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 (I'faluk)
   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.