turned to library stacks and moldy field notes to retrieve and reinterpret any and all shreds of information concerning women. But salvage ethnography is a problematic enterprise. Allegations of male bias aside,⁶ most stockpiles of ethnographic data had not been systematically collected with useful questions about gender in mind. Happily, though, within the last decade feminist anthropologists have had an opportunity not only to comb through old materials but also to conduct new field research informed by recent theoretical developments. Ethnographies are now appearing that address issues of sex roles and gender in new and increasingly sophisticated ways.

The aims of this review are twofold: to identify major trends in recent work, and to evaluate the impact of feminist theory on the writing of ethnography. Limitations of space demand that this review of the literature take the form of a representative sampler rather than an exhaustive inventory of recent publications. They also necessitate an exclusive focus on social and cultural anthropology. I shall leave it to other reviewers to explore the important developments in evolutionary

versity Press, 1981); Nancy Tanner, *On Becoming Human* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Margery Wolf and Roxane Witke, *Women in Chinese Society* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975). And see the earlier essays in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1974); and Rayna Rapp Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

3. See, e.g., Sidney Mintz's chapter on Ruth Benedict in *Totems and Teachers: Perspectives on the History of Anthropology*, ed. Sydel Silverman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); Roger Sanjek, "The American Anthropological Association Resolution on the Employment of Women: Genesis, Implementation, Disavowal, and Resurrection," *Signs* 7, no. 4 (1982): 845-68; and Naomi Quinn and Carol A. Smith, "A New Resolution on the Fair Employment Practices for Women Anthropologists: Fresh Troops Arrive," *Signs* 7, no. 4 (1982): 869-77.

4. Mead's ground-breaking efforts in the study of sex roles are treated in that issue by Peggy Sanday, "Margaret Mead's View of Sex Roles in Her Own and Other Societies," *American Anthropologist* 82, no. 2 (1980): 340-48.

5. See Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

6. For a recent critique, see Kay Milton, "Male Bias in Anthropology," *Man* 14, no. 1 (1979): 40-54.

theory and sociobiology, where recent publications by Sarah Hrdy and Nancy Tanner, in particular, should spark tremendous controversy and debate.⁷

Recent work in the anthropology of women does what cultural anthropologists do best—namely, it heads full tilt at culture-bound assumptions in our own thinking. Since the formative years of the discipline, anthropologists have effectively challenged a long list of preconceived notions about human nature and human institutions. Mystifications of race, religion, and nationalism, among others, have been targets. One reason, perhaps, that feminism and anthropology have taken well to each other is that feminist anthropologists have continued this tradition by tackling hitherto unquestioned assumptions about sex and gender.

Recent debunking exercises have been directed not only at the general public and at the profession but also at early formulations in feminist anthropology itself. Feminist scholars have taken each other to task for culture-bound assumptions that allegedly masquerade as analytical constructs. New arguments assert that dichotomies such as domestic/public and nature/culture, and premises such as universal sexual asymmetry, are ideological constructs that have their history in Western European society and misrepresent the thought and experience of people in other times and places. The long-questioned domestic/public dichotomy has,⁸ for many, outgrown its usefulness as anything more than an ideological distinction that often disguises more than it illuminates.⁹ The nature/culture formulation, elegantly posed by Sherry Ortner,¹⁰ has come under comparable criticism, most recently and thoroughly in a volume entitled *Nature, Culture, and Gender*.¹¹ And feminist assertions of universal sexual asymmetry continue to be attacked, particularly by Marxist scholars—most notably, Eleanor Leacock and Karen Sacks¹²—while counterarguments are posed by Jane Collier, Harriet Whitehead, Ortner, and Rosaldo.¹³

7. Sarah Hrdy, *The Woman That Never Evolved* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Tanner (n. 2 above).

8. For a recent summary, see Rapp (n. 1 above), pp. 508–11.

9. Sylvia Junko Yanagisako, "Family and Household: The Analysis of Domestic Groups," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 8 (1979): 161–205; Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "The Use and Abuse of Anthropology," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): 389–417.

10. Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in Rosaldo and Lamphere (n. 2 above).

11. MacCormack and Strathern (n. 2 above).

12. Eleanor Leacock, "Women's Status in Egalitarian Society: Implications for Social Evolution," *Current Anthropology* 19, no. 2 (1978): 247–75; Sacks (n. 2 above).

13. Rosaldo (n. 9 above); Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, "Introduction: Accounting for Sexual Meanings," in Ortner and Whitehead, eds. (n. 2 above); Jane F. Collier and Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "Politics and Gender in Simple Societies," in Ortner and Whitehead, eds. (n. 2 above).

In the course of evaluating analytical constructs, feminist scholars have looked again at accounts of foraging peoples and archaic states to see what understandings may have been obscured by previous theoretical formulations. At the same time, colonialism and Western sex roles and gender ideology, suspected sources of systematic misreadings of other cultures, have been subjected to scrutiny.

Marxist and non-Marxist feminists continue to focus on foraging peoples in their debate over sexual asymmetry. While most now agree that gathering and hunting societies are generally among the world's most egalitarian, sexually and otherwise, disagreements continue about whether sex roles and gender ideology in these societies too reveal systematic sexual asymmetry. A sexually egalitarian past is central in Marxist feminists' vision of a sexually egalitarian future.¹⁴ Presuming that all forms of social inequality originate from relations of production, Marxists argue that perceived sexual asymmetry among gathering-hunting peoples can be explained in one of two ways: either the world market system has engulfed the remaining foragers, thereby transforming symmetrical systems into asymmetrical ones;¹⁵ or Western observers, conditioned by their own class system to see hierarchy everywhere, simply perceive asymmetry where in fact there is none.

Sacks has explored this latter point in two important works. In a 1976 paper entitled "State Bias and Women's Status," Sacks argues that anthropologists have been blind to sexual equality in nonclass systems.¹⁶ Accustomed to thinking that separate means unequal, they have presumed a sexual division of labor necessarily implies asymmetrical relations between women and men. In her new book, *Sisters and Wives*, Sacks expands her argument into a general critique of what she terms "social darwinist" thinking—a perspective that misreads social relations, especially hierarchical ones, as reflections of innate human tendencies rather than recognizing them as social and historical products.¹⁷ She explores the assumption that women's place in society is dictated by their reproductive functions. Feminists as well as nonfeminists come under attack for failing to recognize that "baby-making" and "culture-making" are not essentially incompatible—that only certain forms of social relations, specifically those spawned by the rise of industrial capitalism, have made them so. To presume that women's roles as mothers and

14. Karen Sacks (n. 2 above) discusses this point at some length in chap. 3 of her book. Non-Marxist feminists are sometimes less candid about why it has been important for them to document sexual asymmetry in all societies. Susan Carol Rogers, "Women's Place: A Critical Review of Anthropological Theory," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 1 (1978): 123–62, is illuminating on this point.

15. Leacock (n. 12 above).

16. Karen Sacks, "State Bias and Women's Status," *American Anthropologist* 78, no. 3 (1976): 565–69.

17. Sacks (n. 2 above).

producers are universally problematic, Sacks argues, is an unwarranted projection of Western bourgeois assumptions on the rest of humanity.

Sacks's penchant for "us versus them" thinking, for categorically pitting Marxist analysts against a dazzling array of strange bedfellows (among them, Herbert Spencer, J. J. Bachofen, Marvin Harris, Margaret Mead, E. O. Wilson, and Sherry Ortner), may annoy readers sensitive to the complexities of social theory and intellectual history. Still, Sacks's argument is an important one that redirects attention from the supposedly essential nature of the sexes to a systematic inquiry into the historical and social relations between women and men.

The second half of *Sisters and Wives* develops a Marxist-feminist model for analyzing women's place in nonclass societies and incipient class societies. For nonclass societies, she poses two models to account for relations between the sexes: a "communal mode of production," in which the community as a whole cooperates as owners and producers, and a "kin corporate mode of production," in which kin groups collectively control the means of production. In the latter, women's relations to the means of production differ according to their status as sisters and wives. It is in the communal mode of production that Sacks locates the possibility of egalitarian relations between the sexes. For Sacks, gender ideology, like the rest of culture, follows from political economy. A system in which women and men share equal access to productive means necessarily will generate sexual egalitarianism. It is here that Sacks's argument is vulnerable.

Sacks's critique of anthropological thinking about women is powerful. Yet it really takes us only halfway to an understanding of the social construction of gender. Sacks has peeled away our social Darwinist blinders, but she has not, to my satisfaction at least, revealed to us what a sexually egalitarian society might in fact be. After all, visions of equality, like those of hierarchy, are themselves Western historical constructs.¹⁸ Sacks argues that the world views of people in nonclass systems are not our own, but she does not explore how they might be constituted. Can we simply define them negatively as being what our world view is not? A more positive characterization of the cultural construction of gender in nonstate societies is needed.

Feminist scholars more inclined than Sacks toward cultural analysis have long suspected that gender ideology stems from more than economic relations of production. Gayle Rubin, in a highly influential essay, urged anthropologists to look at kinship and marriage as a powerful

18. Leacock (n. 12 above) seems aware of this, but she does not deem it necessary to investigate the cultural representations of what she terms "egalitarian society." As Strathern notes in her reply to Leacock's paper, Leacock ignores the cultural perspectives of the societies in question, while at the same time purporting to characterize their views of the sexes (for Strathern's comments, see Leacock [n. 12], p. 267).

shaper of gender constructs.¹⁹ Collier and Rosaldo, in an ambitious paper entitled "Politics and Gender in Simple Societies," propose a model to account for gender systems in societies that roughly correspond to Sacks's communal mode of production.²⁰ In contrast to Sacks's emphasis on relations of production, Collier and Rosaldo examine the sets of social relations generated by marriage in simple societies. Sacks devised a schema based on political economy to circumvent traditional classifications of society by subsistence technology or by level of sociopolitical organization, classifications which she deemed not helpful for illuminating relations between the sexes. Likewise, Collier and Rosaldo develop their own typology, one based on marriage exchange. They argue that brideservice and bridewealth are associated with distinctive systems of gender and politics. Their essay focuses exclusively on brideservice societies, a category that applies to gathering and hunting societies as well as some horticultural peoples.

Collier and Rosaldo construct a composite picture of brideservice societies explicitly in the manner of a Weberian ideal type. In contrast to Sacks and Leacock, and in consonance with Rubin, Louise Lamphere, and Janet Siskind,²¹ Collier and Rosaldo posit that sexual asymmetry is a product not solely of privatized ownership but of politics, marriage, and kinship as well. They examine specifically the sets of relationships generated by the gifts of labor and food owed a woman's parents by her husband. The relationships these obligations create, with both in-laws and peers, are accompanied by ideological characterizations quite distinct from those associated with bridewealth exchanges.

Unlike Sacks, for whom a communal mode of production should lead automatically to egalitarian relations between the sexes, Collier and Rosaldo deny that cultural conceptions of gender are simply by-products of political economy. Instead, they regard gender constructs more complexly as ritual statements that express the values and serve the political interests of those who use them. Thus, in brideservice societies, men's prowess as hunters, killers, or religious specialists and women's sexual attractiveness receive symbolic emphasis precisely because they are the means through which people advance political claims. Sexual asymmetry here derives from the fact that the life courses, social relationships, and political interests of men and women are not mirror images of one another. Collier and Rosaldo's argument is complex and provocative. Their model is avowedly interpretive, not explanatory. Their emphasis

19. Gayle Rubin, "Traffic in Women: Notes toward a Political Economy of Sex," in Rapp Reiter, ed. (n. 2 above). For critiques of Rubin, see Mina Davis Caulfield, "Universal Sex Oppression? A Critique from Marxist Anthropology," *Catalyst* 1, nos. 10-11 (1977): 60-77; Joan A. Moreland-Davis, "Women and Anthropology: A Critique of Lévi-Strauss and Exchange Theory," *Atlantis* 3, pt. 2 (1978): 116-29.

20. Collier and Rosaldo (n. 13 above).

21. Louise Lamphere, "Review Essay: Anthropology," *Signs* 2, no. 3 (1977): 612-27; Rubin (n. 19 above); Janet Siskind, "Kinship and Mode of Production," *American Anthropologist* 80, no. 4 (1978): 860-72.

on symbolic expressions of gender found in ceremony and political discourse will undoubtedly raise questions about exactly how one determines what constitutes a culture's gender system and how women's (and men's) subjective experience intersects that system.

In addition to theoretical work, anthropologists have also recently published new ethnographic studies of foragers, including several outstanding works on the !Kung of the Kalahari. Nancy Howell's superb monograph on !Kung demography and Richard Lee's fine ecological account of the !Kung are landmarks in gatherer-hunter research.²² Both authors are sensitive to issues involving sex roles (although neither systematically treats cultural conceptions of gender). Marjorie Shostak's autobiography of a !Kung woman is another important addition to the literature.²³ Francis Dahlberg's *Woman the Gatherer* is an eclectic volume that documents the great variation existing among foragers with respect to sexual divisions of labor.²⁴

While foraging societies continue to attract considerable attention, the rise of early states has also been a focus of recent writing. Both Marxist and non-Marxist feminists tend to agree that, with the development of state organization, there came a relative decline in women's economic and political autonomy. A traditional view saw women's importance in the domestic sphere eclipsed by the inexorable development of the state. Recent feminist scholarship has taken another approach to the subject. Following Rapp's proposals,²⁵ economic, political, and ideological developments in the early states have been reexamined with questions about sex roles and gender in mind. Traditional theories focused on macrolevel changes in technology, economy, and environment as evolutionary forces; yet significant changes in social relations of production have clearly involved realignments of kinship, household, and family organization.²⁶ Feminist scholarship can illuminate central processes occurring in these critical loci, processes responsible for the shape that sex and gender have taken in various state formations. As in the case of human evolution,²⁷ the new feminist scholarship should have a pro-

22. Nancy Howell, *Demography of the Dobe !Kung* (New York: Academic Press, 1979); Richard B. Lee, *The !Kung San: Men, Women, and Work in a Foraging Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

23. Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

24. Frances Dahlberg, ed., *Woman the Gatherer* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981).

25. Rayna Rapp, "Gender and Class: An Archaeology of Knowledge concerning the Origin of the State," *Dialectical Anthropology* 2, no. 4 (1977): 309-16; Rayna Rapp, "Women, Religion and Archaic Civilizations: An Introduction," *Feminist Studies* 4, no. 3 (1978): 1-6.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Hrdy (n. 7 above); Tanner (n. 2 above); Nancy M. Tanner and Adrienne L. Zihlman, "Women in Evolution. Part I: Innovation and Selection in Human Origins," *Signs* 1, no. 3, pt. 1 (1976): 585-608; Adrienne Zihlman, "Women and Evolution, II. Subsistence and Social Organization among Early Hominids," *Signs* 4, no. 1 (1978): 4-20; Adrienne Zihlman, "Women as Shapers of the Human Adaptation," in Dahlberg, ed. (n. 24 above).

found effect upon conventional thinking in the field by opening up previously ignored areas of study.

Once again, Sacks's work represents new developments.²⁸ Sacks proposes that where strong ruling classes eclipse the control of kin groups over productive means, they erode women's claims as "sisters" (i.e., women's relation to production based on kin group membership) and lead thereby to women's exclusive dependence as wives. Sacks is aware that her thesis regarding women in the development of African states lacks specific historical evidence. But arguing from ethnographic analogy, she postulates that the rise of ruling classes in Buganda and Dahomey undercut women's place in kin corporate modes of production.

The issue of matriarchy inevitably arises when archaic states, especially those of the Near East and the Mediterranean, are discussed. While there continues to be little anthropological support for matriarchal theories,²⁹ recent work demonstrates convincingly the "visibility" of women in archaeological sites like Çatal Hüyük.³⁰ There are very real problems in the interpretation of archaeological data. Material remains are not sure guides to social relations or cultural meanings. Still, what recent work succeeds in doing is to remind us that, given the thinness of evidence, axiomatic presumptions of absolute patriarchy may be as unfounded as their opposites.³¹

Matriarchy, as every beginning anthropology student learns, is not the same as matriliney.³² Matrilineal descent is the subject of several important new studies. Elizabeth Colson, a participant in the SSRC (Social Science Research Council) conference that resulted in the important volume *Matrilineal Kinship*,³³ has written an updated account that explores how, contrary to earlier theoretical assessments, matrilineal kinship among the Gwembe and Plateau Tonga has proved to be quite

28. Sacks (n. 2 above), see esp. chaps. 7, 8, and 9. For a fine summary of other work on the archaic states, see Rapp (n. 1 above), p. 499. See also the following new essays: June Nash, "Aztec Women: The Transition from Status to Class in Empire and Colony," in *Women and Colonialization: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980); Irene Silverblatt, "'The Universe Has Turned Inside Out . . . There Is No Justice for Us Here.' Andean Women under Spanish Rule," in the same volume.

29. But see C. Fluehr-Lobban, "A Marxist Reappraisal of the Matriarchate," *Current Anthropology* 20, no. 2 (1979): 341-59; Romi Grønberg, "Matriarchy—Why Not?" *Folk* 21-22 (1979/1980): 219-28.

30. Anne Barstow, "The Uses of Archaeology for Women's History: James Mellaart's Work on the Neolithic Goddess at Çatal Hüyük," *Feminist Studies* 4, no. 3 (1978): 7-18.

31. For example, Ruby Rohrlich, "State Formation in Sumer and the Subjugation of Women," *Feminist Studies* 6, no. 1 (1980): 76-102.

32. But see Fluehr-Lobban (n. 29 above).

33. David Schneider and Kathleen Gough, *Matrilineal Kinship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).

durable and relatively impervious to change.³⁴ Annette Weiner's work on the matrilineal Trobrianders continues to shed new light on that system.³⁵ And Karla Poewe, in a spate of articles and a monograph, proposes that matriliney in Luapula, Zambia, must be seen as a political economy at odds with the competing Protestant-backed form of capitalism in Zambia today.³⁶ Poewe's work bristles with challenges to conventional views of kinship and social organization.

The effects of colonialism on both state and nonstate societies has been examined with reference to issues of sex and gender. The most significant new work in this area is a collection edited by Leacock and Mona Etienne that demonstrates the importance of ethnohistorical study in any examination of sex roles in society.³⁷ This volume makes great strides in documenting, with sensitivity to sex and class, the interaction of colonialists and indigenes.

In addition to examining other cultures, past and present, feminist scholars have also devoted their efforts to unraveling issues of gender in Western society. Nancy Chodorow's book, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, is a milestone in research on the psychodynamics of family in Western industrial society,³⁸ and Sylvia Yanagisako has provided a comprehensive and provoking theoretical review of the literature on family and household.³⁹ Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako pit Victorian evolutionists against twentieth-century functionalists in a critique of anthropological assumptions about the family.⁴⁰ Rapp explores American

34. Elizabeth Colson, "The Resilience of Matrilineality: Gwembe and Plateau Tonga Adaptations," in *The Versatility of Kinship*, ed. Linda Cordell and Stephen Beckerman (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

35. Annette Weiner, "Trobriand Descent: Female/Male Domains," *Ethos* 5, no. 1 (1977): 54-70; "The Reproductive Model in Trobriand Society," *Mankind* 11, no. 3 (1978): 175-86; "Trobriand Kinship from Another View: The Reproductive Power of Women and Men," *Man* 14, no. 2 (1979): 328-48; "Reproduction: A Replacement for Reciprocity," *American Ethnologist* 7, no. 1 (1980): 71-85; "Stability in Banana Leaves: Colonialism, Economics, and Trobriand Women," in Etienne and Leacock, eds. (n. 28 above).

36. Karla Poewe, "Religion, Matriliney and Change: Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists in Luapula, Zambia," *American Ethnologist* 5, no. 2 (1978): 303-21; "Matriliney in the Throes of Change: Kinship, Descent and Marriage in Luapula, Zambia," *Africa* 48, no. 3 (1978): 205-18, and no. 4 (1978): 353-67; "Matriliney and Capitalism: The Development of Incipient Classes in Luapula, Zambia," *Dialectical Anthropology* 3, no. 4 (1978): 331-47; "Women, Horticulture and Society in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some Comments," *American Anthropologist* 81, no. 1 (1979): 115-17; Poewe and Peter R. Lovell, "Marriage, Descent and Kinship: On the Differential Primacy of Institutions in Longana and Luapula," *Africa* 50, no. 1 (1980): 73-92; "Matrilineal Ideology: The Economic Activities of Women in Luapula, Zambia," in Cordell and Beckerman, eds. (n. 34 above); *Matrilineal Ideology: Male-Female Dynamics in Luapula, Zambia* (London: Academic Press, 1981).

37. Etienne and Leacock, eds. (n. 28 above).

38. Chodorow (n. 2 above).

39. Yanagisako (n. 9 above).

40. Jane Collier, Michelle Z. Rosaldo, and Sylvia Yanagisako, "Is There a Family? New Anthropological Views," in *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions*, ed. Barrie Thorne with Marilyn Yalom (New York: Longman, 1982).

family ideology in light of class differences,⁴¹ while Susan Harding finds that class alone cannot account for the contrasting "family strategies" of feminists and their opponents.⁴²

Several outstanding trends are evident through much of the recent literature. One is an emphatic assertion by feminist anthropologists doing social and cultural research that sex roles and gender concepts must be seen as products of history and society, not as reflections of inherent human sexual natures. This theme, of course, has a long history in the anthropology of women, from Margaret Mead's *Sex and Temperament* onward.⁴³ One intriguing new statement of the problem has been made by Sandra Wallman.⁴⁴ Hers is a witty and penetrating critique of the ways in which social scientists confuse biological classifications of sex type and sex roles. Whereas roles in general are considered social constructions, the female role, she asserts, is used as though it were inextricably bound to women's physical nature. There are clearly relations between some roles and some physical attributes, sexual and otherwise, but sex class does not constitute a social role. Hence arguments about the "position of women" and "women's role" are meaningless.⁴⁵ Wallman raises a critical question: When is sex a socially meaningful criterion and when is it not? She argues that the sex of a social actor cannot be presumed to be significant, definitive, or even relevant across social situations.

A second feature of recent work is its strong commitment to historical analysis, which Marxist analysts have been calling for for some time. Deborah Gewertz's article, "A Historical Reconsideration of Female Dominance among the Chambri of Papua New Guinea,"⁴⁶ illustrates how historical analysis can elucidate distinctive forms of sex roles. The article reconciles Mead's portrait of gender relations among the Tchambuli and the very different situation Gewertz observed in the 1970s as representing systemic adaptations to shifting economic and political conditions.⁴⁷ Debates over familism on the Israeli kibbutz similarly dem-

41. Rayna Rapp, "Family and Class in Contemporary America: Notes towards an Understanding of Ideology," *Science and Society* 42, no. 3 (1978): 278-300, reprinted in Thorne and Yalom, eds.

42. Susan Harding, "Family Reform Movements: Recent Feminism and Its Opposition," *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 1 (1981): 57-75.

43. Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (New York: New American Library, 1935).

44. Sandra Wallman, "Epistemologies of Sex," in *Female Hierarchies*, ed. Lionel Tiger and Heather Fowler (Chicago: Beresford Book Service, 1978).

45. This is a general conclusion in recent work developed most fully by Martin King Whyte, *The Status of Women in Preindustrial Societies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978); Naomi Quinn, "Anthropological Studies on Women's Status," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977): 181-222.

46. Deborah Gewertz, "A Historical Reconsideration of Female Dominance among the Chambri of Papua New Guinea," *American Ethnologist* 8, no. 1 (1981): 94-106.

47. Mead (n. 43 above).

onstrate how historical perspectives conflict with essentialist arguments.⁴⁸

If Marxist feminists have led the way in historical analysis, the non-Marxist camp has displayed a strong commitment to comparative study.⁴⁹ It is noteworthy at a time when much work, especially work done by symbolic anthropologists, has a reputation for being particularistic and immune to cross-cultural comparison, that feminist anthropologists have been unswerving in their efforts to establish comparative frameworks for exploring sex and gender. An outstanding example of this endeavor is Ortner and Whitehead's edited volume *Sexual Meanings*,⁵⁰ which contains several important comparative analyses. Collier and Rosaldo's attempt to construct a model of brideservice systems has already been discussed. Whitehead's impressive examination of the North American Indian berdache (institutionalized transvestism) critiques and redirects comparative strategies in the study of homosexuality, in particular, and sexuality, in general.⁵¹ Ortner applies her interest in structural and cultural dimensions of sex and gender in hierarchical systems to an examination of Polynesian societies and sketches some intriguing comparisons to hierarchical systems of Europe and Asia.⁵²

In their introduction, Ortner and Whitehead propose a model for exploring sex and gender which underscores not only social and historical considerations⁵³ but the cultural dimension as well, a dimension that Marxist feminists and other scholars have neglected. Citing a debt to Weber (and his American interpreters), they propose an approach that examines both the formal structure of social relations and the culturally shaped perceptions of actors within the system. Noting the inevitable connection that anthropologists draw between sex and gender on one hand, and kinship and marriage on the other, Ortner and Whitehead claim that the two sets are mediated in every society by what they call structures of prestige—namely, the systems of status distinctions in a society. Each society has multiple prestige structures (gender is one of them), and these prestige structures tend to be integrated. The intersec-

48. Melford Spiro, *Gender and Culture: Kibbutz Women Revisited* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979); Nancy Datan, review of *Gender and Culture* by Melford Spiro, *American Ethnologist* 8, no. 1 (1981): 202–3; Seymour Parker and Hilda Parker, "Women and the Emerging Family on the Israeli Kibbutz," *American Ethnologist* 8, no. 4 (1981): 758–73.

49. This commitment is evident from the pioneering efforts of Mead (n. 43 above), to new work such as that by Sanday (n. 2 above).

50. Ortner and Whitehead, eds. (n. 2 above).

51. Harriet Whitehead, "The Bow and the Burden Strap: A New Look at Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native North America," in Ortner and Whitehead, eds. (n. 2 above).

52. Sherry B. Ortner, "Gender and Sexuality in Hierarchical Societies: The Case of Polynesia and Some Comparative Implications," in Ortner and Whitehead, eds. (n. 2 above).

53. Ortner and Whitehead, eds. (n. 13 above).

tion of men's prestige games and the relations between the sexes shapes cultural constructs of sexuality and gender.

Ortner and Whitehead's argument for the existence of systematic relations between gender and prestige-oriented activity (which Collier and Rosaldo treat as political and economic dimensions) is highly compelling. Feminist criticism will no doubt focus on the weighting of this model toward male-dominated politics rather than women's experience—an emphasis that the authors defend with the claim that women's lives, like men's, are skewed toward male concerns.

A fourth development in recent work represents a turning point in this review and, I hope, in feminist anthropology: that is, the growing concern among anthropologists with the interplay of situation, context, and meaning. Here my focus shifts from theoretical work to the ethnographic genre. As new field research is undertaken with theoretical questions in mind, ethnographic studies begin to reveal the complexities of cultural experience pertaining to gender. A number of researchers have expressed skepticism about the "are they or aren't they egalitarian/asymmetrical/oppressive" questions of earlier literature.

D. K. Feil poses the issues nicely in a paper on the Enga, a Highland New Guinea group known for quite striking sexual segregation and antagonism.⁵⁴ Feil claims that the stereotypic image of the contaminating and despised Enga woman, derived from expressions of male cult activity, does not hold across all of Enga life. He demonstrates his point with an account of women's influential backstage role in the culturally central *tee* exchange system.

Diane Bell's paper on Warlpiri marriage is a similar demonstration of women's importance in a supposedly male-dominated political arena.⁵⁵ Bell explores how women in this Australian aboriginal society play key roles in the politics of male initiation and marriage arrangements. As in the case of the Enga, stereotypes of Warlpiri women derived from male ceremonies do not subsume all aspects of women's and men's experience.

Some analysts, when responding to such demonstrations of women's influence, tend to discount cultural ideology and focus on observable behavior alone. In doing so, they seem to suggest that it is either ideology or behavior—but not both—that determines women's place in a social system. By focusing on women's activities and deeming them significant, some conclude that all the misogyny observed is in the biased eyes of Western ethnographers or, alternately, that it exists but simply does not matter. Then too, symbolic analysts, by stressing the picture of the sexes

54. D. K. Feil, "Women and Men in the Enga Tee," *American Ethnologist* 5, no. 2 (1978): 263-79. See also Marilyn Strathern, "Self-Interest and the Social Good: Some Implications of Hagen Gender Imagery," in Ortner and Whitehead, eds. (n. 2 above).

55. Diane Bell, "Desert Politics: Choices in the 'Marriage Market,'" in Etienne and Leacock, eds. (n. 28 above).

posed in ritual, have not always connected that picture to the everyday experience of women and men. This has been a particular problem when anthropologists analyze accounts in the literature rather than in their own field research.

To escape from this impasse, we need far more sophisticated approaches to the study of cultural meaning and experience. It is too facile to deny the significance of sexual stereotypes or to presume that women's influence in one context cancels out their degradation in another. Just as we know that women's status is not a unitary phenomenon across cultures, we need to be reminded that the intracultural picture is equally complex.⁵⁶ Indeed, a culture may feature various and mutually contradicting statements about gender. Are these expressions random, irrelevant, or mutually negating? I think not. If not, further study is needed to explore domains of meaning, their associated contexts, and their situated use by social actors.

Efforts in this direction are appearing in new ethnographic studies of gender. Olivia Harris's treatment of *chachawarmi*, a key concept of the Laymi Indians of the Bolivian Andes, reveals how an ideal of marital complementarity excludes other dimensions of male-female interaction, including men's violence toward women.⁵⁷ Here ideology stresses one dimension of experience while ignoring others. Jane Goodale's study of Kaulong gender relations includes an account of how ideas of female pollution figure in everyday life.⁵⁸ Clearly, the existence of an ideological assertion in a culture is no predictor of the way in which social actors experience that assertion. Gilbert Herdt's extraordinary account of a homosexual initiatory cult in the eastern highlands of New Guinea similarly eschews a strictly normative approach in an effort to explore the psychological experiences of his informants.⁵⁹ Stanley Brandes demonstrates a fine sensitivity to social context as he examines male ideology and relations between the sexes alongside other hierarchical relations in an Andalusian town.⁶⁰ Theoretical impetus for a more contextualized analysis of sexual meanings has a number of sources, including symbolic

56. This point is developed by Daisy Dwyer, *Images and Self-Images: Male and Female in Morocco* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

57. Olivia Harris, "Complementarity and Conflict," in *Sex and Age as Principles of Social Differentiation*, ed. J. S. LaFontaine, Association of Social Anthropologists Monograph 17 (New York: Academic Press, 1978). See also Olivia Harris, "The Power of Signs: Gender, Culture and the Wild in the Bolivian Andes," in MacCormack and Strathern, eds. (n. 2 above).

58. Jane C. Goodale, "Gender, Sexuality and Marriage: A Kaulong Model of Nature and Culture," in MacCormack and Strathern, eds. (n. 2 above).

59. Gilbert Herdt, *Guardians of the Flutes: Idioms of Masculinity* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1981).

60. Stanley Brandes, *Metaphors of Masculinity: Sex and Status in Andalusian Folklore* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980). See also Stanley Brandes, "Like Wounded Stags: Male Sexual Ideology in an Andalusian Town," in Ortner and Whitehead, eds. (n. 2 above).

interactionism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis. Sociolinguistics, a field noted for scrupulous investigation of situated meanings, may prove helpful to cultural anthropologists in this regard. Ruth Borker's recent review of sociolinguistic approaches to women and language provides an overview of work in that field.⁶¹

Up to this point I have traced some general trends in recent anthropological literature. Now I would like to consider how feminist theory in anthropology is influencing ethnographic writing. As I noted at the start of this essay, anthropology thrives on a tension between the construction of theory and the practice of ethnography. By challenging traditional anthropology, feminists claim that attention to sex roles and cultural concepts of gender will profoundly and essentially alter our analyses. Feminist anthropology, then, will reach maturity only when it begins to shape significantly the ethnographies we write. In the following paragraphs I will both review various types of ethnographic writing about gender and speculate about the place of feminist analysis in the writing of ethnography.

The number of life histories that have appeared in recent work on women is quite striking.⁶² The life history, of course, is an established form in anthropological writing. It promises an elucidation of subjective experience with reference to historical, cultural, social, and psychological frameworks.⁶³ For feminist anthropologists, its appeal is clear. Given the relative invisibility of women in standard analyses, researchers have looked to personal accounts as a means of locating women in social systems. Personal and longitudinal, life histories have been favored especially by psychological anthropologists and historical analysts. As an anthropological form, the virtues of the life history give rise to its vices. A life history, if presented well, is a richly textured tapestry of detail; but overwhelming amounts of descriptive data often eclipse, and sometimes totally replace, any attempt of analysis. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that readers of anthropological life histories are generally not familiar with the culture from which the accounts come.

Perhaps the most ambitious of recent work that makes use of au-

61. Ruth Borker, "Anthropology: Social and Cultural Perspectives," in *Women and Language in Literature and Society*, ed. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980).

62. Representative of the trend are the following: Domitila Barrios de Chungara with Moema Viezzer, *Let Me Speak! Testimony of Domitila, A Woman of the Bolivian Mines* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978); Youngsook K. Harvey, *Six Korean Women: The Socialization of Shamans* (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing, 1979); Jane Holden Kelley, *Yaqui Women: Contemporary Life Histories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); Oscar Lewis, Ruth Lewis, and Susan Rigdon, *Four Women: Living the Revolution. An Oral History of Contemporary Cuba* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Sarah LeVine, *Mothers and Wives: Gusi Women of East Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Marjorie Shostak (n. 23 above).

63. For a theoretical review of the life history approach, see Lawrence Watson, "Understanding a Life History as a Subjective Document: Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Perspectives," *Ethos* 4, no. 1 (1976): 95-131.

tobiographical materials is Sarah LeVine's *Mothers and Wives: Gusii Women of East Africa*.⁶⁴ LeVine used a clinical approach to explore the psychological experience of seven Gusii women. She interprets her informants' presentations of self not only in terms of their relations to family and neighbors but also in terms of their dealings with LeVine herself. Her case studies expose the pressures on young mothers generated by a patrilineal, virilocal system undergoing drastic demographic, economic, and cultural change. LeVine's study reveals the strengths and weaknesses of a life history approach. The book contains extraordinarily rich and insightful reporting, but lacks judicious editorial pruning, a glossary, an index, and, most critically, a systematic analysis of each case history. A general introduction and conclusion cannot begin to contain, let alone illuminate, the exceedingly suggestive individual accounts they bracket.

LeVine's study presents a picture of Gusii women as passive victims rather than active agents. Michelle Teitelbaum rightly takes her to task for neglecting the stages of the life cycle in which women hold higher status and more power.⁶⁵ But there are problems with the current feminist criticism that women should be portrayed as agents rather than as victims. The logic of the complaint runs something like this: The normative system, articulated most fully by men, puts women in subordinate positions. Read from the vantage point of men in authority, women are pawns. Seen from a feminist perspective, however, it is obvious that women are also actors, with their own agendas. Feminist writers, therefore, should stress women's qualities as agents rather than dwell on their role as victims. What intrigues me about the Gusii case is that in at least one phase of their life cycle Gusii women explicitly use the image of victim to portray themselves (whereas in some societies, feminist anthropologists find their informants inarticulate about their alleged oppression). To understand why, we need a fuller analysis of Gusii personhood. How much do these self-portraits follow common cultural themes, and how much do they reflect the ethos of Gusii women as opposed to Gusii men, of young as opposed to old, of rural folk as opposed to town folk? We have no idea what these assertions mean in the wider context of Gusii society. An exclusive focus on young mothers robs us of a context for evaluating the experience of these seven women.

Rather than stipulate that in feminist ethnography women should always appear in control of their lives, I would argue that we need to analyze the gender constructs through which people express themselves and to play those cultural formulations off against the structural and situational dimensions of women's and men's lives in a given society. Passive, active, victim, agent—our own stereotypes can further confuse

64. LeVine.

65. Michelle Teitelbaum, review of *Mothers and Wives* by Sarah LeVine, *American Anthropologist* 83, no. 1 (1981): 156-57.

our readings of informants' presentations of selves. If young Gusii mothers portray themselves as victims, we must explore that assertion in the context of Gusii culture and social relations.

A less ambitious, yet more successful example of the life history genre is Shostak's *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*, possibly the most manageable life history published to date.⁶⁶ Shostak has the advantage of working with a population that has been well studied over the course of many years by a variety of researchers. Rather than having to account single-handedly for an entire culture in order to illuminate the experience of one of its members, she can draw on the extensive literature about the !Kung. With that edge, Shostak presents with loving care an extraordinary first-person narrative by Nisa, a wonderfully articulate and engaging individual.

Rather than sandwiching a fat narrative between a thin introduction and conclusion, usual life history fare, Shostak divides Nisa's narrative into fifteen chapters, each centered on a theme (e.g., "Discovering Sex," "Motherhood and Loss," "Taking Lovers"). Each chapter is prefaced by a summary of !Kung research pertinent to the topic. While these summaries, some five or six pages in length, are necessarily superficial, they are crucial because they allow the reader to reflect on Nisa's experience within the wider context of !Kung history and society (and to identify further source material in the notes). The mode of presentation also allows Shostak to identify apparent discrepancies between Nisa's account and other sources of information on the !Kung. For example, Nisa's recollections of childhood abuse do not tally with studies of !Kung child rearing. Similarly, Nisa's sense of personal tragedy seemed uncharacteristic of !Kung in general. As for Nisa's apparent obsession with sex, Shostak tries to place it in the context of both her own relationship to her informants and !Kung women's talk in general. Shostak claims that sex figures as a prominent theme in !Kung women's talk, but here, as in other matters, she does not attempt to analyze why. (Collier and Rosaldo's argument about gender constructs in brideservice societies may prove illuminating on this point.)⁶⁷

The strength of Shostak's book is its simplicity. Shostak does not press beyond the task of placing Nisa's narrative in the context of !Kung society and culture. But given the excellent materials available on the !Kung, that suffices. *Nisa* could well become a classic for general teaching within and beyond the discipline of anthropology, thereby replacing the entertaining but outdated *Harmless People*.⁶⁸

Along with personal histories, life-cycle models in general could be

66. Shostak (n. 23 above).

67. Collier and Rosaldo (n. 13 above).

68. Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Harmless People* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1959).

used more effectively by feminist anthropologists.⁶⁹ Examination of the entire life cycle helps to rectify erroneous stereotypes based on characterizations of a single phase. Teitelbaum has made this point in reference to LeVine's study.⁷⁰ Goodale and, more recently, Bell note how Australian researchers have tended to focus exclusively on young girls' marriages to old men and thereby have failed to trace the course of women's marital lives.⁷¹ Work on Taiwanese women reminds us that miserable brides become domineering mothers-in-law in time.⁷² So too, Sarakatsani women enter their prime as their husbands falteringly retire.⁷³ A developmental approach raises intriguing questions about personal experience and societal norms. For example, Enid Schildkrout's paper on Hausa childhood reveals that children freely cross the boundaries and gain knowledge of domains that will be closed to them in the sexually segregated adult world.⁷⁴

A related ethnographic form based on domestic cycles is nowhere better illustrated than by Margery Wolf's beautiful monograph, *The House of Lim*.⁷⁵ Like *Nisa*, *The House of Lim* benefits from the availability of extensive published work on the area, much of it by Wolf herself.⁷⁶ Wolf's carefully crafted book illuminates the general through the particular. By focusing on the history of a single and, in many ways, unique family, she is able to lend clarity to patterns of marriage and family among Taiwanese peasants. Wolf's insightful treatment of women's experience proves essential for understanding a patriarchal family structure. Tighter and trimmer than most life histories, Wolf's book is a

69. There is not space here to review the recent work on initiation, a topic germane to any consideration of the life cycle. A few significant works deserve mention: Herdt (n. 59 above); Bruce Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Karen Ericksen Paige and Jeffrey Paige, *The Politics of Reproductive Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Alice Schlegel and Herbert Barry, "The Evolutionary Significance of Adolescent Initiation Ceremonies," *American Ethnologist* 7, no. 4 (1980): 696-715; Deborah Winslow, "The Rituals of First Menstruation in Sri Lanka," *Man* 15, no. 4 (1980): 603-25. I take exception to the highly androcentric approach taken by Paige and Paige that leads them to focus exclusively on male-male relations and thereby to overlook entirely the significance of male-female relations. This blindness leads, e.g., to a serious misreading of the Mbuti *Elima* ceremony (pp. 102-3).

70. Teitelbaum (n. 65 above).

71. Jane C. Goodale, "Marriage Contracts among the Tiwi," *Ethnology* 1, no. 4 (1962): 452-66; Bell (n. 55 above).

72. See, e.g., Margery Wolf, "Chinese Women: Old Skills in a New Context," in Rosaldo and Lamphere, eds. (n. 2 above).

73. J. K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

74. Enid Schildkrout, "Roles of Children in Urban Kano," in LaFontaine, ed. (n. 57 above).

75. Margery Wolf, *The House of Lim* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968).

76. Margery Wolf, *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972); Wolf and Witke (n. 2 above).

classic demonstration of how case studies can be both true to personal experience and sociologically explicit.⁷⁷

The life history and related approaches provide an alternative to the standard ethnography, which, as Ortner and Whitehead note, often admits women only in the kinship and marriage chapter.⁷⁸ But relying on personal histories to describe women's subjective experience and on traditional monographs to provide the social analysis is clearly an unsatisfactory way of integrating feminist studies and anthropology. It is not surprising, therefore, to find recent work written explicitly from the perspective of women. The complaint seems to be that traditional accounts have bypassed women in their portrayal of the normative male-dominated system; all we have are stereotypes of what women represent in men's dealings with other men. The remedy, for some, is to focus on women as actors. Caroline Bledsoe's book, *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society*, is one example of this approach.⁷⁹ Bledsoe begins with the premise that women are economic and political strategists pursuing their own personal interests. The social structure, then, is the set of options and constraints that individual women actors face.

Several very salient points emerge in Bledsoe's account. First, it became apparent to her that women do not always act in the best interests of women as a group. Instead, she found old women dominating young ones, Sande initiators manipulating the families of young novices, midwives monopolizing knowledge so as to ensure continued dependence on them by other women. In other words, Kpelle women do not form a unified interest group. Bledsoe's finding is in line with other recent research. Margaret Strobel, in her book, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890-1975*, explores how issues like ethnicity and class divide the women of Mombasa as much as or more than their sex unites them.⁸⁰ Patricia Caplan and Janet Bujra provide a cogent theoretical treatment of this issue, as well as specific ethnographic illustrations, in their collection *Women United, Women Divided*.⁸¹ Clearly, any study that investigates women as a category must attend to the variety of social factors that

77. Similarly, Sulamith Heins Potter, in her book *Family Life in a Northern Thai Village: A Study in the Structural Significance of Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), focuses on a single family to illustrate the workings of Thai social structure; but her book lacks the ethnographic richness, the analytical depth, and the literary excellence of Wolf's book.

78. Ortner and Whitehead, eds. (n. 13 above), p. 10.

79. Caroline Bledsoe, *Women and Marriage in Kpelle Society* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1980). Another example is Louise Lamphere, F. M. Silva, and J. P. Sousa, "Kin Networks and Family Strategies: Working Class Portuguese Families in New England," in Cordell and Beckerman, eds. (n. 34 above).

80. Margaret Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890-1975* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979).

81. Patricia Caplan and Janet M. Bujra, eds., *Women United, Women Divided: Comparative Studies of Ten Contemporary Cultures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).

interact with and commonly override sex as a socially significant attribute. For this reason, among others, a study of women must include men—as Bledsoe discovered. The point seems an obvious one, although it is surprising, given criticisms of androcentric analyses, how often feminists who should know better fail to relate their claims about women to the wider context of female-male relations. “Women do this” assertions are as hollow as “men do that” assertions. Feminist anthropology needs to make clear how neither claim makes sense on its own.

Two other recent monographs focusing on women raise the issue of how feminist politics surfaces explicitly in ethnographic analysis. One finds minimal expression of feminist politics in monographs on “traditional” societies; anthropologists are generally protectors, not critics, of such systems. In work on societies like China and Cuba, however, where socialist feminism is an open issue in the cultures under study, feminist issues are addressed directly.⁸² Some anthropologists studying women in urban Third World areas—areas where feminist politics are less overt—have introduced feminism in their studies, with varying degrees of success.

In her book *Women of Accra*, Deborah Pellow uses feminist standards for evaluating the lives of women.⁸³ From Pellow we learn that her Ghanaian informants are not individualistic, free of familism and kinship, or open to speculation about options in their lives. Women of Accra are clearly not what middle-class American female academics are, namely, concerned about autonomy, personal choice, and freedom from family responsibility. Pellow’s study seems designed to disprove assumptions that urban African women enjoy great independence and mobility. Still, it leaves me with a desire to know more about what these women are and less about what they are not.

Ilsa Schuster’s *The New Women of Lusaka* is more successful, although Schuster judges life in Lusaka more harshly than Pellow does life in Accra.⁸⁴ Schuster is unrelenting in her assertion that something is rotten in the state of Zambia, at least as far as the sexual relations between women and men in the urban capital are concerned. Schuster, however, demonstrates that her complaints are built upon those of her informants, that she is giving voice to the frustrations of the people she studied. Her analysis illuminates informants’ perspectives rather than displacing them. What Schuster offers is a dialogue with her informants that is richer for the participation of both sides.

82. See, e.g., Elisabeth Croll, *Feminism and Socialism in China* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); Croll, “Rural China: Segregation to Solidarity,” in Caplan and Bujra, eds. (n. 81 above); also Lewis, Lewis, and Rigdon (n. 62 above).

83. Deborah Pellow, *Women in Accra: Options for Autonomy* (Algonae, Mich.: Reference Publications, 1977).

84. Ilsa M. Glazer Schuster, *The New Women of Lusaka* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1979).

The ethnographies reviewed thus far take women as their primary focus. There is clearly merit in this approach; one hears women's voices and sees the social system from women's perspective. But at some point it is necessary to go beyond this format to demonstrate that approaches which ignore women are not simply incomplete with regard to information but also inadequate because they overlook dimensions fundamental to understanding the phenomena under study. The ultimate goal of feminist anthropology should be not simply to supplement our knowledge but indeed to realign our disciplinary approaches.

Of work to date, Weiner's restudy of the Trobriand Islands demonstrates most dramatically what a "bifocal" view can bring to social analysis.⁸⁵ In her book, *Women of Value, Men of Renown*, and in a series of subsequent publications, Weiner elucidates the workings of Trobriand social organization by demonstrating the significance of women's exchange.⁸⁶ From the start, Weiner has rejected assumptions of sexual asymmetry in simpler societies. In contrast to analysts like Rosaldo, she denies the structural centrality of male economic and political control. She attempts to show how women may often and in less ostentatious ways provide important links in the system. Instead of comparing women's and men's presence in public forums and deeming women deficient, anthropologists, in Weiner's view, should investigate the articulation of female and male spheres of influence.

Weiner's work on Trobriand women is structurally illuminating. An issue still to be resolved (in the field generally, not only in Weiner's work) is the relation between ideology and social structure. Weiner deliberately sets out to circumvent not only the androcentrism of Western anthropologists but also the apparent androcentrism of her male informants. If we follow her lead and take both women's and men's activities into account, we are still left with the problem of how our analysis relates to gender ideology and the cultural experience of our informants. If men deny the significance of women's contributions, it seems essential to discover why. Is it due to colonial influence, to expectations of what Western anthropologists want to hear, or is there something more subtle going on, a more complex dynamic in the Trobriand politics of gender?

The work of Christine Hugh-Jones, while it too does not focus on the political dimensions of male-female relations, merits serious attention by researchers interested in the integration of men's and women's activities in social analysis. Hugh-Jones's approach is beautifully demon-

85. Carolyn Lougee (Department of History, Stanford University) used the term "bifocal" at the seminar on women's studies, held at Lewis and Clark College in June 1981, which was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

86. Annette Weiner, *Women of Value, Men of Renown* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976). Other references to Weiner's work are cited in n. 35 above.

strated in an article entitled "Patterns of Production and Consumption in Pirá-Paraná Society,"⁸⁷ in which she eschews the conventional treatment of a sexual division of labor. Instead, she examines production and consumption as processes and thereby links the activities of the sexes. She evenly examines both secular and ritual processes, an effective strategy for circumventing the domestic-public polarity. As she explains in her monograph *From the Milk River*,⁸⁸ manioc production, basic to most Amazonian diets, is largely ignored in most accounts of Amazonian ideology—probably because manioc production, a women's task, lacks ritual embellishment.⁸⁹ Her analysis demonstrates how seemingly humdrum women's work, such as processing manioc and preparing a meal, is crucial for analyzing a male-dominated ritual cycle. Hugh-Jones's conclusion—"ritual is simply a large-scale version of the daily round"—has important implications for those who hold that single-gender accounts of social systems are analytically impoverished.⁹⁰ Her analysis effectively demonstrates that, despite male control of a ritual complex, anthropologists cannot afford to ignore the activities of both women and men when interpreting that complex.

Weiner's study discovers the significance of a hitherto unrecognized women's place in ceremonial exchange. Hugh-Jones goes beyond a barrier between mundane and ceremonial experience to reveal the structural relations between women's and men's domains. Other examples of bifocal ethnography can be cited.⁹¹ The point here is for feminist anthropologists to establish that gendered analysis is not merely a supplement but a *sine qua non* of social inquiry.

While one can stress the need for a gendered approach to society and culture, there is an additional factor that governs anthropological attention to these issues. Ethnographers informally acknowledge that their analyses are shaped in important ways by the peoples they study. Quite clearly, there are some societies that virtually beg for a thoroughgoing analysis of sex roles and gender ideology. Feminist and non-feminist scholars alike will be drawn to such investigation. New Guinea provides numerous examples of this sort. So, too, do the Mediterranean and the Near East. Take, for example, J. K. Campbell, who as far as I

87. Christine Hugh-Jones, "Patterns of Production and Consumption in Pirá-Paraná Society," in LaFontaine, ed. (n. 57 above).

88. Christine Hugh-Jones, *From the Milk River: Spatial and Temporal Processes in Northwest Amazonia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

89. Or, as Hugh-Jones herself notes, "Doubtless, if men in feather head-dresses did the digging, grating, sieving, etc., manioc would have received the attention it deserves." *Ibid.*, pp. 278-79.

90. Hugh-Jones (n. 87 above), p. 63.

91. Two fine examples are June Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us: Dependency and Exploitation in Bolivian Tin Mines* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); and Dwyer (n. 56 above).

know had no feminist commitment to integrate gender concerns in his study of the Sarakatsani, Greek pastoralists.⁹² One can fault his monograph according to some canons of feminist scholarship. He dwells on ideal rather than actual behavior. He fails to give a sense of how the system looks from a female perspective, what kinds of options and maneuverability it offers to women. Nevertheless, *Honour, Family and Patronage* stands as a model for feminists who argue that politics and economics cannot be understood without reference to kinship, family, sexuality, and gender.

Cases such as that of the Sarakatsani, where relations between men are boldly phrased in terms of men's relations to women, demand consideration of gender. Far more problematic are societies in which gender is a less polemical issue. For example, my own fieldwork among the Wana of Sulawesi, Indonesia, revealed that gender is not a central organizing principle of that culture.⁹³ How one studies the significance of sex differences in a system that minimizes them is far more difficult than cases where clitoridectomy, foot binding, and homosexual fellatio fairly scream out for ethnographic investigation. I hope that others who have worked in areas where sex differences are downplayed will note that fact and attempt analytical explanations. By following the interests of our informants in the course of research, we have garnered some first-rate analyses of gender in societies marked by sexual segregation, opposition, and antagonism, but a much poorer sense of how less extreme systems are constituted.⁹⁴ As in the case of social hierarchy in general, one is prompted to question sex differences in their extreme forms while failing to recognize that more egalitarian societies are equally problematic.⁹⁵

92. J. K. Campbell (n. 73 above).

93. My initial research plan was to study gender and ritual specialization, but I abandoned that plan in my dissertation ("Paths of the Spirit Familiars: A Study of Wana Shamanism" [Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1979]) and in subsequent writings, precisely due to my informants' downplaying of the matter. Recently I have addressed the theoretical dimensions of this problem in a paper entitled "Gender and Engendered Meanings in Wana Shamanism" (unpublished manuscript). Anna Tsing Lowenhaupt found a similar lack of emphasis on gender in her research among the Meratus of nearby Kalimantan (personal communication).

94. A pioneering work in this area is Michelle Z. Rosaldo's *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life* (n. 2 above). Rosaldo's first fieldwork among the Ilongot was conducted from 1967 to 1969, before the impact of feminism on anthropology. In 1974, she returned to the field with new questions about women and men in mind. *Knowledge and Passion* is a result of Rosaldo's reanalysis of the Ilongot in light of feminist critiques of traditional ethnography.

95. The work of Richard Lee (n. 22 above) and Michelle Rosaldo (n. 2 above) directly addresses the question of how egalitarian social relations are maintained in societies with a subsistence-based economy. More attention needs to be paid to the different shapes gender ideology takes across cultures. A useful beginning is provided by Daisy Dwyer, "Ideologies of Sexual Inequality and Strategies for Change in Male-Female Relations," *American Ethnologist* 5, no. 2 (1978): 227-40.

This review has traced some recent trends in the anthropology of women and has asked how feminist concerns are taking shape in the new ethnography. Much of the theoretical work to date has been library based; yet secondary sources are generally silent on crucial questions about the integration of structure, meaning, and experience with reference to both sexes. New feminist ethnographic work must replace the current split between analyses of women's personal lives, on one hand, and male-dominated social structure and ideology, on the other, with a unified picture of how the nature and experience of both sexes are socially and culturally patterned.

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