

UC Merced

Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology

Title

The Constitution of Inequality in Yurok Society

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5521d0k6>

Journal

Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology, 20(2)

ISSN

0191-3557

Author

Lesure, Richard G

Publication Date

1998-07-01

Peer reviewed

The Constitution of Inequality in Yurok Society

RICHARD G. LESURE, Dept. of Anthropology, Univ. of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1553.

Ethnographic accounts of the precontact Yurok of Northwest California serve as a test case for evaluating Jane Collier's (1988) recent models of the constitution of inequality in kin-based societies. This analysis does not support Collier's basic thesis that the nature of the relationship between husbands and their wives' kin determines the degree of social inequality. Nor does it support her contention that each of three contrastive models represents a particular type of society, since two of her three models apply to the Yurok case. However, Collier's models, treated as organizational themes rather than societal types, represent useful analytical tools for understanding the bases of inequality in Yurok society. In addition to the social structural relations explored by Collier, particular material circumstances and cosmological tenets established the contexts in which people negotiated the distribution of power, privilege, and prestige.

KIN-BASED, acephalous societies have often been regarded as "egalitarian" despite ethnographers' descriptions of differential distributions of power, prestige, and privilege among social categories defined by gender, age, role, and even hereditary rank. In a recent analysis, Jane Collier (1988) attempted one of the most detailed explanations of social inequality in such societies. Arguing that marriage is the central institution distributing privileges and obligations among categories of people, she proposed that inequality derives from the dynamics of marital instability. Marriages are unequal relationships in which wives owe obligations to their husbands, whereas husbands owe obligations to others. Since women's kin can deny husbands access to unhappy wives (and thus keep marriages unstable), they claim rights over a woman and demand labor or gifts from her husband or suitor. The ensuing negotiations between men and women's kin generate the commonsense understanding that men, as representatives of kin groups, exchange women (Collier 1988:228-231).

Collier proposed that variation in the degree of social inequality among kin-based societies is linked to the variable nature of this relationship

between husbands and their wives' kin and thereby forms the basis for three alternative models (dubbed brideservice, equal bridewealth, and unequal bridewealth) for the organization of inequality. While these models can be linked to other societal taxonomies, Collier's approach departed from traditional ones by focusing on the dialectical relation between people's commonsense understandings of social relationships and the practical strategies pursued by participants in such relations (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979).

This article evaluates Collier's approach by analyzing ethnographic reconstructions of precontact Yurok society of northwestern California. Although Collier presented models for "classless" societies based on Marxian definitions of the concept—contrary to recent work on the Yurok that has emphasized the emic recognition of social "classes" (Pilling 1978, 1989)—in the unequal bridewealth model, Collier constructed an understanding of hereditary rank that is, in fact, very relevant to the analysis of precontact Yurok society. The Yurok head Collier's list of examples of unequal bridewealth societies (Collier 1988:268). Nevertheless, both the equal and unequal bridewealth models convincingly account for different features of the

Yurok social system. This finding undermines Collier's attempt to represent her models as characteristic of different types of societies. It also challenges her basic thesis that the nature of the relationship between husbands and their wives' kin determines the degree of inequality in a kin-based society, since different Yurok marriages entailed different affinal bonds.

Nevertheless, my analysis of Yurok ethnography also supports Collier's general structure for explaining inequality. Treated as contrastive organizational themes or alternative strategies for social advancement rather than as societal types, the models are useful analytical tools. I therefore propose a tentative model of inequality in Yurok society following the structure devised by Collier but including crucial elements particular to the Yurok case: a set of relations of production that established inequalities of age and rank and a set of cultural understandings that organized disparate hierarchies into a single hegemonic system through the exigencies of personal spiritual attainment.

YUROK ETHNOGRAPHY

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Yurok were sedentary hunter/gatherer/fishers with a highly productive subsistence economy centered along the Klamath River and nearby coastal zones in northwestern California. Together with a few neighboring groups with similar cultural patterns—most prominently, the Karok, Tolowa, and Hupa (see Fig. 1)—they can be regarded as forming the southernmost tip of the Northwest Coast culture area (Drucker 1965). Kroeber visited the Yurok repeatedly between 1900 and 1907, continuing his studies throughout half a century and inspiring other investigators to work directly with the Yurok or with his own ethnographic data (Buckley 1982a:13-21). As a result of Kroeber's influence, a number of attempts were made to reconstruct Yurok culture as it existed in the mid-nineteenth century prior to the disastrous impact of the Euroamerican invasion

beginning in the 1850s. More recent studies have considered the historical processes of change from aboriginal to modern Yurok culture (e.g., Pilling and Pilling 1970; Buckley 1982a) or developed a more reflexive vision of early anthropology in the area (e.g., Keeling 1982; Buckley 1988a, 1989, 1996), but the reconstruction of precontact Yurok culture remains an important concern (Valory 1970; Pilling 1978, 1989; Buckley 1982a, 1988b).

How reliable is Kroeber's portrayal of precontact Yurok society? Certainly all the expected problems of memory ethnography in a period of cultural catastrophe apply. By 1880 or 1890, the indigenous wealth economy and marriage system of the Yurok had disintegrated (Waterman and Kroeber 1934:5), and by 1910, the aboriginal population had been reduced by 75% (Buckley 1989:438). In addition, Kroeber's own interests and perspectives, some of which today seem starkly ethnocentric and insensitive, structured what was recorded and debated in the academic milieu (see Buckley 1982a, 1988a, 1989, 1996; Keeling 1982). Nevertheless, Buckley (1982a:13-14) assessed Kroeber's overall ethnographic reconstruction as "generally sound," although he pointed to some significant weaknesses, the most problematic for the present analysis being Kroeber's rudimentary understanding of the framework of meanings in which exchanges of women and bridewealth took place.

The evaluation of Collier's models presented here is based on existing ethnography rather than new field work. The analysis relies primarily on Yurok ethnography, with occasional references to accounts of the neighboring Hupa and Tolowa. I hope that my exploration of Yurok ethnography for theoretical purposes will not be viewed as an unwarranted intrusion but as yet another indication that the early ethnographies of California, whatever their flaws, represent an invaluable contribution to the record of human diversity.

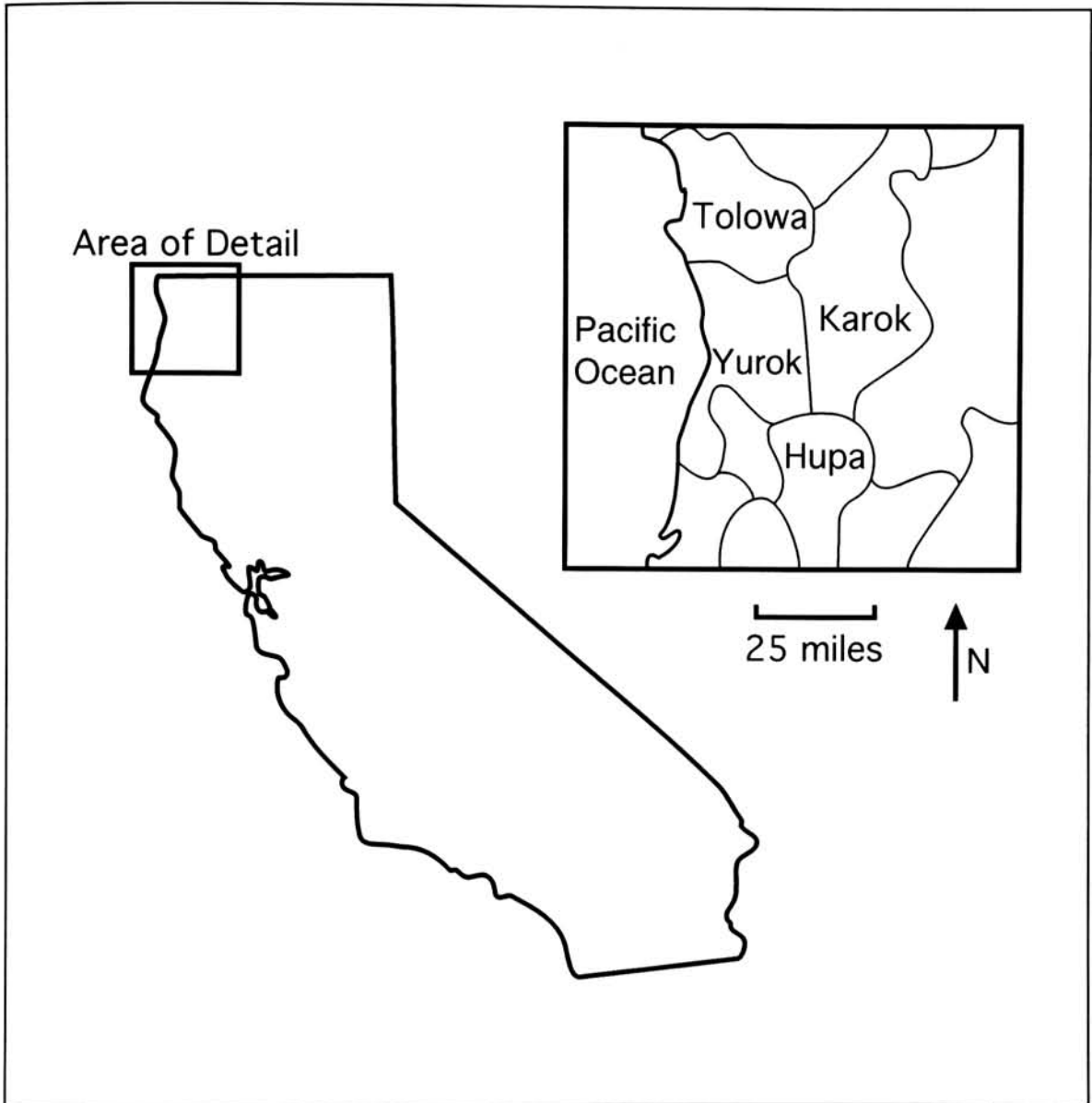


Fig. 1. Map of northwestern California showing territories occupied by the Yurok, Tolowa, Karok, and Hupa. (Adapted from Heizer [1978:ix]).

INEQUALITY IN YUROK SOCIETY

Yurok cultural understandings resulted in an unequal distribution of power, prestige, and privilege. Important dimensions of social differentiation included gender, age inequality and marriage arrangements, social rank, and person-

al spirituality. In Yurok understandings, these dimensions were not separate, but rather formed a coherent framework of meanings.

Gender Differentiation

As recorded by early ethnographers, Yurok discourse concerning gender differences dwelt

on the dangers women pose to men (Kroeber 1925:41, 1959:239). Male training and the pursuit of spiritual power revolved around the sweathouse, where men and boys slept in the winter and women were prohibited from entering (with the exception of shamans; see discussion below) (Pilling 1978:141-143). A man was celibate during periods of moral training or spiritual quests and for 10 or more days before engaging in other valued male activities, including hunting and salmon fishing. Menstruating women were especially polluting to men.

Kroeber's (1925, 1959) accounts of Yurok gender conceptions emphasized men's view of women as polluting. Drawing data from Kroeber's unpublished field notes, however, Buckley (1982b, 1988b) painted a quite different picture (see also Keeling 1989). Men and women maintained separate, gender-specific interpretations of human spirituality, menstruating women praying for "luck" and "wealth" just as men did in the sweathouse ritual. However, the female-specific interpretations of spirituality and menstruation were probably the esoteric domain of high-ranking women. Lower-ranking women appeared to have accepted male perspectives (Buckley 1988b). These latter interpretations dominated public culture, a central symbol being the contaminated family house versus the purifying sweathouse (Erikson 1943:269, 299).

According to Kroeber (1976), the predominant theme in Yurok mythology is the personal moral and spiritual quest of a young man, who may be either in human or spirit form (see also Bushnell and Bushnell 1977:146; Buckley 1980:159-160). The spiritual adventures of young men, and thus the discussion of male achievement and self-worth, were of great public interest to the Yurok. Public discussions of women's achievements were probably more infrequent than talk of what men did, with men's experiences of women as polluting thus receiving greater public approval than women's purifying experiences. Certainly the permanence of the

sweathouse and the daily rituals associated with it favored men's spirituality over women's. Thus, while there were competing constructions of gender relations in Yurok society, ordinary men and women would not have experienced these constructions as equal.

Age Inequality and Marriage Arrangements

Yurok understandings of inequalities among adults due to age were not explicitly recorded by ethnographers, but an age hierarchy figured prominently in social transactions such as marriage arrangements. A young man aspiring to success needed a wife and children. To marry well, he relied on the goodwill of his elders or the largess of a rich man, who would expect services in return (Kroeber 1925:29).

Young women also experienced significant constraints in marriage, since their elders and male kin could "give them away" to men in return for bridewealth, sometimes against their will (Kroeber 1925:29). Bridewealth consisted of *Dentalium* shell valuables and other wealth. Kroeber (1925:28-29) noted that, "the rank of husband and wife and children depended on the amount paid for the woman. People's social status was determined not only by what they possessed, but by what had been given by their fathers for their mothers." Ethnographic accounts of marriage transactions also suggest that marriage and bridewealth payments were conceived as long-term transfers between descent groups of rights over future offspring. For instance, if a woman died having given birth to only one or two children, her family might return part of the bridewealth to the widower; if she left three or four children, no repayment was expected (Kroeber 1925:30-31; see also Waterman and Kroeber 1934:1-3; Spott and Kroeber 1942:143-149).

Although a young woman must have experienced significant constraints on independent action as she became caught up in negotiations among her kin, her husband, and her husband's

kin over rights to her offspring, these restraints probably relaxed somewhat with age (see Kroeber 1925:30). Anecdotal evidence indicates that women had considerable influence over the fates of their children, especially their daughters (Spott and Kroeber 1942:153-155; Erikson 1943:262). Marriage of their sons provided them with daughters-in-law whose labor they could command (Davis 1988:306). The most powerful members of Yurok society, however, were the older men who headed high-ranking descent groups (see Buckley 1982a:75).

Social Rank

The Yurok identified named social categories that ethnographers have sometimes termed "aristocrats," "commoners," and "slaves." Rank was hereditary and high-ranking families maintained heirlooms, valuables, and family traditions. They also had special speech practices, wore special clothing, and practiced a strict eating etiquette (Pilling 1978:141-142, 1989; Buckley 1984).

High-ranking people validated their status by possessing, displaying, and exchanging valuables. Networks of high-ranking regalia owners lent each other treasures for ceremonial display in World Renewal ceremonies. Valuables included strings of *Dentalium* shells, woodpecker scalp regalia, obsidian bifaces, and deerskins of rare colors (Kroeber 1925:22-27). Since wealth was symbolic of spiritual and social worth, and thus of rank, people appeared to be intensely concerned with the "monetary" valuation of themselves and others (see Kroeber 1925:20-42, 1959; Bushnell and Bushnell 1977:131-134).

Personal Spirituality

Although the Yurok described social rank as hereditary, they also linked personal worth, and thus rank, to achieved moral and spiritual qualities. The spiritual quest, in which people sought contact with the supernatural through sweating, gathering sweathouse wood, fasting, avoiding

sexual intercourse, self-mutilation, or other privations, was a central aspect of personhood (see Bushnell and Bushnell 1977:146-147; Keeling 1992:64-66). The sweathouse and other public functions legitimized the importance of men's spiritual quests, while women predominated in shamanism, a domain of spiritual endeavor in which men rarely participated.

For Yurok men, rank and spirituality were linked. The qualitative spiritual and moral difference between low and high rank was represented by a concept Kroeber and others, including the Yurok themselves, have translated as "luck." Yurok luck reflected the general indigenous Californian concept of "power" described by Bean (1976). Luck could be acquired by humans through diligent personal effort. Individuals were autonomous, independent, and personally responsible for their own fate through adherence to strict ideals of training and self-discipline (Buckley 1982a:57-58). Men practiced daily sweathouse rituals prescribed by sacred, ancient beings, the *wó'gey*, (Kroeber 1925:41, 80-82; Valory 1970:21; Pilling 1978:142; Keeling 1992:166-171). They sought luck by ceremonially gathering sweathouse wood and sometimes by visiting special mountain enclosures (Spott and Kroeber 1942:163). Although personal spirituality was an achieved state, it also correlated with social rank. For instance, the special speech of high-ranking people was seen as sacred, *wó'gey* speech (Buckley 1982a:188-189). Ownership of shell valuables and dance-treasures was a material manifestation of personal or family spirituality (see Spott and Kroeber 1942:168-169; Buckley 1980:159).

Men had various means of acquiring valuables. Inheritance was probably the most important (Buckley 1982a:64), along with bridewealth received for the marriage of sisters or daughters. Other sources of wealth included appropriation of the curing fees earned by sisters, wives, or daughters, and small payments made by groups sponsoring dances to formulists and to the fami-

lies of individuals who had died during the year (Kroeber 1925:37). There were other sources of wealth in which the method of acquisition spiritually tainted the valuables obtained (Kroeber 1926:514; Spott and Kroeber 1942:144-145). These sources included blood money paid by a killer to the family of his victim, other legal settlements, and gambling.

Women had much more restricted access to wealth than men. They received little direct benefit from bridewealth payments or blood money unless they had no male kin to handle these matters. They did not gamble for large sums (Gould 1966:85). Instead, the two most important sources of wealth for women were inheritance and income earned as shamans. Women could and did own dance regalia, but they were restricted from dancing with them or sometimes even from touching them (Kroeber 1960:213). When ethnographic descriptions mention specific women deploying wealth in social transactions, it is generally wealth they have earned in shamanic activities.

Shamanic rituals in Northwest California resembled practices among other California Indians, except that most shamans were women (see Kroeber 1925:63; Spott and Kroeber 1942:155-157; Posinsky 1954:248-266). A shaman acquired "pains" on spiritual quests in the mountains and by dancing in the sweathouse. For successful cures, a shaman received compensation in traditional Yurok wealth items. Kroeber (1925:27) provided a typical fee range of \$10.00 to \$20.00 in turn-of-the-century U. S. currency. In about 1870, a shaman was paid approximately \$5.00 for her first cure, while the highly prestigious Fanny Flounder received \$15.00 a cure at the height of her powers (T. Buckley, personal communication 1992). As a point of comparison, a typical marriage payment was approximately equivalent to between \$50.00 and \$300.00 at this time (Kroeber 1925:27-28; Drucker 1937:247). Kroeber (1959:240) maintained that "with few and second-rate excep-

tions, it is only women who are eligible to become curing shamans. Therewith they have in their control perhaps the greatest opportunity in the Yurok world to regular, consistent acquisition of wealth."

Though shamanism was primarily the domain of women, it was not linked symbolically to the system of female spirituality identified by Buckley (1988b), but instead had some significant associations with male interpretations of spirituality. Shamanic initiates, like men, found menstruating women polluting (Spott and Kroeber 1942:161-162), and participated in certain aspects of male spirituality (Erikson 1943:267). The most important shamans avoided sexual activity (Spott and Kroeber 1942:219-223; Kroeber 1976:232). Shamans were the only women allowed into the male domain of the sweathouse; indeed, they seem to have acquired the sociological status of males (Buckley 1982a:83). However, the intersection of gender and spirituality was more complicated than this. A male who adopted the activities and dress of a woman was called *wergern*, and this gender status probably had considerable spiritual import (see Williams 1986). *Wergern* individuals seem to have often become shamans (Kroeber 1925:46; Gould 1966:70), although this was not always the case (Valory 1970:177).

Although the full complexity of Yurok understandings of the intersection of gender and shamanism is unclear, shamanic power certainly contributed to the social rank of women. Shamanic abilities could be inherited along matrilineal lines, though transmission was not automatic (Spott and Kroeber 1942:159, 166). Descent groups tried to recruit or retain shamans because they represented a source of income (see Waterman and Kroeber 1934:3). Families pressured daughters to seek shamanistic powers for the social advantages they would bring (Erikson 1943:262). Shamanism correlated with rank in Yurok society and provided women direct access to valuables that validated social status.

The preceding discussion of social differentiation in Yurok society has been in terms of four axes of variation: gender, age, social rank, and personal spirituality. The Yurok themselves would not have separated the four since they were semantically deeply intermeshed (see Buckley 1984). Thus, the word for "man" in ordinary speech, *pegerk*, shifted meaning in the high register speech of aristocratic Yurok to denote high rank as well (Buckley 1984:471-474). Rank, a fundamental component of social valuation in Yurok society, was symbolically inseparable from spirituality, gender, and age. Taken together, these factors distributed prestige, power, and privilege in Yurok society.

COLLIER'S MODELS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY

In Collier's view, power and meaning are realized together in ongoing conversations or discourses (Collier 1988:230). Her models incorporate this notion in a comparative analytical framework (see Collier 1988:230-245). In her view, marital instability is the ultimate determinant of social inequality because it is the means through which powers and interests outside of conjugal relations become involved in the creation or maintenance of these relations. The influence women's kin have over sisters and daughters allows them to appropriate the labor of prospective grooms or men who have unstable marriages. The more labor a man's in-laws appropriate, the more unstable his marriage becomes. This feedback relation between the appropriation of labor and marital instability establishes the contexts in which people negotiate the meaning of marriage, work, and exchange (Collier 1988:231).

The differences among her three models—brideservice, equal bridewealth, and unequal bridewealth—rest primarily on differences in the power of women's kin over husbands. The equal and unequal bridewealth models are both relevant to the analysis of Yurok society. The

linchpin of the equal bridewealth model is the ability of women's kin to keep a married daughter or sister from her husband, which they speak of as the ability to give women away. This representation of the rights of women's kin impinges on peoples' understandings of the role of men in marriage: men marry through the beneficence of elders, since they rely on respected kinsmen to convince women's kin to give them wives.

In the unequal bridewealth model (so-called because social status is hereditary), the relation between husbands and their in-laws is more unequal, since women's kin claim the right to take back a woman from her husband. The rights of women's kin structure peoples' understandings of the role of men in marriage: men marry and stay married by providing goods and services to their wives' kin since wife-takers can never refuse wife-givers' requests. But men have differing abilities to respond to the requests of women's kin; these differences establish social rank. Rank appears to be hereditary as well as the most important determinant of a person's fate, because the social means of establishing rank entail access to the labor and products of an array of other people that only children of high-ranking families enjoy. Since brothers receive labor and goods from their sisters' husbands, the social unit of production is the extended sibling set, a group of brothers and variously connected kin who share valuables.

Women's experiences in marriage are, in turn, structured by this productive organization. Low-ranking brothers, relying heavily on their sisters' or daughters' husbands in order to fulfill duties to their own wives' kin, provide a woman scant support during times of marital difficulties. They are also easily co-opted by high-ranking men who want to give away female kin to low-ranking subordinates. The constraints and powers experienced by women in marriage thus depend on the rank of their brothers. Finally, marital instability is differentially distributed. A

high-ranking man has a stable marriage: he is able to provide his wife with help in her productive tasks, help sons and daughters to marry well, and supply gifts instead of labor in response to his in-laws' requests. A low-ranking man has less to offer both his wife and her kin. She may thus be more apt to leave him and they are more likely to take her back. As a result, low-ranking men spend their lives working for their wives' kin in order to stay married.

Such is the network of cultural assumptions that in Collier's view underlies the manifest structure of an unequal bridewealth society by providing a framework for people's understandings and negotiations of social relationships. Herein lie two critical displacements of meaning (Collier 1988:236-238; see also Bourdieu 1977: 159-171). First is the assertion by women's kin that they have the right to reclaim a woman from her husband, rather than the ability (and economic incentive) to refuse her shelter should she try to return. Brothers rely on the labor and valuables extracted from their sisters' husbands to satisfy the demands of their own wives' brothers. It is thus to their advantage to return their unhappy sister to her husband if he offers sufficient compensation (Collier 1988:154-157). Second, people talk about how the sharing of valuables by siblings is a mark of social worth and thus rank, but they rarely mention that high-ranking brothers are able to share valuables because they appropriate the labor of low-ranking men. These silences help establish the rules of circulation and exchange in marriage transactions that all people, of both high and low rank, must follow if they are to enjoy society's rewards and avoid its sanctions.

Having presented the unequal bridewealth model as a network of interlinking cultural assumptions underlain by two critical displacements of meaning, Collier returned to the level of overt cultural expression by exploring the ways in which cultural assumptions structure values and public institutions in an unequal

bridewealth society. Public arenas in which Collier identified this structuring include status systems, productive organization, marriage practices, means of conflict management, the organization of leadership, and understandings of personhood and universal order. An attempt to match Yurok institutions and values to Collier's equal and unequal bridewealth models provides a basis for evaluating her scheme.

EQUAL AND UNEQUAL BRIDEWEALTH IN YUROK SOCIETY

Although Collier (1988:268) referred to the nineteenth-century Yurok as an unequal bridewealth society, detailed analysis reveals strong correspondences to certain aspects of *both* the equal bridewealth and unequal bridewealth models. These results suggest that the systematic connections between the distribution of social rewards, overt cultural values, and commonsense assumptions that Collier developed in her models are, for the most part, valid; however, they should be seen as social strategies or competing organizational themes within single societies rather than as characteristic of societal types.

The following are contrasting features of Collier's equal and unequal bridewealth models:

1. In the equal bridewealth model, marriages are validated by bridewealth that young people have difficulty obtaining on their own; in the unequal bridewealth model, the validation of marriage through bridewealth is seen as a public statement of the social rank of husband, wife, and offspring. Both models describe the Yurok case.

2. A pivotal issue for Collier is the nature of the relation between a man and his wife's kin. In an unequal bridewealth society, wife-givers outrank wife-takers, men are said to never refuse requests by their wives' kin, and women's kin say they can reclaim a woman from her husband if he is not fulfilling his duties. Ethnographers of the Yurok do not describe such practices. Instead, their depiction of relations between affines

in Yurok society reflect those of Collier's equal bridewealth model, where wife-givers and wife-takers are equals, only a finite amount of valuables is necessary to validate a marriage, and women's kin—who can keep a woman from her husband—claim to be able to give women away. Yurok marriage transactions required only a finite amount of valuables (Kroeber 1925:22), and a man and his in-laws were supposed to respect and help each other. They exchanged gifts and lent each other valuables for dances (DuBois 1936:56; Drucker 1937:246; Kroeber 1960:356, 360). I suggest below that these "rules" for affinal relationships recorded by early ethnographers of the Yurok actually characterized only some Yurok marriages; in marriages between socially unequal individuals, a set of affinal relations matching the unequal bridewealth model seem to have prevailed.

3. The pattern of postmarital residence in Yurok society fits exactly that outlined by Collier for the unequal bridewealth model. Men from high-ranking families should fulfill debts to their in-laws through gifts, enabling them to live patrilocally, while low-ranking men live with their in-laws and work for them (Collier 1988: 146-147). These two forms of marriage match the characteristics of Yurok "full" and "half marriages." About 23% of aboriginal marriages were half marriages in which the husband lived with his in-laws; other arrangements were also negotiated by low-ranking men (see Waterman and Kroeber 1934:2-3).

4. The social appropriation of labor is a crucial point of contrast between the two models. In the equal bridewealth model, parents appropriate the labor of their children in order to establish respect, whereas in the unequal bridewealth model it is the appropriation of the labor and allegiance of low-ranking men by high-ranking sibling sets that establishes hereditary rank. Both models apply to the Yurok case. Parents acquired socially defined daughters who might bring in valuables by becoming shamans or

whom they could give away in return for bride-wealth. They desired sons who would marry and reside virilocally, thereby expanding the descent group. High-ranking men, however, also recruited labor and allegiance from other categories of people, including secondary wives (Spott and Kroeber 1942:167), debt-slaves (Kroeber 1925:32-33; Pilling 1978:143), and poor men whose kin could not amass enough bridewealth to contract full marriages.

5. In both models, the activities to which cultural understandings assign prestige obscure important mechanisms for the transfer of rank-validating wealth. Although inheritance within descent groups was one of the most important mechanisms for the transfer of wealth, conversations about wealth acquisition centered on the personal strivings of young men in sweat-house rituals. Experience would have supported these cultural understandings since the "stewards of wealth favored those who practiced stringent austerities when distributing inheritance" (Buckley 1982a:72). According to Collier, prestigious activities are also ones that power-holders can perform more easily than can those individuals from whom they appropriate labor. Here again, both models hold. Following the equal bridewealth model, the ability to display, lend, and exchange wealth was distributed by age, but following the unequal bridewealth model, the practice of prestigious activities was also distributed by rank.

6. Following the unequal bridewealth model, and contrary to the equal bridewealth model, Yurok informants described hereditary social ranks (see Pilling 1978:141-143, 1989), but social relations were characterized by continual negotiation of relative rank (see Kroeber 1925:20-33, 40; Bushnell and Bushnell 1977:131-134; Buckley 1982a:93-94).

7. The social appropriation of labor establishes the contexts in which people organize productive units. In the equal bridewealth model, where parents appropriate the labor of children,

their children's spouses, and their children's children, the unit of production is the extended family household. In the unequal bridewealth model, where brothers appropriate the labor of their sisters' husbands, the unit of production is the extended sibling set. Again, both of these models are applicable to the Yurok. Different economic units were organized for different tasks. Extended family units were most appropriate for daily subsistence chores or for recruiting valuables for shamans' fees or common marriages (see Waterman 1920:219-222; Kroeber 1925:29; Waterman and Kroeber 1934:1-3; Buckley 1982b:53-54). Sibling and affinal relations were mobilized for high-ranking marriages and for sponsoring dance troupes in World Renewal ceremonies (see Drucker 1937:246; Spott and Kroeber 1942:144-148; Kroeber and Gifford 1949:1-5).

8. The organization of productive units structures women's experiences in marriage. In the equal bridewealth model, both women and men benefit from accumulating children who will work for them. A concern with the offspring of marriages dominated ethnographic accounts of Yurok marriage negotiations (Waterman and Kroeber 1934:1-3). In the equal bridewealth model, women play off their husbands and kin to seek advantage for themselves and their children, but I have not identified any clear examples of this strategy in the Yurok case. Following the unequal bridewealth model, a Yurok woman's experience did depend in large part on the rank of her brothers, since only a wealthy descent group could afford to return her bridewealth in the event of a divorce and thereby reclaim her children from the husband's household.

9. In the equal bridewealth model, personal conflicts appear to concern unpaid debts, since wrongs created the obligation to pay compensation; in the unequal bridewealth model, conflicts are seen as disputes over the relative ranks of the participants. The equal bridewealth model

more accurately characterizes the ways in which Yurok managed conflict. Adultery was seen as a theft that created a debt, and the offended husband demanded compensation from the lover and the woman's kin (Spott and Kroeber 1942:150; Kroeber 1960:361). Murder required compensation in the form of blood money equal to the amount of bridewealth paid for the mother of the victim; blood money for a victim who was a married woman went to her husband, unless he was half married, in which case it went to the father of the woman (Kroeber 1926:512-513).

10. In the equal bridewealth model, there is no cultural justification for the powerful to impose their will on the weak, and although leaders may achieve considerable personal power, they depend heavily on the support of their followers (Collier 1988:116-117). In the unequal bridewealth model, hereditary leaders recruit wives, children, siblings, and affines to their productive units. Each model reflects a different aspect of Yurok leadership. Although rank was hereditary, the tenuous nature of authority was characterized by Drucker (1937:244) for the neighboring Tolowa as follows: "His [a high-ranking man's] status derived from his possession of riches. The rich-man had no formal authority at all; if his kinsmen did his bidding it was out of respect for his wealth and his personality" (see also Spott and Kroeber 1942:144-148; Buckley 1982a:75-76; Keeling 1992:58).

11. Collier maintained that the organization of inequality would structure cultural representations of gender. In the equal bridewealth model, femininity is a potent force, both good and evil, and needs to be controlled. Masculinity is fragile and threatened by potent femininity. In the unequal bridewealth model, gender concepts are not as highly elaborated, and rank overshadows gender in people's understandings of personhood. Yurok representations of gender, discussed briefly above, appear to fit the equal, but not the unequal, bridewealth model.

12. Ritual activity also differs in the two

schemes. In the equal bridewealth model, men limit their contacts with women, and community rituals are devoted to renewing masculine energy. This clearly characterizes the Yurok sweathouse ritual. In an unequal bridewealth society, however, public rituals affirming universal order revolve around status confrontation among higher-ranking people. This characterizes another domain of Yurok ritual, the World Renewal dance ceremonies, in which wealthy descent groups equipped dance troupes with costumes and wealth items to display (Kroeber and Gifford 1949:2). Several groups would sponsor dances at one ceremony, competing in an effort to present the most opulent and expensively outfitted troupe (Kroeber and Gifford 1949:126). Competition for rank could dominate relations within as well as between sponsoring groups (Kroeber and Gifford 1949:70-71).

The preceding analysis clearly undermines Collier's attempt to frame the equal and unequal bridewealth models as constituting different types of society, since both models generally fit the Yurok case. Because both models prove useful in analyzing the unequal distribution of power, privilege, and prestige in nineteenth-century Yurok society, it may be more productive to consider them to be complementary or competing strategies for social organization and the appropriation of labor rather than societal types (see Fricke 1990:135).

INEQUALITY AND DISPLACEMENT OF MEANING

In Collier's scheme, causally connected cultural assumptions that misrepresent the basis of inequality provide the framework for ongoing conversations in which power, privilege, and prestige are distributed among different categories of social actors. These displaced meanings are employed by people in everyday life and therefore structure institutions and publicly held values.

The foregoing analysis supports the identifi-

cation of a core network of cultural assumptions built around the social appropriation of labor, as well as some of the ramifications Collier identified for these assumptions in institutions and values. In Yurok society, women's kin claimed the right to give away sisters and daughters in marriage. Young men relied on their elders to help them acquire wives. The social qualities validating elders' privileged positions with respect to juniors were qualities they could uphold more easily than could those from whom they appropriated labor. Finally, the social appropriation of labor established the extended family as the fundamental unit of subsistence production. This is the basis of the equal bridewealth model (Collier 1988:230-236). Many of the structural ramifications of this model appeared in the Yurok case as well, including payment of debts as a basic idiom for resolving conflicts, gender representations counterpoising potent femininity and threatened masculinity, and ritual activity limiting contacts between the sexes and renewing masculine energy.

In addition, men who could not amass enough bridewealth for full marriage joined their wives' households and thereby surrendered control of their offspring to their wives' kin. High-ranking brothers recruited followers through this practice of "half marriage," as well as by taking second wives or accepting slaves in payments from social inferiors. The social behaviors which validated high rank were performed more easily by children of high-ranking families. These arrangements established the basis for hereditary rank. Among high-ranking families, a unit of economic cooperation was formed at the level of the extended sibling set. Finally, women's experience in marriage depended on the rank of their brothers and fathers. This is the basis of the unequal bridewealth model (Collier 1988: 230-236). The institutional ramifications of this structure include patterns of leadership and the social emphasis given to the public negotiation of rank in the World Renewal ceremonies.

Again in accordance with Collier's models, these cultural assumptions set the bounds of what people discussed, and what they did not, in conversations about the circulation of labor and goods. First, parents claimed obedience and respect from the children they supported, but they did not talk about how parents appropriated the labor of their children in order to establish the respected status that allowed them to order children about. Second, fully married brothers who established descent groups claimed rank and respect because they could mobilize wealth for marriage transactions or dance troupes; they did not talk about how it was the labor of low-ranking men, secondary wives, and slaves (together with the ability to give away children of such dependents) that allowed fully married brothers to maintain their rank and transmit it to their offspring. In Collier's models, these silences are fundamental to inequality because they establish the contexts in which men and women discuss their duties to and rights over others. They also structure the way people understand their personal fates and thus the strategies they devise to achieve personal goals or social approbation (Collier 1988:237-238).

The above elements of Collier's models work well when applied to the Yurok case; however, her models founder on another and, according to Collier, more fundamental silence in the universe of discourse: the nature of the relationship between husbands and their wives' kin. In Collier's (1988) view, it is this relationship that established marital instability and thus the pattern of inequality. Yurok ethnography makes this view difficult to support.

MARITAL INSTABILITY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Collier's central thesis is that marital instability (the ongoing relations between husbands, wives, and wives' kin) organizes inequality in kin-based societies (Collier 1988:226-230). Specifically, the nature and content of a society's

unequal social relationships are founded on the appropriation of labor and goods from a husband by his wife's kin, who have powers over his wife that constrain her ability to leave him. The more labor and goods women's kin can extract from husbands, the more unequal social relationships become.

In the equal bridewealth model, women's kin can choose to offer shelter to an unhappy sister or daughter when she leaves her husband (Collier 1988:77-86). They may be interested in her labor or in validating claims to her children. Based on this ability to offer shelter to an unhappy wife, women's kin claim to be able to give women away. Women tend to comply with these claims, because their most reasonable strategy is to avoid alienating their kin and to play them off against their husbands in advancing their own and their children's futures. Their kin offer shelter from their husbands and help for their children.

In the unequal bridewealth model, women's kin can offer to shelter a woman, but they can also threaten to take her back from her husband (Collier 1988:150-157). A man should thus never refuse a request by his wives' kin, lest they be tempted to exercise their right to take his wife away. This right originates as a logical extension of the ability of women's kin to refuse a woman shelter should she wish to leave her husband. It makes sense for a woman's brothers to refuse to shelter their unhappy sister if the husband agrees to pay them sufficient compensation, since men rely on their relationship with their sister's husbands to meet the requests of their own wives' kin.

Both of these models characterize the Yurok case to some extent. Yurok marriage negotiations followed the equal bridewealth model, where wife-givers and wife-takers are equals, only a finite amount of valuables is necessary to validate a marriage ("full marriage"), and women's kin claim to be able to give women away. Ethnographers have not claimed that men

were required to fulfill requests by their wives' kin or that wife-givers "outranked" wife-takers. Instead, following the equal bridewealth model, women's kin could shelter an unhappy wife. If a man beat his wife and she returned to her family, they might keep her until the husband paid damages for his abuse, or they could return the bridewealth and dissolve the marriage (Kroeber 1925:30-31). However, a woman's kin could also deny her shelter by refusing to return the bridewealth to her husband. Return of the bridewealth was the only hope a woman had of recovering her children from her husband's kin group. A woman's experience in marriage thus depended on the rank of her brothers (an aspect of the unequal bridewealth model), since lower-ranking brothers might not be able to return bridewealth.

Therefore, although a woman's experience of marriage depended on the rank of her brothers, and her kin could refuse her shelter if she fled her husband (as in the unequal bridewealth model), Yurok marriage negotiations seem to have been cast in the idiom of the equal bridewealth model. Women's kin talked primarily of their right to give a woman away, and discussion centered on the offspring of the union rather than on the continuing duties of wife-taker to wife-giver. While this set of affinal relations was a cultural ideal, certain marriages, particularly "half marriages," may have been founded on very different understandings between a husband and his in-laws, creating relations more like the affinal bond in the unequal bridewealth model. In half marriage, wife-givers outranked wife-takers. A father with only daughters might arrange for a respectable but matrilocal marriage by making various concessions to the husband, including a promise to "respect" him, meaning that he "would not order him about" (Waterman and Kroeber 1934:3). This arrangement implies that a half married man who joined his in-laws' household usually *was* ordered about; the debt he owed his in-laws for the gift of their daughter

probably obliged him to always fulfill his in-laws' requests.

Thus, within Yurok society, affinal relationships were distributed by rank. Marriage between social equals followed the equal bridewealth model, while links between socially unequal families followed the unequal bridewealth model. It is therefore difficult to argue that a specific affinal relationship was the fundamental constituent of social inequality in Yurok society, since different marriages were characterized by different affinal relationships. Although marital instability may have been an important element of inequality, other factors must have operated to distribute affinal relations by rank.

BEYOND MARITAL INSTABILITY

These structural relationships (between affines, spouses, etc.) determined much of the framework within which inequality was perpetuated in Yurok society. Nevertheless, factors outside of social structural relationships also appear to have been necessary to the reproduction of inequality in the Yurok case. These include a set of relations of production that established age and rank hierarchies and a system of beliefs concerning personal spirituality that structured conversations on morality and thereby organized cultural assumptions concerning gender inequality, the exchange of people for valuables, and concepts of ownership. In presenting these themes, I return to the distribution of inequality by age, rank, gender, and personal spirituality.

Relations of Production and Inequalities of Age and Rank

In the equal bridewealth model, an ideology of respect for age is linked directly to the power that women's kin have to shelter wives from their husbands, since this power creates contexts in which young men who want to marry or who have unstable marriages must ask elders for support (Collier 1988:83). But the existence in Yurok society of multiple strategies for the

appropriation of labor and a variety of affinal relations undermines Collier's logic.

A similar problem holds for Collier's explanation of hereditary rank. In Collier's equal bridewealth model, there is no hereditary rank. However, for the Yurok, as in the unequal bridewealth model, rank was hereditary because high-ranking men, with the support of fully married brothers and their families, drew on the labor and products of people other than their children (secondary wives, debt-slaves, and half-married men and their children) in order to support their own and their children's prestigious activities. But what forced secondary wives, debt-slaves, and half-married men into these disadvantageous relationships? In Collier's model, it is the nature of husbands' duties to their affines—specifically, the prescription to never refuse wife-givers' requests—that formed the ultimate basis for these relationships. But if men's duties to affines were actually distributed by rank, then some other factor must have acted to distribute these relations among people.

Inequalities of age and rank may have been founded in part on the relations of production in Yurok society. A complex relationship between the material circumstances of subsistence and wealth on the one hand, and cultural understandings of these circumstances on the other, provided contexts for the reproduction of inequalities of age as well as of hereditary ranks.

Subsistence. Precontact Yurok subsistence was based on a variety of wild foods, including, in order of importance, salmon, acorns, deer and elk, other fish, various nuts and seeds, mussels, sea lions, and some waterfowl (Kroeber 1960:56). The most important of these, salmon and acorns, became highly abundant only at particular times during the year and were harvested and stored by households for sustenance during the nonproductive season (Gould 1966, 1975). Household heads managed the stored food for a variety of social ends (Gould 1975:166-167).

The abundant but seasonal resources of

northwestern California were variable in space as well as time. The stretch of the Klamath River that was the focus of Yurok subsistence practices was full of rocks, eddies, and waterfalls that obstructed the passage of salmon and other anadromous fish bound upriver to spawn; fishing in these particular locations could be phenomenally productive (Davis 1988:177). The right to fish in each locale was "owned" by individuals and families among the Yurok and other groups in northwestern California (although each group encountered a distinct ecological regime described by Davis [1988]). Rights to produce from particular locales could be "sold, bartered, and bequeathed" (Waterman 1920:219; Pilling 1978:146). Indeed, access to all of the most abundant natural resources was governed by cultural rules of ownership (Waterman 1920:218-223; Kroeber 1925:33-35; Kroeber and Barrett 1960). Owned resource patches included acorn groves, particular oak trees, and even strategic hunting spots—paths or gullies where deer or elk passed or could be driven. A beached whale belonged to the group holding rights to the particular stretch of beach where it was encountered. Even the order and position for fishing at communally constructed fish weirs was guarded and maintained by particular families (Davis 1988:169).

Actual patterns of use were, of course, quite complex. Individuals or families might share a resource patch, and use rights were regularly lent out to create or fulfill social obligations (Davis 1988:258). Furthermore, not all resources were owned: bow hunting of small game, gathering of bulbs and seeds, and harpoon fishing away from the choice fishing spots were open to all (Waterman 1920:222; Davis 1988:174). However, access to the most productive resources—those yielding storable surpluses used both for winter subsistence and ceremonial feasts—was significantly restricted, and these restrictions impinged directly on social relationships. Disadvantaged people—youths who had

not yet inherited rights to resources and low-ranking people who had insufficient or inferior holdings—worked for elders or high-ranking families who held rights to the most productive locales. Although those who controlled access were obliged to share, their status as “owners” provided them with the cultural justification for establishing unequal social relationships, demanding loyalty and labor in return for food (Gould 1966; Buckley 1982a:51-52).

Wealth. None of the items that the Yurok identified as valuables were locally abundant resources. *Dentalium* shell beads, pileated woodpecker scalps, and large obsidian bifaces entered the coastal economies of northwestern California primarily through trade. *Dentalium* shells probably came from the coast of Washington, woodpecker scalps primarily from oak groves inland of the redwood belt (about 30 miles to the east), and obsidian from south-central Oregon and northeastern California (Kroeber 1925:22-26, 1960:214; Gould 1966:71-73; Davis 1974; Hughes 1978).

Individual Yurok did trade subsistence goods inland for wealth items and could have enhanced their social standing through industrious hunting and trading (Kroeber 1960:332; Gould 1966:79; Chagnon 1970). However, such intergroup trading contacts were primarily in the hands of high-ranking village headmen (Gould 1966:79; Buckley 1982a:53). Commoners did not have the far-flung social contacts that higher ranking individuals relied on to reduce the danger of long-distance travel (Pilling and Pilling 1970:102; Bean 1974:29). Thus, the most important source of wealth items for ordinary Yurok were local. They obtained valuables in the same sorts of social transactions (marriage payments, compensation for injuries, payments to shamans, and gambling) for which they desired wealth in the first place.

Yurok wealth was thus inheritable. Since shell valuables were durable and rare, a high-ranking man had substantial success in transmit-

ting his status to his sons, while a low-ranking man had little opportunity to advance (Kroeber 1925:40). A high-ranking young man relied on elders' support in order to obtain the bridewealth needed for an advantageous marriage. As such, he respected his elders, worked for them, and diligently pursued sweathouse rituals.

A young man whose family could not provide the wealth he needed to marry or pay for his wrongs allied himself to a high-ranking man who could supply him with valuables. In so doing, he perpetuated the social basis of hereditary rank, since his high-ranking patron claimed bridewealth paid for his sisters and daughters (who had been his most important opportunity to acquire wealth). Sons of such low-ranking men likewise had little chance to improve their status, since they were of inferior status in their fathers' patron's lineage and because their fathers could not offer them support except through their patrons. Drucker (1937:245) provided an excellent account of the strategies pursued by low-ranking Tolowa men:

The rich-man gave feasts, and in lean times would share his stores with his people. He bought wives for the young men, or at least contributed most of the payment; but it was also he who accepted and held the bride prices paid for their sisters and daughters. Perhaps most important of all, it was the rich-man who was obliged to pay compensation for wrongs his henchmen committed, to save them, and himself, from retaliation. Secure in the knowledge that he could, and would, protect them from vengeance, the poor men worked and fought for their rich relative.

Although material conditions, particularly the scarcity and consequent inheritability of wealth, were crucial to this system, again, as in the realm of subsistence, cultural understandings of the meaning of wealth were equally important to the perpetuation of inequality. The equation of wealth and people in social transactions was especially significant. Descent groups claimed an ability to give away sisters and daughters in exchange for wealth, and daughters and sisters ac-

quiesced to those claims. These cultural understandings of the role of valuables in social relationships established the contexts in which high-ranking, wealthy individuals converted their material dominance in the acquisition of wealth into superordinate social positions (see Meillassoux 1981:42-49, 82-88).

Relations between subsistence and prestige in the aboriginal economies of the northwest California coast are discussed by Gould (1966), who sought to resolve the differences between the interpretations of DuBois (1936) and Drucker (1937) by identifying women's labor as the crucial link between the two spheres. According to Gould (1966), marriage was one of the most important means a man had of acquiring wealth. Through marriage, he gained access to a woman's labor. Because women's productive labor was more time-consuming than men's, the amount of surplus food stored by a household (and thus available for prestigious sponsorship of public ceremonials) was highly dependent on the number of women in the household. It was also through marriage that a man gained rights to the labor of his children and the bridewealth of married daughters.

Gould (1966) emphasized the predominance of men in negotiations over wealth. Women were not "active participants" in transactions involving wealth; rather, "their role in the wealth quest was important (as food producers and storers, as childbearers, and for their role in attracting bridewealth) but essentially passive" (Gould 1966:85). But Gould's discussion raises a significant paradox: If women's labor was the limiting factor in amassing food surpluses, and women bore the children who could be given in exchange for bridewealth, and, most of all, if women had what Kroeber (1959:240) termed "perhaps the greatest opportunity in the Yurok world to regular, consistent acquisition of wealth" in the form of curing fees, then why were women not active participants in social transactions involving wealth?

Gender Inequality

Following Collier's models, the kin of Yurok women "gave" them away in return for bride-wealth. In the models, the ability of a woman's kin to give her away is based on what they can offer her in return—shelter from her husband and help in advancing the careers of her children. While these provisions certainly provided Yurok women an incentive for cooperating with kin who wanted to "give them away," Collier's model does not sufficiently reflect the constraints Yurok women experienced on independently negotiating marriage or deploying wealth.

As Buckley (1982b, 1988b) pointed out, the strong male biases of early Yurok ethnography make the reconstruction of aboriginal gender relations difficult. Women were important participants in the economic as well as the spiritual life of the Yurok and may have maintained a gender-specific system of spiritual advancement. Although myriad rules and prohibitions distanced women from the practice of hunting and fishing, women assumed charge of the products for processing and storage (see Gould 1966). Women came to own fishing places through inheritance or curing fees; although they could not fish there themselves, they had an owner's right to the product (Waterman 1920:223; Davis 1988:205). Likewise, although women were prevented from wearing, and in some cases even from touching, ceremonial regalia, they still received the social credit of owning it. Husbands could not simply appropriate their wives' display wealth (Kroeber 1905:692, 1960:213).

Although inheritance and residence had a patrilineal and patrilocal bias, kinship was reckoned bilaterally; matrilineal marriage history was one of the most important claims to high rank (Kroeber 1960:307; Buckley 1982a:66). Young, high-ranking men in training to become *pegerk* learned the traditional skills of both men and women (Buckley 1982a:84). High-ranking women, both shamans and non-shamans, might also

become *pegerk* (Buckley 1982a:83, 94).

Yet Yurok men exercised significant control over women's fates, even over those called *pegerk*. For example, although shamans apparently had some control over the wealth they earned in their practice (see Waterman 1920:223; Erikson 1943:262), they encountered surprising constraints as well. The story of the doctor married at Turip is a particularly telling example. Two separate versions of this legend have been published, one told by a woman, the other by a man. As told by Mary Blake of Rekwoi, it is the story of a woman's spiritual quest and success as a shaman. Spott and Kroeber (1942:222; emphasis added) related:

This girl became very rich practicing. She bought wives for her two brothers. And she accumulated wealth enough to outfit three dances at once: a Deerskin Dance, a Jumping Dance, and a dance among the Tolowa. Then, *against her will*, her brothers sold her to a husband for three times the highest price of a full-marriage. She was married into the house *higwo* in her own Rekwoi. But she insisted that her husband not sleep with her, and bought him another wife.

This triumph, however, did not last long, as her husband, recounting what he had "paid" for her, again demanded that she sleep with him. She still refused. He tried to rape her, but she broke away, jumped into the river, and was never seen again.

Mary Blake's version highlights the irony of a shaman's tragic experience with brothers who "give" her away and a husband who "buys" her, despite her ability to outfit three dances and buy wives for both brothers and husband. The second version of the story (see Kroeber 1976: 229-233), told by Stone of Weitspus, is narrated from the perspective of the shaman's brother (who in this account steals her first "pain" for her). Mary Blake's irony is absent in the account of the marriage told from the male view:

Now a man from Turip bought this doctor for wife. Her brother did not want to sell her, but the one from Turip offered so much that he took

the price and let him have his sister. She did not want to go, but they paid so much that her brother had to let her go. Yet he told her husband, "Do not try to sleep with her: she has just become a doctor."

Stone's conclusion to the story focuses on the complex negotiations between husband and brother. Whether these events actually happened is of less importance than is the difference in perspectives on marriage transactions. Stone is only interested in the intricate negotiations among men concerning women, while Mary Blake highlights the constraints on women by making her protagonist the most exaggeratedly rich of shamans. There is at least one description of an actual case of negotiations between men over rights to a shaman's income (Waterman and Kroeber 1934:3).

If, as Collier suggested, the ability of women's kin to give wives was founded on their ability to shelter women, then shamans, who earned valuables without relying on their brothers, should have been difficult to give away. Shamans' access to wealth should have given them an important voice in decisions made by their descent group. Instead, men appropriated wealth earned by female kin and gave shaman-sisters away in marriage. The ideology that privileged men's social roles over women's was powerful enough to sanction men's appropriation of shamans' wealth and labor. This ideology cannot simply be derived from choices made by women, whose chances depend on the rank of their brothers, in marriage transactions. Instead, it should be seen as another significant silence in Yurok conversations about rights to labor and products. This ideology—and women's consequent disadvantageous position in social transactions involving wealth—may have been perpetuated through the system of male spiritualism. Buckley (1982a:58) concluded that "Men were, in Yurok culture, the models of independence and, hence, of 'real' personhood. Women could and did achieve such autonomy and were recognized for doing so by being called 'men,' *pegerk*."

Personal Spirituality and Inequality

The preceding analysis has departed from Collier's models in several significant respects. The first is a rejection of the idea that a particular relationship between husbands and their wives' kin determined Yurok social inequality, because different Yurok marriages were characterized by different affinal relationships. Then, following a description of the economic structures that seem to have determined the contexts in which social strategies pursued by Yurok men and women reproduced inequalities of age and rank, I pointed out that the roles of these material circumstances (salmon fishing, acorn distribution, regional exchange patterns) in social relationships were culturally constituted. Two sets of understandings, one concerning ownership of rights to resources, the other involving an equation of people with valuables, were not inherent in the ecology of northwestern California but rather were elements of Yurok social inequality in need of explanation. These can be understood as significant silences in Yurok discourse, in addition to those silences outlined by Collier. Finally, I developed the idea that an ideology of gender hierarchy constrained Yurok women more than Collier's models would predict, particularly in view of the special access women had to wealth items via shamanism. This gender hierarchy could be considered still another silence in Yurok discourse.

These findings suggest that Yurok discourse concerning social differentiation—even at a very abstract level—was significantly more complicated than Collier proposed. As Collier (1988) suggested, the universe of the undiscussed (Bourdieu 1977) included assumptions about rights to labor and the content of affinal relationships; however, it also encompassed notions of the ownership of resource rights, the exchangeability of people and valuables, and the privileging of men's social roles over women's. The central framework for organizing what was con-

tested and what was not may have been the Yurok system of personal spirituality.

As noted at the outset of this article, personal spiritual achievement was very significant in pre-contact Yurok culture, but was poorly investigated by early ethnographers. Recently, researchers have taken a greater interest in religious aspects of Yurok culture (see Bushnell and Bushnell 1977; Pilling 1978; Buckley 1982a, 1984, 1988b, 1991). Personal spirituality provided for the moral evaluation of people and established strategies of individual moral advancement. In this system, what I have separated analytically as distinct aspects of inequality—age, rank, and gender—were semantically intermeshed and would have been experienced as a single hegemonic system by Yurok actors.

Buckley (1984:471-473) explained how, while the social achievement designated in *wo'gey* speech by the concept *pegerk* was open to women, such women were spoken of as "men." Personal virtues such as independence, permanence, strength, and wealth also held connotations of maleness. Of the two forms of Yurok sorcery, one, *'uma'a*, was associated with men and high rank, while the other, *ohpok*, was associated with women and low rank (Valory 1970: 115). Buckley (1982a:226) posited a series of linked oppositions between "pure" and "dirty" elements that included *wo'gey* and human, life and death, men and women, elite and ordinary, wealth and poverty, legitimacy and bastardy, etc.

Daily experience would have continually reinforced the symbolic link between the hierarchies of rank and gender. Men were physically associated with valuables more often than women. Women could not wear, handle, or even touch a whole class of ceremonial display wealth, whereas men made and repaired these regalia (Kroeber 1960:213, 397). Buckley (1984:472) identified an "intense localization" in Yurok culture, where, with "its emphasis on putatively immemorial residence of 'high families' at permanent, patrilineally inherited house locations, the notion

of 'dwelling' had connotations of maleness, permanence, strength, and independence.'

Again, experience would have reinforced these linkages, since brothers who were "fully" married and resided patrilocally (thereby exhibiting cultural ideals of permanence and independence) were necessarily economically well situated; they controlled their own labor and that of their wives and children, receiving bridewealth from the marriage of their sisters and daughters. A woman marrying into such a family had more difficulty exhibiting valued personality traits than her husband. Her best opportunity to display strength and independence of character, as well as to obtain valuables held to be representative of such achievement, was to become a shaman. As a shaman, however, she entered the sweat-house to dance and adopted other male spiritual practices, thereby distancing herself from the independent female interpretations of spirituality that could have provided media for resisting the dominant male ones. She had little choice but to tacitly accept the sweat-house-associated ideology that opposed men and women, wealth and poverty, and high rank and low rank.

Similar causal loops probably underlay silences in the economic realm, but here the ethnographic record is quite thin. Buckley (1991:6-7) suggested that *Dentalium* beads were perceived as a "life-force" associated with the male contribution to human existence. It was probably in the context of such concepts that people understood the exchange of women for valuables and by extension the exact reckoning of life and injury in damage payments. Similarly, the value of immemorial residence noted by Buckley (1984; see also Waterman 1920), together with the symbolism associated with the World Renewal ceremonials, might have justified claims to ownership of resources. Those who doctored the world in the ceremonials also fed the crowds that attended the ceremonies. They probably justified their tenure of the most productive resource patches by extending their role as spiri-

tual stewards to the economic realm. Low-ranking men and women who accepted food at such ceremonies also accepted the link claimed by high-ranking sponsors between high spirituality and rights to resources.

Summary of Inequality in Yurok Society

For Collier (1988), inequality derives from social relationships. The structural relationship between husbands, wives, and wives' kin lies at the heart of her three models. The foregoing analysis suggests that, while this structural relationship framed the practical strategies of Yurok men and women that, in turn, reproduced inequality, other factors shaped relations between husbands, wives, and wives' kin. These factors were, on the one hand, the economic conditions of subsistence production and wealth exchange, and, on the other, a set of beliefs about the world centered around stringent personal spiritualism. In Yurok society, all three of these conditions—social structural relationships, material circumstances, and the particulars of a symbolic system—simultaneously established the contexts in which people negotiated the distribution of power, privilege, and prestige.

It was with reference to these conditions that people discussed the status and actions of young men and women. Young men were indebted to elders who provided them with protection and access to resources. Young women, whose kin could shelter them from their husbands, were not just indebted; they could be given away. But women's kin, who (ideally) constituted patrilocal descent groups exhibiting the valued (male) qualities of permanence, independence, wealth, and knowledge, demanded symbolic compensation for the alienation of a woman in marriage—and the transfer of her children to her husband's lineage—in the form of shell beads. Because a young man experienced these valuables as inheritable and because women's kin could always shelter unhappy wives, a man who wanted to marry or who had an unstable mar-

riage needed assistance, and turned to his elders for aid.

Elders were "real men" who exhibited valued spiritual qualities and claimed to act as spokesmen for their households in the distribution of food, valuables, and wives. People who needed food, valuables, or wives obeyed them. But men who were generous with food relied on their wives' labor to maintain their social position (see Gould 1966). Their wives worked for them because women were disadvantaged in independently deploying wealth, although they might come to own shell beads, dance regalia, and resource patches through inheritance or curing fees. There were economic incentives for a woman to let her kin give her away in marriage to a high-ranking husband. Such a husband could offer the security and social standing of his patrilocal household, legitimacy and training for her children, and, in a large household, relief from her subsistence chores so that she could devote more time to her own spiritual quests (shamanic or other). Her kin offered her shelter from abuse by her husband, help for her children, and access to family resources.

In order to maintain respect, a fully married man relied on the productive labor of his wife and his children and on his ability to exchange sisters or daughters for bridewealth. This "respect" became "rank" and appeared to be hereditary due to the material circumstances in which Yurok sought social advancement. Patchy but abundant and storable resources, experienced as ownable, perpetuated productive differences between households. Wealth, symbolic of social worth, was difficult to obtain except through inheritance or through direct, long-distance exchange in which wealthy headmen with far-flung social contacts had a marked advantage. These relations of production, together with the nature of the marital bond (especially the options open to women), distributed the social strategies available to Yurok men by rank.

A high-ranking man worked for his father's

household in hopes that his father would provide him with the bridewealth for a "full" and advantageous marriage. With sufficient bridewealth, he did not face onerous demands from his in-laws. He could offer the support of his descent group to his wife and their children, and could thus hope for a stable marriage. By obeying his elders, he could eventually expect to become a respected elder himself.

A young man whose family could not provide him much bridewealth could offer little to a woman and thus faced the prospect of an unstable marriage. He might choose to accept whatever marriage arrangements he and his kin could work out, but he might also agree to join a higher-ranking household in half marriage or let a high-ranking patron pay his bridewealth. Such a maneuver may have improved his social standing, even as he accepted a subordinate position within his patron's group. Although he might cede rights to the bridewealth of his daughters and sisters to his high-ranking relative, he probably benefited from the labor of his wife and children and had a more stable marriage than he could have achieved on his own. The experiences of low-ranking men highlight an aggrandizing strategy for high-ranking brothers, who could enhance their social status by sharing wealth to meet large marriage payments or to sponsor dances. They sought to attract people to their descent group in order to free their children and their primary wives from daily drudgery and thus enable them to devote themselves to the spiritual activities expected of high-status individuals.

CONCLUSIONS

Yurok men and women evaluated each other according to a system of representations that have been separated into four dimensions herein: gender, age, social rank, and personal spiritual attainment. To explain inequalities of gender, I drew on Collier's analysis of the affinal bond and women's experiences in marriage as depend-

ing on the rank of their brothers, suggesting that this was not completely satisfactory in the Yurok case, given shamans' access to wealth. In developing an understanding of inequalities of age and rank, I again found Collier's analysis useful, particularly her discussion of how the appropriation of labor might be organized by relations between husbands, wives, and wives' kin. However, certain economic conditions in precontact northwestern California were probably also crucial to the perpetuation of age and rank hierarchies in Yurok society. The role of these material circumstances in social relationships was culturally constructed, requiring sets of understandings concerning the ownability of resources and the potential equivalence of people and valuables. Finally, the system of personal spirituality was a fundamental locus of inequality since, by participating in this system, Yurok men and women found different domains of inequality, such as gender and rank, to be mutually reinforcing in both symbolism and practice.

Following Collier (1988), I have framed my exploration of inequality in nineteenth century Yurok society around a particular question: Why did disadvantaged people participate in the very systems that perpetuated their own subordinate status? The answer is that it made sense for them to do so, given the distribution of social sanctions and rewards they encountered in their daily lives. According to Bourdieu (1977:164-165), "Social categories disadvantaged by the symbolic order, such as women and the young, cannot but recognize the legitimacy of the dominant classification in the very fact that their only chance of neutralizing those of its effects most contrary to their own interests lies in submitting to them in order to make use of them." By these actions, people established the meanings they employed in conversations about the distribution of power, privilege, and prestige.

The basis of inequality therefore lies in what is said and what is not said, the universe of discourse and the universe of the undiscussed

(Bourdieu 1977:168). Following this line of reasoning, Collier (1988:236-238) identified two significant silences in each of her three models, the first concerning the rights of wives' kin, the second involving the social appropriation of labor. She thus implied that an homologous pair of silences or displaced meanings should underlie social inequality in most kin-based societies. The Yurok data suggest, however, that the universe of the undiscussed, even when considered at Collier's very abstract level, is structurally more complex than she proposed. Aspects of Yurok cosmology, especially the system of personal spiritual attainment, organized significant silences in conversations about affinal relationships, the social appropriation of labor, gender relations, the exchange of people for valuables, and the ownership of resources.

This result reflects Kelly's (1993:415-525) conclusions in his detailed critique of Collier's "brideservice" model, the only one of her three formulations not analyzed herein. Kelly explained how the cosmological system of the Etoro of New Guinea is the locus for the production of inequality in what is often considered an "egalitarian" society. For the nineteenth-century Yurok, I have not suggested that the cosmological system was *the* locus for the production of inequality, only that it played an important role.

Although I have rejected several important aspects of Collier's models of inequality in kin-based societies, including her specification of societal types and the thesis that the affinal bond is the fundamental determinant of inequality, other aspects of her analysis have proved quite useful. Her approach—which moves from the values people profess, to the arguments they make in negotiating social relationships, and finally to an analysis of the obligations and powers experienced by different categories of social actor—has been helpful in developing an understanding of inequality in Yurok society. The foregoing discussion suggests that a useful framework for the

study of inequality in kin-based societies would be one that used the analytical approach developed by Collier (1988) to consider not simply marital inequality but a full range of social, economic, and ideational structures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thomas Buckley patiently read through several drafts of this paper and on each occasion provided new and insightful comments. Jeanne Arnold, Elizabeth Brumfiel, Ray Kelly, and Joyce Marcus also helped improve this paper considerably with their commentary on various earlier drafts. I am, of course, responsible for any errors that remain.

REFERENCES

- Bean, Lowell John
 1974 Social Organization in Native California. In: 'ANTAP: California Indian Political and Economic Organization, Lowell J. Bean and Thomas F. King, eds., pp. 11-34. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 2.
- 1976 Power and its Applications in Native California. In: Native Californians: A Theoretical Retrospective, Lowell J. Bean and Thomas C. Blackburn, eds., pp. 407-420. Ramona: Ballena Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre
 1977 Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Trans. by Richard Nice.)
- Buckley, Thomas
 1980 Monsters and the Quest for Balance in Native Northwest California. In: Manlike Monsters on Trial: Early Records and Modern Evidence, Marjorie M. Halpin and Michael M. Ames, eds., pp. 152-171. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- 1982a Yurok Realities in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago.
- 1982b Menstruation and the Power of Yurok Women: Methods in Cultural Reconstruction. *American Ethnologist* 9(1):47-60.
- 1984 Yurok Speech Registers and Ontology. *Language in Society* 13:467-488.
- 1988a Kroeber's Theory of Culture Areas and the Ethnology of Northwestern California. *Anthropological Quarterly* 62(1):15-26.
- 1988b Menstruation and the Power of Yurok Women. In: *Blood Magic: The Anthropology of Menstruation*, Thomas Buckley and Alma Gottlieb, eds., pp. 187-209. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 1989 Suffering in the Cultural Construction of Others: Robert Spott and A. L. Kroeber. *American Indian Quarterly* 13(4):437-445.
- 1991 The One Who Flies All Around the World. *Parabola* 16(1):4-9.
- 1996 "The Little History of Pitiful Events": The Epistemological and Moral Contexts of Kroeber's Californian Ethnology. In: *Volkgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*, George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., pp. 257-297. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Bushnell, John, and Donna Bushnell
 1977 Wealth, Work and World View in Native Northwest California: Sacred Significance and Psychoanalytic Symbolism. In: *Flowers of the Wind: Papers on Ritual, Myth and Symbolism in California and the Southwest*, Thomas C. Blackburn, ed., pp. 120-186. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 8.
- Chagnon, Napoleon A.
 1970 Ecological and Adaptive Aspects of California Shell Money. Los Angeles: University of California Archaeological Survey Annual Report 12:2-25.
- Collier, Jane F.
 1988 Marriage and Inequality in Classless Societies. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Davis, James T.
 1974 Trade Routes and Economic Exchange Among the Indians of California. Ballena Press Publications in Archaeology, Ethnology, and History No. 3.
- Davis, Lee
 1988 On This Earth: Hupa Land Domains, Images and Ecology on 'Deddeh Ninnisan.' Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
- Drucker, Philip
 1937 The Tolowa and Their Southwest Oregon Kin. University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 36(4):221-300.
- 1965 Cultures of the North Pacific Coast. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co.

- DuBois, Cora
 1936 The Wealth Concept as an Integrative Factor in Tolowa-Tututni Culture. In: *Essays in Anthropology Presented to A. L. Kroeber*, R. H. Lowie, ed., pp. 49-65. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Erikson, Erik H.
 1943 Observations on the Yurok: Childhood and World Image. University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 35(10):257-302.
- Fricke, Thomas
 1990 Elementary Structures in the Nepal Himalaya: Reciprocity and the Politics of Hierarchy in Ghale-Tamang Marriage. *Ethnology* 29(2):135-158.
- Giddens, Anthony
 1979 *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gould, Richard A.
 1966 The Wealth Quest Among the Tolowa Indians of Northwestern California. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110:67-87.
 1975 Ecology and Adaptive Response Among the Tolowa Indians of Northwestern California. *The Journal of California Anthropology* 2(2):148-170.
- Heizer, Robert F. (ed.)
 1978 *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 8, California. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
- Hughes, Richard E.
 1978 Aspects of Prehistoric Wiyot Exchange and Social Ranking. *The Journal of California Anthropology* 5(1):53-66.
- Keeling, Richard
 1982 Kroeber's Yurok Myths: A Comparative Re-Evaluation. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 6(3):71-81.
 1989 Musical Evidence of Female Spiritual Life Among the Yurok. In: *Women in North American Indian Music: Six Essays*, Richard Keeling, ed., pp. 67-78. The Society for Ethnomusicology, Inc., Special Series No. 6.
 1992 Cry for Luck: Sacred Song and Speech Among the Yurok, Hupa, and Karok Indians of Northwestern California. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kelly, Raymond C.
 1993 *Constructing Inequality: The Fabrication of a Hierarchy of Virtue Among the Etoro*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Kroeber, A. L.
 1905 Notes. *American Anthropologist* n.s. 7(4): 690-695.
 1925 *Handbook of the Indians of California*. Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 78.
 1926 *Law of the Yurok Indians*. Rome: Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Americanists 2:511-516.
 1959 Yurok National Character. University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 47(3):236-240.
 1960 Comparative Notes on the Structure of Yurok Culture. In: *The Structure of Twana Culture*, by William W. Elmendorf. Pullman: Washington State University.
 1976 *Yurok Myths*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kroeber, A. L., and S. A. Barrett
 1960 Fishing Among the Indians of Northwestern California. *University of California Anthropological Records* 21(1).
- Kroeber, A. L., and E. W. Gifford
 1949 *World Renewal: A Cult System of Native Northwest California*. University of California Anthropological Records 13(1).
- Meillassoux, Claude
 1981 *Maidens, Meat and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pilling, Arnold R.
 1978 Yurok. In: *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 8, California, Robert F. Heizer, ed., pp. 137-154. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.
 1989 Yurok Aristocracy and "Great Houses." *American Indian Quarterly* 13(4):421-436.
- Pilling, Arnold R., and Patricia L. Pilling
 1970 Cloth, Clothes, Hose, and Bows: Non-sedentary Merchants Among the Indians of Northwestern California. In: *Migrations and Anthropology*. Robert F. Spencer, ed., pp. 97-119. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

- Posinsky, S. H.
1954 Yurok Ritual. Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University.
- Spott, Robert, and A. L. Kroeber
1942 Yurok Narratives. University of California Publications in Archaeology and Ethnology 35(9):143-256.
- Valory, Dale Keith
1970 Yurok Doctors and Devils: A Study in Identity, Anxiety, and Deviance. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
- Waterman, T. T.
1920 Yurok Geography. University of California Publications in Archaeology and Ethnology 16(5):177-314.
- Waterman, T. T., and A. L. Kroeber
1934 Yurok Marriages. University of California Publications in Archaeology and Ethnology 35(1):1-14.
- Williams, Walter L.
1986 The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture. Boston: Beacon Press.

