

LECTURE

Wednesday, October 31

Subject: Gender continued

I. GENDER ROLES AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN

A. The Anthropology of Gender focuses on the status of women and gender hierarchy.

1. women's traditional roles
2. women's economic contributions
3. Cultural perceptions of women in world wide societies.
4. male ideologies of male superiority
5. sources of women's power and influence
6. the development of their identities.

B. **Gendered roles**—both men and women—are the cultural expectations for men and women in a particular society:

1. **Gendered roles are expected in the sense of “natural” abilities, suitable occupations, differences in temperament and personality and appropriate behavior.**
2. **Gender hierarchy is the ways in which these attributes are differentially valued and related to the distribution of resources, prestige, and power.**
3. **Gendered roles and gender hierarchy relate. Role determines access to power; power determines access to role**

C. The universality of male dominance, i.e., economic and domestic dominance, has been debated in Anthropology since the 1970s.

1. One theory—**public and private dichotomy**—suggests that women's universal subordination to men has to do with their women's universal role as mother and homemaker.
2. According to the public/private dichotomy, women in their capacity as mother and women, inhabit the private domestic sphere in contrast to the prestigious public world dominated by men.
3. The Private/Public opposition was most apparent in 19th century Victorian Europe and the U.S. where middle class ideal was a woman within her home, was concerned with domestic affairs, was dependent, bore many children and was sexually repressed.
4. **The Private/Public opposition did not and does not apply to traditional non-western societies where home, family, economics and politics are not easily separated.**
1. **Anthropologist Ernestine Friedl rejects the private/public dichotomy. According to Friedl, economic factors are the key to women's status.**

2. Friedl claims that power for men and women relates to the distribution of resources. She points out:
 - a. in foraging societies, where the food supply depended on men's hunting and not on woman's gathering, men's control o meat distribution gave them power and status.
 - b. In horticulture societies, men cleared forest and allocated land which gave them power.
 - c. Where women had some control of the distribution of resources for example, Inuit hunting societies or through selling in markets, See page 212, their status increases.
 - d. Friedl also notes cultural norms for family size and child care can conform to women's productive work: in many non-western societies, child care can be shared, especially in extended families.
 - e. Finally, Motherhood, according to Friedl does not weaken women's position as much as does men's control o exchange of goods beyond domestic units.

II. GENDER RELATIONSHIPS: COMPLEX AND VARIABLE

- A. Although anthropologist disagree concerning gender hierarchies and whether male dominance or economics is the primary cause, all agree that gender hierarchies are culturally not biologically determined and that they vary with time and place.
- B. At present the debate now transcends the issue of the universality of male dominance; this is primarily the result of more comprehensive examination of women's lives in both traditional and contemporary culture.

III. WOMEN IN FORAGING SOCIETIES: CHALLENGING "MAN THE HUNTER"

- A. The field of human evolution has focused on "man the hunter." And ignored the economic importance of women as gatherers in the origin and development of our species.
- B. Contemporary cultural and biological anthropologist have also challenged the common belief that the sexual division of labor is biologically determined.
 1. Sexual division of labor is now regarded as a cultural development that emerged under specific conditions.
 2. Current research indicates less rigidity in division of labor.
 3. Women contribute significantly by gathering and hunting.
 4. Among the polygynous Tiwi of Australia, multiple-wife households have a higher started of living—See Chapter 8, p.166

5. The Agate of the Philippines have overlapping roles—that supports Friedl's thesis: child rearing adapts to economics

IV. WOMEN AND POWER

- A. Women, in both traditional and contemporary societies, make alliances and participate in networks: women centered collectivities whether they are ritual associations in traditional societies, women's soccer teams, sororities, or women's political associations are the sources of prestige, influence, self-esteem, power and entertainment.
- B. The relationship between gender and power varies in different cultures.
- C. Generally, women have more autonomy and power in egalitarian foraging societies than in horticultural and agricultural societies.
- D. An absence of social hierarchy and equal autonomy for men and women characterizes most foraging societies and is reflected in egalitarian gender relations.

V. ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY: THE TLINGIT: WOMEN AND POWER IN A FORAGING SOCIETY:

- A. The TLINGIT are a northwest coast Native American group; They are both hierarchical and egalitarian regarding gender.
- B. Social status for men and women derives from long distance kinship alliances and trade.
1. Long distance trade centered on men, but women acted as negotiators and handled money.
 2. A route to wealth for both men and women was becoming a shaman—an individual who acts as an intermediary between the natural world and the spirit world.
 3. The public/private dichotomy did not apply: women could be heads of clans or tribes and have titles of high rank.
1. Kinship was matrilineal and rank inherited from mother's and father's side. Son's status derived from their mother.
 2. Tlingit women were assertive and competitive in business, behaviors typical of modern Tlingit women who hold political, corporate and professional positions.
 3. However, and this is key, modern Tlingit women—as well as traditional women's status—did and does not diminish men's status; rather women's status on based on individual ability, training and personality rather than on the basis of gender.

VI. GENDER RELATIONS IN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETIES.

- A. Vary greatly and there is wide variety in sexual division of labor

- B. In some groups, a high degree of segregation between the sexes plus important male rituals indicates male dominance. For example the Mundurucu of South America are discussed
- C. Women's solidarity—in horticultural cultures, is based on working cooperative and bonds among female kin—consanguineal, i.e., blood relations between, mothers, daughters and sisters are important than conjugal—or marriage ties between husband and wife.
- D. The impact of European expansion on women varies but generally declines
 1. The Nukumanu of Polynesia— were sexually egalitarian.
 2. Men and women played complementary roles until colonialism introduced a shift to cash crop export.
 3. Women's economic role was destroyed and men's economic status increased due to the introduction of wage labor.
 4. Labor was imported, beginning a downward spiral that made women dependent and distanced men and women

VII. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN'S STATUS.

- A. In modern capitalist society, women's status has been negatively affected by economic development projects.
- B. The United Nations and International Agencies funding economic development projects have only recently come to recognize this.
 1. Primarily as a result of the work of Applied and Development Anthropologist who have performed studies which conclude the negative impact the programs sponsored by these agencies has had on women's economic and social status.
- C. While global marketing of women's handicrafts brings income, prestige, and autonomy, it also tends to create conflict as husbands experience a loss of control over profits from women's work.
- D. Similarly women employed by multinationals in factories may experience short term economic gains, but multinational concerns exploit them in a variety of ways:
 1. Low wages and long working hours, working conditions that come close to human rights violations.
 2. Also women working in, for example, the American-owned factories in Mexico find that their wages promote conflict at home, ultimately intensifying patriarchy and gender inequality.

