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Tradition and Gender in Modernization Theory

There does not seem to be much more to write about modernization theory of the 1950s and 1960s. Numerous critics have taken early modernization theorists such as Rostow (1960), Parsons (1960), and Inkeles (1969) to task for their ethnocentrism, naive optimism, and "failure to recognize the political implications of economic dependency upon the West" (Randall and Theobald 1985: 33). Other critics pointed to modernization theory's reliance upon evolutionary and linear notions of social and political change and its reductionism and oversimplification of the development process (e.g., Portes 1976; Tipps 1976).[1] However, upon closer inspection it is evident that modernization theory was mainly criticized for its empirical content, lack of predictive ability, definitional shortcomings, and Western bias. Virtually no questions were asked about the way in which challenges to modernization were framed, and the extent to which the dichotomies of traditional and modern depended upon conceptions of gender, gender differences, and the devaluation of "the feminine."

Embedded within constructions of traditional society are ideas about women, family, and community that function as points of contrast for modernization theorists' idealization of a rational, forward-looking, male-dominated public sphere. Conceptions of linear time also play an important role for modernization theorists, with tradition and the feminine viewed as part of the past. As Inkeles and Smith (1974: 3–4) put it, "Mounting evidence suggests that it is impossible for a state to move into the twentieth century if its people continue to live in an earlier era." For development theorists seeking to construct the antinomy of tradition and modernity, it is important to distance one from the other and stress the importance of autonomy and separation of men from the household and the feminine traits associated with it.

There are three major themes evident in the work of theorists as diverse as Alex Inkeles and W. W. Rostow. The first is an unconscious

and pervasive psychological preoccupation with separation and differentiation from the household. This distancing is accomplished by the presentation of tradition as a bundle of characteristics that also have historically been used to subordinate women and denigrate the social relations associated with females, especially mothers. It is interesting to note that some early critics of modernization theory argued that it undertheorized tradition and presented it as a static and "residual concept" (Randall and Theobald 1985: 35). This chapter will argue that the powerful imagery and the descriptions of idealized modernity provided by early modernization theorists were laden with such significant demarcations of constructed gender differences that explicit explorations of tradition were unnecessary.

A second theme evident in early modernization theory is the reliance on the public/private distinction in discussions of modernity and tradition. Modernity, rationality, technological progress, and good government are achieved in a public realm inhabited by autonomous men. With the exception of the Comparative Politics Committee of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), which displayed some ambivalence toward tradition and called for more exploration of the content of traditional societies, early modernization theorists viewed tradition, and the values associated with tradition and women, as absolutely incompatible with modern institutions.

Finally, early modernization theorists rely, implicitly or explicitly, upon evolutionary models of social and political change, which provide an important lens for viewing their ideas about development, modernization, and gender. In their reliance upon an evolutionary model, they inevitably portray development as a struggle for dominance over nature, and implicitly, over women. Moreover, in using an evolutionary model, they portray development as the ever-widening ability of men to create and transform their environment. Within this linear framework of evolutionary social and political change, women are "left behind," confined to the household and denied citizenship. Women's continued subordination in fact defines male citizenship.

▲ Sexism and Modernization Theory

The argument here is that modernization theorists brought deeply held masculinist and dualistic views of the world of tradition and modernity that relied upon configurations of the public and private spheres, the household, and evolutionary progress. It is important and useful also to note that this literature consistently purported to present a universal model of the modernization process that was, in

fact, partial and based on an (often idealized) version of masculine modernity. Women are either invisible, treated paternalistically, or used as a litmus test for determining the degree of "backwardness" of a particular Third World country. A startling example of invisibility is the project that interviewed six thousand men in Argentina, Chile, East Pakistan (Bangladesh), India, Israel, and Nigeria in order to examine the effects of factory life on modern attitudes (Inkeles 1969; Inkeles and Smith 1974). They report that budget limitations and the concentration of men in industrial jobs explain the gender of the sample (Inkeles and Smith 1974: 311). But, surely, would not women be included in the cultivator and nonindustrial worker category, two other categories of respondents interviewed in each of the countries? The authors never explain why only men were included in these categories as well. They also make the interesting assertion, "We are firmly convinced that the overwhelming majority of the psychosocial indicators we used to identify the modern man would also discriminate effectively among women" (Inkeles, Smith, et al. 1983: 123). This directly contradicts their reporting on the low correlations concerning modern attitudes about political life and attitudes about the family.

As an example of striking paternalism, Daniel Lerner (1958: 29) took Zilla K. along as an interviewer when he returned to the village of Balgat, Turkey, in 1954 (he had been there four years before). This is his description of her hiring:

> I had "ordered" her through a colleague, at Ankara University, "by the numbers": thirtyish, semi-trained, alert, compliant with instructions, not sexy enough to impede our relations with the men of Balgat but chic enough to provoke the women. A glance and a word showed that Zilla filled the requisition.

Rostow (1960: 91) speculated about what lies beyond the state of high mass-consumption reached by societies such as the United States and worried about the onset of pervasive boredom—for men. Women, on the other hand, "will not recognize the reality of the problem" because of their involvement in childrearing: "The problem of boredom is a man's problem, at least until the children have grown up."

The comparison of the liberated and independent woman of the West with the tradition-bound woman of the Third World also informs many accounts of the psychosocial requisites of modernity. When women are discussed by the modernization theorists in any specific way they are presented in remarkably flat terms, and often uniformly oppressed by men and family structures. Lerner (1958: 199) notes that "traditional women are content to accept the role

and status assigned them," as the "stolid guardians of custom and routine." Women who represent modern values in Middle Eastern societies such as Lebanon yearn for the greater educational and career opportunities available to women in the West. The Western media provides a constant reminder to Middle Eastern women of their restricted opportunities. In a puzzling analogy, Lerner (1958: 204) notes that "as the American housewife uses soap operas to fill her day and satisfy her needs, so this young Lebanese woman finds gratification through borrowed experiences." While implicitly acknowledging that viewing soap operas might represent frustration and denied opportunities for middle-class U.S. women, Lerner never explicitly challenges the media's juxtaposition of the "enlightened and independent woman" of the West with the backward and traditional woman of the Middle East. McClelland (1976: 399–400) makes a similar contrast:

> A crucial way to break with tradition and introduce new norms is via the emancipation of women. . . . The most general explanation lies in the fact that women are the most conservative members of a culture. They are less subject to influences outside the home than the men and yet they are the ones who rear the next generation and give it the traditional values of the culture.

Inkeles and Smith, et al. describe "most of the traditional societies and communities of the world" as "if not strictly patriarchal, at least vigorously male dominated" (Inkeles and Smith, et al. 1983: 26). While traditional man is reluctant to accept women's freedom, modern man is willing to "allow women to take advantage of opportunities outside the confines of the household" (Inkeles and Smith 1974: 77, 291). In a later work they predicted that "the liberating forces of modernization would act on men's attitudes and incline them to accord to women status and rights more nearly equal to those enjoyed by men" (Inkeles, Smith, et al. 1983: 42). Such contrasts not only serve to establish a Western sense of difference and superiority (and complacency about women's rights in the West); they also mark women, in Mohanty's (1991b: 56) terms, as "third world (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.)." As the most "backward" group in society, women serve as an implicit contrast between Western modernity and non-Western tradition.

▲ "Becoming Modern": The Syndrome of Modern Male Citizenship

Randall and Theobald (1985: 15) place early modernization theories into one of two categories: psychocultural or structural-functional.

Psychocultural approaches examine the attitudinal prerequisites of modernity, while structural-functional approaches focus on the institutional changes needed for modernity. Inkeles (1969), Inkeles and Smith (1974), and Inkeles, Smith, et al. (1983) adopt a psychocultural approach to modernization. In the study of six thousand men in the six countries listed above, Inkeles and Smith locate a syndrome of participant citizenship, "attitudes and capacities" necessary to realize "nation-building and institution-building" in the Third World (1974: 3).

Inkeles and Smith (1974: 19–24) argue that twelve traits define modern man (sic). In addition, they argue that modernity is also characterized by a host of other orientations toward religion, the family, and social stratification (1974: 25). Their analytic and topical characteristics of the modern man are summarized in Table 2.1. Feminist critics of the Western philosophical tradition have noted the persistent denigration of the feminine within that tradition. Lloyd (1984: 2–3), for example, notes that in the triumph of reason over darkness, the early Greeks used symbolic associations of the female as what needed "to be shed in developing culturally prized rationality." Rooney (1991: 91) and Jordanova (1980) have noted the images of battle or struggle that are common in discussions of reason and unreason. Jordanova's (1980: 44) presentation of the dichotomies that emerged in the biomedical sciences in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries showed similarities with the contrasts between traditional and modern man presented by Inkeles and Smith (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1   Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Dichotomies

Traditional	Modern
Nature	Culture
Woman	Man
Physical	Mental
Mothering	Thinking
Feeling and superstition	Abstract knowledge and thought
Country	City
Darkness	Light
Nature	Science and civilization

Source: Jordanova 1980: 44

Jordanova (1980: 44) suggests that the oppositions contain an important gender dimension and connotations of battle: the struggle between the forces of tradition and modernity was also a struggle between the sexes, with the increasing assertion of masculinity over

"irrational, backward-looking women" applauded as inevitable. Furthermore, she shows how science and medicine used sexual metaphors that portrayed nature as a woman to be penetrated, unclothed, and unveiled by masculine science (Jordanova 1980: 45).

Inkeles and Smith replicate these Enlightenment dichotomies in their comparison of traditional and modern men (see Table 2.2). In the larger study, they present case studies from East Pakistan (Bangladesh) of a traditional man and a modern one (Inkeles and Smith 1974: 73–80). Ahmadullah, the traditional man, "was relatively passive, even fatalistic, and very much dependent on outside forces, above all on the intervention of God." He said he could do nothing in the face of an unjust law, and he preferred living in the "closed and unchanging world" of the village. Nuril, on the other hand, had lived in the city for ten years, approved of women acquiring more education, was open to meeting new people and having new experiences, and believed that "the outcome of things depended very much on himself, and [that] others bore responsibility for their individual actions." As Inkeles noted in his earlier study (1969: 1122–1123), the modern man possesses an orientation toward politics that recognizes the necessity and desirability of a "rational structure of rules and regulations."

Juxtaposed with the village, family, and kinship structures stands the factory, a "school in rationality" (Inkeles 1969: 1140). The factory is an exemplar of efficiency, innovation, planning, punctuality, rules and formal procedures, and objective standards for assessing skills and output (Inkeles and Smith 1974: 158–163). City life, they argued, also has a powerful indirect effect on creating modern attitudes because cities have greater concentrations of schools, factories, and mass media (Inkeles and Smith 1974: 228).

In addition to an uncritical perspective on the nature of factory work in both the First and Third Worlds, the description by Inkeles and Smith of the benefits of factory work rely upon a liberal framework of contractual obligation and individualism that reflects a masculinist standpoint and preoccupation with autonomy. Hirschmann (1989: 1237) argues that this is especially evident in symbolic language that reflects desires for dominance and nonreciprocal recognition. In describing modern man's experiences as a "shift from the more traditional settings of village, farm, and tribe to city residence, industrial employment, and national citizenship" (Inkeles and Smith 1974: 156), psychocultural theorists of modernization juxtapose community, family, and kinship with the modern, and it is women who stand at the center of the traditional community. The factory serves as the emblem of scientific progress and technological prowess that promises to shatter any resistance to rationalized

relationships in the public realm. This liberal and masculinist conception of freedom entails nonrecognition of the female and the relationships she represents. Freedom requires not only moving beyond the household: subordination of the household becomes the means of achieving freedom (Hirschmann 1989: 1235). Women were not only excluded from the samples because they worked in factories, but because they resided in the very location that undermines the institutions that "train men in active citizenship" (Inkeles 1969: 1141).

Table 2.2 Traditional Man and Modern Man

Traditional	Modern
Not receptive to new ideas	Open to new experience
Rooted in tradition	Change orientation
Only interested in things that touch him immediately	Interested in outside world
Denial of different opinions	Acknowledges different opinions
Uninterested in new information	Eager to seek out new information
Oriented toward the past	Punctual; oriented toward the present
Concerned with the short term	Values planning
Distrustful of people beyond the family	Calculability; trust in people to meet obligations
Suspicious of technology	Values technical skills
High value placed on religion and the sacred	High value placed on formal education and science
Traditional patron-client relations prevail	Respect for the dignity of others; belief that rewards should be distributed according to rules
Particularistic	Universalistic
Fatalistic	Optimistic

Source: Inkeles and Smith 1974: 19–34.

Daniel Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) is another representative of the psychocultural approach. Lerner presents the parable of modern Turkey through the story of the Grocer and the Chief, two men interviewed in the village of Balgat, near Ankara, in 1950 and 1954. The Chief "was a man of few words on many subjects," who "audits his life placidly, makes no comparisons, thanks God." The Grocer, on the other hand, perceived his story as "a drama of self versus village," a man whose "psychic antennae were endlessly seeking the new future here and now" (Lerner 1958: 22, 24).

Lerner's contrasts between traditional and modern society (1958: 44) echo Enlightenment thinkers and Inkeles and Smith: "village versus town, land versus cash, illiteracy versus enlightenment,

resignation versus ambition, piety versus excitement." In modern societies, personal mobility is a "first-order value," and a modern society "has to encourage rationality, for the calculus of choice shapes individual behavior and conditions its reward" (Lerner 1958: 48). Empathy is the mechanism that accompanies the transformation of traditional man, i.e., "the capacity to see oneself in the other fellow's situation" (Lerner 1958: 50). Empathy takes place through both projection ("assigning the object certain preferred attributes of the self") and introjection ("attributing to the self certain desirable attributes of the object") (Lerner 1958: 49). Identification with others is a key component of modern man's personality.

Chodorow has noted the importance of negative identification, differentiation, and nonrecognition in human development, and these themes recur in Lerner's definition of modern man's development and "maturation." Differentiation is defined relationally, and because men have "conflictual core gender identity problems," it is important to maintain a rigid boundary between the masculine and feminine: "Boys and men come to deny the feminine identification within themselves and those feelings they experience as feminine; feelings of dependence, relational needs, emotions generally" (1989: 109–110). The development of masculine identity as outlined by object relations theory resonates in Lerner's (1958: 410) definition of modern man's solitary struggle against forces represented by the village, "the passive, destitute, illiterate and altogether 'submerged' mass which looms so large in its [the Middle East's] sociological landscape."

McClelland's (1976: 107) chief goal was to determine the extent to which a "culture or nation has adapted more or less rapidly to modern civilization, with its stress on technology, the specialization of labor, and the factory system." McClelland and his colleagues developed a measure of "n achievement" (shorthand for need achievement) through content analysis of achievement-related stories written by male college students, folk tales from various cultures, and children's stories. He explicitly links high n achievement with boys who had mothers who encouraged independence yet at the same time provided warmth and affection. Reporting on earlier findings that attempted to demonstrate a link between socialization and the propensity for high achievement, McClelland (1976: 46) summarized: "The mothers of the sons with high n-achievement have set higher standards for their sons; they expect self-mastery at an early age." Thus he not only touches on themes within object relations theory, he literally claims that characteristics of mothering (along with other factors) are influential in determining whether a society develops. McClelland (1976: 404–495) also warns about father-dominance in producing low achievement, because "the boy is more likely

to get his conception of the male role from his relationship with the father rather than his mother and therefore, to conceive of himself as a dependent, obedient sort of person if his father is strong and dominating" (McClelland 1976: 353). It is in his relationship with the mother that the boy obtains a sense of independence and autonomy, but only from mothers who are "controlled and moderate in warmth and affection" (McClelland 1976: 405).

From these observations, McClelland hypothesizes about how to bring about development. First, "other-directedness" is essential (McClelland 1976: 192). The "authority of tradition" must be replaced and men must learn to pay attention to newspapers, local political parties, and the radio, a "new voice of authority." Development, in other words, requires a shift in allegiance from the private to the public realm. Second, n achievement needs to be increased, and McClelland speculates about the prospects for decreasing father-dominance, protestant conversion, and a reorganization of fantasy life (McClelland 1976: 406–418). Finally, McClelland suggests that existing n achievement resources could be used more efficiently to encourage "young men with high n achievement to turn their talents to business or productive enterprise" (McClelland 1976: 418).

Rostow's (1960) *Stages of Economic Growth* introduces both the concept of evolutionary stages of societal development and attitudinal prerequisites as crucial for understanding political development. He conceptualizes the evolutionary path of development as composed of five stages: tradition, societies poised to "take-off," the "take-off" into modernity itself, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption. Traditional societies are characterized by Rostow (1960: 4) as "pre-Newtonian" because they are located on the other side of "that watershed in history when men came widely to believe that the external world was subject to a few knowable laws and was capable of productive manipulation." The "frame of mind" conducive to modern science was nonexistent in these pre-Newtonian societies, which possessed a "long-term fatalism" and a "ceiling on the productivity of their economic techniques" (Rostow 1960: 5). During the time before take-off, "limited bursts" of entrepreneurial activity and "enclaves of modernity" emerge, spurred by "enterprising men" who are willing to "take risks in pursuit of profit or modernization" (Rostow 1960: 6–7). Rostow presents us with the image of energetic men emerging from rural backwardness and leaving the bonds of tradition to transform and manipulate the forces of nature:

> Man need not regard his physical environment as virtually a given factor by nature and providence, but as an ordered world which, if rationally understood, can be manipulated in ways which yield

productive change and, in one dimension at least, progress (1960: 19).

Rostow contrasts the world of family, mother, and household with the modern world of markets, technology, and science. In fact, traditional societies become eligible for take-off when "men come to be valued in society not with their connection with clan or class . . . but for their individual ability to perform certain specific, increasingly specialized functions" (Rostow 1960: 19). This requires attitudinal changes toward science, propensities to calculate and take risks, and a willingness to work (Rostow 1960: 20). Rostow appeals to male heroic leadership in his analysis of the key take-off from tradition to modernity. He juxtaposes this new elite with "the old land-based elite" which is mired in agrarian practices and worldviews that do not regard "modernization as a possible task" (Rostow 1960: 26).