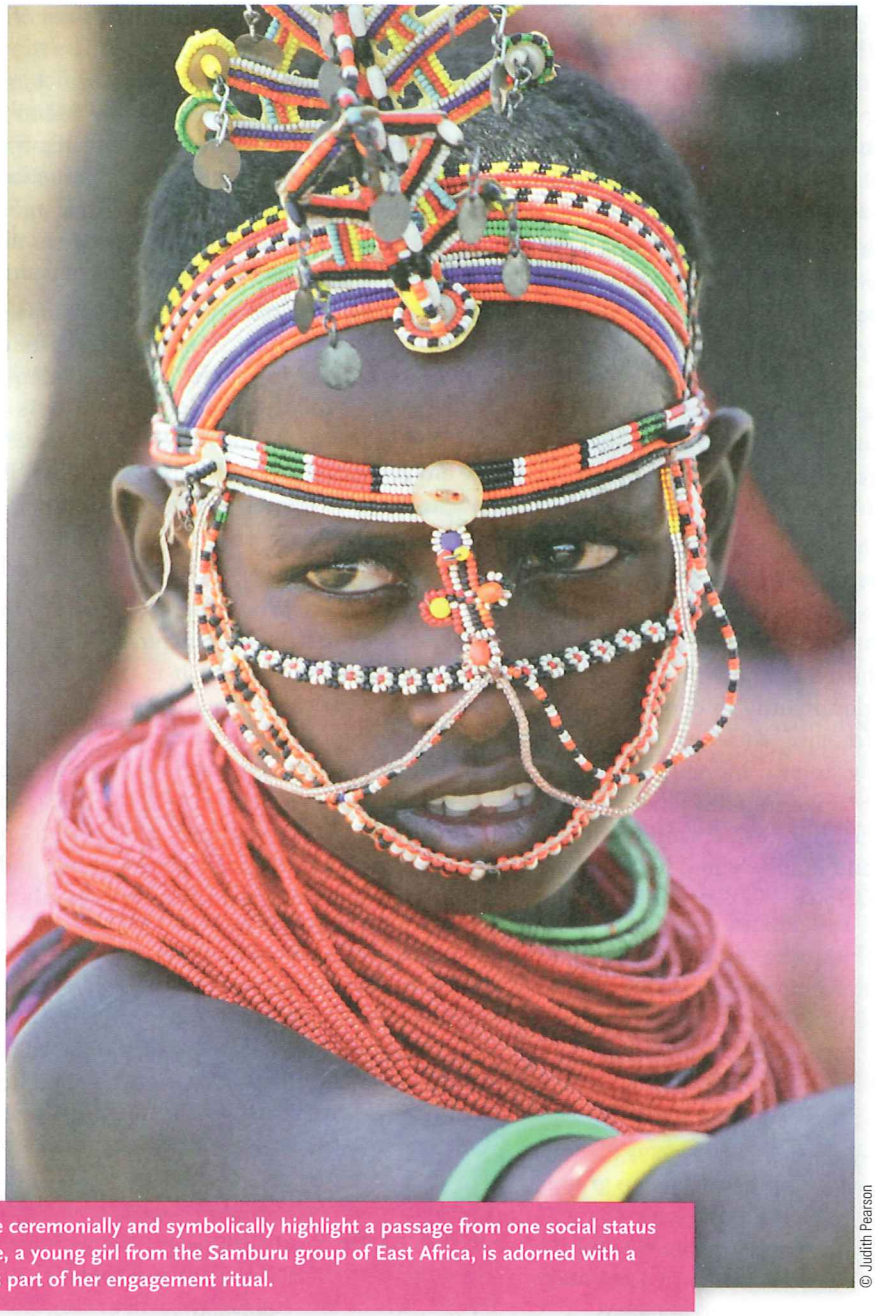

Rites of passage ceremonially and symbolically highlight a passage from one social status to another. Here, a young girl from the Samburu group of East Africa, is adorned with a beaded mask as part of her engagement ritual.

THINKING POINT: Among the Tchambuli, women had the major economic role and showed common sense and business shrewdness. Men were more interested in esthetics. They spent much time decorating themselves and gossiping. Their feelings were easily hurt, and they sulked a lot.

—From Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*
[See next paragraph for more details.]

{chapter 10}

Gender

CHAPTER OUTLINE

In the 1930s, Margaret Mead (1963/1935) began to question the biologically determined nature of gender. Mead organized her ethnographic research around the question of whether the characteristics defined as masculine and feminine in Western culture, specifically the United States, were universal. In one of her many field research projects, she examined masculine and feminine traits among three groups in New Guinea—the Arapesh, the Mundugamor, and the Tchambuli (1963/1935). She reported that among the Arapesh, men and women both were expected to act in ways that Americans considered "naturally" feminine. Both sexes were concerned with taking care of children and nurturing. Neither sex was expected to be aggressive. In Mundugamor society, both sexes were what American culture would call "masculine": aggressive, violent, and with little interest in children. And, as we saw in the "Thinking Point", among the Tchambuli, traditional American notions of masculine and feminine were, to some degree, reversed. Women had the major economic role and were noted for common sense and business shrewdness. Men were more interested in esthetics. They spent much time decorating themselves and gossiping. Their feelings were easily hurt, and they sulked a lot. Thus, Mead found that many of the behaviors, emotions, and roles that go into being masculine and feminine are patterned by culture.

In addition to its importance in gender studies, Mead's work is significant because it reinforces a central anthropological thesis: in order to grasp the potential and limits of diversity in human life, we must look at the full range of human societies—particularly those outside Western historical, cultural, and economic traditions. In nonindustrial, small-scale, kinship-based, more egalitarian societies, gender relationships clearly differ from those of the West. Indeed, research on gender diversity indicates that the very construction of sex and gender is extraordinarily diverse, as are the relationships between sex, gender, and other aspects of culture. >>

Ethnographic evidence for this diversity is legion. Among some subarctic Indian peoples, for example, where a son was depended on to feed the family through big game hunting, a family that had daughters and no sons would simply select a daughter to "be like a man." When the youngest daughter was about 5 years old, the parents performed a transformation ceremony in which they tied the dried ovaries of a bear to a belt the child always wore. This was believed to prevent menstruation, protect her from pregnancy, and give her luck on the hunt. From then on, she dressed like a male, trained like a male, and often developed great strength and became an outstanding hunter (W. Williams 1996:202). For these Indians, being male or female included both biological elements, such as menstruation, and cultural features, such as the ability to hunt. ≪

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Anthropologist Margaret Mead was a key figure in emphasizing the cultural element in gender roles. She was also important in introducing these anthropological ideas to the general public.

Sex and Gender

In contemporary social science, the distinctions between biological and cultural aspects of being male or female are very important. **Sex** is the term used to describe the biological differences between male and female, particularly the visible differences in external genitalia and the related difference in the role each sex plays in the reproductive process. **Gender** is the term for the cultural and social classification of masculine and feminine. Thus, gender is the social, cultural, and psychological constructs that different societies superimpose on the biological differences of sex (Worthman 1995:598). Every culture recognizes distinctions between male and female, but cultures differ in the meanings attached to these categories, the supposed sources of the differences between them, and the relationship of these categories to other cultural and social facts. Furthermore, all cultures recognize at least two sexes (male and female) and two genders (masculine and feminine), but some cultures recognize additional sexes and genders.

sex The biological difference between male and female.

gender A cultural construction that makes biological and physical differences between male and female into socially meaningful categories.

cultural construction of gender The idea that gender characteristics are the result of historical, economic, and political forces acting within each culture.

The current anthropological approach to gender emphasizes the central role of gender relations as a basic building block of culture and society (Yanagisako and Collier 1994:190–203). Gender is central to social relations of power, individual and group identities, the formation of kinship and other groups, and meaning and value. As was noted in Chapter 3, until the 1970s the central role of gender in society and culture was largely overlooked, and both ethnography and anthropological theory were skewed as a result.

The Cultural Construction of Gender

The central assumption of an earlier, androcentric (male centered) anthropology was that gender, like sex, was "natural" or biologically determined. The different roles, behaviors, personality characteristics, emotions, and development of men and women were viewed as a function of sex differences, and thus universal. An assumed biological determinism meant that many important questions about the role of gender in culture and society were never asked. The emergence of feminist anthropology in the 1970s focused attention on cross-cultural variability in the meaning of gender. Biological determinism began to give way to the view that gender is culturally constructed (Ortner and Whitehead 1981). The **cultural construction of gender** is the idea that gender is established by social norms and values rather than by biology. Work focusing on the cultural construction of gender emphasizes the different ways cultures think about, distinguish, and symbolize gender.

This revised understanding of gender raised new questions about the culturally patterned nature of women's and men's lives in all cultures. It focused attention on historical changes in gender relations (Lancaster 1989; Spector and Whelan 1989; Zihlman 1989), the role of gender in human development (Chodorow 1974, 1978), the constructions of feminine and masculine in different cultures, and the connections between gender systems and other sociocultural patterns (Ortner and Whitehead 1981). It also raised questions about the effect of Euro-

pean expansion on gender relations in non-European societies (Nash and Safa 1986) and the changes in gender relations within Europe and North America as a result of industrialism, capitalism, and expansion of the global economy (Andersen and Collins 1995; Warren and Bourque 1989).

Alternative Sexes, Alternative Genders

Since the late 1970s, anthropological research and reinterpretation of older ethnography added weight to the view of gender as culturally constructed. Particularly important were cultures that recognized more than two sexes and more than two genders (Costa and Matzner 2007; Herdt 1996; Matzner 2001; Nanda 1999; W. Roscoe 1991; W. Williams 1986; Winter 2009) or where heterosexuality and homosexuality were defined differently than they were in the United States (Herdt 1981).

The division of humans into two sexes and two genders, characteristic of most cultures, appears to be natural and inevitable. Sex assignment, which takes place at birth, is assumed to be permanent over a person's lifetime. The view of sex and gender as a system of two opposing and unchangeable categories is taken for granted by most social science. It is difficult for most of us even to think about any alternative to this view.

However, a cross-cultural perspective indicates that sex and gender are not necessarily or universally viewed as identical and limited to a system of male/female opposites. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, for example, Amadiume (1987) notes that members of either sex can fill male gender roles. Daughters can fill sons' roles and women can be husbands, without being considered "masculine" or losing their femininity. Before the influence of Christianity among the Igbo, both women and men could use wealth to take titles (achieve rank) and acquire wives. Although Christian missionaries attempted to eliminate woman–woman marriage in Africa, the practice continues today. In some African societies that practice woman–woman marriages, such as the Nandi of Kenya, the female husband is considered to be a man and adopts many aspects of the male gender role, such as participating in male initiation and public political discussions (Oboler 1980). The presence of female husbands has been reported for more than 30 African groups (D. O'Brien 1977). Although there are important variations among the different groups' woman–woman marriages, the literature specifically notes that the relationship between the female husband and wife is not sexual.

Alternative gender roles—neither man nor woman—have been described for many societies. The **xanith** of Oman on the Saudi Arabian peninsula (Wikan 1977), the **two-spirit role** in many Native American tribes (W. Roscoe 1991; 1995; Whitehead 1981; W. Williams 1986), the **mahu** of Tahiti (Besnier 1996; Levy 1973), the *muxe* of Mexico (Lacey 2008), and the **hijra** of India (Nanda 1999; Reddy 2005) are among the gender roles in which men take on some of the attributes of women and are classified as an in-between gender.

The Native American two-spirit role has long been a subject of anthropological interest. Two-spirit roles took different forms in different Native American cultures, but most often the two-spirit person was a man who dressed in women's clothing, engaged in women's work, and was often considered to have special supernatural powers and privileges in society (Whitehead 1981). There were also female two-spirit people (Blackwood 1984). Although alternative-gendered people were not equally valued in all Native American cultures, they were very highly valued in some, such as the Zuni (W. Roscoe 1991).

The form, frequency, and cultural specificity of alternative sex/gender roles are not random occurrences, but appear to be woven into cultural patterns. Sex/gender diversity varies cross-culturally: cultures differ on their criteria for constructing sex/gender variation, the extent to which this variation is recognized and/or ritualized, the degree to which sex/gender transformations are considered to be complete and/or irrevocable, the association of sex/gender transformations with males or females, the special functions of alternative sexes and genders (such as healing or acting as go-betweens in marriages), and the value or stigma placed on such variations (Nanda 2000b).

Anthropologists attempt to explain the occurrence and form of sex/gender alternatives, though no one explanation covers all the ethnographic variation. In some cases, for example among some Native American groups or in Polynesia, sex/gender diversity is associated with an ideology that recognizes all individuals as having their own special characteristics, including sex/gender variation. In cultures such as those in Thailand, there is less concern for an individual's private life as long as he or she observes social obligations in public, so that sex/gender diversity is not severely stigmatized. In India, the sex/gender alternative of the hijra is related to the Hindu philosophy of dharma, where each person is expected to follow his or her own life path, no matter how different or even painful that may be. In addition, Hinduism in general has the ability to incorporate cultural contradictions and ambiguities to a larger extent than, for example, Western religions, and this too is congenial to the

xanith An alternative gender role in Oman on the Saudi Arabian peninsula.

two-spirit role An alternative gender role in native North America (formerly called berdache).

mahu An alternative gender role in Tahiti.

hijra An alternative gender role in India conceptualized as neither man nor woman.

Ethnography

The Hijras: An Alternative Gender Role in India

The hijra of India is a gender role that is neither masculine nor feminine. Hijras are born as men, but they dress and live as women. The hijras undergo an operation in which their genitals are surgically removed, but unlike transsexuals in the West, this operation turns men into hijras, not into women. Hijras are followers of a Hindu goddess, Bahuchara Mata, and the hijra subculture is partly a religious group centered on the worship of this goddess. By dressing as women, and especially through emasculation as a ritual expression of their religious devotion, the hijras attempt to completely identify with the goddess. Through this operation, the hijras believe that the procreative powers of the goddess are transferred to them.

Traditionally, the hijras earn their living by performing at life-cycle ceremonies, such as the birth of a child (formerly only for male children, who are much desired in India, but sometimes for female children today) and at marriages. Because the hijras are vehicles of the goddess's powers of procreation, their presence is necessary on these occasions. They ask the goddess to bless the newborn or the married couple with prosperity and fertility. Hijras also serve the goddess in her temple.

The word hijra may be translated as either eunuch or hermaphrodite; in both cases, male sexual impotence is emphasized. Few hijras are born hermaphrodite, almost all are born biologically male. Because there are many causes for male impotence, there are many reasons that men may choose to join the hijras. In some parts of India, it is believed that an impotent man who does not become a hijra, in deference to the wishes of the hijra goddess, will be reborn impotent for seven future lives.

The concept of the hijra as neither man nor woman emphasizes that they are not men because they cannot function sexually as men, though they were assigned to the male sex at birth. Hijras also claim that they do not have sexual feelings for women, and a real hijra is not supposed to have ever had sexual relations with women. But if hijras, as a third gender, are "man minus man," they are also "man plus woman." The most obvious aspect of hijras as women is in their dress. Wearing female attire is a defining characteristic of hijras. They are required to dress as women when they perform their traditional roles of singing and dancing at births and weddings, and whenever they are in the temple of their goddess. Hijras enjoy dressing as women, and their feminine dress is accompanied by traditionally feminine jewelry and body decoration. Hijras must also wear their hair long like women.

Hijras also adopt female behavior. They imitate a woman's walk, they sit and stand like women, and they carry pots on their hips as women do. Hijras adopt female names when they join the community, and they use female kinship terms for each other such as aunt or sister. They also have a special linguistic dialect, which includes feminine expressions and intonations. In public accommodations, such as the movies, or in buses and trains, hijras often request "ladies only" seating. They also request that they be counted as females in the census.

Although hijras are like women in many ways, they are clearly not women. Their female dress and mannerisms are often exaggerations almost to the point of caricature, especially when they act in a sexually suggestive manner. Their sexual aggressiveness is considered outrageous and very much in opposition to the expected demure behavior of ordinary Indian women in their roles of wives, mothers, and daughters. Hijra performances are essentially burlesques of women; the entertainment value comes from the difference between themselves, acting as women, and the real women they imitate. Hijras often use obscene and abusive language, which again is considered contrary to acceptable feminine behavior. In some parts of India, hijras smoke the hookah (water pipe) and cigarettes, which are normally done only by men.

The major reason hijras are not considered women, however, is that they cannot give birth. Many hijras wish to be women so that they can give birth, and there are many stories within the community that express this wish. But all hijras acknowledge that this can never be. As neither man nor woman, the hijras identify themselves with many third-gender figures in Hindu mythology and Indian culture: male deities who change into or disguise themselves as females temporarily, deities who have both male and female characteristics, male reli-

emergence of sex/gender diversity. In some cases, sex/gender alternatives appear related to cultural systems with relatively low gender differentiation (the distinctions between male and female gender roles), though sex/gender alternatives also appear in cultures, such as in Brazil, where gender differentiation is high. Sex/gender alternatives also are found in cultures where transformations of all kinds—of humans into animals or vice versa, for example—are common, such as in some African cultures and in African diasporic religions. Where androg-

Courtesy of Serena Nanda

These hijras, celebrating a marriage, exhibit exaggerated female gestures and clap their hands in the unique style of this subculture.

gious devotees who dress and act as women in religious ceremonies, and the eunuchs who served in the Muslim courts. Indian culture thus not only accommodates such androgynous figures but views them as meaningful and even powerful.

The emphasis in this ethnography is on the cultural conception of the hijra role. The realities of hijra life do not always match the ideal, and, as in other societies, there are some tensions between the ways in which hijras understand themselves and the realities of their lives. A significant source of conflict among hijras is their widespread practice of prostitution. Hijras serve as sexual partners for men, which contradicts their identity as ascetics. Hijras see prostitution as deviant within their community, and many deny that it occurs. Others justify it by reference to their declining incomes from traditional performances.

Unlike many societies throughout the world with alternative gender roles that were suppressed by colonial authorities and Christian missionaries, hijras continue to function as an integral part of Indian culture, both in traditional roles and in changing roles that reflect new adaptations. One new role for hijras is in contemporary Indian politics, in which hijras have achieved some notable success. In recent years hijras have stood for and even won election to local, state, and even national office (Reddy and Nanda 2005). Significantly, hijra success in politics has been achieved not by denying, but by emphasizing their ambiguous gender. (However, the election of one hijra has been overturned by a lower state court on the grounds that hijras are men masquerading as women and therefore cannot stand for election to seats reserved for women. What we seem to see here is a clash between traditional concepts that admit of in-between or alternative genders and Western concepts that recognize two genders only—man and woman.)

When they enter politics, hijras explicitly construct themselves as individuals without the obligations of family, gender, or caste, and emphasize that they are therefore free from the corrupting influence of nepotism, which plagues Indian politics. They also emphasize their identity as ascetics, Hindu religious figures who renounce sexual relations, claiming historical continuities with many Hindu political reformers. Many Indians believe that hijras are more empathetic to issues of poverty and social stigma because of their own low social status, and this has enabled hijras to defeat traditionally powerful upper caste opponents.

The continued recognition of hijras in Indian society is a strong testimony to the cultural construction of genders. Unlike many other traditional alternative genders among indigenous peoples that have been stamped out or repressed by the powerful states in which they now live, the hijras continue both in their traditional roles and in new roles, contributing to the cultural variation that characterizes the human species.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. How does a study of the hijras contribute to an understanding of gender as culturally constructed?
2. Discuss some of the similarities and differences between the hijras and similar gender roles in other societies.
3. In what ways do elements of Indian culture relate to the maintenance of the hijra role?

Source: Serena Nanda, *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999.

yny (the mixture of male and female) is considered sacred and powerful, as in southeast Asian island cultures, sex/gender alternatives also frequently appear. And where continuation of a patrilineage is central to a society's kinship structure, such as in the Balkans, or among the Ibo of Nigeria, one way of making sure there are people to fill all important kin positions is to permit women to take on not only male roles, but also other male gender characteristics. As in all things, from the seemingly most ordinary to the seemingly most exotic,

anthropology not only documents human diversity, but also tries to explain that diversity by drawing on the ethnographic record and the related aspects of culture and society.

Cultural Variation in Sexual Behavior

In addition to varying in the number of sexes and genders they recognize, cultures also vary in their definitions of appropriate sexual behaviors. The cultural component of sexual behavior is not easily understood. Of all the kinds of human behavior, sexual activity is most likely to be viewed as "doing what comes naturally." But a cross-cultural perspective on sexual behavior demonstrates that every aspect of human sexual activity is patterned by culture and influenced by learning, sometimes in contradictory or paradoxical ways.

Culture patterns the habitual responses of different peoples to different parts of the body. What is considered erotic in some cultures evokes indifference or disgust in others. For example, kissing is not practiced in many societies. The Samoans learned to kiss from the Europeans, but before this cultural contact, they began sexual intimacy by sniffing. The patterns of social and sexual preliminaries also differ among cultures. The Trobriand Islanders, as described by Malinowski, "inspect each other's hair for lice and eat them. . . . to the natives a natural and pleasant occupation between two who are fond of each other" (1929b:327). This may seem disgusting to people from the West, but to the Trobrianders, "the idea of European boys and girls going out for a picnic with a knapsack full of eatables is. . . . disgusting and indecent" (1929b:327) although it is a perfectly acceptable custom for a Trobriand boy and girl to gather wild foods together as a prelude to sexual activity.

Who is considered an appropriate sexual partner also differs in different cultures. In some societies, for example, same-sex sexual activity is considered shameful and abnormal, but in other societies it is a matter of indifference, approval, or even required in some cases. Among the Sambia of Papua New Guinea, the rite of passage for every adolescent male incorporates same-sex activity in the form of fellatio, where it is believed that only men can create men through this transfer of semen. During their initiation boys live away from their parents in a men's cult house and this same-sex activity is considered essential as part of their training to become vigorous, strong warriors. Those participating in these relationships are not considered homosexual, and as adults, the boys are expected to enter heterosexual marriages (Herdt 1981). The assumptions of Sambia culture contrast strongly with the dominant cultural ideology in the United States, where consistent heterosexuality is considered essential to masculine identity and same-sex sexual activity defines one as "homosexual."

Among other cultural variations in beliefs about sexuality are the ages at which sexual response is believed to begin and end, the ways in which people make themselves attractive, the importance of sexual activity in human life, and its variation according to gender—all these are patterned and regulated by culture and affect sexual response and behavior. A comparison of two cultures, the Irish of "Inis Beag," a community on one of the Aran Islands in the Bay of Galway, and the Polynesians of Mangaia, makes clear the role of culture in sexuality.

John Messenger describes Inis Beag as "one of the most sexually naive of the world's societies" (1971:15). Sex is never discussed at home when children are near, and parents provide practically no sexual instruction to children. Adults express the belief that "after marriage nature takes its course." (As we shall see, "nature" takes a very different course in Inis Beag than it does in Polynesia!) Women are expected to endure but not enjoy sexual relations; to refuse to have intercourse is considered a mortal sin among this Roman Catholic people. There appears to be widespread ignorance in Inis Beag of the female capacity for orgasm, which in any case is considered deviant behavior. Nudity is abhorred, and there is no tradition of "dirty jokes." The main style of dancing allows little bodily contact among the participants; even so, some girls refuse to dance because it means touching a boy. The separation of the sexes begins very early in Inis Beag and lasts into adulthood. Other cultural patterns related to sexual repression here are the virtual absence of sexual foreplay, the belief that sexual activity weakens a man, the absence of premarital sex, the high percentage of celibate males, and the extraordinarily late age of marriage. According to a female informant, "Men can wait a long time before wanting 'it' but we [women] can wait a lot longer" (1971:16).

Although the idea of total sexual freedom in the South Sea Islands is a Western myth, Mangaia, as described by Donald Marshall (1971), presents a strong contrast to Inis Beag. In this Polynesian culture, sexual intercourse is one of the major interests of life. Although sex is not discussed at home, sexual information is taught to boys and girls at puberty by the elders of the group. For adolescent boys, a 2-week period of formal instruction about the techniques of intercourse is followed by a culturally approved experience with a mature woman in the village. After this, the boy is considered a man. This contrasts with Inis Beag, where a man is considered a "lad" until he is about 40.

Sexual relations in Mangaia take place in private, but there is continual public reference to sexual activity. Sexual jokes, expressions, and references are expected as part of the preliminaries to public meetings. This pattern of public verbal references to sex contrasts with the public separation of the sexes. Boys and girls should not be

seen together in public, but practically every girl and boy has had intercourse before marriage. The act of sexual intercourse itself is the focus of sexual activity. What Westerners call sexual foreplay generally follows intercourse in Mangaia. Both men and women are expected to take pleasure in the sexual act and to have an orgasm. Female frigidity, male celibacy, and homosexual identity are practically unknown. The contrast between Inis Beag and Mangaia indicates clearly that societies' different attitudes pattern the sexual responsiveness of males and females in each society.

Sexuality and the Cultural Construction of Gender

A culture's construction of gender always includes reference to sexuality and the differences between men and women. Cultural views of gender-related sexuality have often been used to support various sexual ideologies, which also intersect with the construction of race, class, and colonialist relationships. European constructions of masculine and feminine sexuality have been an important part of European images of their own society and of others.

Not all societies so strongly differentiate male and female sexuality. When gender ideologies do make these distinctions, however, they are also likely to use this distinction as the basis of gender hierarchy, in which social control of women's sexuality is central. These controls may take such forms as the seclusion of women (S. Hale 1989); a cultural emphasis on honor and shame as related to female sexuality (Brandes 1981); and control by men, or by the state and organized religion, over marriage, divorce, adultery, and abortion. Controls are also imposed on women through medical/scientific definitions of what constitutes the normal or the pathological in female bodily processes (Martin 1987) and sexuality (Groneman 2000). Society's control of female sexuality is often inscribed on female bodies: female circumcision in some African societies (Barnes-Dean 1989), Chinese footbinding (Anagnost 1989), gang rape in the United States (Sanday 1992), sati (the Hindu practice of a woman burning herself on her husband's funeral pyre) (Narasimhan 1990), and eating disorders in the United States (Brumberg 1989).

Coming of Age in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Male and Female Rites of Passage

All cultures have changing expectations of an individual at different points in life, as new capacities unfold or old ones diminish. At each of these points, individuals learn what is necessary for the new roles associated with these changing expectations. The cultural learning that takes place in childhood is particularly important, but the teaching and learning of culture continues throughout life.

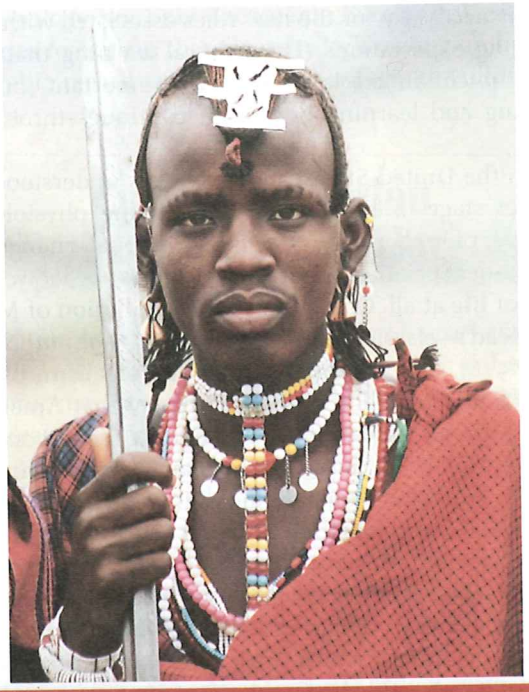
In the United States, adolescence is understood as a distinct stage of life associated with the physiological changes of puberty as well as emotional changes. In some other societies, adolescence may not be viewed as a stage of life at all. One important contribution of Margaret Mead's classic study *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1971/1928), was her finding that the idealism, psychic conflict, and rebellion against authority that Americans view as an inevitable part of adolescence did not occur in Samoa. Rather, in Samoa, as in many societies, an individual's transition from childhood to adulthood involved a gradually increasing participation in society, with little psychological trauma.

In many societies, although the stage of adolescence is not recognized, children's passage into adulthood is marked by rituals, which are called **rites of passage** (see Chapter 13). Arnold Van Gennep (1960/1909) viewed rites of passage as a way of publicly and ceremonially acknowledging a change of social roles, or a passage from one social group to another. These rites were performed at important life events, such as puberty, marriage, and death. Their function was to reduce the potentially traumatic effects of such transitions both on the society and on the individual by formalizing and ritualizing them. Subsequent to Van Gennep's discussion, most anthropological studies focused on the very widespread pattern of male initiations—the rituals surrounding the transition from childhood to the adult male status.

Male Initiation

The importance of male initiation in many societies led anthropologists to focus attention on their possible psychological and sociological functions, along with the cultural symbols and rituals that embodied the society's concept of masculinity or referred back to these functions (see the description of female envy later in this section). Sociological theories held that male initiation rites primarily expressed and affirmed the enduring order of male relationships and male solidarity. In some societies, they also served to culturally validate male dominance. The most obvious purpose of the rites appeared to be the legitimization of a change of status from child to adult. They often involved an extended period of separation, during which the initiates learned the beliefs,

rite of passage A ritual that moves an individual from one social status to another.



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Among the Maasai, initiation signals a break between childhood and adulthood. A young man's ability to repress any emotional reaction to the pain of circumcision, a key ritual of male initiation, indicates whether he is worthy of the warrior role that is central to Maasai adulthood.

skills, and knowledge necessary to participate as a functioning adult in society. Thus, another function of the rites was the transmission of culture. The social order was reinforced by dramatizing its values in a public context. By taking the child out of the home, initiation rites emphasized the importance of citizenship. An individual was responsible to the whole society, and society as well as the family had an interest in him (Hart 1967).

There are several different psychological theories of male initiation. The Freudian view is based on the Oedipus complex. Initiation rituals are seen as a symbolic means of mastering universal conflicts that are generated by boys' identification with their mothers, from whom they must be separated in order to carry out their male adult responsibilities. Evidence for this theory can be found in the work of John Whiting, who showed that male initiation rites are more likely to occur in cultures where boys have strong identification with their mothers and hostility toward their fathers (Whiting, Kluckhohn, and Anthony, 1967). This may grow out of sleeping arrangements in which children sleep with their mothers apart from their fathers. In these cases, says Whiting, male initiation rites are necessary to ensure the development of an adequate male role.

menarche A woman's first menstruation.

Other psychological theories of male initiation rites, particularly those involving bloodletting, explain the rites as symbolic reactions by males to their envy of female procreative ability and the mother-son bond (see, for example, Bettelheim 1996/1962). Margaret Mead noted that male initiation rites frequently involved men ritualizing birth and taking over, as a collective group, the functions women perform naturally. Gilbert Herdt (1981) described the male initiation rites of the Sambia of Papua New Guinea in terms of men's symbolic control over the rebirth of boys, making them into men. Viewed from this perspective, male initiation is a type of fertility cult in which men celebrate and ritually reproduce their control over the fertility of crops, animals, and humans.

Whatever the underlying psychodynamics, male initiation rituals clearly have an important sociological role in moving young people from childhood to adulthood. Radcliffe-Brown (1956), for example, viewed the ordeals, taboos, and solemnity of these rites as essential to communicating the seriousness of life and its duties to the initiates. The sociological and psychological features of initiation rites complement each other.

Female Initiation

Historically, there was a general ethnographic neglect of female initiation rites in comparison to male initiation rites even though such rites, which are generally performed for individuals at their **menarche** (first menstruation), actually occur in more societies than male initiation rites. This anthropological neglect resulted partly from an androcentric bias and partly from the definition of initiation rites as group activities. Recent research on girls' coming-of-age rituals indicates much cross-cultural variability (Lutkehaus and Roscoe 1995). Sometimes the initiate is isolated from society; sometimes she is the center of attention. Some rituals are elaborate and take years to perform; others are performed with little ceremony.

Several interpretations have been offered for girls' initiation rites. Judith Brown (1965) found that such rites are more likely to occur in societies in which the young girl continues to live in her mother's home after marriage. This suggests that the rites are a way of publicly announcing a girl's status change, because she will spend her adult life in the same place that she spent her childhood. Although the girl may continue to do the same kinds of tasks she did as a child, she now has to do them as a responsible adult. The rites are thus the means by which the girl publicly accepts her new legal role. As with boys, girls' initiation rites also teach them what they will need to know as adults. Bemba women explain their elaborate girls' initiation rite, called Chisungu (Richards 1956:125), by saying that they "make the girls clever." The word they use means "to be intelligent and socially competent and to have a knowledge of etiquette."

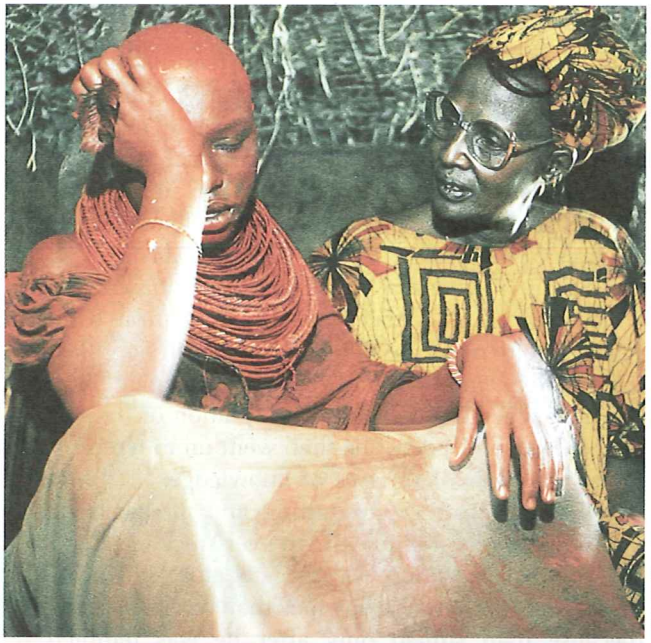
Many of the analytical frameworks of male initiation—transmission of cultural skills and traditions, the social importance of publicly moving individuals from one social status to another, and the channeling of sexuality into adult reproduction—are also relevant to female initiation. Female rites, however, are most productively analyzed on their own terms. **Feminist anthropology,** along with the current anthropological interest in women's bodies and reproductive experiences as sources of power as well as subordination, has given girls' initiation rites a new ethnographic and theoretical prominence.

Ethnography in Papua New Guinea suggests that although girls' initiation rites are individual, they are connected to the larger social whole. These connections are seen in the ritual's sponsors, public observation of the rituals, and the meanings the rituals have as metaphors for other cultural patterns. In addition to making cultural statements about what it means to move from girlhood to womanhood, female initiation rites may also make more general cultural statements about gender and gender relations. Many female initiation rites in Papua New Guinea suggest the complementarity of male and female, rather than male dominance and antagonism between the sexes. Among the Yangoru Boiken of Papua New Guinea, for example, (Roscoe 1995:58–59), where achievement of success in the political and ritual fields depends on the complementarity of husbands and wives, female initiation rites emphasize those qualities that will help women to be strong wives who can help their husbands. The various elements of the rites motivate girls to bear and rear children, strengthen their fortitude, and provide them with the capacity for the hard work necessary to assist their husbands in gathering wealth.

In acknowledging gender difference, initiation rites for males and females may convey the message that both male and female powers and potentials are necessary for social reproduction—that each sex is dependent on the other to complete its personhood and make its contribution, as a father or a mother, to society. Thus, the sexual symbolism of girls' initiation rites may refer not only to male–female sexual relations and biological reproduction, but also to the reproduction of society.

The Papua New Guinea studies also emphasize that initiation rites—for females as well as males—are processual; that is, they move individuals through successive stages of life. Among the Murik, a girl's transition to adulthood does not end with a puberty rite. Rather, the puberty rite is just one ritual step in a series of rites celebrating reproduction, culminating in marriage and the birth of the first child.

Analysis of female initiation provides new insights into the ritual manipulation of the body that is often central to these ceremonies. The ceremonies may include ordeals, scarification, circumcision, and infibulation (the stitching together of the vulva, leaving a small opening for the passage of urine and menstrual blood). The usual explanation of the emotional and symbolic significance of these often painful and traumatic transformations is that they are a test of the initiate's preparation for adulthood, and the permanent signs of the initiate's change of status. This emphasis, derived mainly from male initiation, overlooks the importance in body manipulation of the association among sexuality, beauty, and power. In some cultures, like those in Papua New Guinea, this is a prominent theme in both female and male initiation.



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During female initiation, elders impart important information to girls that allows them to participate as responsible adults in their society. Where female initiation involves circumcision, as among the Kikuyu of Kenya, elder women give girls the necessary emotional support to help them get through this very painful ritual.

This bodily attractiveness is one form of female power, manifest in procreation. Female initiation rites display other forms of power as well. Among the Manam of Papua New Guinea, the exchange of valuables plays an important role in female initiation. In the Manam girl's initiation rite, the initiate displays the wealth her parents and clan have contributed for the event, which significantly influences later bridewealth negotiations. The wealth displayed in the initiation rite also affects the social reputation of the kin group who sponsors it. The attention to girls' initiation not only deepens our understanding of cultural worldviews and symbolic meanings within cultures, but also suggests new directions for theorizing about an old topic of cross-cultural interest.

feminist anthropology A theoretical perspective that focuses on describing and explaining the social roles of women.

The Construction of Masculinity in Spain

With the contemporary interest in feminist anthropology and the construction of femininity in different cultures, there has been a parallel increase in exploring more explicitly the construction of masculinity, and how these constructions are supported by society beyond what is taught in the passage from childhood. Like many cultures in the Mediterranean area, Andalusia, in southern Spain, includes a construction of masculinity in which control of female sexuality is central (Gilmore 1996). "Women are the Devil," a butcher in San Blas, Andalusia, explained to anthropologist Stanley Brandes, "because when Eve fell to the temptation of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, she then went on to tempt Adam to eat the apple of the tree of knowledge. . . . [Woman] was that way from the beginning, and she has been trying to tempt and dominate man ever since."

For San Blas men, this biblical story justifies their view that men are more virtuous than women, more pure (because man sinned only after he was tempted by woman), and closer to God. Consistent with this religiously based view, men in San Blas assert that all women are "seductresses and whores," possessed of insatiable, lustful appetites, who can break down a man's control over his passions and lead him into temptation. Women possess goodness only in their role as mothers, an idealized, pure version of womanhood. Otherwise they are devils who threaten family unity and honor. The ability of women to bring down the reputation of their whole family and kin group through their lustful sexuality underlies the male ambivalence toward women that permeates San Blas social life.

One significant source of this view is early and medieval Christianity, in which Eve's temptation was explicitly interpreted as sexual, and sexual passion was viewed as the mainspring of female nature. The particular suspicion with which medieval Christianity viewed single or widowed women is echoed in the mistrust with which widows are viewed in San Blas. Although wives devote themselves to their husbands, husbands fear that women drive them to a premature death by sapping their strength through demands for frequent sexual activity and heavy physical labor. The women do this, men explain, in order to live off their husbands' social security payments without having to share them and to satisfy their voracious sexual appetites without the constraints of marriage (Brandes 1981:225).

The cultural construction of manhood in San Blas explicitly opposes the cultural construction of women. Space is constructed in gender terms: women belong to the home, men to the streets, bars, and other public spaces. Most men fear that their wives, driven by insatiable sexuality, will be unfaithful, emasculate them, and ruin the honor of their families. They counter this fear by adhering to an image of manliness that centers on aggressive sexuality, a willingness to confront and compete with other men in public, and the demonstrated drive and ability to be successful, whatever the risks, in their marital and economic lives. Even language reflects the sexual inequality of Andalusian culture: terms from the sexual arena, in which men are supposed to be "on top," are reflected in the language of social stratification in which the rich and powerful not only occupy the higher spaces in Andalusian towns but are considered to be "on top" of the poorer classes, dominating them the way men dominate women (Gilmore 1996).

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Throughout the Mediterranean and in Muslim dominated societies, as in the tribal areas of Pakistan, there is a strong bond among men and almost all social activities are sex segregated, except between close family members.

Proving Manhood: A Cultural Universal?

The concept of a "real man" as one who proves himself to be virile, controls women, is successful in competition with other men, and is daring, heroic, and aggressive (whether on the streets, in bars, or in warfare) is an almost universal cultural pattern (Gilmore 1990). On the island of Truk, a U.S. trust territory in Micronesia, young Trukese men, who in the past were fierce warriors, are now known as hard drinkers and violent brawlers (M. Marshall 1979). Most young men in Truk go through a turbulent adolescent period of heavy drinking, which generally results in violent fights and serious injuries, particularly on weekends. Through the ethnography of anthropologist Mac Marshall, they have become known as the Weekend Warriors. Masculinity in Truk is defined in terms of competitiveness, assertiveness, risk-taking in the face of danger, physical strength, and, during adolescence, hard drinking, smoking, and physical violence. There is no initiation ritual that turns a boy into a man, and Trukese males must continually demonstrate their manhood in the public arena by cultural competence and

effectiveness in everyday affairs (Gilmore 1990:66). This includes being successful at an occupation, acquiring consumer goods, and defending one's relatives, particularly women, against danger and dishonor.

As we saw earlier in this chapter, in many societies, becoming a man is tested by initiation ceremonies in which boys are expected to bear much physical pain without showing any emotion. Among the Sambia of Papua New Guinea, boys were required to undergo a very long and painful process of initiation, which included whipping and beatings, before they were regarded as men (Herdt 1981). In the United States, similar patterns exist in the oppositional cultures of urban streets and schools (see page 274) and in the great attraction of occupations such as firefighting, where the heroic ideal of sacrifice in the face of physical danger is played out on a regular basis (Kaprow 1991).

The near universality of the need to test and prove one's manhood has been called the **manhood puzzle.** Why, in so many different cultures, is the state of manhood regarded as uncertain or precarious, a prize to be won or wrested through struggle? Why does the transformation of a male into a "real man" require trials of skill or endurance, or special rituals? Various attempts to solve this puzzle, particularly in terms of the need for the young boy to separate himself from his mother, are suggested in our earlier discussion of male initiation.

Some psychological anthropologists offer orthodox Freudian explanations. Thomas Gregor, for example, has described patterns of manhood among the Mehinaku Indians of Brazil (1985). Gregor ascribes the Mehinaku male's preoccupation with the public display of manhood to a culturally conditioned defense against castration anxiety. In order to compensate for their fears about castration, he suggests, Mehinaku men feel compelled to demonstrate their masculinity at every opportunity.

Anthropologist David Gilmore acknowledges the importance of **machismo** in resolving male ambivalence, but suggests that these "real man" concepts have important social as well as psychological functions. According to Gilmore (1990), such cultural patterns help ensure that men will fulfill their roles as procreators, providers, and protectors of their families. This essential contribution to society, he argues, is at the heart of the "macho" role and accounts for its intensity, near universality, and persistence.

The anthropological emphasis on the cultural construction of masculinity, as represented by David Gilmore, is a welcome and important addition to the literature of sex and gender, but also raises important questions. One problem with this universalist view of masculinity is that it does not recognize the plurality of masculinities within a culture, as well as possible differences among cultures (Conway-Long 1994). Although individual differences among men may be noted, this is usually ascribed to "deviance," and little work has yet been done on alternative masculine ideologies as cultural patterns. A second issue that needs to be addressed is that of the power differences between men and women in society: why is it that the important contributions of women in reproduction and food production, and their potential for group protection, are not culturally recognized and elaborated in ideologies and rituals similar to those of men, and why (as Margaret Mead noted more than 70 years ago) is whatever men do in a society more culturally valued and publicly elaborated than what women do? As Don Conway-Long points out, as masculinity becomes more central to gender research, these theoretical questions will undoubtedly become a more important part of the ethnographic research agenda.

Gender Relations: Complex and Variable

Fueled by European and American concerns about male dominance and women's subordination, much of the gendered anthropology in the last three decades has focused on the status of women and gender hierarchy. Studies have examined the significance of women's roles as mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters; women's economic contributions; women's perceptions of their cultures; women's roles in creating symbolic and collective worlds within the context of ideologies of male superiority; the sources of women's power and influence; the development of women's identities; and the ways in which violence against women is related in various ways to gender hierarchy. As noted in the previous chapter, one dimension of the imbalance between the power of men and the power of women is gender violence, which takes a variety of forms, including but not limited to violence within families.

Gender roles are the cultural expectations of men and women in a particular society. Gender roles include expectations about the "natural" abilities of men and women, the occupations considered suitable for each sex, differences in temperament and personality, the kinds of behavior that are most appropriate for men and women, and their attitudes toward themselves and others—in short, almost the entire range of the inner and outer life

manhood puzzle The question of why in almost all cultures masculinity is viewed not as a natural state but as a problematic status to be won through overcoming obstacles.

machismo A cultural construction of hypermasculinity as essential to the male gender role.

gender role The cultural expectations of men and women in a particular society, including the division of labor.

that characterizes human nature and society. **Gender hierarchy** is the ways in which these attributes are differentially valued and related to the distribution of resources, prestige, and power. Gender roles and gender hierarchy are clearly related to each other because access to material resources, prestige, power, and autonomy depend significantly on what one does, or is allowed to do, in society.

The question of whether (and if so, why) male dominance is universal emerged as an early debate in the anthropology of gender. One theoretical position held that women's subordination to men is universal, based on women's universal role as mothers and homemakers (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). In this view, all societies are divided into a less prestigious domestic (private) world, inhabited by women, and a more prestigious public world, dominated by men. This **private/public dichotomy** emerged most sharply in highly stratified 19th-century capitalist societies, such as those of Victorian Europe and the United States, as productive relationships moved out of the household and middle-class women (but not working-class women) retreated into the home. There they were supposed to concern themselves solely with domestic affairs, repress their sexuality, bear children, and accept a subordinate and dependent role (E. Martin 1987). It became apparent, however, that the private/public dichotomy was not applicable in many non-Western societies, where home and family and economics and politics were not easily separated. Indeed, the dichotomy also obscured the relationships among power, workplace, and family structures critical to understanding much of gender stratification in contemporary Western societies, particularly the United States.

Anthropologist Ernestine Friedl was an early critic of the notion that the private/public dichotomy was the key to women's status. She attributed widespread male dominance to economic factors. In her comparative examination of foraging and horticultural societies, Friedl (1975) noted that one key factor in women's status was the degree to which they controlled the distribution and exchange of goods and services outside the domestic unit. She argued that in foraging societies the fact that men exercised control over the distribution of meat within the larger community gave them more power and status in society than women. In horticultural societies men cleared the forest for new gardens, and thus were in a position to exercise control over the allocation of land,

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An emphasis on male dominance and aggression in horticultural societies overlooks the elements of affection and nurturance that males play as fathers, as in the Iban society of Indonesia.

which put them in a position of power. On the other hand, in societies where women had control over resources beyond distribution within the domestic unit (such as some West African societies, where women sold produce in the market), their status increased. Friedl also suggested that because the care of small children can be shared by older children, neighbors, relatives, and others, women's low status cannot be explained by their obligations in child rearing. Thus cultural norms regarding family size and systems of child care are arranged to conform with women's productive work, rather than the norms of work being an adaptation to pregnancy and child care.

Marxist-oriented feminist anthropologists added another dimension to the importance of economic factors, emphasizing the cultural and historical variation in women's status, particularly the effects of the expansion of capitalism and European colonialism. Eleanor Leacock's (1981) work on the Montaignais of eastern North America, for example, was persuasive in documenting that they were egalitarian before European contact, demonstrating in detail how European expansion led to gender inequalities in some non-Western societies. Leacock's work led to a greater focus on changes in gender relations wrought by the European encounter.

In yet another approach to understanding the cultural variability in male dominance, Peggy Sanday (1981)

gender hierarchy The ways in which gendered activities and attributes are differentially valued and related to the distribution of resources, prestige, and power in a society.

private/public dichotomy A gender system in which women's status is lowered by their almost exclusive cultural identification with the home and children, whereas men are identified with public, prestigious, economic, and political roles.

used a controlled cross-cultural comparison to ascertain whether male dominance was universal and, if not, under what conditions it emerged. Sanday concluded that male dominance was not universal, but it was correlated with ecological stress and warfare. She showed that where the survival of the group rests more on male actions, such as warfare, women accept male dominance for the sake of social and cultural survival.

Regardless of their position on the universality or variability of gender hierarchy, all sides in this debate agree that gender hierarchies are culturally, not biologically, determined. Both the division of labor by sex and the meanings attached to gendered patterns of activity show great cultural variability and historical specificity. In fact, the debate over the universality of male dominance has been not so much resolved as transcended. As one anthropologist put it, a gendered anthropology has moved from an interest in "woman" to an interest in "women" (Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988:486). This move poses new challenges to old assumptions.

Because each cultural situation is complex and unique, it is difficult to generalize about the ways in which gender affects the distribution of prestige and power in different kinds of societies. Generally speaking, egalitarian foraging societies, such as those in native North America (Klein and Ackerman 1995), some tribal populations in Southeast Asia (Ong 1989), some hunters and gatherers in Africa (Shostak 1983), and the Mbuti of the Ituri forest in Africa (Turnbull 1961), do offer women more autonomy and power than do horticultural or agricultural societies, although there is great variety among these also. Even generalizing about women's status by region becomes risky; it has been demonstrated that within such regions as aboriginal Australia (Burbank 1989) and sub-Saharan Africa (Potash 1989) there are great variations in women's roles and status.

Gender Relations in Foraging Societies

The interest in the cross-cultural variability of women's roles has led to a reexamination of the sexual division of labor in foraging societies, in which men were previously seen as the sole hunters and male hunting was seen as the basis of male dominance. This issue was a subject of much anthropological debate in the 1960s, largely based on a new look at earlier ethnographies of foraging societies, which gave evidence that women significantly contributed to the food supply by gathering vegetable foods and also by hunting.

Among the Tiwi of Australia, for example, women made important contributions to the food supply by gathering vegetable foods and hunting small animals (Goodale 1971; see page 200), whereas among the largely foraging Agta of the Sierra Madre in the Philippines, women make an important economic contribution to their households through hunting. Agta men tend to hunt alone, stalking pigs, deer, and monkeys with their bows and arrows. Women hunt in groups, with men or with other women, using dogs to drive the animals and killing them with long knives or bows and arrows (Estioko-Griffin 1986).

The Agta illustrate Ernestine Friedl's contention that in foraging societies, which rely heavily on women's economic contributions, child rearing is adapted to economic needs. Agta women carry nursing infants on their backs on their forest trips for hunting and gathering. Older children are left with older sisters or grandmothers. Fathers also spend significant amounts of time caring for their children. Although women's economic contributions appear to be an important factor in their social power, other factors are also important. For example, even in foraging societies where women make important economic contributions, men may have greater prestige and power through their (exclusive) participation in hunting large animals (as among the Inuit) or through male-dominated ritual activities, as in native Australian groups (Bell 1981; Kaberry 1939; Merlan 1988).

In the many non-Western societies where the private/public dichotomy cannot be applied, women's power cannot be judged solely on the basis of formal political status. In addition to their important roles within households, women in many of these societies make alliances and participate in networks outside the household, which are important arenas for prestige, influence, and self-esteem.

Native foraging groups in North America were among the most gender egalitarian societies (Albers 1989). Even in those few groups, such as the Tlingit of the Northwest coast, whose society did involve social hierarchy, men and women both had a high degree of individual autonomy (Klein 1995). Both women and men could achieve prestige through their own efforts and their kin relationships. Kinship relations and wealth obtained through extensive trade with other coastal societies were the keys to social status for both men and women. The Tlingit sexual division of labor was clear but not rigid, and economic roles had little bearing on the power and influence of women. The abundant food supply of the Tlingit depended primarily on salmon, which were generally caught by men and smoked and dried by women. The plentiful products of sea and land provided the basis for long-distance trade in luxury items such as furs and copper, wood carvings, and woven blankets, which were distributed at festive giveaways (potlatches) as indicators of wealth.

Although long-distance trade was centered on men, women often accompanied men, acting as negotiators and handling the money—a fact commented on by early European traders, missionaries, and anthropologists. Tlingit women regarded men as "being foolish with money," and both girls and boys were expected to "work, save, get wealth and goods" (Klein 1995:35). Becoming a

shaman was one route to wealth outside the kinship system, and this role was equally open to men and women.

The private/public dichotomy was not relevant to gender status among the Tlingit. Power and influence were embedded in kinship and rank, which applied equally to men and women. Although Europeans generally recognized only men as chiefs, some women were heads of clans or tribes, and Tlingit aristocrats were both male and female. In any case, wealth, kinship connections, and personality were more important sources of status than formal political roles. Titles of high rank were used for both men and women, and the ideal marriage was between a man and woman of equal rank.

The assertive competitiveness that appears to have characterized both women and men in traditional Tlingit society—noticed, not always favorably, by European observers—remains part of Tlingit life (Klein 1995). Tlingit women are found in the highest offices of the native corporations administering Tlingit land and in government, social action groups, and business and cultural organizations. Traditional female roles in accumulating wealth and handling money have served Tlingit women well in their contemporary communities, where they hold political positions and sit on the boards of the influential voluntary associations. With no traditional inhibitions about women appearing in public roles, Tlingit women have taken advantage of opportunities for education and easily enter modern professions. Unlike many societies in which the impact of Europeans resulted in a diminishing of women's economic roles and influence, modernization has led to a broadening of women's roles among the Tlingit.

Anthropologist Laura Klein, who has studied the Tlingit, warns against a Eurocentric reading of women's status as one that diminishes men. Tlingit men and women both take pride in the accomplishments of prominent Tlingit women. Husbands proudly describe the achievements of their wives and daughters, encouraging them to go into public life. Klein concludes that the Tlingit are best described not as a matriarchy, or even as a society where exceptional women can occupy important masculine roles, but rather as a society in which roles are structured more on the basis of individual ability, training, and personality than on the basis of gender (1976:179).

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Most horticultural societies have culturally patterned ideas about men's work and women's work. Men most often do the clearing and planting, and women, the food processing. Among the Dani of New Guinea, tending pigs and barbecuing them is women's work, though men accrue the prestige for their use in ritual and in exchange networks.

Gender Relations in Horticultural Societies

Horticultural societies encompass a very wide range of gender relationships, from the highly egalitarian Iroquois of eastern North America (J. Brown 1975) to the highly sex-segregated and male-dominated Yanomamo of South America (Chagnon 1997) and most societies in highland Papua New Guinea (Strathern 1995). There is a correspondingly wide variety in the sexual division of labor in horticultural societies, although some general similarities can be noted.

A high degree of segregation between the sexes, paralleled by the importance of males in ritual, is associated with male dominance in some horticultural societies. For example, among the Mundurucu of South America, adolescent boys are initiated into the men's cult and thereafter spend most of their lives in the men's house, only visiting their wives, who live with the children in their own huts in the village. These men's cults are closed to women and surrounded by great secrecy. The men's house itself is usually the most imposing structure in the village and the sacred musical instruments and paraphernalia of the cult are kept in or near it. The musical instruments, which are often flutelike (shaped like the male genitals), are the symbolic expressions of male dominance and solidarity (Murphy and Murphy 1974). Often, especially in Australia, such men's cults are associated with circumcision rites for newly initiated boys, after which the initiates are considered men and introduced to the secrets of the cult. Sometimes these cults include a

religious explanation of why women are not allowed in them. These myths may also explain from a religious perspective why women are considered socially inferior to men and why men and women have different roles in these societies.

The solidarity of women in horticultural societies is usually not formalized in cults or associations, but is based on the cooperation found in domestic life and strong interpersonal bonds among female kin. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the most important economic and emotional ties for both men and women are not between a married couple (conjugal ties) but between generations (consanguineal ties). Women's most important ties are with their children, particularly their sons, on whom women depend for emotional support and security in old age (Potash 1989:199). The importance of kinship ties for African men has long been noted. Ethnographies focusing on the lives of women show how they, too, use kinship ties with their natal groups to gain access to land, gain support in marital disputes, or participate in ritual activities (Sacks 1982).

The impact of European expansion on women in horticultural societies varied. Generally, women's role declined as indigenous economies shifted from subsistence horticulture to cash crops to be sold in a world market. This process of change is illustrated by the Polynesian atoll of Nukumanu, a fishing and horticultural society studied by anthropologist Richard Feinberg (1986). Before European contact, Nukumanu depended for its food on the abundant marine life and a few indigenous plants, such as the coconut, pandanus (a type of fruit), and taro (a starchy root). Women's primary responsibilities were domestic, whereas men contributed food acquired some distance from the home through fishing, collecting shellfish, and collecting and husking coconuts. Men also made canoes and constructed new buildings, and women cooked food and collected and prepared leaves for thatch.

Both women's and men's roles were highly valued in Nukumanu society. Women exclusively controlled and cultivated swamp taro lands, which were inherited matrilineally. Matrilocality added to women's status, whereas men's power came from their economic contribution and the fact that only they could occupy formal positions of power in the chiefly hierarchy. In the 1880s, under German colonialism, most of Nukumanu was turned over to production of copra (dried coconut meat). Wage laborers were brought in from nearby islands. This resulted in irreversible cultural and economic changes, most of which lowered women's status. Commercial foods such as wheat flour and rice supplanted taro, and men's wages were needed to buy coffee, tea, and sugar (once luxury items). As a result, women's traditional sphere of influence declined, and men's sphere expanded.

In addition, the traditional segregation of men's and women's activities has intensified. With the introduction of kareve (sap of the coconut tree fermented to make a potent alcoholic beverage) in the 1950s, men's economic activities, such as canoe building, took on a social aspect involving drinking. Because the production and consumption of kareve takes up a great deal of men's leisure time and excludes women, sexual segregation has increased.

With the declining importance of taro, women's collective activities have become more individualized, leaving women more isolated and dependent on their husbands and brothers than they were in the past. Male–female tensions have also increased, partly as a result of kareve drinking, which many women vehemently oppose. The traditional tendency for men to travel off the island more than women also lowered women's status, and this pattern has continued because it is mainly men who go overseas for wage labor and higher education. But by the 1980s, as a result of Western influence, more opportunities were made available for women to attend school and pursue careers off the atoll. These changes may enable Nukumanu women to return their culture to its tradition of sexual egalitarianism.

Gender Relations in Pastoral Societies

Pastoral and agricultural societies tend to be male dominated, though some variation exists. In pastoral societies women's status depends on the degree to which the society combines herding with cultivation, its specific historical situation, and the diffusion of cultural ideas, such as Islam. Generally speaking, women's contribution to the food supply in pastoral societies is small (Martin and Voorhies 1975). Men do almost all the herding and most of the dairy work as well. Male dominance in pastoral society is partly based on the required strength to handle large animals, but females sometimes do handle smaller animals, engage in dairy work, carry water, and process animal by-products such as milk, wool, and hides (O'Kelly and Carney 1986). Pastoral societies generally to not have the rigid distinction between public and domestic roles of agricultural societies: herders' camps are typically divided into male and female spaces, but both men and women work in public, somewhat blurring the private/public dichotomy.

In pastoral societies men predominantly own and have control over the disposition of livestock, which is an important source of power and prestige. However, the disposition of herds is always subject to kinship rules and responsibilities and animals also may be jointly held by men and women. Still, the male economic dominance in pastoral societies seems to give rise to general social and cultural male dominance, reinforced by patricentric kinship systems and the need for defense through warfare (Sanday 1981).

This generalization again, however, is subject to variation. Among the Tuareg of the Central Sahara, for example, women generally had high prestige and sub-

Anthropology Makes a Difference

Advocating for Female Factory Workers in China

The importance of women's work to meet the demand for cheaper goods in the national and the global economy is clear in the People's Republic of China. Global capitalism is expanding, and sweatshop working conditions in factories that produce goods for a global market particularly affect women.

Pun Ngai, a Hong Kong anthropologist, spent 6 months tightening screws in computer hardware at an electronics factory in Shenzhen, People's Republic of China, as part of her ethnographic study of how *dagongmei*, or "working girls," are responding to the pressure of China's increasing participation in the global economy (Tsui 2000). The factory directors were interested in Dr. Pun's work because they hoped to learn more about what the workers want so they would know better how to deal with the workers. At first, the factory directors assumed that Pun would focus on the factory's operations and inundated her with personnel and administrative documents. They were astounded when she told them she wanted to work on the line and live with the workers, in the participant-observation mode of anthropology.

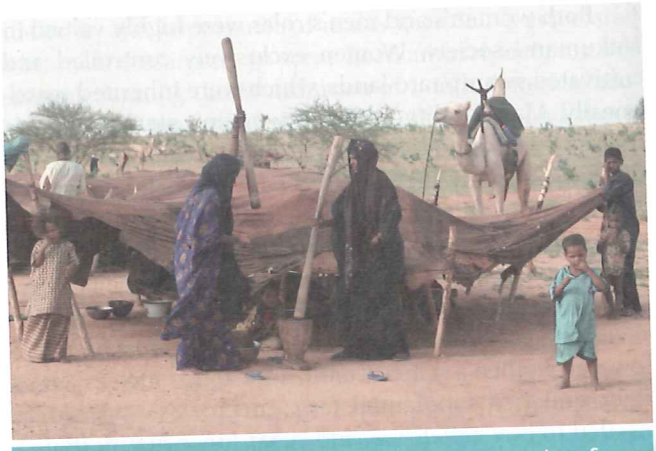
Although the dagongmei were initially suspicious of Pun, when they saw she was really interested in their lives, they were so eager to talk with her she didn't have enough time to listen to them all. As an outsider, Pun quickly became a confidante, dealing with workers' complaints, offering academic guidance, and giving advice on love and other personal relationships.

Pun found the factory work interesting for the first week, but it soon became a monotonous routine. Dagongmei, most of whom are in their late teens or early 20s, spend 15 hours a day in the factory. They sleep in dormitory-type accommodations called cagehouses. In addition to boredom on the job, dagongmei also suffer from many physical ailments. Long working hours cause menstrual pain and anemia. Those who weld microchips suffer eyesight problems, and those who wash plates with acids are constantly at risk for chemical poisoning. Accommodation and other expenses are deducted from their already low wages. The dagongmei also work and live under very strict rules. They have to wait their turn to go to the restroom. They are thoroughly searched before they are allowed to leave the factory premises. Security guards wielding electric batons guard the locked quarters at night.

Dr. Pun has followed up her field study with a continuing commitment to improving conditions for dagongmei in China. She represents the interests of dagongmei at labor conferences, fighting for their rights. In China, a residence permit is required to live in a particular city; dagongmei are denied residential rights even if they have been working in the same city for more than 10 years. They are also overcharged for medical and other services and consumer goods. Urban factories recruit dagongmei as cheap labor but then do not want to take proper care of them. When unemployment hits, the first thing people want to do is send the dagongmei back to their rural villages. After years of urban living and participation in a consumer-oriented global lifestyle, dagongmei find it difficult to readapt to village life.

Dagongmei receive little sympathy in China, especially from men who say they are taking away their jobs. In fact, times are getting harder for dagongmei. With China's admission to the World Trade Organization and the opening up of its agricultural market, more people are rushing to the cities. Urban unemployment is high, and getting higher, thousands of workers have been downsized as a result of the privatization of factories, and factories themselves are now

stantial influence (Rasmussan 2005). The Tuareg, who are Muslims of Berber origin, herd camels, sheep, goats, and donkeys. Because the Tuareg are matrilineal, Tuareg women enjoy considerable rights and privileges: they do not veil their faces, and they have minimal social and economic separation from men. Women are singers and musicians and organize many social events. They traditionally enjoyed freedom of choice in sexual involvements, though this has been somewhat modified among those Tuareg who are more devout Muslims. The traditionally high status of Tuareg women, and matrilineality itself, are also undermined today by the migration of men to cities, where they work for wages, and the incorporation of the Tuareg into larger nation-states, with their patrilineal cultures. Cities, however, may also provide increasing opportunities and freedom for Tuareg women. The Tuareg appear to be an unusual exception to the generally patriarchal nature of pastoral—and



Courtesy of waterishope.org

While Tuareg engage in the traditionally domestic occupation of processing food, in contrast to the male role of herding animals, Tuareg women have considerable prestige, influence, and privileges in their societies.

closing by the thousands as part of the worldwide recession and steep decline in the global demand for Chinese-made goods.

In spite of all these hardships, dagongmei see advantages in their factory work. It exposes them to a wider view of the world and permits some escape from the rigid patriarchal structure of the village. Dagongmei enjoy having boyfriends, keep up with the latest fashions, and search for the secrets of success, especially in the form of making money (toward which goal many are determinedly studying English) and maybe finding a husband (Chang 2008). Some dagongmei, by pooling their earnings, have managed to open small factories. Others have ambitions for a business career, or to improve their education. Urban migration offers the opportunity to take a computer class or learn a little English, which can lead to switching jobs and earning more money. Indeed, it may be that dagongmei are at the cutting edge of a changing Chinese culture: moving from traditional commitments and filial loyalty to the cultural values of upward social mobility, individualism, and the pursuit of a more prosperous future, though Pun cautions that out of 70 million dagongmei, few succeed.

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An important part of the multinational factory worker workforce, and particularly of the Asian economic "miracle," consists of young woman workers.

Multinational corporations' desire for cheap labor will lead to more women working in the global factory. Anthropologists such as Pun Ngai are trying to make sure their rights are protected when they do.

Muslim—societies, but they are also an essential reminder that gender roles vary greatly, even within similar economic types of societies and within religious traditions.

Gender Relations in Agricultural Societies

With the transition to agriculture, the direct female contribution in food production generally drops drastically, though this also varies. Agricultural work by women declines with the introduction of plow agriculture but women have an important productive contribution in wet rice agriculture. Generally, agricultural societies are a good example of the principle that women lose status in society as the importance of their economic contribution declines. The decline of women's participation in agriculture is also generally accompanied by their increasing isolation in domestic work in the home and increasing numbers of children (Ember 1983). The transformation of agricultural production through machine technology reduces the overall labor force, and because most machinery is operated by men, this change particularly affects women, who are disproportionately excluded from the productive process. The inequality between the sexes is also apparent in the lower wages paid to women as agricultural laborers and in the concentration of women in the labor-intensive aspects of agriculture such as weeding, transplanting, and harvesting. This situation is exacerbated as societies increasingly rely on cash economies and the marketplace. It is relatively easy for men to enter the cash economy by selling their crops or animals to buy goods and services. Entering the cash economy is far more difficult for women, who thus become more depen-

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In Guatemala, as in many agricultural societies, the income from women's craftwork, which they sell in local markets and to tourists, is an important source of family income

dent on men. For example, in Zinacantecan, Mexico, men control cash crops and participate in the market. As a result, they are now able to purchase many of the goods and services that women used to contribute to the household. Zinacantecan women are increasingly dependent on men, but men are less and less dependent on women (Flood 1994).

The lower status for women in agricultural societies is often exacerbated by foreign aid and development programs, which, while increasing production in the man's sphere of work, tend to be more restrictive for women. Economic development is intended to improve people's lives but such projects often fail to take women's economic contributions into account. Frequently they increase gender inequality, worsening women's position in their societies (Moser 1993; Warren and Bourque 1989). Some development projects have resulted in more prestige, income, and autonomy for women. These include projects promoting the global marketing of women's textiles and pottery in Mexico and Guatemala. However, in some cases this has led to greater tension and even violence between men and women (J. Nash 1993, 1994:15). As anthropologists increasingly point out, the impact of development projects on women is a result of the interplay of specific material and cultural conditions in a particular society (Lockwood 2005).

Gender Relations in a Global Economy

Women's status in modern, stratified societies varies greatly and is affected in multiple ways by economic development, political ideology, and globalization. In the past 25 years, industrial production by multinational corporations in Latin America, Asia, and Africa has exploded. For example, in China (as described in this chapter's "Anthropology Makes a Difference" section), in the search for cheap labor, clothing manufacturing, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and electronics assembly factories have recruited women—particularly young women. These jobs give women a chance to earn money on their own, and they offer women an important opportunity to act in their own interests. But there are also social costs to the involvement of women in the workforce, especially in more traditional cultures, such as those of Taiwan for example. In these cultures, women's efforts to act in new ways disrupt the conventional organization of power within families, in which men, by virtue of their economic dominance, have power over women, and parents have power over children. This widening of alternative roles, for young women particularly, is becoming intensified in the global economy (Lee 1996).

As rural lifestyles and agriculture are replaced by urban lifestyles and industrial production, women may benefit relative to men. For example, in Mata Chico, Peru, in the 1930s, access to land was critical, and the only way for women to get land was to marry. By the 1980s, Peru was increasingly urbanized, and many occupations were available to both men and women. Because women could support themselves and their children through employment in urban areas, they began to remain single longer and in some cases chose not to marry at all (Vincent 1998). But although women may benefit financially from these new opportunities, particularly as factory labor, these benefits often come at a high price. As illustrated by the work of Pun Ngai (see "Anthropology Makes a Difference"), women are often exploited as cheap labor and work under sweatshop conditions in factories producing for the global market. And even in societies in Europe, Japan, and the United States—nations that are much further along on the scale of economic development—women's status is not equal to that of men; women still earn less pay for similar work, for example.

Gender stratification is a complex issue in a global economy. It consists of social, economic, and political dimensions; it is embedded in culture; and it affects both men and women and the relationships between them.

The Global and the Local: Islam and Female Modesty

Islam is a global religion, having expanded from its origin in Saudi Arabia to all parts of the world, including Europe and the United States. Muslim gender ideologies and practices regarding women are much debated, among both Muslims and non-Muslims. As with other global religions, there are many local differences in ideology and practice, shaped by varying interpretations of the Qur'an and by local histories, politics, and cultures. Much of the debate on the correct roles and attire for Muslim women centers on the **hijab,** or head covering. For some Muslims as well as non-Muslims, the hijab is a sign of oppression of women; these people think the hijab makes women invisible and restricts their freedom of choice. Others, however, especially young Muslim women, may view the hijab as a liberating garment that forces the world to see them as more than sexual objects and establishes their identity as a Muslim.

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The hijab, or headscarf, worn by these Malaysian girls is one means by which some Muslims accommodate the Islamic requirement for women to dress modestly. Wearing the headscarf has become a political issue in Turkey and in many European countries, which have large numbers of Muslim immigrants.

Muslims base their commitment to modest dress for women on the Qur'an (24:30–31), which says, "And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; . . . [and] that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands."

The Qur'an also speaks of the need to erect a "curtain" (hijab, which means to hide from view or conceal) between women and men. Some Muslims interpret this as requiring separation of men and women within a house, others that it requires that women wear clothes that conceal their bodies (Bowen 2007). Although the Qur'an specifically requires face covering only for Muhammad's wife, some Muslims interpret this command as requiring all women to cover their head, hair, neck, and bosom (see Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement 2008). Thus, although Islam requires female modesty, it does not command any specific styles, nor specifically mention hijab, making room for much local variation.

Local interpretation of female modesty is shaped by different historical and cultural contexts, particularly the degree of male dominance in a society and the commitment to secularism of governments in largely Muslim societies. In some societies, most Muslim women wear a hijab that loosely covers only their hair and neck; in others, such as in Yemen, women wear full head and body coverings as well as a face veil. In the airlines of the United Arab Emirates, a compromise is reached between fashion and religion—air hostesses wear "jaunty little caps with attached gauzy scarves that hint at hijab" (Zoepf 2008).

The specific practices of modest female dress vary among different societies, sects, social classes, rural and urban populations, generations, and to some extent depend on whether Muslims are a dominant or minority group. In Saudi Arabia, women must wear a face veil, whereas in Afghanistan, under Taliban rule, women were required to wear a burka, or full body and face covering. In all of these countries, these laws and customs are resisted by some women (Ali 2006; Manji 2003; Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan 2009). Wearing the veil is discouraged in Tunisia, and neither veil nor hijab are generally worn by Muslim Bedouin women (see page 230). In Egypt, conflict over what constitutes women's modest dress is an important political issue between religious parties and the government. Today, almost 90 percent of Egyptian women wear a headscarf and many Egyptians believe it is explicitly required by the Qur'an. At the same time some government officials publicly oppose the Egyptian Islamist call for women to cover themselves entirely, including their faces. One official called the hijab "a step backward for Egyptian women" (Slackman 2007), and some Egyptian authorities are also concerned about the small but growing number of women wearing the niqab, the black flowing garment that covers the entire body and the face. In

hijab A widespread term used for the head covering worn by some Muslim women as part of modest dress.

Turkey, women commonly wear the headscarf in public, though previously they were not permitted to wear it in government offices or universities. Today the hijab is part of a contentious public debate about the secular versus the religious character of this largely Muslim state (Tavernise 2008a).

In Europe and the United States, the headscarf has also become a source of conflict. In France, the growing number of Muslim immigrants led to a law banning headscarves (and other religious symbols) in public institutions, specifically public schools. Those supporting the law claimed headscarves are a symbol of female oppression, though many Muslim young women want to wear the headscarf as a proud display of their Muslim identity. In the United States, some discrimination cases have been filed by Muslim women denied the right to wear the headscarf, for example, while teaching in public schools. However, the American commitment to individual freedom of religious practice has made Islamic dress less of an issue here (Moore 1998).

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, women are required to wear hijab and wearing a burka is increasingly common, because of government and some public pressure. At the same time, however, anthropologist Pardis Mahdavi, in her new ethnography of sexuality in Iran (2009), describes the widespread breach among upper class, educated Iranian families of many Muslim sexual restrictions, such as premarital chastity, marital fidelity, and the wearing of modest dress. Dating, nail polish, and immodest dress are outlawed in Iran, and although these restrictions are policed in public spaces, in private girls wear layers of makeup and women's headscarves are often so transparent and fashionable that they actually look sexy. In sum, a cross-cultural study of Islamic practices illustrates that despite the global reach of Islam, as in other religions, local patterns emerge that resist attempts at global uniformity.

Key Questions

1. Why do Muslim women wear the hijab? What are some of the factors that explain its local variations within the global context of Islam?
2. Using ethnographic evidence, outline an argument either that Islamic "modest dress" oppresses women or that it liberates them.

Summary

1. **What is some of the anthropological evidence that gender is culturally rather than biologically determined?** Margaret Mead's early studies, as well as subsequent studies of variation in gender roles across cultures, support the prevailing view in anthropology today that gender is culturally constructed, rather than biologically determined.
2. **What is the difference between sex and gender?** Sex refers to biological differences between male and female; gender refers to the social classification of masculine and feminine.
3. **How does cross-cultural evidence raise questions about the Western view that sex and gender are universally divided into male and female, man and woman?** Although all cultures distinguish between masculine and feminine, some cultures also include alternative, in-between, or third-gender roles. These include woman–woman marriage in parts of Africa, the two-spirit role among Native Americans, and the hijras of India.
4. **How do you define the hijras and how is their position in Indian society different from sex/gender roles in American culture?** Hijras are men who dress and act like women, are regarded as ritually powerful devotees of the Mother Goddess, and perform ritually at weddings and childbirths. As an "in-between" gender the hijra role contrasts with the sex/gender dichotomy symbolized in American society by transsexuality, in which a male or female becomes a member of the opposite sex.
5. **Are sexual behavior and sexuality "doing what comes naturally"?** Views about the nature of male and female sexuality are part of gender ideologies. Sexuality and sexual behavior, though rooted in biology, are patterned by culture.
6. **What are initiation rituals and how do they function socially and psychologically in different societies?** Initiation rituals, or rites of passage, transform boys and girls into adult men and women. Both male and female initiations transmit cultural values and emphasize the importance of citizenship in a society. Male initiations also reinforce the solidarity of men, culturally validate male dominance, and from a psychological perspective symbolically enable men to master the conflicts generated by boys' early identification with their mothers. In matrilineal societies, female initiations publicly emphasize the status change from child to adult, make statements about gender relations, and enhance a girl's beauty and her attractiveness to men, in preparation for marriage.
7. **Is male dominance culturally universal? How do you explain male dominance in any particular society?** A male-dominated gender hierarchy is a sociocultural system in which men are dominant, reap most of the social and material rewards of society, and control the autonomy of women. One explanation for gender hierarchy in some societies (mainly more complex ones) is the private/public dichotomy, in which men are associated

with public political and economic activities and women are identified with the home and children. Gender hierarchy is also related to men's control of economic processes and warfare.

8. **Are foraging societies gender equalitarian? What is the evidence for or against this theory?** The classical anthropological view that hunting is exclusively a male occupation in foraging societies is contradicted by a closer look at forager ethnographies which indicates that in some foraging societies, women also hunt (although not as much as men, who often exclusively hunt large animals) and make important contributions to the food supply, giving them autonomy and influence. Also, as among the Tlingit, a matrilineal society of the Northwest coast of North America, women were actively involved in economic exchanges and had important positions in kinship and political networks.

9. **How has the impact of Western economy and culture influenced gender relations in different horticultural societies?** Gender relations in horticultural societies vary considerably. Often, the impact of Western economies has led to a decline in the economic status and prestige of women, as illustrated in the Nukumanu atoll in the Pacific.

10. **What appears to be the effect of the rise of agriculture on gender relations? How do globalization and industrialization affect gender roles in different societies?** In agricultural societies, women's role tends to decrease and the private/public dichotomy becomes more relevant. Development projects, particularly those involving the use of heavy technology, such as tractors, also tend to marginalize women and reduce their autonomy and status. And, as illustrated in our ethnography on China, even when women benefit by working in factories, they are also subject to severe restraints and difficult working conditions.

11. **What is the relationship between pastoralism and gender hierarchy? In what ways are the Tuareg an exception to most pastoralist societies in this regard?** In pastoral societies men gain dominance through their control over large herd animals and male dominance is also supported by patrilineality, although the public/private dichotomy is weaker than in agricultural societies. The Tuareg, a matrilineal society of North Africa, are an exception, and women have substantial freedom, which, however, varies with the commitment to Islam and is both strengthened and weakened by male migration to cities for employment.

12. **What is the hijab and its relation to female modesty as required in Islam? What are some of the local variations of this practice?** The hijab is a head covering adopted by many women in Islamic cultures as an expression of the universal Muslim injunction for female modesty. In fact, Islamic dress for women varies locally, ranging from a full head, face, and body covering, to the rejection of full covering of women and even headscarves by some politicians in places like Turkey and Egypt.

Key Terms

cultural construction of gender
feminist anthropology
gender
gender hierarchy
gender role
hijab
hijra
machismo
mahu
manhood puzzle
menarche
private/public dichotomy
rite of passage
sex
two-spirit role
xanith

Suggested Readings

Gutmann, Matthew C. 1996. *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City.* Berkeley: University of California Press. An original look at the construction of masculinity in Mexico City, with implications for the rest of Mexico, this ethnography undermines stereotyped views of machismo as the sole basis of Mexican manhood as it reveals the complexities and contradictions of Mexican gender.

Mascia-Lees, Frances E. 2009.*Gender and Difference in a Globalizing World: Twenty-First-Century Anthropology.* Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland. The right book for the student who wants to explore how globalization shapes gender identities, gender behavior, and gender inequalities, including an incisive examination of different anthropological theories and perspectives on the relationship between gender and power.

Merry, Sally Engle. 2008. *Gender Violence: A Cultural Perspective.* New York: Wiley-Blackwell. Through personal accounts and ethnographic case studies, an outstanding legal and cultural anthropologist examines the social and cultural contexts of gender violence and its history as a public issue.

Nanda, Serena. 2000. *Gender Diversity: Cross-Cultural Variations.* Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland. Aimed at introductory students, this short book presents a cross-cultural look at alternative gender roles for both males and females among Native American societies and in India, Brazil, Thailand, the Philippines, Polynesia, Europe, and North America.