

GENDER, SEXUALITY & SOCIETY HANDOUT

Adapted from Ernestine Friedl.

6 factors that affect gender roles (activities deemed appropriate to men or women) and status (relative social standing), cross-culturally; i.e., areas to look in order to assess the basis of gender relations (and relative inequality and/or egalitarianism) of a society:

- 1) **labor related to subsistence base** — contributions to material needs of group (productive labor); gendered division of labor; racial-ethnic division of labor — and *valuing* of that labor
 - a) hunting-foraging societies (Ifaluk)
 - b) agrarian societies (rural Southern Europe/Mediterranean, until recently)
 - c) market capitalist societies (wage labor and consumerism)
- 2) **distribution & exchange of goods & services**

means of accumulating wealth, property: inheritance, dowry, market exchange
organization of non-subsistence, unpaid labor (e.g., kin work)
ritual exchange in which symbolic prestige, not wealth, is accumulated
are avenues of prestige potentially open to all?
- 3) **child-rearing**

including birth spacing, birth control; responsibility (and credit) for childcare, socialization, education
- 4) **sexuality**

ability to express (within local parameters) sexual desire, get sexual pleasure, initiate sexual contact; incidence of sexual violence; presence/absence of gendered double standards in sexuality (e.g., adultery, chastity); management of sexuality by marriage and other institutions (medicine, law).
- 5) **symbolism & ritual**

what is conveyed through rites of passage — wedding rituals, initiation rites, birth practices — about gender and status
symbolic meanings associated with masculinity/maleness, femininity/femaleness
gendering of objects/elements of nature, valued positively/negatively, etc.
- 6) **extraordinary events**

crisis management, conflict resolution, ability to heal, etc.

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