



MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT

**Women, Men and Gender
As Social Construction**

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SEX AND GENDER

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I. INTRODUCTION

To understand the problem of gender subordination, one must first understand two key concepts: sex and gender. In common usage, the two terms are often interchanged. Properly, each has a meaning distinct from that of the other. This distinction has important implications for the way we look at existing inequality between women and men.

The following paper aims to clarify this distinction and its implications, both for the present situation and for social and personal change. The paper will first define sex and gender and explore the connections between the two. This exploration will include a discussion of how gender is manifested in contemporary Philippine society, how it is commonly explained; and how it is explained by more contemporary social theory. The paper will then discuss the implications of gender on equality between men and women. Next, it will attempt to trace the development of gender to its present Philippine context. Finally, it will briefly examine the social institutions that maintain gender.

II. SEX AND GENDER: WHAT THEY ARE, HOW THEY DIFFER

A. Sex: In the Realm of the Biological

1. What It Is

Sex is a biological term. We use it most often to refer to the act of mating between two organisms — an act which is part of the process of biological reproduction. A more technical term for this act is *coitus*. The concept of “sex” may also be expanded to include other behavior associated with the act of mating: animal courtship rituals, human “foreplay.”

While sex in this sense begins with biology, human sex differs from that of other animals in that biological factors no longer play a primary role in it. The human desire and capacity for sex are not determined, as these are in other animals, by the instinct, or the body's readiness, for reproduction. For instance, a woman's fertility cycle does not dictate when she will want sex; pre-pubescent children and post-menopausal adults may have a sex life. Many human sexual practices do not involve coitus and have nothing to do with reproduction, while civilizations from the earliest times have constantly been looking for ways to have coitus without having babies.

Nor does human sex simply respond to a physical urge. It is often used to express human emotions and relationship: love, anger, subservience or domination, affirmation or the need for affirmation. Thus human sex has acquired cultural dimensions; human beings have a sexuality that is influenced, but not dictated, by biological circumstances.

Sex also refers to the two categories of animals — male and female — needed for the act of mating to result in biological reproduction. This categorization is made according to reproductive function: the female produces the egg cell, or ovum; the male provides the sperm that fertilizes it. (A third category exists, the intersexed — people born with both male and female, or incomplete, genitalia — but these form a very small proportion of the human population.) ⁽¹⁾

It is in this second general sense of categorization that sex is often confused with gender. The rest of this section will use sex in this sense.

2. Men and Women According to Biology

Besides the fact that males produce sperm and females egg cells, males and females differ from each other in several indisputable ways. They have a different chromosomal make-up; different internal and external genitalia (sex organs); and different quantities of various hormones. Most male and female humans also have different secondary sex characteristics, such as patterns of body hair distribution, voice pitch and muscular development.⁽²⁾

Chromosomes are the first determinants of sex. These elongated bodies of a cell nucleus contain the genes that parents pass on to their

offspring. Each cell of a female ovary or male testis contains twenty-three chromosomes; one of these is the sex chromosomes. ⁽³⁾

There are two types of sex chromosomes: X and Y. Female egg cells contain only the X chromosomes, while male sperm may have either. An XX combination produces a female; an XY combination, a male. Sex chromosomes present in the sperm determine whether offspring are genetically male or female. Some of the "intersexed" are genetically male or female — that is, their chromosomal make-up is either XX or XY and the confusion in their body structure is due to faulty embryonic (pre-birth) development. Others are truly "neuter" (neither male nor female), having the chromosomal make-up XO. ⁽⁴⁾

Despite this difference in chromosomal make-up, male and female human embryos look pretty much the same during the first six weeks of their lives, down to their gonads (primary sex glands). After this period, the presence of the Y chromosome apparently triggers the production of male hormones by the male embryo's gonad (the future testis); these hormones stimulate the development of male genitalia and suppress the development of female genitalia. The female gonad (the future ovary) starts producing hormones at a later stage; these result in the development of female genitalia. ⁽⁵⁾

Hormones are secretions of the endocrine glands, which include the pituitary, adrenal, thyroid and primary sex glands and the pancreas. The main function of hormones is to stimulate the development of primary sex characteristics, so that individuals become capable of reproduction. Hormones are also responsible for the development of secondary sex characteristics. ⁽⁶⁾

All human beings produce both male and female hormones. During childhood and after the age of sixty, there is little difference in the quantity of male and female hormones they produce. From puberty through sexual maturity females produce more female hormones, and males more male hormones. However, the actual quantity varies from one individual to another; some females may actually produce more male hormones than some males, and vice-versa. ⁽⁷⁾

Similarly, secondary sex characteristics vary from person to person. For some characteristics, such as muscle development and body hair, the

differences among men or among women have been found by some studies to be greater than the differences between the average male and the average female.⁽⁸⁾

Moreover, racial differences in secondary sex characteristics are often more significant than differences between men and women of the same race. In general women tend to have less body hair than men, but many Caucasian women have more body hair than Filipino men. Men tend to be taller and heavier-built than women, but the average Caucasian woman is probably taller than the average Southeast Asian man.

Vital statistics reveal more constitutional differences between males and females. More males are conceived than females, but more also die from the moment of conception through all stages of life. Some differences between men and women are based on their chromosomal make-up. Some disorders, such as hemophilia and color-blindness, occur only in men; these are linked to a mutant gene in one X chromosome, which a healthy X chromosome inherited from the other parent (by females but obviously not by males) effectively neutralizes. Higher male susceptibility to infectious diseases, a trend supported by many studies, can be attributed to the same cause.⁽⁹⁾

B. Gender: In the Realm of the Social

1. What It is

Gender refers to the differentiated social roles, behaviors, capacities, and intellectual, emotional and social characteristics attributed by a given culture to women and men — in short, all differences besides the strictly biological. There are two genders: masculine, ascribed to the male sex; and feminine, ascribed to the female.⁽¹⁰⁾ The way a society is organized according to sex is referred to by some social scientists as the “sex-gender system”.⁽¹¹⁾

Almost all cultures tend to see gender as a natural phenomenon, deriving from the biological differences between men and women. However, definitions of masculine and feminine often vary from one race and culture to another.

For instance, in one Brazilian tribe, women — seen by most other cultures as the sexually passive partners — are as sexually aggressive as the men; among the Zuni Indians, women, not men, are the sexual aggressors.⁽¹²⁾ Latin Americans and other Asians are often surprised to note the number of women working in middle-level positions in government and business offices in the Philippines; Filipinos hardly notice. Similarly, Filipinos view construction work as “heavy” labor fit only for men; in Thailand and India, it is low-wage work viewed as suitably only for women.

Within our own country, the woman of Central or Eastern Visayas, farther removed from the center of Spanish colonization and forced by an impoverished subsistence economy to leave her home and seek her living elsewhere, is generally more adventurous than the woman of Central and Southern Luzon, or Western Visayas, more prosperous regions where agriculture follows tenancy or capitalist arrangements.

Gender expectations also vary in degree among different social classes within the same ethnic group. In Manila, the professional woman who walks home alone at night is more likely to invite social disapproval than the woman who works the night shift in a food processing factory. The religious teaching that woman's place is in the home also finds more adherents among the propertied classes than among the working classes who need both spouses' income. In many societies, physical strength is less essential to the definition of maleness among the propertied and professional classes than among the classes which engage in manual labor.

Gender also changes through history. The women of many tribes in pre-Hispanic Philippines enjoyed a good measure of property and political rights, social status, and premarital sexual freedom. Spanish Christianity changed this situation, promoting the ideal of the chaste and docile woman subservient to the authority of father, husband and priest.

Such variations in gender definitions are due to specific economic, political, and social conditions of each class, culture, or era. However, almost all gender systems in the world today share certain common elements.

2. Men and Women According to Society

The most basic and common element in contemporary gender systems is a difference in gender roles: the assignment to women of the primary responsibility for caring for children and the home, and to men of the task of providing the income on which their families live. In most contemporary societies, this sexual division of labor exists in the form known technically as the production-reproduction distinction. ⁽¹³⁾

Production here refers to social production, or the production of commodities: that is, goods and services for exchange rather than for immediate consumption. Participants in social production usually get a wage or fee in return for their labor or the product they produce. Production is viewed as men's sphere.

Reproduction includes not just biological reproduction, but also the other tasks associated with it: childrearing, the maintenance of other members of the family, and the maintenance of the dwelling — activities, indispensable to survival, but assigned no economic value. This is viewed as women's sphere. ⁽¹⁴⁾

In real life, many Filipino women do participate in social production: working in factories, plantations or offices; taking on income-earning work within the home; or rendering unpaid work in family fields or enterprises. Women do 40-60 percent of agricultural work in the Philippines ⁽¹⁵⁾, and constitute more than 40 percent ⁽¹⁵⁾ of the work force in all sectors. ⁽¹⁶⁾ But various studies have found that they, their families and their communities often view such work as supplementary and secondary to the main task of housekeeping and childrearing, even when the income they earn is greater than that of the men in their families. ⁽¹⁷⁾

Similarly, many Filipino men give an occasional hand with the children or the housekeeping — but the assistance is voluntary, and often viewed by the women in their families as a bonus. Common Filipino speech abounds with derogatory labels for the man who puts in too much help with the housework: he is called *macho-nurin* or *under the saya*.

The production-reproduction distinction manifests itself not simply as a family-work distinction, but also in the work men and women do outside the home. What heavy industries do exist in the Philippines —

those engaged in the production of capital goods, or in the extraction and processing of mineral resources — largely employ men. So do the professions which society values most: law, management, science and technology, and the prestigious fields in the medicine. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Meanwhile, female labor is the rule for light industries such as garments, food processing, handicrafts and the assembly of electronic components. The jobs women get in these industries, though income-earning, are analogous to the tasks they perform within the home: sewing, preparing food, making ornaments and doing other fiddly things (*mabubusising bagay*) that need finger dexterity.⁽¹⁹⁾ In the professions, women are teachers and nurses, just as they are in the family.⁽²⁰⁾

This horizontal sex segregation occurs simultaneously with a kind of vertical sex segregation, in which jobs requiring decision-making or technical skills designated as “higher level” are assigned to men rather than to women. This happens even in female-dominated professions and industries. Lower-echelon teachers are mostly women, but the proportion of men to women increases as one goes up the career ladder.⁽²⁰⁾ Food-processing factories prefer female workers, but high-class restaurants prefer male chefs.

The production-reproduction distinction also has implications for gender roles in political life. Women in the Philippines are said to rule the household, their husbands and through their husbands, the rest of Philippine society. This is the myth of Filipino matriarchy.⁽²¹⁾ Filipino women do enjoy more decision-making powers within the home than their sisters in more clearly patriarchal societies, such as those of South Asia and the Middle East; but their control is by no means substantial. Because men are viewed as the main providers of family income, women defer to them in the most important household and personal decisions, particularly those that affect the family's economic life: where to live, whether or not to make improvements on the house, whether or not they themselves should have children, get a job or go into business.⁽²²⁾ On the other hand, while many Filipino husbands do consult their wives on personal and social decisions affecting the family, many others do not, and in any case the final decision is the husband's.

Decision-making in the community and the larger society is also dominated by men, because it is they who are involved in the economic activities that society values. Moreover, their relative freedom from household responsibilities allows them the leisure to participate in social

and political organizations and formal political structures. In the Philippines, the leadership of urban poor, peasant, fisherfolk and labor organizations is predominantly male.

Few women run for public office, at whatever level; fewer still, the women who actually get elected into office. Women who do win elections beyond the municipal level have very similar profiles. Most come from traditional political families, having risen to power on the coattails of husbands, fathers or brothers who were politicians before them; in effect, they are extensions of male power. (While descent from political dynasties figures in the careers of both male and female politicians, the men tend to stress their own educational, professional and political achievements more than the women). Most women in provincial, regional or national politics belong to a socioeconomic class that can pass on the most onerous tasks of the reproductive sphere to working class women.

President Corazon Aquino's accession to power, often cited as evidence of the high status of women in the Philippines, is actually an illustration of this phenomenon. Her landowning family had figured in Philippine politics for decades. Her husband, too, came from a prominent political family and had been billed as the next President after Marcos. In accepting the Presidential candidacy in 1985, she was thus merely stepping into her late husband's vacated shoes. Had her husband not been assassinated, she would probably have remained a "plain housewife." Her victory in the 1986 elections had less to do with the status of Filipino women than it did with her being Benigno Aquino Jr.'s widow and with the undesirability of her opponent (whose most effective argument against her was that she was a weak, vacillating, inexperienced woman).

Philippine government bureaucracy has its fair share of women — more than in other countries — but as in other careers, one finds more men than women as one goes up the hierarchy. The few women who have served in various cabinets have traditionally been appointed to departments that are extensions of the female role in the family (e.g., education, social services).

Gender roles also interact with sexuality, although there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between the two (e.g., male homosexuals can be masculine and female homosexuals feminine in all but their sexual preference). Sexuality cannot be reduced to productive and reproductive roles.⁽²³⁾

The sexual servicing of men is an important task that women perform within the reproductive sphere.⁽²⁴⁾ This task is valued not simply, or even primarily, for its part in biological reproduction, but for the pleasure it gives to men. Unfortunately, woman's role as provider of sexual pleasure puts her in a double bind. On the one hand, she is expected to be desirable to men; on the other, she must be sexually available to only one man, to whom she is both sexual and reproductive property. (This proceeds partly from the need for men to be sure that their wives' children are also their own — an important consideration in inheritance.)⁽²⁵⁾ If a woman has sexual relations with any other man, or if her desirability invites sexual aggression from any other man, society condemns her as evil, the occasion for if not the agent of sin. Filipino culture sees wifehood — the binding of a woman in sexual and reproductive service to one socially-acknowledged male partner — as the highest feminine achievement, but has only contempt for the woman who services many men, and pity for the one who services none at all. Such women are considered unnatural, “unfeminine” and somehow less worthy of respect.

Sexual virility is as much a part of our culture's definition of masculinity as sexual attractiveness is of femininity. This, too, has its links with reproduction: in Asian tradition, for instance, the more offspring a man has sired, the more virile he is considered (thus the Filipino male's suspicion of contraceptives, especially those affecting his own ability to beget children). But a man's sexual activity is not service, either sexual or reproductive: it is considered to be directed at his own pleasure rather than at his partner's. Moreover, masculinity is also measured by one's ability to seduce many women. Thus, while society condemns promiscuity in women, it implicitly encourages this in men.

3. Gender ideology

Gender roles are justified by gender stereotypes about the different personality traits, skills and capacities that men and women have.

Men are said to be physically stronger than women, thus more fit to take on work outside of the home. Women, on the other hand, are perceived as fit only for household work that does not require great physical exertion. Women are supposed to be better equipped for minute, detailed manual work, because their fingers are smaller and therefore nimbler than men's.

Men are said to be brave, aggressive, independent, good at controlling their emotions. The center of their lives is their work; relationships are secondary. Their decisions are supposed to be based on reason, hence solid and unshakeable. All this makes them better-equipped, in the eyes of society, to head families, business enterprises, social and political organizations, communities, nations and armies.

Women, on the other hand, are perceived as timorous, passive, emotionally dependent, demonstrative, loving, patient, self-sacrificing and peaceful by nature. Relationships — especially within the family — take precedence over everything else. Women as mothers and wives are predestined roles. They can also be good peacemakers. However, they are not to be trusted with major decisions, since they operate not by reason but by intuition or worse, whim; women are as fickle as the weather.

Stereotypes about women's and men's sexuality also justify their different gender roles within sexual relationships. Men are supposed to be more sexually aggressive than women. Their sexual urges cannot brook delay and occur independent of loving relationships — thus even strangers are potential sexual partners. Women are supposed to be less easily roused, less interested in coitus than in the loving feelings that accompany it, hence they ought to find it hard to engage in the sex act with strangers.⁽²⁶⁾ Men are by nature polygamous, women by nature monogamous: the "double standard of morality" is simply the social expression of these inherent tendencies.

All these gender stereotypes seem to be validated by a cursory observation of men's and women's behavior. Exceptions are numerous and tolerated within a certain degree, but men and women who deviate markedly from the norm are viewed as unnatural, and encounter much social disapproval.

Gender roles and stereotypes find a coherent explanation in gender ideology. The basis of most gender ideology is biological determinism, the thesis that the biological differences between men and women dictate a difference in social roles as well. The logic goes: because women are the ones physically equipped to bear and nurse children, nature intends that their lives should revolve around the care of children and the family.⁽²⁷⁾

Biological determinism takes this logic one step further: the difference in men's and women's bodies results in a difference in their

psychological make-up.⁽²⁸⁾ By virtue of bearing and breastfeeding children, women are said to establish a special relationship with them. Some psychologists and philosophers even use the structure of the male and female external genitalia, and of coitus to graphically illustrate their view of the psychological differences between men and women.

A woman's vagina, they point out, is hidden from view, turned inwards. She need not be an active or willing partner for coitus to take place. In terms of reproductive efficiency, the best position she can take during coitus is supine; she is the receptacle of man's seed. This, they argue, points to the essential nature of the feminine psyche: inward-looking, subjective, reflective, passive, and subject to man.

On the other hand, a man's penis and testicles are exposed, jutting out of his body. He is the active sexual partner: his penis must be hard and erect for coitus to take place; he penetrates the woman, and gives her his seed. Thus man is essentially outward-oriented, active, aggressive, woman's benefactor and rightful superior in society as in bed.

The same argument is used to explain gender stereotypes about sexuality — and to excuse male promiscuity. The logic goes: because a man's penis is located outside his body, his inner being need not be involved in sexual intercourse; thus he can engage in it even with persons he does not know or care about. The vagina, on the other hand, is located inside a woman's body — thus, it is argued, a woman's inner being must be involved in any sexual relationship, and she cannot easily engage in sexual intercourse with someone she does not love.⁽²⁹⁾

There is also a chemical explanation: male and female hormones, according to this theory, are responsible for male-female personality differences.⁽³¹⁾

Religion takes all these explanations and cloaks them in sacred authority. In most dominant religions, God, or the chief God, is male. Men were often the first creatures, women an afterthought; and whereas men's primary task in the sacred scheme of things is co-creation; women's is procreation.

4. Gender Ideology Demystified

In reality, none of the arguments for an essential difference in men's and women's psyches has been proven beyond doubt. There is nothing women can do for children that properly-trained male adults cannot do, except bear them and breastfeed them; and the advent of the baby bottle has made a parent's sex irrelevant even in the task of infant-feeding. Some fathers are better parents to their children than the mothers are. The biological connection between mother and child need not produce intimacy, as we know from the numbers of children abandoned or abused by their natural mothers.

As for the structure of men's and women's bodies, this can be used to draw the most contradictory conclusions about their predestined social roles. One might contend, for instance, that because it is women who carry children for nine months and risk their lives in childbirth, the rest of the childrearing work ought to be men's job; or that, because a man's testicles and flaccid penis are fragile and exposed, men ought to lead less active lives than women, whose clitoris and vagina are naturally protected; or that a woman's act of enclosing a man's penis during coitus is symbolic of her destiny of encompassing man; or that, since men must be active and willing participants in sexual intercourse in order for it to succeed, it is they who must be emotionally involved with their sexual partners — not women, who need not be aroused in order to participate in sexual intercourse. We know, of course, that none of these arguments has any basis in reality. They merely serve to illustrate how contrived any analogies between gender and body structure must be. (In fact, this inversion of gender logic is used by some trainers in an exercise to help women challenge gender ideology).

The biochemical explanation of male-female personality differences is less easy to dismiss. Experiments on animal behaviour have shown a positive correlation between levels of aggression and the amount of the male hormone testosterone present in the body. Studies of the female menstrual cycle have also related changes with pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS), a common condition in which women become sensitive, irritable and easily upset just before the onset of menstruation.⁽³²⁾

But the extent to which hormones control male-female personality differences is difficult to determine, because of the intrusion of other factors affecting human behavior: social learning, for instance; or the pain,

inconvenience and taboos surrounding menstruation. The most that can be said of hormones is that they may indicate differential tendencies in male-female behavior, but are not its sole, or even main, determinants.⁽³³⁾

As for the religious arguments for male supremacy or for the “complementariness” of male-female roles: human society has always been prone to create its gods in its own image and likeness. Most religions simply reflect and rationalize the existing social order. They cannot be used to infer natural laws.

5. Culture, Not Nature

Where then does gender come from? Why do so many men and women seem, superficially at least, to correspond with society’s definitions of masculine and feminine behavior?

One emerging answer is that gender is a cultural construction — a product of a given society’s adaptation to the material conditions in which it finds itself. This hypothesis seems to be borne out by the wide variations in definitions of masculine and feminine found across cultures, social classes, and historical periods.⁽³⁴⁾

Gender differentiation, according to this explanation, originates from the different functions assigned to men and women by society, which in turn are based on their sex differences. For instance, because women bore and nursed children, many cultures probably found it more convenient to charge them as well with other childrearing tasks and the maintenance of the dwellings. This division of labor led to the development of different skills and qualities in men and women — differences later enshrined as “natural” or “God-given.”

The individual male or female within each culture acquired gender through socialization. Identification with the parent of the same sex, close association with others of the same sex, rewards or restrictions by the family or peer group or community on behavior considered gender — appropriate or inappropriate, all contribute — quite early in life — to the shaping of an individual’s self-image, personality, and valued social roles. These are reinforced by the institutions of mass socialization: education, religion, art and mass media.

Socialization is far less foolproof than biology. A completely developed male or female cannot be anything but male or female; but no one individual can be described as totally masculine or feminine. In any society, deviations from dominant definitions of masculine and feminine are too numerous to be explained by faulty biology.

The theory that socialization is the key factor in establishing individual gender identity seems to be validated by studies made of intersexuals — intersexed individuals (not to be confused with homosexuals) — in Britain and the United States. These studies found that persons with incomplete genitalia, or even genetically neuter persons, could be just as “masculine” or “feminine” in their behavior and orientation as people with all their genitals and chromosomes intact. More surprisingly, some intersexuals, raised as males or females because of the appearance of their genitals and later found to belong genetically to the opposite sex, were eventually able to acquire the opposite gender as well. This may be the most convincing proof yet gender is not inherent, but culturally acquired.⁽³⁵⁾

III. GENDER SUBORDINATION

Gender has implications for equality between women and men in society. In earlier days these implications were accepted as a matter of course: women were perceived as “naturally” inferior to men, and that was the end of the discussion.

By contrast, modern-day apologists of gender, hard put to defend a male-female dichotomy in the harsh light of egalitarian ideologies, deny these implications, claiming that gender differences do not make for inequality at all. Their favorite slogan is that women and men are “equal but different” — or, put another way, that males and females have “complementary” roles in human society. According to this line of apology, society gives just as much importance to feminine roles, qualities and skills as it does to the masculine — and therefore no one need complain; indeed, to try to eradicate the differences would destroy the very fabric of society. A well-known sociologist of the early 20th century even went so far as to claim that the specialization of labor between the sexes is a mark of advanced civilization.⁽³⁶⁾

A more complicated line of gender apologetics, prevalent among Filipino males (and some females), is that these differences actually make

for female superiority — that Filipino society is a matriarchy in which Filipino women have the best of the situation.⁽³⁷⁾ (Curiously, the men who argue for this position seem to have little inclination to change a system that ostensibly operates to their disadvantage).

In reality, gender limits the potential of both men and women. This limitation means more than mere gender discrimination: the gender system supports and interacts with other social systems which keep the majority of people, women and men, from achieving full and dignified lives. However, in most gender systems, including that in dominant (lowland Christian) Philippine society, women suffer more problems and limitations than men; they are, in Simone de Beauvoir's words, "the second sex." "Gender subordination" is the phrase which describes the secondary position of women vis-a-vis men in society. "Male dominance," on the other hand, describes the position of men.⁽³⁸⁾

A. Gender Subordination and the Economic System

The production-reproduction divide is the sexual division of labor that prevails within the capitalist system. In this division, males as heads of households are the "breadwinners" and women, the "homemakers," responsible for housework and the daily reproduction of laborers, husbands and children. It is often the case, however, that wages of breadwinners are insufficient so that women have to do paid work as well. But women's responsibility for the home defined her work outside it. Women's homemaker role, together with a gender ideology of sex attributes, meant that women were assigned to low level, low skilled, low productivity and low paid work. (The papers on the sexual division of labor and the family-household explore this issue at greater length.)

B. Gender Subordination and the Political System

Male dominance in grassroots and formal politics has already been pointed out. Precisely because the gender system prescribes different roles for men and women, women have problems and concerns which men do not experience, and therefore do not voice or act upon: for instance, problems relating to child care, social services, economic independence, and equal access to social institutions. For instance, the economic value of

household work and child care is given too little recognition and support by the community and the state. Public policies are made largely on the assumption that male interests are broad interests, and that female interests (if at all acknowledged) are side issues.

As pointed out earlier, the few elite women who make it to positions of influence in the formal political system do not adequately represent the interests of the majority of women. They are shielded from any unpleasant aspects of the sex-gender system by the power of their social class and by their ability to purchase the services of working class women.

Grassroots organizations, accessible to working class men, are not as accessible to working class women because of gender biases, women's learned passivity, and the burden of household work which hinders their active participation. Even the most politically progressive people's organizations are often guilty of the same male focus and the same dismissal of women's issues that characterize the political establishment.

But gender subordination in the political system means more than the exclusion of women and their concerns from political life. The state, used by particular groups in society to perpetuate themselves in power, in turn uses gender to support its objectives or thwart those of other groups. For instance, the Marcos administration in the early 1970's employed the image of the charming, attractive and hospitable Filipino woman to promote one of the pillars of its economic program — Philippine tourism — and, not incidentally, the myth of a people happy with a benevolent dictatorship. The military, the most male-dominated institution in our society, has been known to use the rape and sexual torture of female dissenters as a warning to groups seeking social change.

C. Gender Subordination and Sexuality

Rape is an extreme illustration of the subordination of women's sexuality. Women are not just men's sexual and reproductive property, they are also legitimate targets of sexual aggression. While society officially condemns rape, its victims are perceived as being in some way to blame for it: because their dress and manner "asked for it;" because they were engaged in gender-inappropriate activities, such as travelling at night or agitating for political change; or simply because they were young, or

beautiful, or women. In many cultures, rape is excused as an excess of male lust which must find release. In reality, rape and its milder cousin, sexual harassment, are expressions of male control over female sexuality. These acts can also be instruments of political control — in military rape, for instance, or in the sexual harassment of women workers and trade unionists.⁽⁴⁵⁾

A more subtle and perhaps more commonplace manifestation of female subordination in sexual relationships is the double standard of morality that condones male promiscuity while demanding female chastity. This double standard, is often excused by women themselves as a natural law — but many other women experience it as a painful form of personal injustice.

D. Gender Subordination and Personhood

The gender system encourages the development of different personality traits for women and men. This stunts the personal growth of both sexes, but because the traits developed by men are those on which society places greater value, women are subordinate in this area as well.

1. Women: Dutiful and Dependent

Since men are breadwinners and political mediators, in myth if not in fact, women perceive men as essential to their own material survival. This perception generates an inordinate attachment to relationships with men. From childhood women are encouraged to think of a permanent and exclusive intimacy with a man, rather than creative and meaningful work, as their primary goal in life. Much of their adolescent and adult activity is geared towards this goal. For many single women, a job is a temporary phase, a period of waiting for the real job of marriage and a family. A large part of many women's self-image is shaped by their ability to attract men, as well as by the type of men they attract.⁽⁴⁶⁾ And because good men are a limited item, many women learn to see each other as competitors.

Once a woman has committed herself to a relationship with a man, keeping him becomes a preoccupation, even at great personal cost. This is reflected in the stereotype of the long-suffering wife or girlfriend in radio

and television dramas, who bears with her lover's irresponsibility, infidelity, emotional cruelty, and even physical abuse because having him is better than having no man at all. Filipino news tabloids carry many stories of women who kill themselves after being abandoned by a lover or husband, who is probably not worth the trouble.

A woman's commitment to a man ideally goes hand-in-hand with commitment to the family they create together. Filipino girls are trained at a very young age to be responsible for the home and their younger siblings. As wives and mothers they often subsume their own personal needs to the needs of the family. Though this is not by itself unhealthy, constant denial or neglect of one's own needs and aspirations can lead to mental and even physical stress. The double burden of work that many women carry, and the multiple roles they perform, pose additional hazards to physical and mental health. At the same time, the bondage to household work prevents women from developing their full potential for contributing to the development of society.

Women's tendency to defer to men even in decisions involving the household or their personal lives has already been mentioned. Though Filipino women are quite assertive compared to women of other Oriental cultures, assertiveness is not a prized feminine trait. And compared to men of the same social class, they are less ready to speak out or do anything to call attention to themselves. This is most noticeable in meetings or gatherings at which both women and men are present; women tend to leave, the speaking and the decisions to the men. A woman who holds her own with men might occasionally gain respect, but she also risks becoming the object of hostility and unkind gossip, most of all from fellow women.

The lack of bonding between women, the absence of a sense of common cause, is perhaps the greatest obstacle to their liberation from gender subordination. Competition for men is only one reason for this. Women's isolation within the home is another.⁽⁴¹⁾ The isolation is not so much physical as it is social: the home is the center of women's lives; anything outside of it is not quite as important, and any way is men's concern. A major reason for women's inability to see themselves as a social sector, and their problems as social problems, is gender ideology. This not only teaches women to accept their situation as natural, it also convinces them that they would not want to have it any other way. Some anthropologists speak of a "patriarchal bargain" in which women

voluntarily subordinate themselves to men for the sake of protection and security.⁽⁴¹⁾ There is, after all, a certain seductive comfort in not having to make decisions for oneself.

2. Men: Dependent Too

Men are raised to think of their lives in terms of self-fulfillment rather than relationships. Self-fulfillment is achieved through creative work or through the pursuit of pleasure. While a relationship with a woman is important to the Filipino male, and also a source of his self-image, he is better able to retain his autonomy from the relationship.

This emphasis on self-fulfillment, however, has its unhealthy consequences. Unlike their sisters, most Filipino boys do not have to worry about household chores or the care of siblings. This seems to be one reason Filipino men are often less responsible and caring than Filipino women.

The emphasis on developing emotional control also makes, men less able than women to express affection, weakness or fear. Mental stress can result from this suppression. Another source of mental stress is the inability to meet unrealistic social expectations: for instance, the myth of the good breadwinner, a tough act in a high-unemployment situation.

Men are better-prepared than women for decision-making and participation in public life; leadership and a public role are, after all, part of the definition of masculinity. But the extent of men's public role is made possible by the unacknowledged support of women's work in the household and sometimes, in the public sphere as well (e.g., secretarial services). Deprived of this support, their success in public life suffers considerably.

IV. GENDER SUBORDINATION THROUGH HISTORY

A. Roots

The roots of gender subordination are difficult to trace. We can only guess at the relations between women and men in prehistoric communities, and much of written history already presupposes the

subordinate position of women. However, by studying other cultures, particularly those of communal societies with a relatively simple economic organization, social scientists have gained some idea of how gender subordination developed.

Gender differentiation probably began as a recognition of the different roles played by males and females in biological reproduction. This different became the basis for the sexual division of labor. For instance, the female's capacity to nurse children probably led to her becoming responsible for gathering other forms of food for them as well. In fact, some feminist anthropologists posit that men were initially dependent on women for their survival, and not the other way around, since women were the earliest human food producers and gatherers.⁽⁴³⁾ A logical development would have been the assignment to women of tasks compatible with the care of children, such as the maintenance of the dwelling-places.

Some anthropologists also believe it was women who developed agriculture, or the cultivation of plants — a significant step in gaining control over the environment.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Though there is little real evidence for this, it would have been a development of a piece with the more settled lifestyle imposed upon women by the task of caring for children. In any case, women probably played an important role in early subsistence agriculture, as they do to this day.

The sexual division of labor did not automatically lead to male dominance. Friedrich Engels, in his tract *The Evolution of the Family, Private Property and the State*, rejected the theory that women's subordination existed from the beginning of human society.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Studies of various cultures by later anthropologists, notably Margaret Mead, also indicate the male dominance is not a universal phenomenon.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Engels postulated that as long as the means of production remained communal, women's tasks were also communal and their importance pretty well recognized, so that women's status in the community was comparable to that of men. He traced the beginnings of women's subordination to the evolution of private property. As the level of technology increased, it became possible to produce more than was needed for survival, and individuals began to appropriate the surplus production. The system of inheritance from parents to children developed as a means for ensuring the smooth passing on of

property from one individual to another; with this system came the need to ensure that the inheritors were one's natural children, and thus, according to Engels, the practice of monogamy as a means for controlling women's sexuality. The advent of the monogamous household led to the privatization of women's work and to the appropriation of women as sexual and reproductive property.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Engels' explanation has been rejected by many contemporary feminists because it reduces gender subordination to a problem produced by the development of class society, and also because it concentrates on male productive work — implicitly downgrading female reproductive work — as the main force in history.⁽⁴⁷⁾ However, most alternative explanations share his view that the development of gender subordination is intricately interwoven with the development of other unequal human relations.

One alternative view espoused by feminists centers around the role of another early human activity — hunting — in the development of gender subordination. In most cultures this was probably a male activity, since it is difficult to carry a spear in one hand and a suckling child in the other. Hunting was probably not as vital as food-gathering or cultivation, because it involved more risk and provided a less constant supply of food. However, according to this theory, it was not the economic importance of hunting itself that led to the subordination of women, but the fact that hunting weapons could be used against human beings as well. These became instruments of coercion, enabling the wielders (men) to appropriate for their own private benefit the labor of other human beings. Since women were producers of both food and children (future labor power), they became the primary targets of such coercion.⁽⁴⁸⁾ War, directed mainly at the taking of slaves, thus became another important economic activity of slaves, thus became another important economic activity for the men; and in this women were of little use, for the same reason that they were handicapped in hunting.

Mies postulates that underlying these developments were differences in the relationship that men and women developed with nature in their bid for survival. Because women were in themselves productive, in a broad sense — that is, they were able to produce food (milk) from their own bodies — their relationship with nature was one of unity and cooperation. Men, on the other hand, could not produce food from nature except with the use of tools; thus their relationship with nature was one of subjugation.⁽⁴⁹⁾

However gender subordination may have begun, it plainly increased together with the increasing organization of economic, political and social life. Religion came to reflect this situation. Early religions, which often worshipped both male and female gods in the same degree, came to be replaced by religions in which male gods were supreme, and eventually by monotheistic religions which worshipped one male God. The misogyny of Judaism, organized Christianity and Islam developed alongside the growing control of a minority class over the means of production. Feudalism, an economic system in which warring lords appropriated peasant labor by coercion, flourished in Europe at the same time that the male-dominated Roman Catholic Church reached the height of its power. It is significant that these religions also portrayed men as the masters of nature, and women as part of nature, therefore to be dominated by men.

B. Philippine Context

1. Spanish Colonization

In the sixteenth century, merchant capitalism in Europe spawned a lust for new territories and the subjugation of new peoples whose produce and labor could be appropriated for the benefit of merchants and their kings. The islands that were later to be the Philippines became a target of these colonial objectives.

At the time the first Spaniards arrived, a number of economic systems operated in the island, ranging from nomadic agriculture in the North to incipient feudalism in the Islamic South. Although women were in charge of the home, they were active in agriculture and other economic activities, while in many places men participated in the household work. The chronicles and Catholic missionaries who came with the Spanish soldier-colonizers were surprised and perhaps rather shocked to observe the degree of status and freedom enjoyed by the women of the islands.

The missionaries transplanted Roman Catholicism, with its misogyny, into the native culture. Ironically, the native women who had been active in the pre-colonial religions became avid recruits and supporters of Catholicism, embracing with enthusiasm the new role that it circumscribed for them: chaste, otherworldly, meek and devoted servants

of men and the faith. Some religious orders deliberately targetted women for their missionary efforts, realizing the powerful role these women had in the community and in the socialization of children. Thus the women of the islands, subjugating themselves, became instruments for colonial subjugation. But they continued to be producers, and though they left political leadership almost entirely to men, a few of them did manage to lead unsuccessful revolts against the Spaniards.

The eighteenth century in Europe saw the rise of industrial capitalism and with it, the establishment of the production-reproduction distinction. Previous to this, a significant amount of social production still took place alongside subsistence agriculture and domestic maintenance tasks within and around the home. Industrial capitalism shifted the locus of production from home to factory, and gave social production a wage. Thus a clear distinction came to be drawn between productive labor, which earned a wage, and reproductive labor, which did not. Since women, being chiefly responsible for reproductive labor, were handicapped in their participation in waged work outside of the home, this led to a further and graphic devaluation of their sex.⁽⁵⁰⁾

The ideology of the nuclear family and the housebound wife reached its height at around this time among the bourgeoisie, the rising industrial capitalist class of Europe. But while the bourgeoisie idealized the lady of leisure, working class women and their children were already entering the factories in such massive numbers and under such poor wages and working conditions that their plight became a scandal for nineteenth-century humanitarians.

In the Philippines, European gender ideology found its most avid adherents in the native elite that emerged in the nineteenth century. This elite drew its wealth from the ownership or control of land cultivated by small tenants — a system similar (though not identical) to European feudalism — but had close links with European capitalists, whom they supplied with agricultural raw materials for industrialization. Moreover they were pretty well exposed to European ways through education, literature and travels abroad. While the sons of the elite led raucous and decadent lives as students in the universities of Europe, their sisters and future wives were shut up in convent schools, learning the arts of home and the restricted ways of Victorian womanhood. This womanly ideal was caricatured in Jose Rizal's Maria Clara, obedient and helpless, escaping

from social and personal conflict into madness and each in a convent. In reality, however, women of the rural elite were often not quite as useless and feckless as prevalent gender ideology would have them be, actively participating in the management of lands and finances.

Women of the peasantry also continued to play a significant role in subsistence agriculture, although in some areas this role had been undermined by the introduction of male-cultivated cash crops (e.g., sugar) for the world market. In Manila, the incipient working class, though largely male, included young women who worked in the tobacco factories.⁽⁵¹⁾

Nevertheless, the revolution against Spain and the subsequent war against the United States put both working class and elite women on the sidelines. Although a few of them did take up arms, women were for the most part cast in auxiliary and feminine roles: delivering messages, cooking meals, nursing the wounded, and dancing to distract the authorities. One historian claims women were denied full membership in the revolutionary organization, the Katipunan, because the men deemed them incapable of keeping secrets.⁽⁵²⁾ And in the discussions over the Constitution of 1898, elite men patently denied women the right to vote.

2. United States Colonization

United States colonization, repressive as it may have been in fact, brought with it a more liberal ideology — and the first great wave of women's agitation for equality. Bourgeoise women of Europe and the United States at the turn of the century were waking up to the contradictions between capitalism's claim of equal opportunity for all and respect for individual rights and freedoms and the reality of women's continuing subordination in the home and the political sphere. Suffragists from the United States, fighting for women's right to vote, came to the Philippines to recruit elite women into the struggle. Though hesitant at first, and never as aggressive as their Western counterparts, the Filipino suffragists did win the vote, in 1937.

At the same time, the increasing integration of the Philippines into the US capitalist system resulted in the expansion of trade, export agriculture and the bureaucracy. This created more jobs, and women

entered the formal work force not just as factory workers but as clerks, sales staff, and teachers. The public school system gave males and females, at least in principle, equal rights and opportunities in formal education. The mass media brought in the image of the free white woman who smoked, drank and held her own with men.

Nevertheless, these developments brought only cosmetic improvements to Filipino women's lives. The right to vote merely drafted women into the support of patronage politics dominated by the male members of the landowning elite. The agitation for equal rights, articulated by elite women protected from the combined forces of class and gender inequality, never went beyond suffrage. Trade union and peasant movements that emerged during this period were also male-dominated.

The working woman was still expected to be the loving and dutiful wife at home, putting her domestic responsibilities above all. The individualistic rebellion of white women in films was seen as a corrupting influence, and Filipino films not otherwise famous for their nationalistic sentiments portrayed the "good," domesticated, long-suffering traditional Filipino woman as continually winning her man from the "bad" Westernized vamp.

The mass media also cast women in other roles in the capitalist scheme that were not so liberating: as consumer and as the means for selling male-oriented products. The desirable woman became a metaphor for the desirable commodity. From there it was a short step to women becoming commodities themselves: or, in the vocabulary of the second wave of the women's liberation movement, "sex objects."

4. Formal Independence

The period of formal independence continued many of the trends begun under direct United States rule, partly because of the ever-increasing integration of the Philippines into US capitalism and its military support system. The sexual objectification of women worsened, not just in the Philippines but in other underdeveloped countries. In many cases this phenomenon grew alongside military and economic intervention by the former colonizer nations, now calling themselves the "First World" or the "industrialized world." The United States' military

installations and wars in Asia turned Manila, Bangkok, pre-communist Saigon and other Southeast Asian capitals into world-famous brothels servicing the U.S. Armed Forces. The tourism programs of the 1970s — part of the industrialized countries' foreign-exchange-dependent development plans for the underdeveloped countries — expanded the market for prostituted women to foreign tourists and businessmen.

Of a piece with the industrialized nations' development plans was the restructuring of the international division of labor, which continued the drafting of women into the formal labor force. Previously, the underdeveloped nations had served only as markets and sources of raw materials for the industrialized nations; now they also became sites for the production of low-cost, labor-intensive consumer goods for the world market, and for assembly operations of transnational corporations fleeing the high labor costs of the industrialized world. Women — cheap, obedient, and fleet of finger — were the ideal work force for these operations. But this massive recruitment into the production force brought no real equality for women, only more varied forms of gender subordination.

V. GENDER AND SOCIALIZATION

The previous chapter showed how changing social conditions influence gender. This chapter will deal with the socialization mechanisms that maintain gender in our society.

A. Child-Rearing

“Gendering,” or the socialization of persons into a given gender, begins the moment a child is born. Almost the first thing people want to know about a baby is: “Boy or girl?” Hospitals and middle-class parents emphasize the difference, dressing girl babies in pink and boy babies in blue, and friends' and relatives' responses to the baby take their cue from this color code.

Ruth Hartley notes four processes involved in a child's learning of gender identity. In most cases these processes are performed unconsciously by those nearest the child: they are seen as “natural” reactions to the child's sex. The child, too, learns from them unconsciously, and the learning is all the more powerful for this.

The first process, *manipulation*, simply means that people handle girls and boys differently, even as infants. One study in the West, for instance, showed that a sample of mothers tended to use more physical and visual stimulation on male infants, and more verbal stimulation on female infants. In our own experience, we might notice that boy babies are tossed into the air more often than girl babies, who get more delicate handling.

The second process, *canalization*, means that people direct children's attention to gender-appropriate objects. The most common example of this is the choice of toys. Little boys are given war toys, cars and machines that they can take apart or put together; little girls are given dolls, tea sets and toy houses. These toys teach children early on what their prescribed roles in life will be, and serve to familiarize them with the tools of their trade.

The third process, *verbal appellation*, consists in telling children what they are (e.g., "brave boy" or "pretty girl") or what is expected of them ("Boys don't cry," "Girls don't hit their playmates," "Boys don't hit girls [but other boys are fair game]"). The fourth process, *activity exposure*, ensures that children are familiarized with gender-appropriate tasks: for instance, in our culture, girls are expected and encouraged to help their mothers with housework and the care of younger siblings, while their brothers are encouraged to play or work outside the home.

This series of processes enables children to identify which gender their parents think they should belong to, and to acquire the corresponding behavior and roles. Quite early, before the age of three, children develop a clear and often irreversible gender identity; and this is reinforced through their identification with parents of the same sex, as well as through later interaction with children with the same gender identity.⁽⁵³⁾

The rites and myths of puberty, marking the passage from the learning of gender roles to their actual performance, also convey messages to girls and boys about their gender. In our culture, circumcision is the first rite of manhood; it tests the boy's courage and ability to endure pain. It is often referred to as a baptism [*binyaq*], signalling the boy's rebirth into his adult role. Another baptism is considered to have taken place with the boy's (or young man's) first experience of sexual intercourse. In both cases, the passage to manhood is often a conscious choice — the boys ask for circumcision, or seek out or agree to a sexual encounter — and a matter of pride.

A girl, on the other hand, is not baptized into womanhood. No conscious choice is involved; the turning point, menstruation, simply happens to her. Once it has, she is warned "Now you are a woman, you must be more careful" (sometimes without explaining what she is to be careful about). She is also subjected to numerous regulations: not to take baths, not to wander about. Menstruation is treated as dirty and embarrassing. One myth has it that men can tell by a woman's smell whether she is menstruating or not, and this implies she should stay away from them until she is clean again. Thus a girl learns to associate her passage into womanhood with shame, the fear of men, and additional restrictions on her behavior.

B. INSTITUTIONS OF MASS SOCIALIZATION

Institutions of mass socialization — those which aim to ensure that whole groups of people consent to and fit into the existing social order — also play an important role in promoting the dominant gender ideology and inequality. In our contemporary society, four institutions are crucial: formal education, the mass media, religion, and language.

I. Formal Education

By current statistics, one might conclude that Philippine formal education is as accessible to females as to males. Girls and boys are found in almost equal proportion in elementary and secondary education; women outnumber men in institutions of tertiary and higher education. Filipino girls and women also have consistently lower repetition and dropout rates than their male counterparts, and half as likely to fail.⁽⁵⁴⁾

However, a closer look at parents' attitudes to women's education, and at the education system itself, shows far more gender differentiation and far less equality than at first appears. A common parental attitude towards higher education for women is that it is not very useful, since women will probably get married and stay home. The same attitude is at work in some of the most prestigious institutions of higher education, which impose lower quotas and higher grade-point averages for women than for men in admissions, and in highly technical courses such as law, medicine and engineering.

The education system itself is authoritarian in orientation, with learning occurring largely as a transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. Discipline and obedience are important components in this pseudo-learning process. Thus girls' superior performance might be at least partly attributable to their greater propensity for the passive behavior which teachers consider right conduct. In a 1987 consultation on Women and Education, teachers admitted imposing different standards of discipline on boys than on girls, who were expected to be better-behaved.

Sex-segregated schools, or exclusive schools as they are euphemistically called, are the rule for the upper classes; these are mostly run by religious congregations. The principle behind sex-segregated schools is that women and men have different roles in life, therefore the education they require is different. Another philosophy behind sex segregation in education, though less openly admitted, is that females and males must be protected from each other until they are of marriageable age. (One graduate of a sex-segregated school notes, however, that segregation may in fact work for female students to a certain extent, since it removes them from exposure to discrimination and the pressure to underachieve in order to be less threatening to male classmates).

Sex segregation inside the coeducational schoolroom is also a common practice; graduates of such schools remember a form of disciplinary action in which unruly little girls are made to sit with the boys, and vice-versa.

Schools and teachers also channel boys and girls towards gender-appropriate behavior and activities. High schools used to teach boys carpentry and electronics, and girls, cooking, typing and child care. The content of textbooks and visual aids reinforces gender stereotypes, with females portrayed primarily as workers and adventurous little boys. No wonder then that in tertiary institutions, girls opt for training that suits their perceived roles and characteristics as women— such as secretarial courses, nursing and education — while boys choose more technical courses such as engineering.⁽⁵⁵⁾

2. Mass Media

Print media (newspapers, magazines, komiks), broadcast media (radio and television) and films carry the same gender stereotypes as school textbooks,

and more. A recent study on the images of women in mass media found that women in magazines, comic books, radio and television dramas, and films are shown as housewives or worse, emotionally dependent martyrs and victims or scheming and sly villainesses. The usual goal of both good and bad women alike is to catch or keep a man, and whole plots revolve around how this goal is frustrated or achieved. Men have more positive images: they are shown as courageous, principles, determined and assertive; but they are also portrayed as violent and destructive.

The same study found that most of the news contained in newspapers was about men. Women, when they did appear, particularly in the tabloids targetting the working class, were often victims of rape or sexual molestation.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Advertising uses gender imagery to get people to buy products; in so doing, it also convinces people to buy the prevalent gender ideology. Females are shown as home-bound wives, mothers or daughters whose greatest joy is to feed their families, keep their houses clean, see sons, husbands and fathers off to work, and welcome them back from the trials of the world. They also appear as sexy come-ons to specific male-oriented products, such as alcoholic drinks and cigarettes. Males are shown engaged in sports, professions, wars, camaraderie with other men, or the conquest of women.⁽⁵⁷⁾

3. Religion

As already mentioned, most dominant religions teach that gender differentiation and inequality are ordained by God. This teaching is conveyed not just in doctrine or in a male-dominated religious hierarchy, but also in sacred symbolism. Filipino Catholic marriage rites, for instance, do not just bid brides to be good housewives, obedient to their husbands, but illustrate the proper position of wives by putting a veil over their heads and pinning it on their husbands' shoulders. Until Vatican II, Catholic women were instructed to cover their heads in church. Mary, the model of Catholic women, is depicted as "ever-virgin," meek and self-sacrificing. Muslim fundamentalists practice *pardah*, or the seclusion of women, and insist that no woman venture into the public eye unless she is covered from head to foot. Ancient Jewish tradition forbids women from entering the synagogue, the main place of religious worship and instruction.

4. Language

Language is perhaps the most subtle and pervasive institution of socialization, since we use it everyday, not just in communicating but in the very act of thinking. It is a primary mediator in our relationship with the world. Thus sexist language is a powerful tool for the maintenance of gender ideology.⁽⁵⁸⁾

The English language, which has gendered nouns and pronouns, is a case in point: it uses the word "man" to refer to humankind, and the pronoun "he" to any abstract individual. While defenders of common usage insist that the terms thus used are generic, or meant to refer to both men and women, the image that such terms create in the minds of the users, readers or listeners is distinctly masculine — particularly for children, who have difficulty distinguishing between literal and figurative meanings. This perpetuates the idea of men as the main social players, and the invisibility of women. The range of derogatory words in English which refer exclusively to women is wider than that of words denigrating men, and common phrases, such as the reference to a weak or timid person as "having no balls," unconsciously put down women.

Most Filipino languages are more fortunate in that these do not have gendered pronouns or terms for many positions: *asawa* may refer to a male or female spouse, *kapatid* to a male or female sibling. However, they do have terms which perpetuate gender stereotypes: *maybahay* ("the one who has the house"), for instance, means a wife, never a husband. Like the English language, Filipino languages also use phrases which denigrate women: "no balls" has its own equivalent (*walang bayag*); competition is described as "seeing who can piss higher" (*pataasan ng ibi*), a feat for which women are not physically equipped; a wife who knows nothing about housework is contemptuously branded a "pussy-wife" (*asawang-puki*), as though her sole value to her husband resided in her genitals.

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Sex and gender are two different concepts: sex is a biological fact, gender a social construction. The distinction between male and female, and the definition of these categories according to each one's role in biological reproduction, is universal in all human cultures. The definition

of gender categories, masculine and feminine, is not. However, nearly all societies use sex as the basis for differentiating masculine and feminine roles, thus creating a sex-gender system.

A primary component of this sex-gender system is the sexual division of labor. In most contemporary societies; this sexual division of labor exists in the production-reproduction distinction, in which men are perceived as primarily responsible for the production of commodities while women are primarily responsible for child care and the home. In real life the distinctions are not so sharp, since women are being drafted more and more into commodity production in the formal and informal sectors of the economy. However, most women's jobs in the formal sector are analogous to their role in the reproductive sphere, while men retain effective control of productive work. The production-reproduction distinction also has implications on women's participation in public life, and on their sexuality.

The sexual division of labor is justified by gender stereotypes which fit into a coherent gender ideology. The basis of common-sense gender ideology is biological determinism: the belief that sex automatically dictates social role and even personality. However, what small evidence there is for this assertion is offset by evidence that social and cultural factors have a greater influence in shaping individual personalities and capabilities. In sum, biology may at best indicate differential tendencies between males and females, but does not determine them.

The sex-gender system is depicted by dominant gender ideology as a harmonious arrangement in which men and women take complementary roles. However, an emerging perspective sees this arrangement as one of gender subordination — specifically, the institutionalized domination by men of women. This may be seen in the disadvantages women experience in the economic and political spheres, and with regard to their own sexuality and personhood. The specific contours of gender subordination are shaped, but not determined, by economic and political systems. Gender subordination interacts with and, to a certain extent, support other forms of social subordination.

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14. Guettel (1984).
15. Maranan (1987).
16. Del Rosario (1986).
17. Cortes and others (1983).
18. Licuanan (1987).
19. Elson and Pearson (1984).
20. Maranan (1987).
21. Nakpil (1963).
22. Porio and others (1975).
23. Eviota (1991, this series).
24. Rubin (1975).
25. Engels (1981).
26. Llamare (1955).
27. Mossink (1984).
28. Stolcke (1984).
29. Russianoff (1983).
30. Oakley (1972).
31. Oakley (1972).
32. Oakley (1972).
33. Oakley (1972).
34. Oakley (1972).
35. Oakley (1972).
36. Durkhiem (1949).
37. Nakpil (1963).
38. Whitehead (1979).

39. Dionisio (1988).
40. Russianoff (1983).
41. Bujra (1978).
42. Kandiyoti. (1988).
43. Reed (1986).
44. Reed (1986).
45. Oakley (1972).
46. Engels (1981).
47. Mies (1986).
48. Mies (1986).
49. Mies (1986).
50. Laguia and Dumoulin (1969).
51. Maranan (1987).
52. Agoncillo (1956).
53. Oakley (1972).
54. Oakley (1972).
55. Azarcon and Jimenez-David (1986).
56. Azarcon and Jimenez-David (1986).
57. Rowbotham (1987).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Sex and gender are often taken as one and same thing. Why do we need to differentiate between sex and gender?
What is the basis of this differentiation?
2. How is gender socially constructed?
3. In what ways has the sex-gender system interacted with social, economic and political systems? What have been the major outcomes of this interaction?

EXERCISE

Read the following essay in front of the group. At the end, ask for reactions and comments.

Ang Pantasya ni Eba

Masaya at maayos ang buhay sa bayan ng Kagawasan. Ang babae ay kilos babae, at ang lalaki, kilos lalaki; nasa tamang lugar ang lahat. Bagama't pantay-pantay ang pagtingin nila sa kababaihan at kalalakihan, hindi sila naniniwala sa mga makabagong pananaw na pareho dapat ang kilos, ugali at papel ng babae at lalaki sa lipunan.

Babae ang Pangulo ng Kagawasan. Babae rin ang mga opisyal na nasa mahalagang posisyon ng gabinete, tulad ng Kagawasan ng Patakarang Pangkabuhayan, Tanggulang Pambansa, Pananalapi, Industriya at Kalakal. Babae ang mga sundalo, ang mga negosyante, ang mga kaparian ng simbahan. Babae ang mga manggagawa, magsasaka, mangingisda, at propesyonal.

Nararapat lamang ito, dahil iyan ang papel na itinakda ng Diyos-Ina para sa mga babae. Kaya nga't biniyayaan ng Diyos-Ina ang kababaihan ng Kagawasan ng mga katangiang angkop sa kanilang mahalagang panangutan sa lipunan: ang matalas na isip at kakayahang magpasiya, ang lakas at katatagan ng kalooban, ang lakas ng katawan.

Ang mga lalaki naman ang mga maybahay. Sila ang nag-aalaga ng mga anak: tatal, may likas silang katangiang mapagmahal at mapag-aruga. Sila rin ang biniyayaan ng mga kamay na mas may resistensya sa init, kung kaya't mahuhusay silang magluto. Kasiyahan nila ang pasilbihan ang kanilang mga asawa at anak. Bagama't hindi sila kumikita sa ganitong klaseng gawain, sinusuportahan naman sila ng kanilang asawa bilang kapalit sa kanilang serbisyo. Kinikilala rin naman ng lipunan ang kanilang mahalagang kontribusyon: sila ang tinaguriang "ilaw ng tahanan" at taontaon binibigyan sila ng bulaklak tuwing Araw ng mga Ama.

Ang ganitong pagkakahati ng trabaho sa lipunan, at ang pagkakaiba ng likas na pag-uugali ng babae at lalaki, ay alinsunod sa pagkakaiba ng kanilang mga katawan. Tanda ng lakas at katatagan ng kababaihan ang kanilang kakayahang magdala ng bata sa kanyang sinapupunan, at tiisin ang sakit at hirap ng pagluluwal nito. Ang kanilang papel bilang mga manggagawa sa lipunan ay nakabatay rin dito, at sa kanilang kakayahang magpasuso sa mga bata; hindi ba't ang panganganak, at ang pagkakaroon ng gatas para sa anak, ay isang uri rin ng produksyon?

Pati ang anyo ng kanilang aring pangreproduksyon ay naayon sa kanilang papel bilang manggagawa, mangangasiwa, at tagapagpasiya sa lipunan. Ang ari ng babae ay nakatago, kung kaya't hindi madaling masaling; malaya siyang nakagagalaw. Papaloob ang direksyon nito, ang sagisag ng kanyang kakayahang pagmuni-munihan ang mga bagay-bagay at magbigay ng mahusay na kapasiyahan. Sa pagtatalik, ang ari niya ang sumasakop sa ari ng lalaki, sagisag din ng kanyang pananagutang sakupin ang mundo. Gayon din ang posisyon sa pagtatalik na nakapagbibigay sa kanya ng higit na kasiyahan: siya ang nangingibabaw sa lalaki tulad ng pangingibabaw niya sa kalikasan.

Samantala, dahil walang kakayahan ang lalaking magdalantao at magpasuso, at dahil ang babae na ang nagsusugal ng buhay sa panganganak, makatarungan lamang na sa kalalakihan na ipaubaya ang pag-aalaga at pagpapalaki sa mga anak. Bukod pa rito, nalilimitahan ang kanilang mga galaw ng kanilang ari: di tulad ng sa babae, nakalawit ito at madaling mabasag. Kung kaya't kailangang pagkaingatan sila, huwag masyadong palabasin ng bahay, dahil kung may mangyari sa kanilang ari, paano na ang pagpapatuloy ng lahi? Kita rin naman sa kanilang ari ang kakulangan nila ng kakayahan sa mahalagang pagpapasiya: dahil nakalabas ito, may kababawan silang mag-isip at hindi gaanong magaling magtago ng mga sekreto. Kung kaya't nababagay silang magpasiya tungkol sa mga bagay na hindi na dapat pagkaabalahan pa ng mga babae, tulad ng kulay ng kurtina. Gayon din, ang posisyon nila sa pagtatalik ang nagpapakita kung ano ang papel nila sa lipunan: sila ang nakatihaya, naghihintay habang tinatrabaho ng asawa. Dahil sa akto ng pagtatalik napapaloob ang kanilang ari sa ari ng babae, laging sinasabi sa kanila kapag silay's ikinasal: "Magpasakop kayo sa inyong mga asawa..."

Sa Kagawasan, isang masayang pangyayari ang pagkakaroon ng anak na babae: "Hayag," wika ng mga ina, "may magdadala na ng pangalan ko." At nangangarap na sila sa pagiging Pangulo balang araw ng kanilang anak. Masaya rin sana ang pagkakaroon ng anak na lalaki, dahil magkakaroon rin ng isa pang katulong sa gawaing bahay ang mga ama; ngunit kung bakit napapaluha ang mga ama kapag nakitang lalaki ang kanilang mga supling, at naibibigkas ang: "Heto na ang isa pang pambayad sa kasalanan!"



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